

## New tool fights food insecurity in Africa

Using Earth observation technology, a **new tool** to combat food insecurity in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana was **launched** this month in Nairobi, Kenya. Training for government officials on how to make immediate use of the Africa Regional Data Cube took place shortly after the launch. The Data Cube assists decision-makers in answering the question of what crops are growing where, the answer to which in turn will assist with planning and research around agriculture and water access also. The new tool represents a collaboration between public and private entities, including the Office of the Deputy President of Kenya and Amazon Web Services.



**Collaborating for progress** Steven Ramage signs the collaborative agreement on the Africa Regional Data Cube on behalf of the Global Earth Observation community.

The Hewlett Foundation has issued a **call for proposals** from West and East African organisations who work in policy research and aim to support government decision-makers in using evidence in policy-making. The call is part of the Hewlett Foundation's long-term evidence-informed policy-making strategy, the goal of which is to see evidence systematically used in government decision-making.

In an **interesting piece** on the **Arukah Network** website, co-leader Elizabeth Wainwright explains how networks can function to support well-being amongst their members. She argues that looking to nature, we see that the flow of 'nutrients' – information, support, connections – becomes essential for the sustainability of a network.

Universities who consider the future seriously would be "foolish to ignore the potential for collaboration" within Africa, according to Professor Maggie Dallman, the Vice-President (International) of the Imperial College of London. **A recent post** on the university's website highlights the fascinating collaborations happening in multiple African countries currently.

Birth to Twenty Plus is a longitudinal study based on a cohort of South African children living in the Johannesburg-Soweto region undertaken by a **consortium of institutions**. The study – following these children and their families from birth – has recently found that **only 1% of these children do not experience violence** before the age of 18.

## Evidence events

**23-25 May: [African Unity for Renaissance Conference](#), Pretoria, South Africa.**

**22-29 June: [AfriGEOSS Week](#), Libreville, Gabon.**

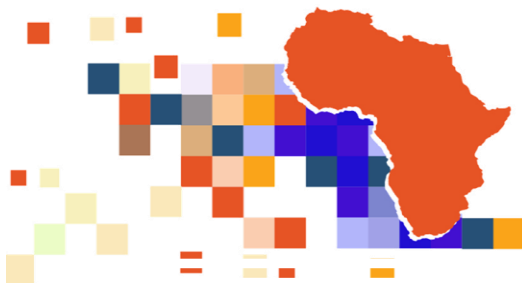
**25 June: [EvalCafé](#), Cape Town, Durban & Pretoria, South Africa.**

**25-28 September: [EVIDENCE 2018](#), Pretoria, South Africa.**

## Announcements

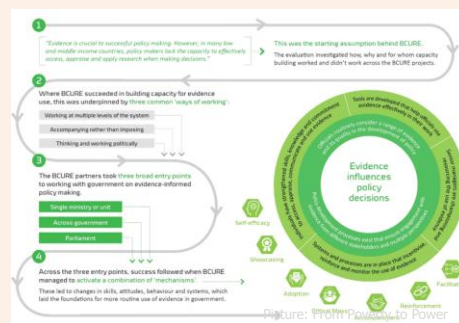
- The AEN **annual member survey** closes on 31 May; complete it stand the chance to win an EVIDENCE 2018 registration fee waiver.
- **Express your interest** to attend the International Network for Government Science Advice conference.
- Position available for a **Policy Associate** with the United Nations Foundation.
- **Call for nominations** for Health Systems Global societal awards.

This month's blog is written by Natalie Tannous of the AEN secretariat and focusses on the ways that **EVIDENCE 2018 will be innovative**. View all blog posts **online** and submit your AEN blog **here**.



### Does building capacity really help evidence-use?

In a guest post on Duncan Green's *From Poverty to Power* blog, authors Isabel Vogel and Mel Punton **reflect on the lessons** gleaned from their evaluation of the Department for International Development programme, Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence. They conclude that effective evidence-informed decision-making depends on the establishment of institutional reforms supported by long-term collaboration. Other lessons shared in the post by the evaluators include that training initiatives were most successful when used in the conjunction with other activities, such as extended mentoring support, that targeted different levels of the policy ecosystem. The authors point to the fact that capacity-enhancing initiatives should accompany change, not enforce it.



**Useful capacity-building** Summary of the lessons learnt by the evaluation team of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence programme.

### INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

A team from the **International Center for Nonviolent Conflict** explored factors associated with mass killings: where governments take lethal violent action against at least 1000 non-combatant civilians. The findings of the investigation were published recently in a **report available online** and highlight the need for foreign allies and local dissidents to work together to achieve the safest outcome.

Political agency and support is key for evidence-informed decision-making efforts to be successful in development contexts. In a new paper by researchers at the University of Birmingham, **a new method of identifying positive cases of political agency is discussed**. The methodology can be applied to a number of different contexts – for example, it may also help to identify unexpected cases of progress on service delivery.

A **report** was recently published by a research team from the University of South Hampton **on the investment and funding trends of pneumonia research**. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the team argues that their analyses of the evidence base around how resources are allocated provide a departure point for further multi-disciplinary stakeholder discussions that should include decision-makers and funders, among others.

### Evidence from academia

**Gough et al:** 'Knowledge commons for evidence use as a democratic and practice good'

**Menzies Munthe-Kaas et al:** 'Effectiveness of interventions to reduce homelessness: a systematic review and meta-analysis'

**Rickinson et al:** 'Understanding evidence use within education policy: a policy narrative perspective'

**Schlauer et al:** 'The political use of evidence and its contribution to democratic discourse'

In a **thought-provoking piece** in *The Conversation*, Anne Toomey of Pace University argues that researchers in settings like Bolivia must be wary of perpetuating scientific colonialism in the dissemination of their research findings. The author challenges our understanding of research impact, stating that impact can happen long before results appear in a journal article.