

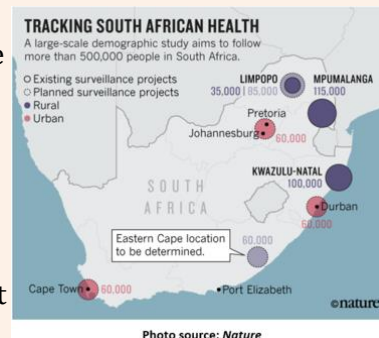
Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || November 2016

All set for Africa's largest demographic studies project

The South African government has **announced** that it will expand the country's existing demographic studies to create a project that will be the largest of its kind in Africa.

This initiative is part of the **South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap** - a strategic intervention that provide research infrastructure across the entire public research system. The initiative was announced by the South African **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** and will focus on tracking the health, income and educational statistics of around 1% of South Africa's population. DST estimates that it will put 264 million rand (US\$19 million) into the demographic project over the next five years, which will eventually cover at least half a million people. It has secured funding for the project's first three years; the rest will need to be allocated for in future government budgets.



On 1 November 2016 the Speaker of the Parliament of Malawi, Hon. Richard Msowoya, launched the **Guidelines for Evidence Use in Policy-Making** that were jointly produced with the **African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)**. These guidelines provide, but are not limited to, an institutional framework for promoting an increased focus on evidence use, skills and tips in understanding the complexity of decision-making.

Sarah Wild **discusses** what South Africa's next White Paper on science and technology would look like since the first one was published in 1996. Twenty years has passed and South Africa has made strides in training professionals but innovation lags behind. According to Minister Naledi Pandor the next draft paper, expected in 2017, will drive research and development.

AFIDEP's technical staff completed an intensive five-day **training** in systematic reviews which took place on 7-11 November 2016 at the Westwood Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The training was facilitated by experts from the Africa Evidence Network. The training was part of technical capacity-building for AFIDEP's researchers in knowledge translation.

The University of Johannesburg led programme to Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) has produced **video** to share key lessons learned in the three-year mentoring programme to supporting evidence uptake to South African and Malawi government departments. Some key lessons include the necessity for mentorships to be needs-led.

Evidence events

5 December: What drives the use of evidence within government? [Webinar](#), 17:30-19:00 (GMT)

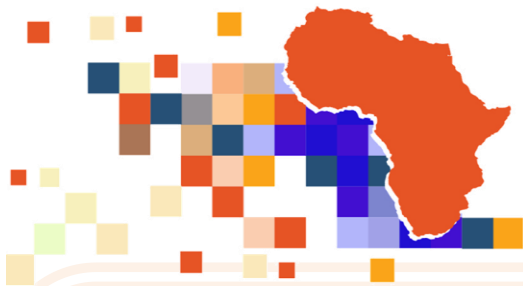
8-9 December: DST Science [Forum](#) in Pretoria, South Africa

27-31 March: 8th AfrEA International [Conference](#) 2017 in Kampala, Uganda

Announcements

- **Call for abstracts** for the 8th AfrEA International Conference 2017
- **Vacancies:** Two Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Specialist post at CLEAR-AA at the University of the Witwatersrand

The latest **AEN blog** by Ms Meg Wiggins from the Institute of Education at University College London reflects on the Evidence 2016 training workshop she led. The workshop focused on government evaluations, which led to useful discussions about different measures that can be taken to improve the quality and output of evaluations. Submit your AEN blog [here](#).



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New framework, report and guidelines on enhancing the use of evidence within government departments

The [Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#) has published [three resources](#) which are a series of documents that have been developed as part of the Vaka Yiko Consortium project, supporting the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in South Africa as it embeds and enhances an evidence-informed approach to policy-making. This series of documents includes a [paper](#) outlining an approach to help government departments diagnose their evidence-informed approach to policy; a [report](#) that synthesises the team's observations on evidence-informed policy-making in DEA; and a set of [guidelines](#) that underpin an evidence-informed approach to policy-making in DEA. All these documents are based on the findings of five studies that were conducted as part of Vaka Yiko's support to DEA between 2014 and 2016.



INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

The latest [Oxfam policy and practice blog](#) summarises some of the discussions and insights from a session on evaluation for adaptive management at the recent [European Evaluation Society](#) conference. One of the insights emerged from the conference is that comprehensive evaluations are seen credible and have the potential to influence policy.

A new [video](#) by the [International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications \(INASP\)](#), showcases how long-term collaboration with over 50 publishers and library consortia in over 20 countries is making a difference to research and development. This initiative is key to solving local development issues by making published research information accessible.

'The Politics of Evidence: From Evidence based policy to the Good governance' is a new [open access](#) book by Prof. Justin Parkhurst. This book considers the political nature of decision-making and how this influences the ways in which evidence is used (or misused) within political areas. In addition, the book provides new insights into the nature of political bias with regards to evidence and critically considers what an 'improved' use of evidence would look like from a policy-making perspective.

Evidence from academia

[Brandon et al](#): 'Twitter predicts citation rates of ecological research'

[Jones et al](#): 'Women and babies are dying but not of Ebola: the effect of the Ebola virus epidemic on the availability, uptake and outcome of maternal and newborn health services in Sierra Leone'

[Robbins et al](#): 'Publish, Don't Perish!: Strategies for getting published in peer reviewed journals'

An [opinion piece](#) by Louise Ball of [ODI](#) is featured [On Think Tanks](#) which looks at four questions to assess the impact of research communications. It is suggested that research can have an impact if it targets the right people. Often research communication statistics only cover downloads and retweets which provide a fraction of the impact, whilst how someone uses the research is not captured. To solve the latter, the opinion piece provides four questions that act as a guideline to assess the impact of a research communication plan.