



**AFRICA  
EVIDENCE  
NETWORK**

*Only together can evidence-  
informed decision-making  
become reality.*

NEWSLETTER || October 2019

### Promoting evidence-use in policy

The [Africa Evidence Network](#) was a partner of the [Evidence Policy Action Forum](#), which took place from 17 to 18 October in Cotonou, Benin, which is the largest in-country gathering of researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners to promote the use of evidence in decision-making. The theme was 'utilising evidence to improve food security and nutrition in urban areas'. It is an initiative of the Evidence Policy Action Network, which aims to support evidence-use in policy design and execution. The Forum brought together participants from various backgrounds with the aim of improving the use of evidence by policy-makers and practitioners in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition.



**Evidence Policy Action Forum** Frejus Thoto, the Director of ACED and EPA Network Coordinator welcomes the delegates to the Forum

Photo: EPA Network

Kevin Marsh, the senior advisor for the [African Academy of Sciences](#), gave a great [keynote speech](#) on the potential of Africa and African science at the [Connecting Minds Africa Conference](#) that aimed at forging connections amongst young scholars across disciplines and countries in Africa. A hundred and fifty researchers from over 20 African countries were represented at the event.

The [Mo Ibrahim Foundation](#) launched the first comprehensive [Africa Governance Report](#) that aims to explore the government environments, which are necessary to advance the sustainable development goals and Agenda 2063. The report also assists in finding out if there has been any advancement in particular sectors and what data gaps exist.

[Electronic Information for Libraries](#) guest blogger Dr Solomon Mekonnen Tekle commemorates the implementation of a [national open access policy](#) for higher education institutions by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Ethiopia. The policy aims to increase the quality of research through open science practices and open access to publications.

At the [10th Oppenheimer Research Conference](#) in Midrand, South African Minister of Forestry and Fisheries and Environmental Affairs Barbara Creecy emphasised the importance of environmental literacy and [evidence-based policy-making](#). An environmentally literate society is comprised of motivated, skilled and understanding people who make responsible choices, she said.

### Putting the spotlight on...

#### ...a new member!

Kouadjo San Boris Bediakon joined the AEN from the [Jean Lorougnon Guédé University](#) in Côte d'Ivoire to participate "in this great network on African realities [of] evidence". Welcome – we look forward to hearing your experiences Kouadjo! Want to spotlight you or your organisation? [Let us know](#) and you could be featured.

#### Evidence events

21-25 October: [7th Biennial SAMEA Conference](#), Gauteng, South Africa.

22-26 October: [Uganda Management Institute 2nd International Conference](#), Kampala, Uganda.

28-31 October: [Role of Science in Assisting Regional Development Workshop](#), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

4-6 December: [Science Forum](#), Pretoria, South Africa.

On the [blog](#) now: Members from the [West African Network of Emerging Leaders](#) write about advancing the translation of health policy and system evidence into practice. View all blog posts [online](#) and use the Network to share your view – submit your AEN blog [here](#).

### Informing decisions using qualitative evidence

The **QESymposium** was organised by Fiocruz Brasilia, the Centre for Informed Health Choices, and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health with a focus on using qualitative evidence to inform decisions in the age of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A number of **Africa Evidence Network** members participated at this Symposium: Dr John Lavis chaired a plenary session where the first inaugural winner of the Africa Evidence Leadership Award, Velia Manyonga, shared her experiences of using qualitative evidence in policy in Malawi. Dr Okwen Mbah chaired an exciting session on conceptual approaches to qualitative evidence and SDGs, and Harsha Dayal and Dr Laurenz Langer discussed ways of strengthening collaborations and capacity to produce robust and relevant qualitative evidence.



**Getting qualitative** Delegates at a plenary session during the symposium on the use of qualitative evidence to inform decisions in the SDG era

Photo: QESymposium

### INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

In a recent **International Initiative for Impact Evaluation** blog, **Birte Snilstveit**, **Jennifer Stevenson**, and **Laurenz Langer** write about an **experiment they designed** in an attempt to combine timely rapid systematic reviews to inform decisions with developing capacity to provide policy-relevant synthesis of high-quality research, motivated by the growth of citizen science in other fields.

The senior manager for **Centre for Effective Services**, **Majella McCloskey**, spoke to Ruth Stewart, the director for the **Africa Centre for Evidence** in South Africa about the **use of evidence** in addressing significant social and political challenges in South Africa. One of the four approaches used by the **Centre** to advance evidence-use in Africa is to support evidence communities.

**Sarah Lucas** from the **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation** argues that African think tanks can assist in strengthening the **use of data and evidence** in government. In her blog post, she cites the recent **Africa Evidence Week** where African organisations that promote a culture of using evidence in decision-making participated in different ways. They achieve this culture, argues Lucas, by focussing on enhancing the capacity for evidence-use or strengthening the ongoing collaboration amongst academics and policy-makers.

### Evidence from academia

**Fooks et al:** 'Corporations' use and misuse of evidence to influence health policy: a case study of sugar-sweetened beverage taxation'

**Mapanga et al:** 'Strategies to strengthen the provision of mental health care at the primary care setting: An Evidence Map'

**Metz et al:** 'Co-creative approaches to knowledge production: what next for bridging the research to practice gap?'

### Announcements

- **Vacancies available** at Duke University, Trinity College: apply now!
- **Funding opportunity** for research on multimorbidity in low and middle-income countries.
- Call for applications for the **Africa Postdoctoral Training Initiative** open now.
- Congratulations to **JPAL** co-founders on being awarded the **Nobel Prize**.