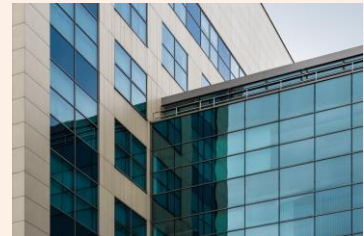




### Improving evidence-informed policy-making by navigating unclear authorities

**Donald Houessou** and **Fréjus Thoto**, in a recent [blog](#), highlight the significance of having clear authorities and acknowledging the game of power in ensuring that evidence is used in informing policies. Using Benin as a case study, they identify three key categories of power relationships that can make institutionalising evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM) challenging. These include: 1) the apparent decision-makers who act like they have the decision power, but they do not have; 2) the constrained decision-makers who hold power but cannot use it; and 3) the unwilling decision-makers who hold the power of decisions but do not want to use it.



**Who holds the power?**  
Navigating unclear authorities builds trust among stakeholders.

Photo: Actions pour l'Environnement et le Développement Durable (ACED)

The [Africa Evidence Network](#) secretariat is currently updating its online database of available resources, tools, guides, and opportunities for capacity-building in evidence-informed decision-making in Africa. Send your resources to Charity Chisoro on [charityc@uj.ac.za](mailto:charityc@uj.ac.za). In sending us this information, you are agreeing that we can share the information within our online database.

**Share** your stories of success in evidence-informed decision-making with the Africa Evidence Network secretariat. For example: where evidence made a difference in policy design, resulted in positive results after policy implementation, or an individual/organisation grew in strength or developed because of evidence uptake.

The [Partnership for African Social and Governance Research](#) (PASGR) has published its [2019 annual report](#). The report shares highlights from the organisation's year that was, including the enrolment of 700 academics, researchers and practitioners in its Master of Research and Public Policy programme since 2016.

**Author** Naliaka Odera from the Mawazo Institute writes about [training for researchers about how to communicate their work](#). The virtual training session, co-hosted by the [Mawazo Institute](#) and [The Conversation Africa](#), welcomed 24 female African researchers on science communication and Op-Ed writing.

### Putting the spotlight on...

... **a new member!** Tochukwu Nwachukwu joined the AEN because he has always been a strong advocate for rigorous analysis of policy options in order to improve the quality of decision-making. He sees the AEN as an opportunity to collaborate with like-minded people engaged in promoting evidence-informed decision-making in the continent.

Want to spotlight yourself or your organisation? **Let us know** and you could be featured.

### Mark your calendars

23-25 September: [EVIDENCE 2020 ONLINE](#), online.

19-20 October: [HighEdWeb 2020 Annual Conference](#), online.

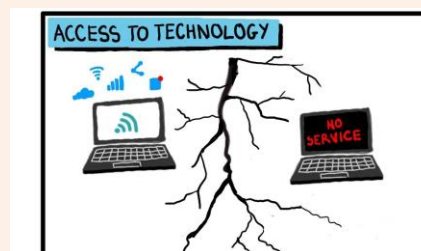
7-8 December: [Coronavirus webinar](#), online.

This month's blog post [explores the role of the researcher at the nexus of decision-making during COVID-19](#) by Daniela Rodriguez and colleagues.

View all blog posts [online](#) and use the Network to share your work – submit your AEN blog [here](#).

## An inequitable knowledge system in the COVID-19 era

In his latest [blog post](#) on [From Poverty to Power](#), [Jonathan Harle](#) argues that the knowledge system is inequitable which creates a challenge to be addressed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has prompted us to have a change in mindset when looking at “whose knowledge counts.” He points out that all forms of knowledge should be valued to promote inclusivity at all levels. Harle argues for moving away from merely gathering information, knowledge, and evidence for the sake of gathering information. Instead, he writes, we should aim to use all data collected to benefit society, transitioning from theory to practice. He argues also for the questioning of existing norms about what is categorised as excellent research.



### Access to digital knowledge and tools

Going digital creates new exclusions, since it is much harder to participate when your connectivity is poor or comes at greater personal expense.

Photo: From Poverty to Power platform

## INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

In a recent article for [Policy Canada Politiques](#), [Sarah Doyle](#) and colleagues write about the ‘cracks’ in social and economic policy that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed. The country’s best chance of recovery claim the authors is for [an investment in evidence to understand](#) how well – or not – different recovery approaches are working.

In an [LSE Impact Blog](#) post, Dr Rachel Middlemass shares [four ways social sciences, humanities, arts for people and the economy \(SHAPE\) subjects can inform decisions about the post-pandemic world](#). By “ensuring that the voices of communities affected by an issue are represented in discussions of it”, social sciences have much scope for informing decisions about issues like COVID-19.

Last month, US drug developer Novavax – funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – enrolled 2665 healthy adults and approximately 240 medically stable, HIV-positive adults “[to generate evidence in the African context on how well \[experimental COVID-19\] vaccines work](#) in settings such as our own”, says principle investigator Professor Shabir Madhi. The mid-stage study of the experimental COVID-19 vaccine is taking place at Witwatersrand University (Wits) in South Africa.

## Hot off the press

[Farley-Ripple et al](#): ‘Mapping the community: use of research evidence in policy and practice’

[Konno et al](#): ‘The CEEDER database of evidence reviews: An open-access evidence service for researchers and decision-makers’

[Serruya et al](#): ‘EviSIP: using evidence to change practice through mentorship – an innovative experience for reproductive health in the Latin American and Caribbean regions’

[Vélez et al](#): ‘A framework for explaining the role of values in health policy decision-making in Latin America: a critical interpretive synthesis’

## Opportunities

- Applications for a [short online course](#) close on 30 September.
- Apply for the [Fulbright](#) South African research scholarship by 1 October.
- [Apply](#) for the 2021-2023 cohort of CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars by 30 October.