



ANNUAL MEMBER SURVEY OF THE AFRICA EVIDENCE NETWORK

SEPTEMBER
2018





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to all our Africa Evidence Network members who took time to respond to our survey and to encourage others to do so.

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Suggested citation: Tannous N & Nduku P. (2018). Annual member survey of the Africa Evidence Network. Johannesburg: Africa Centre for Evidence as secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network, University of Johannesburg.



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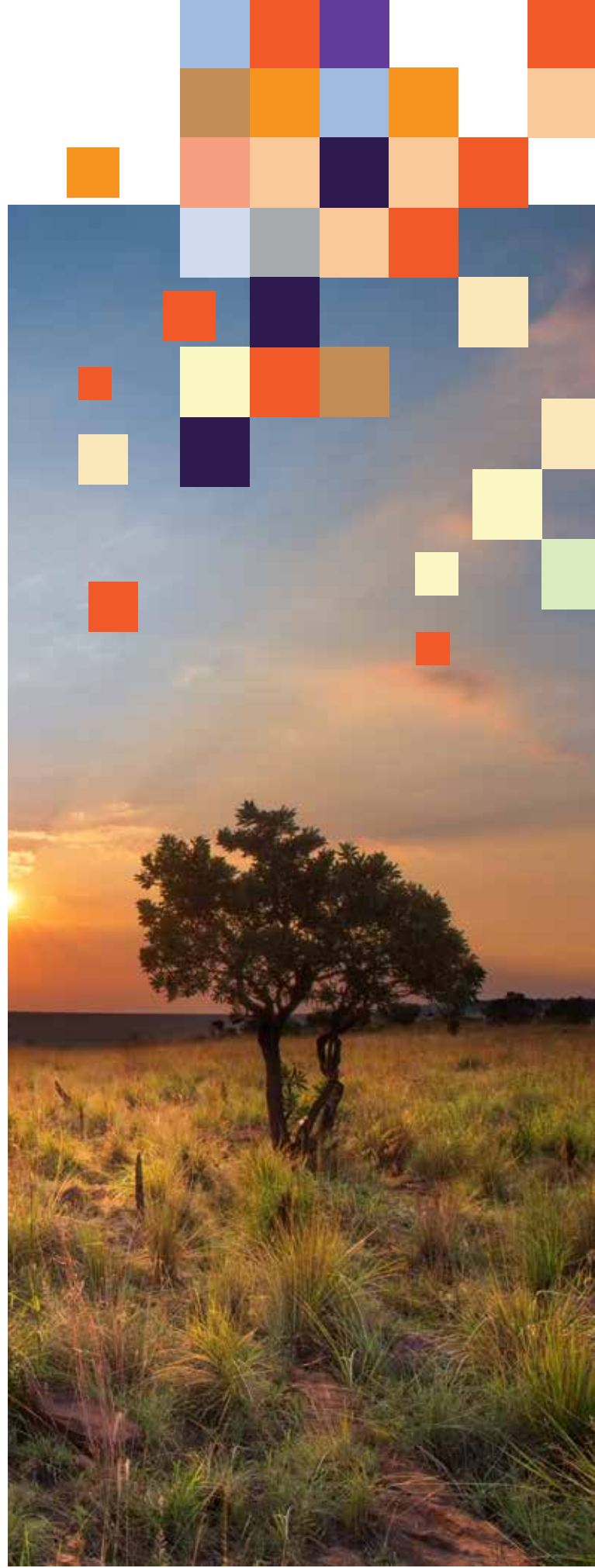
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Africa Evidence Network is a voluntary network of individuals working and interested in evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) in Africa from across sectors and roles.

Annually, the Network invites its members to participate in a survey, that seeks to address the following primary questions: how is the AEN membership changing, what is valuable to members for the AEN to offer, what difference has the AEN made to members' work, and what should the AEN do differently? The survey is designed, administered and written up by researchers at the Africa Centre for Evidence, the current secretariat to the AEN.

The findings from the 2018 survey indicate that the AEN membership that responded to the survey finds great value in being part of the AEN. Specifically, the Network is valued for the role it plays in connecting people working in Africa to one another and in sharing relevant information about EIDM in Africa. This year's survey also shares a few testimonies from members about the connections being part of the Network has allowed them to make. Members would like to see the AEN undertaking more capacity-building activities on the continent in the form of face-to-face workshops that allow members to share real-world examples of EIDM in action.

The findings of this report have been shared with the current AEN governance structures, namely the advisory and reference groups, for their input on the high-level findings. The feedback from these groups, as well as the findings from the survey respondents, will be fed into discussions among the secretariat of the AEN to work out how to best integrate members' inputs into a revised 2019-2020 strategy and workplan.

1. THE STORY OF THE AFRICA EVIDENCE NETWORK

In December 2012, the Campbell Collaboration and International Initiative for Impact Evaluations held a mini-colloquium on Systematic Reviews in International Development in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Attending the mini-colloquium were a number of delegates from Africa who, to varying extents, had backgrounds centred on research synthesis methodologies and evidence-use. Included among these delegates were members of the South African and Ugandan governments, as well as academics from universities in Egypt and South Africa. The current Africa Evidence Network (AEN) chairperson Professor Ruth Stewart was among these delegates. Surprised by the variety and commitment of the African contingent with expertise in evidence-use and production present at an event in Bangladesh, the 23 people from Africa decided to set time aside during the colloquium to meet with one another. Following a lively discussion about the necessity to stay in touch upon returning to Africa after the mini-colloquium, this group agreed that a mechanism for connecting people involved in research synthesis and evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) in Africa should be developed to share their experiences and ideas around EIDM.

In December 2012, the Africa Evidence Network (AEN) was born when it circulated its first official communication to these founding members operating at first with no official funding. In 2014 – aided by funding received from the UK's Department for International Development for a project entitled Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence based at the University of Johannesburg – the AEN employed a coordinator to regularly send out communication to the Network's growing membership. After three years' worth of funding to run the Network, 2017 saw the AEN once more in a position to think creatively about how it would continue to connect people in Africa engaged in EIDM.

Then from 2017, the Hewlett Foundation funded the AEN for an 18-month period to pilot new activities, bolster the support structure team for the AEN, and become a truly member-driven network. Now – in 2018 – the AEN finds itself once more with the challenge of creatively devising its survival, now with over 1571 members expressing a need for its services, a sense of value at belonging, and excitement about the work the Network is doing. And still, at the heart of it all is the AEN's aim to facilitate connections between EIDM practitioners in Africa with one another and the wider EIDM field.

1.1. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance of the AEN has grown as the Network has (figure 1). The founding chairperson was Professor Ruth Stewart in 2012 who volunteered to chair and share communications in what was then a group of 23 like-minded individuals.

As the Network and the demand for more information grew, the AEN gained a coordinator in 2013. The person in this role was responsible for carrying out the predominantly information-sharing activities of the Network at that stage. The role grew to include member liaison and social media engagement responsibilities. Then in 2017, a senior manager role was created to take the ever-growing Network into a more strategic direction, and to coordinate the increasing variety of activities that the Network was undertaking – including capacity-sharing activities, information-sharing, and match-making. Importantly, it was recognised that this role within the Network would give the AEN the best chance of developing a sustainable operating plan as it continues to grow. Then in 2018, the AEN formally commissioned an advisory group to act as a sounding board in making changes as the Network grows. The AEN reference group is a pilot group whose feedback also feeds into the growth of the AEN.

1.2. WHAT THE AEN AIMS TO ACHIEVE

The activities undertaken by the AEN are all focussed on facilitating a connection between EIDM practitioners in Africa with one another, and with the world of EIDM internationally. The reason for this focus on enabling connection between people is because we believe that only through relationships, does the Network have the potential to change norms in the use of evidence for the benefit of the region. The AEN achieves this aim by becoming a mechanism through which producers and users of evidence can connect, communicate, and collaborate. Through the AEN's various services, the Network aims to promote EIDM in Africa, enhance knowledge-sharing, support EIDM capacity-sharing, and foster a sense of community of people in Africa passionate about EIDM.

PROMOTING EIDM IN AFRICA

Hosting a biennial conference centred on EIDM in Africa is the main tool the AEN currently uses to promote EIDM in Africa. The events draw evidence users and producers from around the globe, and especially from across Africa, to facilitate engagement with the latest developments in EIDM but more importantly with one another. The conferences also support the submission of EIDM in Africa landscape maps that is continuously growing the AEN's knowledge of the different landscapes and stakeholders of EIDM in Africa.

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

The network actively shares knowledge about initiatives, events, activities, research, funding calls, and job openings in the EIDM field both from within Africa and across the globe in a newsletter that is emailed monthly to members.

In addition to this newsletter, the network shares blog posts throughout the month featuring stories that can include the work of AEN members as well as work from organisations external to the Network. The knowledge-sharing role of the AEN takes a variety of forms and includes active social media pages on LinkedIn and Twitter.

CAPACITY-SHARING

From its inception, the AEN has attempted to support capacity-building in EIDM by making freely available resources on research synthesis and EIDM from capacity-building programmes across the globe. The website also hosts a database of over 400 capacity-building resources. All members of the AEN are able to access these resources for their EIDM work, as well as welcomed to submit content regarding their own capacity-building work to the AEN for inclusion in the database.

FOSTERING A COMMUNITY OF EIDM PRACTICE

Underlying all the activities of the AEN is the support and growth of a community of practice in EIDM in Africa. Activities such as the biennial conference, member database, and social media pages are all designed to give members opportunities to network with one another and connect with individuals and organisations active in the EIDM field.

1.3. GROWTH OF MEMBERSHIP

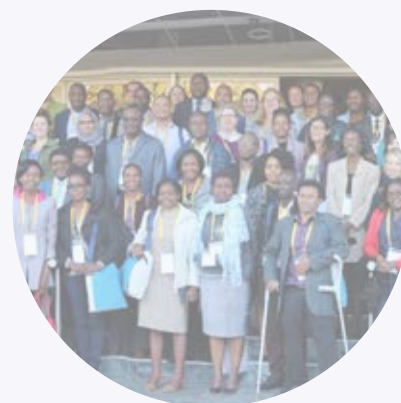
The membership of the AEN has grown from 23 members in 2012 to 1571 members at the time of writing in 2018 (figure 2).

1.4. MOVING FORWARD

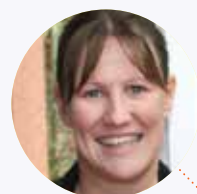
The development of the AEN survey report is part of the Network's aim to develop the most suitable plan for making the Network self-sustaining. The survey report was undertaken as part of the member consultation which was supported by the current funder of the AEN – the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The findings of this report represent part of the process of the AEN secretariat planning creatively how to sustain the AEN and its activities into the future. In addition to the survey, the AEN secretariat selected as sample of members who responded to the survey to interview to gain a deeper understanding of how the AEN has impacted their work.

A number of issues are covered by the survey, captured in: 1) how the information for this survey was gathered, 2) a description of who the respondents were, 3) questions about the service offering, roles and values, governance, member-interaction, and ways to improve the AEN, 4) a social network analysis, and 5) what the survey says about what kind of network the members want the AEN to be. In close consultation with the reference and advisory groups of the AEN, the secretariat hopes to come up with innovative ideas for sustaining the work of the Network with the insights gained from this survey.

FIGURE 1



A timeline of governance of the AEN



The founding chairperson, Professor Sterwart, volunteers to take on the role of AEN chairperson after the meeting in Dhaka and coordinates first communication.

2012



With funding, the AEN develops a coordinator role responsible for carrying out the activities of the Network.

2013



A senior manager role is created within the AEN, with the responsibility of ensuring strategic oversight and growth within the Network.

2017



The AEN appoints an advisory group whose insight is sought on key developments of the Network. The group is made up of representatives from government, academia and the private sector both within and outside of Africa. The AEN also pilots the use of a reference group made up of 14 AEN members.

2018

FIGURE 2

A timeline of the growth of the AEN membership

23 members

2012



104 members

2013



354 members

2014

563 members

2015



722 members

2016

1295 members

2017

1571 members

2018



2. HOW WE GATHERED THIS INFORMATION

2.1. DESIGNING THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey was designed by a researcher based at the AEN secretariat. The survey questions were informed by two sources: the 2016 survey and the proposal for funding submitted by the AEN to the Hewlett Foundation¹. Drafts of the survey questions were shared with senior researchers at the AEN secretariat, and questions refined and restructured in light of their comments before being uploaded into a Google form. Google forms were used as the delivery method for the survey because of the ease with which survey could be shared using this platform, and the level of automation inherent in the platform.

2.2. ADMINISTERING THE SURVEY

The member consultation framework scheduled the survey to be administered for a period of one month; this was extended to two months to increase the response rate to the survey. AEN members were emailed the survey to complete, with a number of reminders having been sent throughout the two-month period that the survey was open for. The AEN secretariat team was also requested to send targeted personal emails to the AEN members within their professional network to remind colleagues to complete the survey. A final incentive to increase the number of responses to the survey was to offer an EVIDENCE 2018 registration fee waiver. The survey was also tweeted from the AEN Twitter account and mentioned in two monthly newsletters. When the two-month period was over, the Google form was prohibited from accepting any more responses.

2.3. RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

The total number of responses at the end of the two-month period was 180 AEN members. One empty survey response was removed from the dataset and 11 duplicate responses were also removed. The analysis of the survey responses included descriptive statistics for respondent demographics, thematic analysis between questions, and a social network analysis to better understand the connections between members.

2.4. MEMBER INTERVIEWS

Members for interviewing were selectively sampled from the pool of survey respondents. A sampling frame that was developed and as far as possible, members representative of different African regions, sectors and genders were approached for interviews. Forty survey respondents were contacted by email to arrange and invited to participate in a telephonic interview. A total of seven respondents were interviewed either via Skype or telephone. In instances where respondents were unable to participate via telephone or Skype, interview schedules were sent to respondents to complete. Themes common between the survey responses and interview data have been integrated into the current report. A few testimonies of respondents have also been incorporated into the current report.

2.5. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 2016 SURVEY

For the 2018 survey, the categories of questions were expanded. For instance, the capacity-building and collaboration with others sections were introduced in the 2018 survey but were absent from the 2016 survey. Most of the new revised categories of questions were the result of drawing from the Hewlett funding proposal. Other categories of the 2016 survey were collapsed into existing sections of questions. For example, membership participation was absorbed into the current service offering section of the 2018 survey.

2.6. LIMITATIONS

By far, the most inhibiting limitation of this survey was the many open-ended questions that meant the survey took on average 30 minutes to complete. This could partly explain the hesitation of respondents to participate in the survey in the first instance. Additionally, it could also account for lack of responses in some of the questions. Another limitation was the low response rate of just over 10% of the total membership of the AEN. The response rate is lower than the 2016 survey response rate. It remains a struggle to get the bulk of the membership to interact with the secretariat through the AEN member survey. In planned reflection activities, this is something the secretariat should revise going forward to ensure a better response rate and more complete answers. Two other limitations included that the survey would only have been available to members with an internet connection and access to a computer as it was based only online. Due to the nature of the Network itself however – in terms of the target audience, who the members are, and its services being mostly online – this may not have been as much of an issue as the aforementioned limitations. Finally, the survey was designed in English only. The language barrier is apparent in some responses, rendering them incomplete and not useable.

¹ A full copy of the survey questions is available on request: ace@uj.ac.za.

3. WHO RESPONDED TO OUR SURVEY?

Respondents were asked to describe themselves in terms of the sectors in which their primary job role was based (academia, government, civil society, private sector or other), their gender, and country of residence. The different sectors to which respondents belong can be seen in figure 3, with the most dominant sector being academia (n=59). Many respondents used the other option to describe their sectors;

table 1 below details how these responses have been coded. The majority of respondents were male (figure 4), and most respondents (n=158) were from Africa (figure 5, figure 6). The non-African respondents were predominantly from within academia but included an international funder, an international governmental organisation representative, and an independent consultant.

TABLE 1: HOW 'OTHER' RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION OF SECTOR WERE CODED

SECTOR	OTHER RESPONSES PROVIDED
Private sector	Humanitarian; non-profit tech company; funder; real estate; foundation; consultant
Academia	principal investigator/researcher; regional instruction; research company; research; health policy and systems researcher
Civil society	international non-governmental organisation; head boss at public hospital; humanitarian
Government	Parliament
Other	International governmental organisation; evaluation network
Not provided includes the following identifiers provided by members	Otherwise not stated; MINUSMA
Additional sector category introduced based on members' responses	Think tank

FIGURE 3: DIFFERENT SECTORS THAT MEMBERS WORK IN

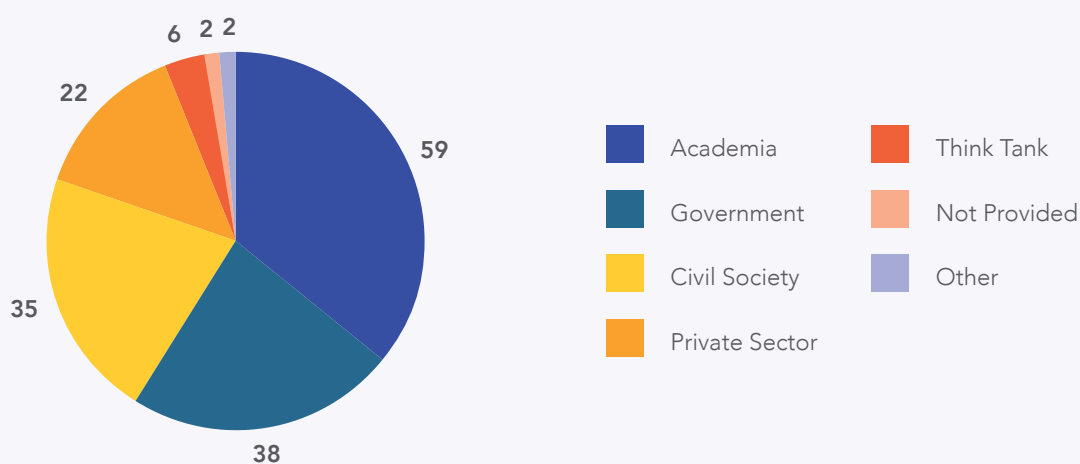


FIGURE 4: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS

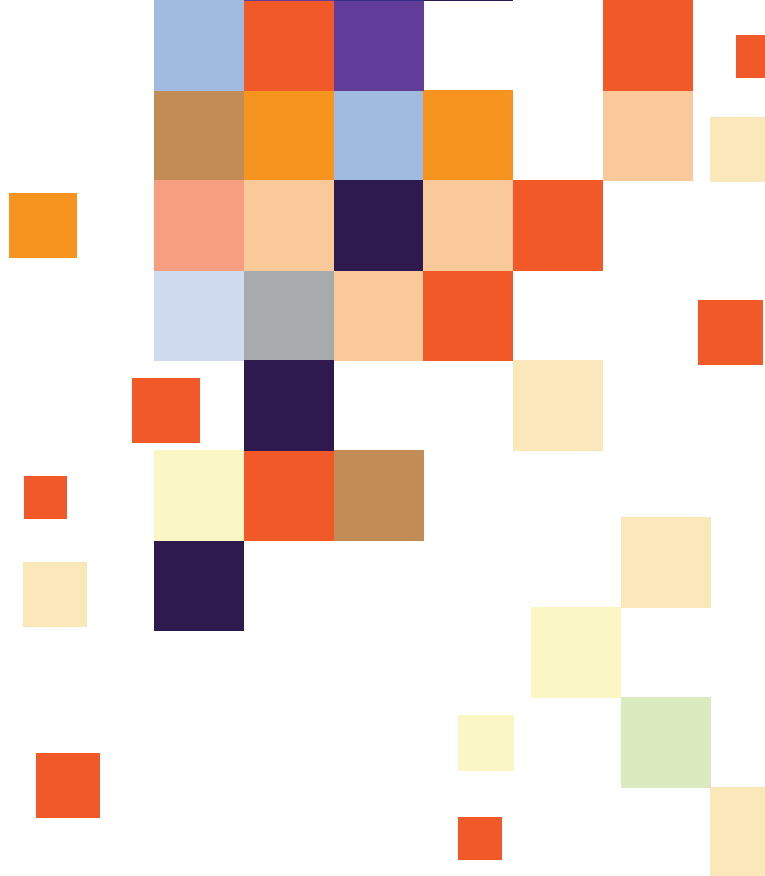
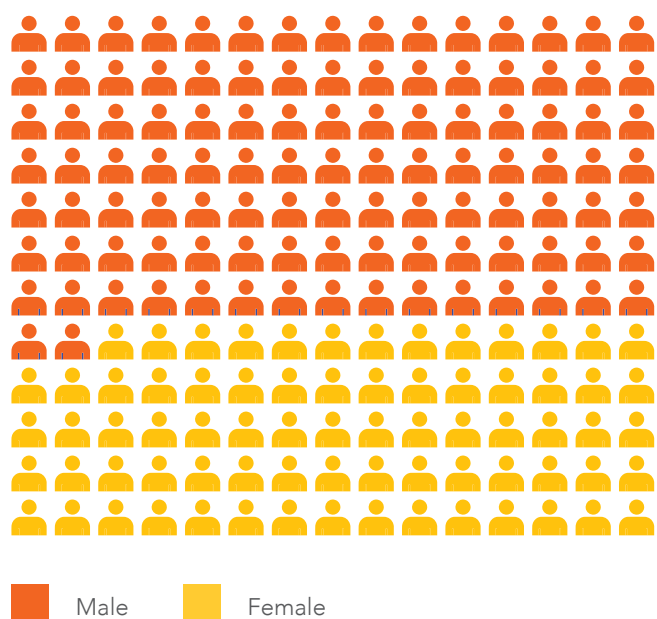


FIGURE 5: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS

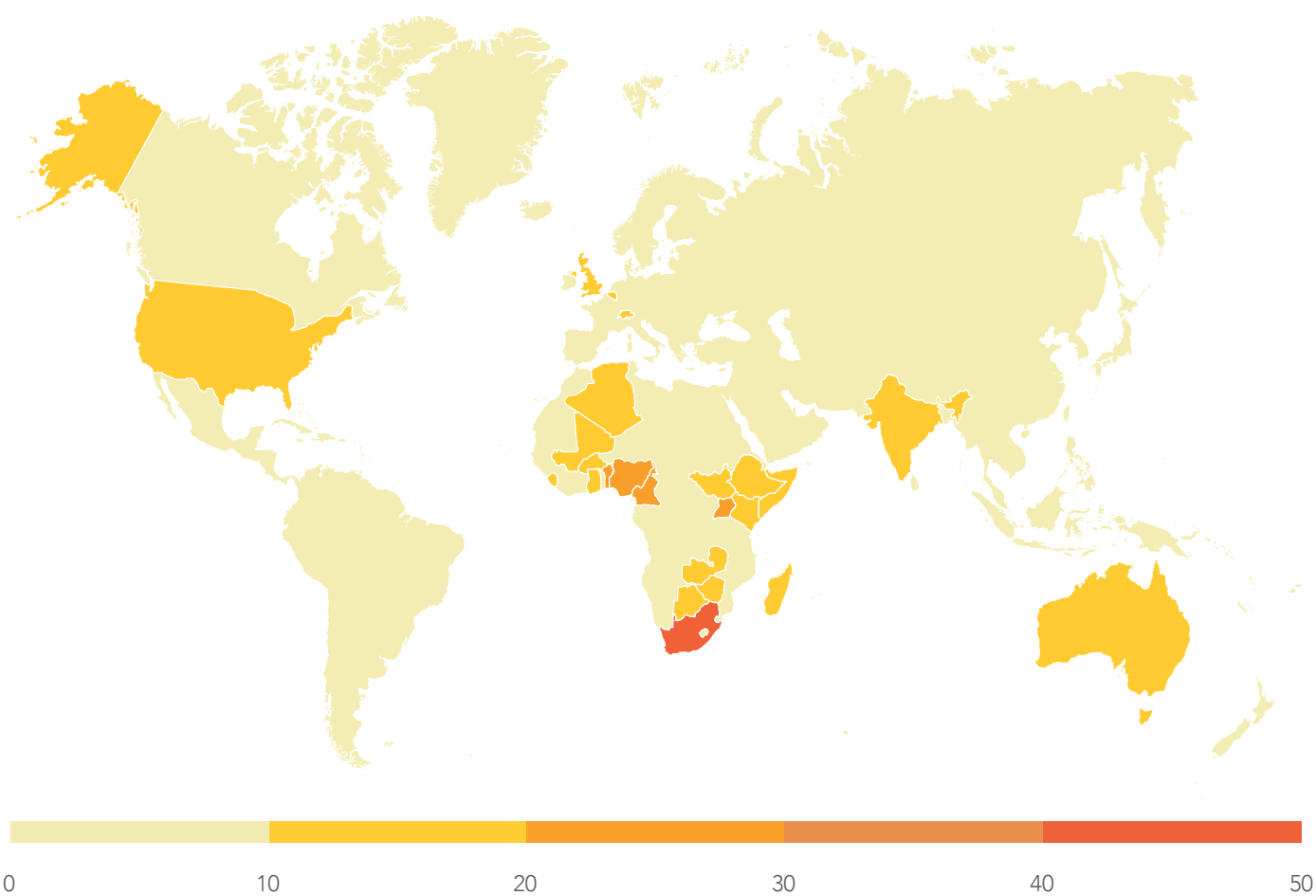
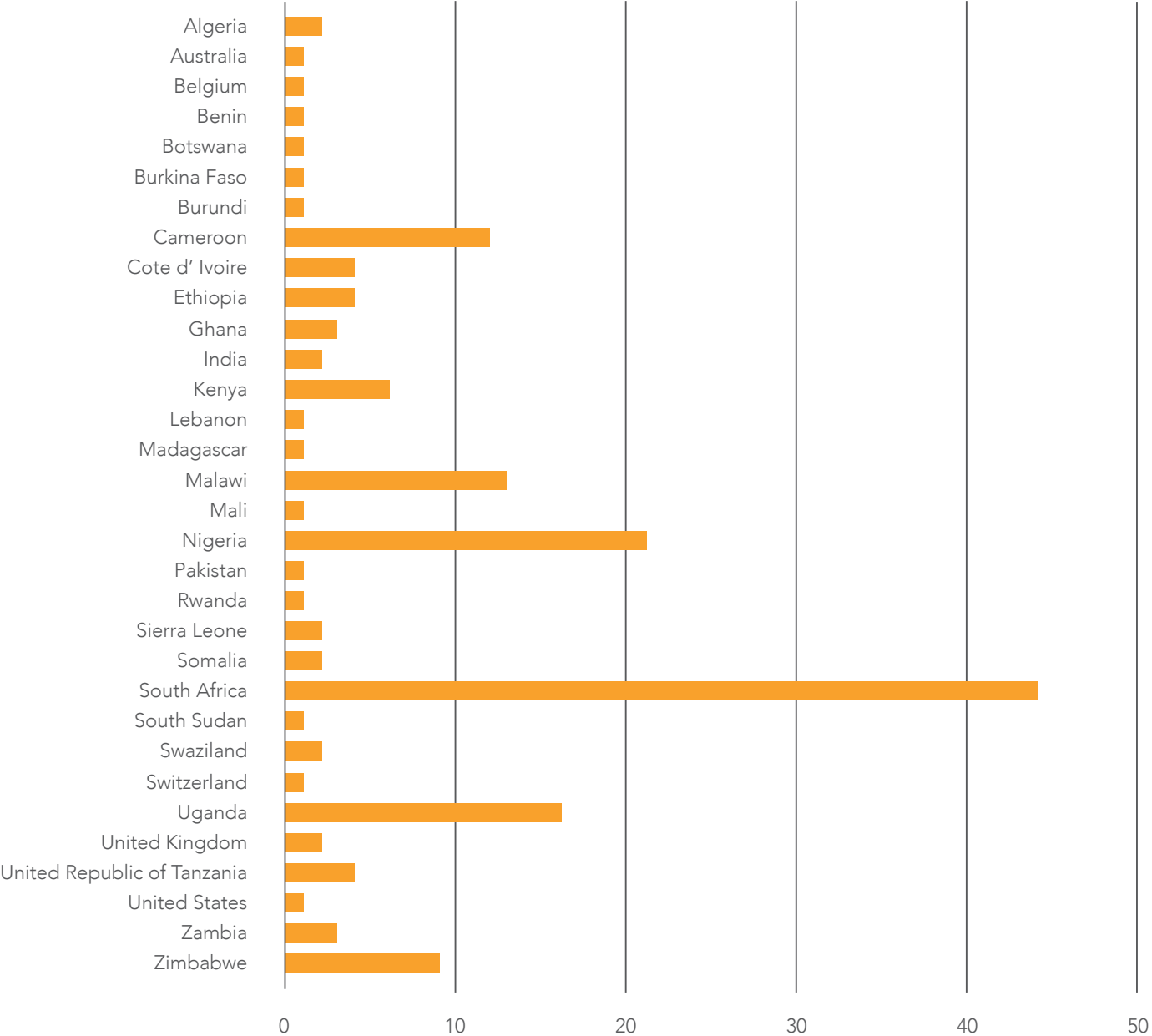


FIGURE 6: COUNTRY DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



4. WHAT DID RESPONDENTS SAY ABOUT THE AEN?

The following section presents the per-question results of the member survey. There are eight sections:

- Current services
- Potential services
- Capacity-building
- Roles of and collaboration by the AEN
- Value of membership and values the AEN represents
- Governance and leadership
- Network-member interaction
- Ways to continue improving
- Social network analysis

4.1. CURRENT SERVICES

DIFFICULTIES USING THE AEN SERVICES

To understand better the current way in which members of the Network use the services the AEN offers, members were asked to comment on whether they had experienced any difficulties using the services of the offered by the AEN. Most respondents (n=135) reported not having experienced any challenges using the AEN services (figure 7); eleven percent of respondents did not answer the question.

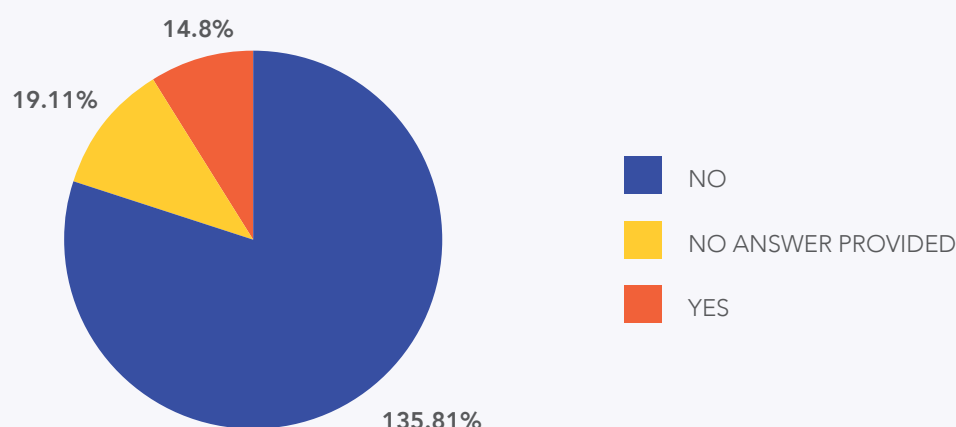
Of those respondents who had experienced difficulties (n=14), some of the difficulties listed are as follows:

- Internet interruption when out of the capital,
- The newsletter is inconsistently delivered to my work address,
- Not sure how to contribute evidence or write a blog on behalf of my organisation and sub-sector (adolescent health),
- I sometimes have difficulties loading the website; some of the resources are behind pay walls,
- Membership registration delayed,
- AEN events – mostly timing and fees to attend events,
- The website was 'hacked' at some point so could not access the website content,
- Abstract submission dashboard was not user-friendly, and
- Limited access to internet.

EXTENT OF ENGAGEMENT WITH AEN SERVICES

AEN members were asked to both describe how they engaged in the services offered by the AEN and whether they felt they were active or passive members of the AEN. Of the 160 respondents who answered this question, the majority of respondents (n=114) said that they had motivated colleagues to join the network. The least number of respondents (n=14) had contributed to the newsletter or written a blog (n=18). Most respondents had engaged in a single activity (figure 8), with 64 respondents having participated in more than one activity of the AEN.

FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO'VE EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTIES USING THE AEN SERVICES



Members were asked to indicate how actively or passively they felt they engaged with the current service offering of the Network. Sixty-eight respondents described themselves as active members and 59 respondents described themselves as passive members (figure 9). The explanations that respondents provided for their level of activity within the Network varied greatly, and often overlapped between those who described themselves as passive or active. For example, for some members who described themselves as active, reading the newsletter and sharing it within their professional network was presented as a motivation for this choice, while the very same motivation was used by other members who described themselves as passive members. There is no consistent motivation of passive and active within the survey respondents.

There are some common themes that emerged in how respondents described their passivity. These themes included that respondents 1) only read the newsletter but do not attend AEN events, and 2) were new members and so not yet aware of how they could participate in the Network. Where respondents provided free-text responses, these were coded for different themes. Themes that arose from these answers included respondents describing:

- Themselves as active if they are part of the reference or advisory groups;
- Their activity or passivity in participation as fluctuating depending on their needs; and
- Themselves as currently passive as new members to the Network, albeit hopeful of more active participation soon.

FIGURE 8: MEMBER ENGAGEMENT WITH AEN ACTIVITIES

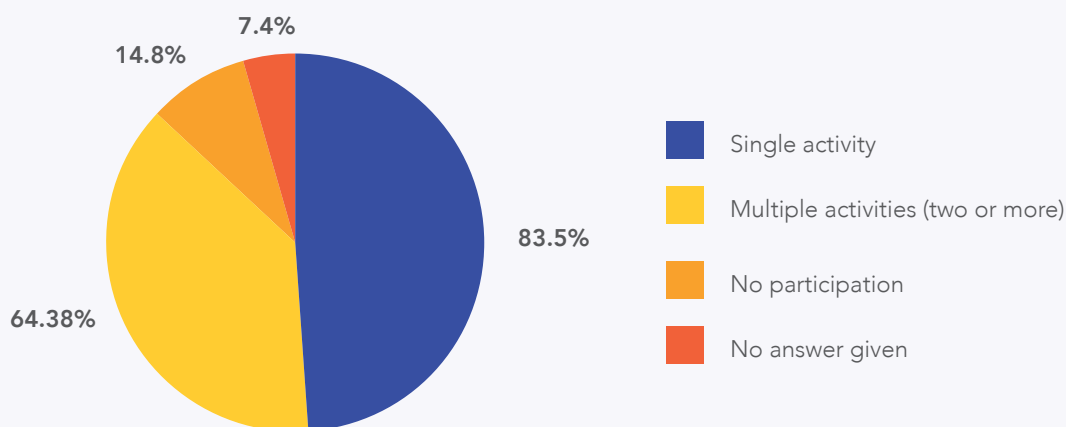
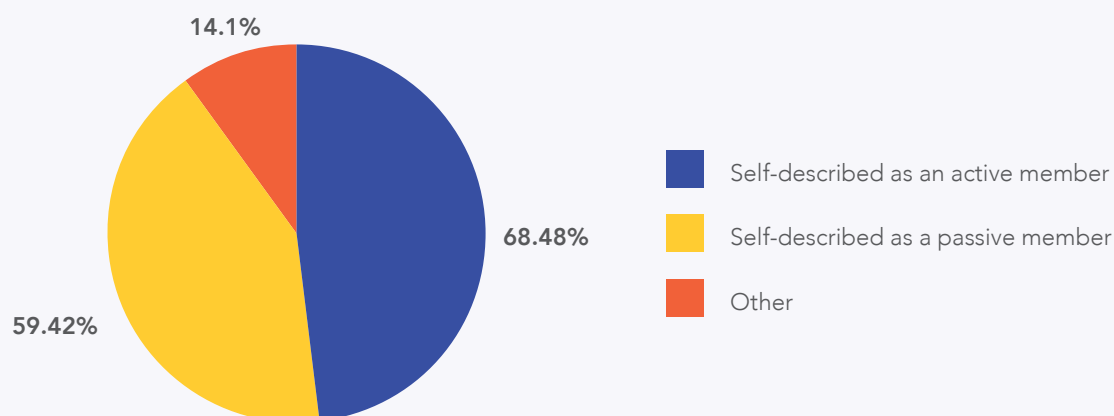


FIGURE 9: LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN AEN ACTIVITIES AMONG MEMBERS



FREQUENCY OF ENGAGEMENT WITH AEN SERVICES

The frequency with which AEN members use the current services of the AEN can be seen in figure 10, with the most frequently accessed service of the AEN being the newsletter. If the use (sometimes used or often used) and non-use (never and unaware) of the same services are compared (figure 11), we can see that the top four services made use of by the AEN members who responded to the survey are the website, newsletter, capacity-building resources, and resource database.

These four are followed closely by the blog and Twitter. The services that are used the least by respondents are LinkedIn, YouTube, and AEN events.

When asked what specifically made the most-frequently engaged with services useful to members, respondents to the survey listed a number of factors; figure 12 shows a word cloud developed from the themes that emerged from respondents' comments.

FIGURE 10: WHAT ARE THE MOST-USED AEN SERVICES?

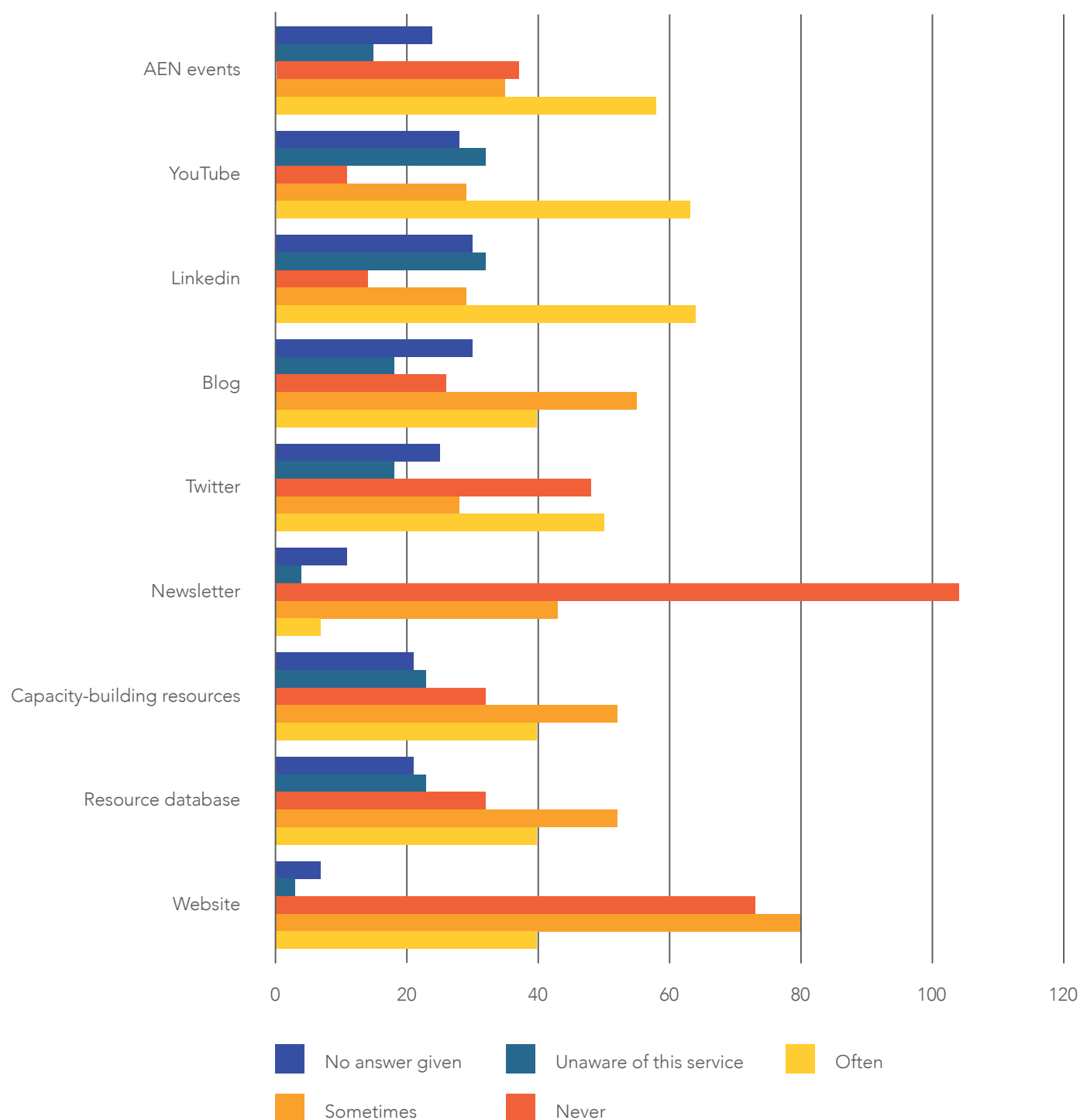


FIGURE 11: USE OR NON-USE OF AEN SERVICES BY RESPONDENTS

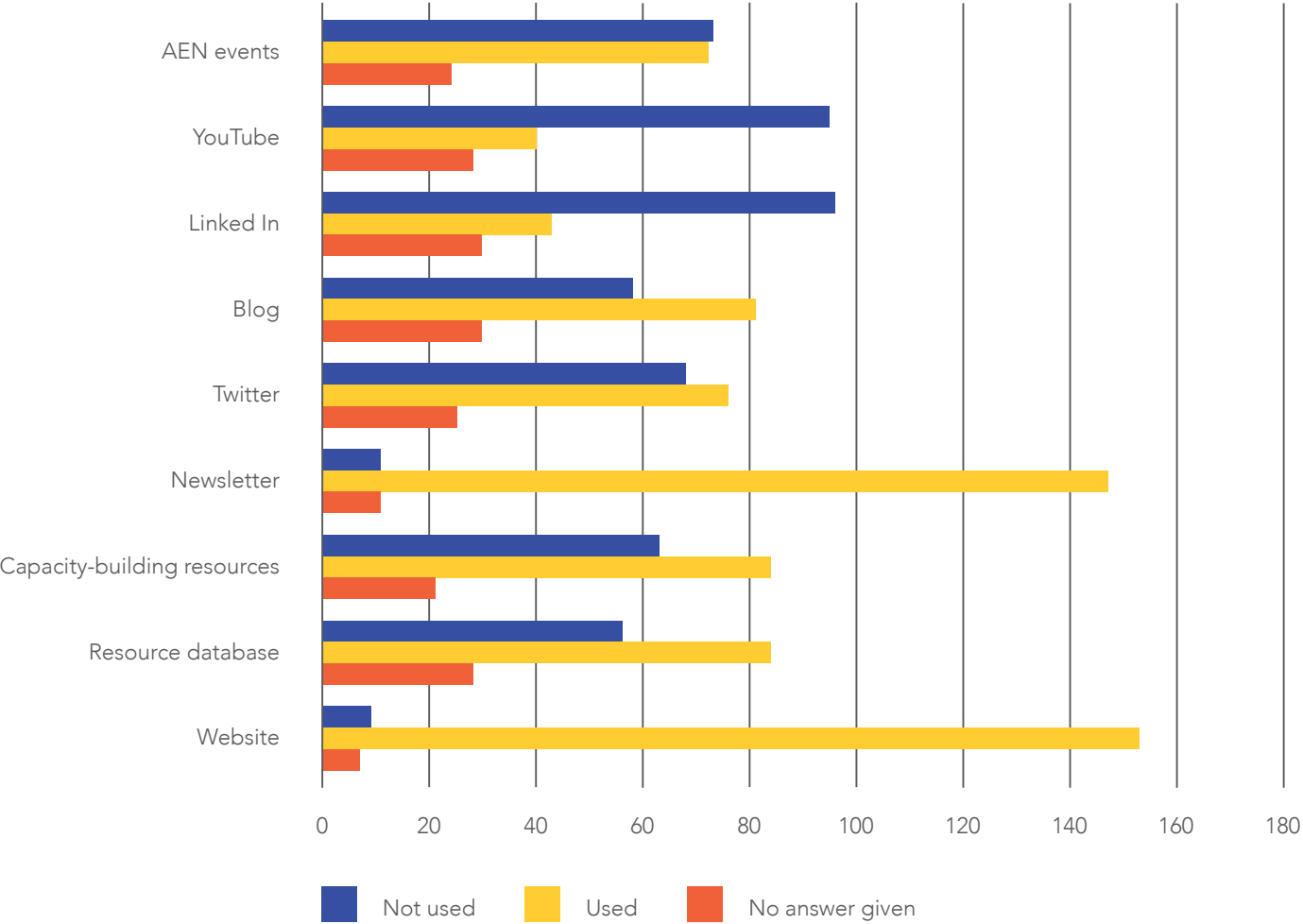


FIGURE 12: WHAT MAKES THE AEN SERVICES USEFUL TO MEMBERS?



WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES FOR THE AEN TO OFFER?

When asked what the core services for the AEN to offer were, most respondents answered that capacity-sharing activities were the most important service to sustain the usefulness of the Network (n=48, figure 13).

A large proportion of respondents' answers did not fit into one of the provided categories; a sample of these are shown in table 2 and include some respondents saying that the service offering of the AEN is sufficient in its current form.

FIGURE 13: CORE SERVICES FOR THE AEN TO RETAIN USEFULNESS

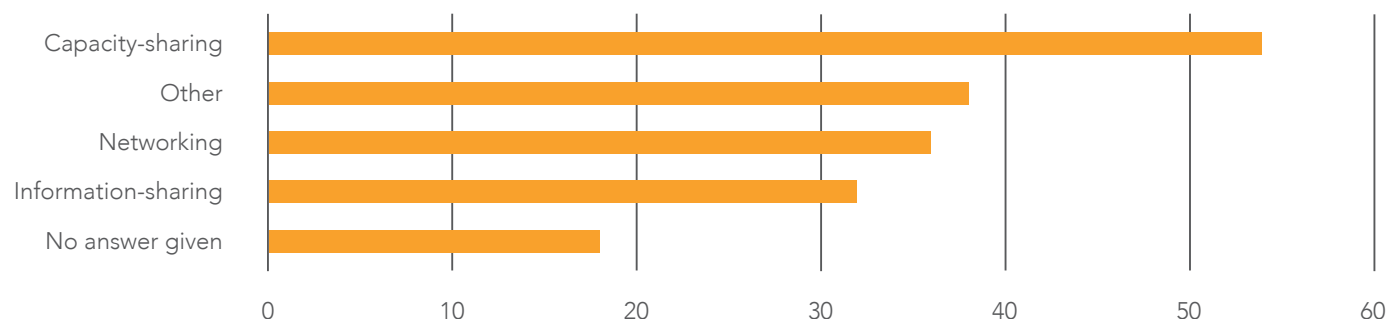


TABLE 2: RESPONSES CODED AS 'OTHER' IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION 'TO SUSTAIN THE AEN IN THE LONG TERM, WHAT IN YOUR OPINION WOULD BE THE CORE SERVICES OF THE AEN?'

Identifying strategic goals and get funding. Evaluate the impact and share with policy makers
Make sure country programs are very active. Evidence sharing forums are done at country-level
Production of knowledge resources and establish more learning forum and platforms. see how to work more closely with governments, research institution and think tanks to get important message at policy making tables
Open more branches worldwide
Involve members in thematic activities
An adequately staffed secretariat with expertise and leadership to both drive and be responsive to the network
Funding to expand AEN work across the continent
Facebook and Instagram can be easily accessible by new members or prospective members
Try to publish also in French language as we are not all good in English. We need some research documents in French
Provision of research evidence and making them accessible.
Sharing tips on what works best to disseminate audience to different target audiences. Biennial conferences. Tracking evidence use
Measuring the sense of AEN members, maintain a niche for AEN members and ongoing AEN community discussions
Decentralise it and also have a national body
Continuing Professional Development service to members
Current core services are okay
Research
Ensure the continuous availability of relevant resources
Continue as now but perhaps greater engagement with international stakeholders?
Constant engagement with members
More active membership - that allows local and global spaces for members to network and collaborate, and even hosts collaboration events
Evidence generation, evidence synthesis, evidence transfer and evidence implementation. Also, more advocacy on use of evidence for policy in Africa
Evidence building learning organisations

4.2. POTENTIAL SERVICES

POTENTIALLY USEFUL ADDITIONAL SERVICES

AEN members were asked to provide their feedback about what other services that the AEN is not currently offering that would be useful. Most respondents (n=69) felt that the AEN's service offering is currently sufficient; they indicated no services that would be useful to them that the AEN is currently not offering (figure 14).

Other categories of services that came out prominently in the responses were certified training (n=29), publishing services (n=14), and mentoring programmes (n=9) respectively.

Within certified training, respondents described a variety of different features they wished training through the AEN would have, as indicated in the quotes below:

- Building capacity to conduct and produce evidence synthesis,
- Webinars,
- Short courses on EIDM,
- Credited courses related to evidence gathering and its use,
- Research methods training for early career African academics,
- Free online training especially in ME planning, storytelling impact,
- In future we may think of short courses/certified professional course in evidence, and
- Online learning courses

FIGURE 14: ADDITIONAL SERVICES SUGGESTED BY RESPONDENTS



For mentoring programmes, members' desires focused on match-making between experienced and young researchers and practitioners interested in EIDM, as reflected below in the quotes:

- Peer-learning activities
- Mentoring programs could be done using network members
- You could provide mentorship services for budding professionals
- A match-making service that matches early career professionals with experienced EIDM practitioners (both in evidence generation and utilization)

The publishing services that respondents requested centred on making research available in the form of a journal. Factsheets and bibliographies were also suggested as potential mechanisms through which to publish the research produced by members of the AEN:

- Publication of sectoral evaluation results of various member countries
- Display archives for papers and articles
- Scientific journal
- Current research by AEN members maybe in the form of a quarterly publication
- Bibliography of evaluation reports and papers
- Quarterly factsheets
- Africa Evidence Network journal

PILOTED ACTIVITIES

As part of its new funding remit until March 2019, the AEN has piloted some new activities, including a reference group, the Africa Evidence Leadership Award, and advisory group distinct from the advisory group of the AEN secretariat. Members were asked to what extent they were aware of these piloted activities (figure 15) and to what extent they had participated in any of them (figure 16). Sixty-percent (n=100) of the respondents were aware of all the listed activities, with approximately nine-percent (n=13) stating they were only aware of the award, while only 27% of respondents had participated in any of the activities. The award was the activity that most respondents participated in.

FIGURE 15: AWARENESS OF PILOTED ACTIVITIES

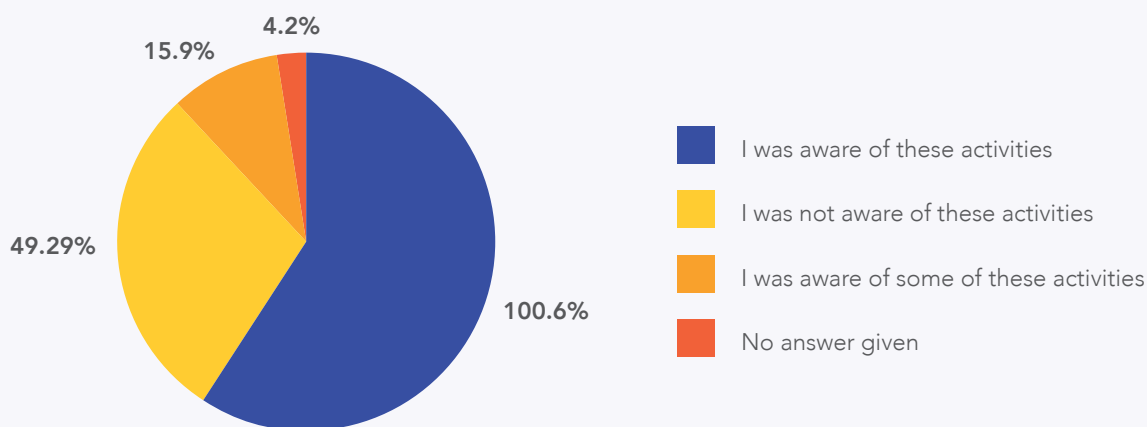
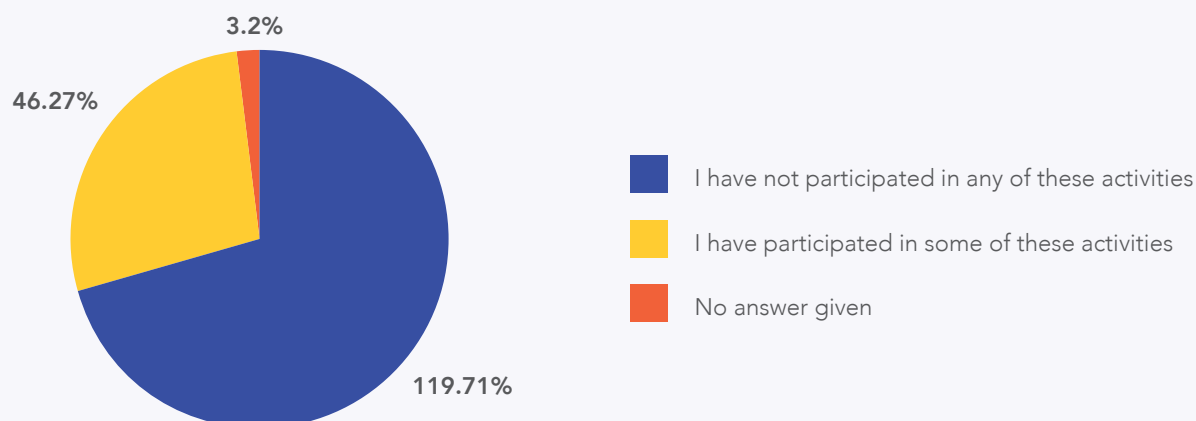


FIGURE 16: PARTICIPATION IN PILOTED ACTIVITIES



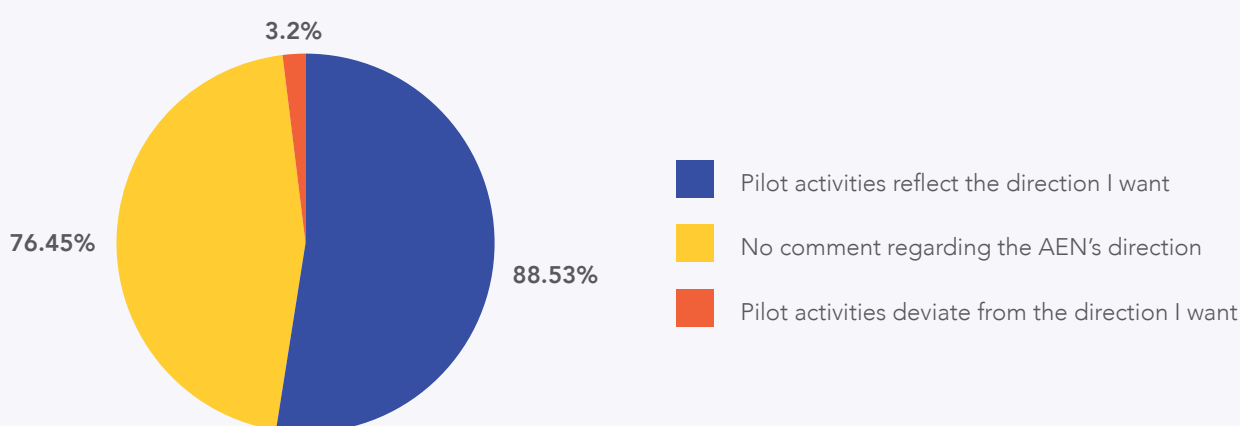
AEN DIRECTION

The AEN works very hard to be a member-driven network. As such, members were asked whether the activities piloted in 2018 (reference group, advisory group, and Africa Evidence Leadership Award) reflected or deviated from the direction they wanted to see the AEN moving in as it grew. Figure 17 illustrates that just over half of respondents felt the piloted activities were moving the AEN in a direction they wanted to see. Forty-five percent of respondents either did not leave a response to this question or felt indifferent to the direction of the AEN and the piloted activities. A few respondents did not feel that the piloted activities moved the AEN in the right direction.

The below quotes reflect some of the concerns that members raised regarding the future direction of the AEN and its relation to the services piloted in 2018.

- [The direction] deviates from my direction because it's [the piloted services] not yet in my country; Nigeria.
- Well, the activities much reflect M&E as [the] main focus though it deviate[s] by not offering enough career opportunities to active members.
- It [the AEN] is on track but I wish it gives more chances to individuals at the base of the career – start-up or young career professionals.
- These activities are appropriate for knowledge-sharing and-building. I, however, need to actively engage with the activities to see how effective they are. Caution is that the participants should not be the usual suspects: give enthusiastic and willing new entrants in the field room to make their contribution.
- They [piloted activities] drive the agenda for evidence-use; they serve as a forum for technical reflection and networking. More of such services are needed to boost evidence use across the continent.

FIGURE 17: DIRECTION OF THE AEN



4.3. CAPACITY-BUILDING

Part of the Network's mission is to support the capacity-enhancement of research producers and users in Africa to engage with evidence-informed decision-making. A few questions in the survey explored what kind of capacity-building members would like to see the AEN support.

LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATION

Members were asked how likely they would be to participate in capacity-building workshops, an open access member database or a mentoring programme as three potential capacity-building activities that the AEN might be able to facilitate.

Figure 18 shows that the majority of members would participate in capacity-building workshops and an open access member database, with fewer respondents open to participating in a mentoring programme were the AEN to offer these.

The way in which members would participate in these activities was not asked and would have to be teased out in further consultations. For example, this report cannot comment on whether members would prefer to organise and host their own workshops that are publicised across Network platforms rather than attending a capacity-building workshops hosted by other AEN members or the AEN secretariat.

FIGURE 18: LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATION IN CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

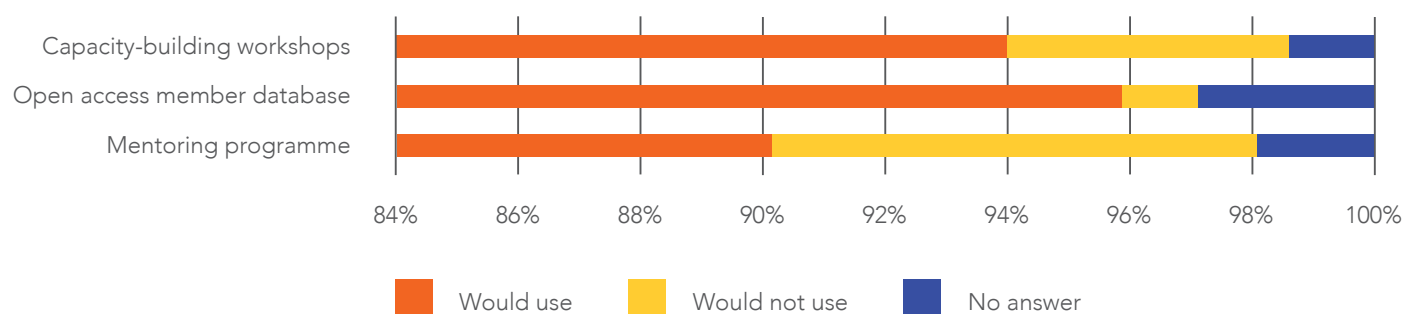
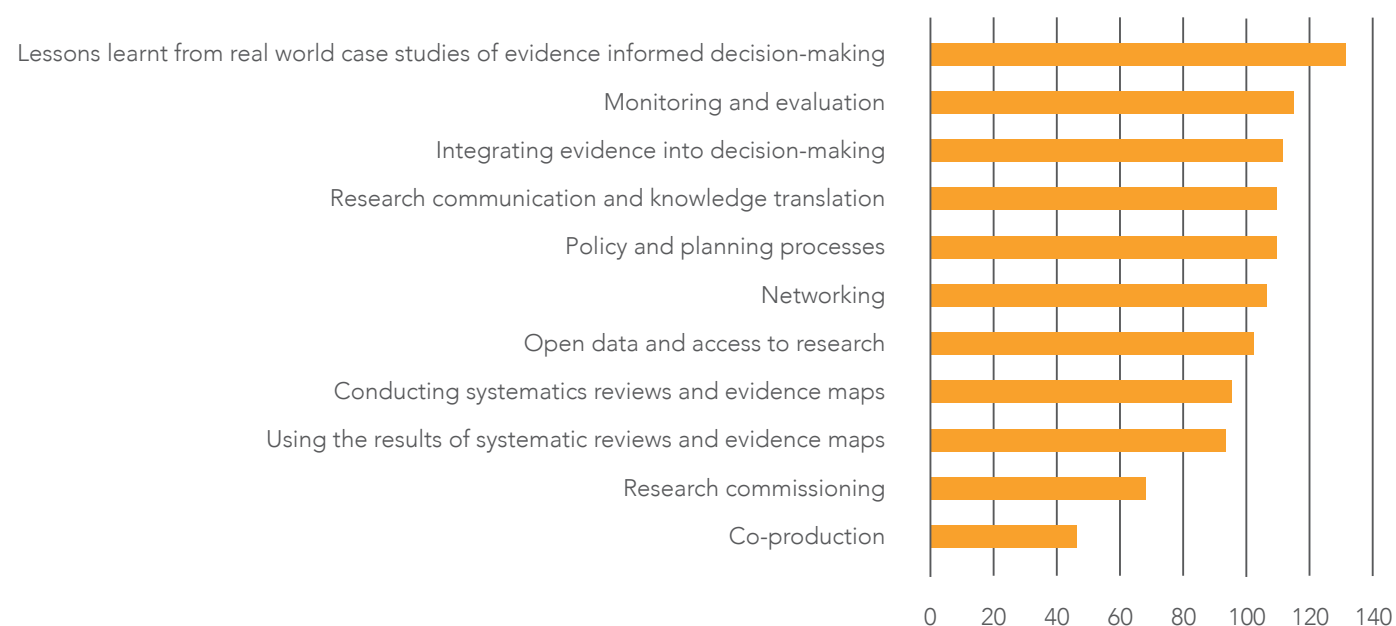


FIGURE 19: CAPACITY-BUILDING CONTENT MEMBERS WANT



CONTENT AND FORMAT OF CAPACITY-BUILDING

Members of the AEN were asked what capacity-building content would be most useful to them as part of the Evidence 2018 workshop planning. Respondents to the survey are most interested in learning more about the lessons learnt from real-world case studies of evidence-informed decision-making (n=132), while the respondents were least interested in learning more about co-production (n=47) (figure 19). Box 1 indicates how the AEN secretariat responded to these preferences and actioned them within the programme of Evidence 2018. The format that respondents would prefer these capacity-building activities in is as face-to-face workshops. The financial and logistic feasibility of offering face-to-face workshops has also not been considered by this report; this could be something for the secretariat to explore in future consultations.

4.4. ROLES OF AND COLLABORATION BY THE AEN

The way in which members experience how the AEN relates to other evidence-informed decision-making initiatives happening on the continent is important to the sustainability of the Network.

Members should feel that the AEN has a unique role to play and that its existence enhances the activities of others in Africa. As such, the survey questioned members as to the role they perceive the AEN as fulfilling, and the extent to which they see the AEN collaborating with other initiatives happening in Africa.

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL ROLES OF THE AEN

Most respondents felt that the AEN plays a networking role of connecting people and or organisations together (figure 20). Other roles that emerged from members' responses to this question included the AEN as playing a role in enhancing the skills or knowledge of members (n=22), sharing information (n=22), or developing a sense of community among members within Africa (n=8).

To better understand the kind of Network members need the AEN to be, the survey included a question about what roles the AEN should be fulfilling that it currently is not. A total of 58 respondents did not provide an answer to this question (figure 21), most respondents (n=20) felt that there is no role the AEN should be fulfilling currently that it is not fulfilling.

BOX 1: AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE AEN IS BEING RESPONSIVE TO MEMBERS' FEEDBACK IN 2018

Recognising that Evidence 2018 currently represents the AEN secretariat's biggest opportunity to support members' desires for capacity-building, part of the annual member survey was used to determine what workshops should be offered during biennial event. Responses (figure 19) were shared with the organising committee of Evidence 2018 well in advance of designing the conference programme to ensure that the workshops members would find most valuable were included in the programme. Below highlighted in red are a few examples of workshops being offered at Evidence 2018 by the AEN that reflect some of the members' capacity-building priorities. This is small one way in which the AEN secretariat is attempting to respond to members' needs.

TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2018 (PRE-CONGRESS DAY)

07h00 - 17h00	Registration			
09h00 – 10h30	Crystal Room 1A Part 1: Evidence Value Chain: Showcasing the dimensions of evidence from projects undertaken by the Research Use and Impact Assessment (RIA) Unit of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)	Onyx Room 2A Strengthening evidence use in Uganda: what's working and what's next (3ie)	Amber I Room 3A Part 1: Citizen Evidence and Evidence-informed Policy-Making: Whose Knowledge Counts? (IDRC)	Amethyst Room 4A Workshop: Introduction to Evidence synthesis and systematic reviews (Prof. Sandy Oliver, EPPI)
10h30 - 11h00	Networking Break			
11h00 – 12h30	Crystal Room 1B Part 2: Evidence Value Chain: Showcasing the dimensions of evidence from projects undertaken by the Research Use and Impact Assessment (RIA) Unit of the Human Sciences Research Council	Onyx Room 2B Invisibility and evidence: Time's up for evidence that doesn't consider gendered drivers of inequality (3ie)	Amber I Room 3B Part 2: Citizen Evidence and Evidence-informed Policy-Making: Whose Knowledge Counts?	Amethyst Room 4B Workshop: How Can Research Organizations More Effectively Transfer Research Knowledge to Decision Makers? - Workshop on Finding and Using Research Evidence (Prof. John Lavis, McMaster University)
12h30 - 13h30	Networking Break			
13h30 – 15h00	Crystal Room 1C Measuring evidence use: the value of contribution tracing (3ie)	Onyx Room 2C GESI Network needs assessment (Prof. Sandy Oliver, EPPI Centre)	Amber I Room 3C Part 3: Citizen Evidence and Evidence-informed Policy-Making: Whose Knowledge Counts?	Amethyst Room 4C Workshop: Networking between Francophone and Anglophone Africa: bridging a post-colonial divide (Prof. Ruth Stewart, AEN/ACE & Ms Beryl Leach, 3ie)
15h00 - 15h30	Networking Break			
15h30 – 17h00	Crystal Room 1D Exploring synergies between evidence maps and rapid response services to support evidence-informed policy-making: towards collaboration and shared learning (U/DPME)	Onyx Room 2D A peer learning network for government policymakers to advance evidence use in Africa: an emerging strategy (Results for All)	Amber I Room 3D Capacity development to use evidence in decision-making: working toward partnerships and building space to use approaches that work (Prof. Ruth Stewart, AEN/ACE & Ms Beryl Leach, 3ie)	Amethyst Room 4D Workshop: Introduction to EIDM (Tamara Kreda, Cochrane South Africa)
Close of Day				
17h00 – 17h30	Buses depart for City Lodge Lynnwood Bridge and Casa Toscana			

Of other responses to this question, there were three prominent roles suggested by the respondents for the AEN to fulfil: 1) a partnership role to others, individuals and organisations alike (n=17); 2) a training role (n=14); and 3) a stronger connecting role (n=12). Table 3 provides a few sample responses from each theme.

It should be highlighted that the finding that the AEN should play a partnership role and a connector role is contrary to the finding that most members perceive the AEN as already fulfilling this role.

FIGURE 20: PERCEIVED ROLE OF THE AEN



FIGURE 21: ROLES THE AEN SHOULD BE FULFILLING

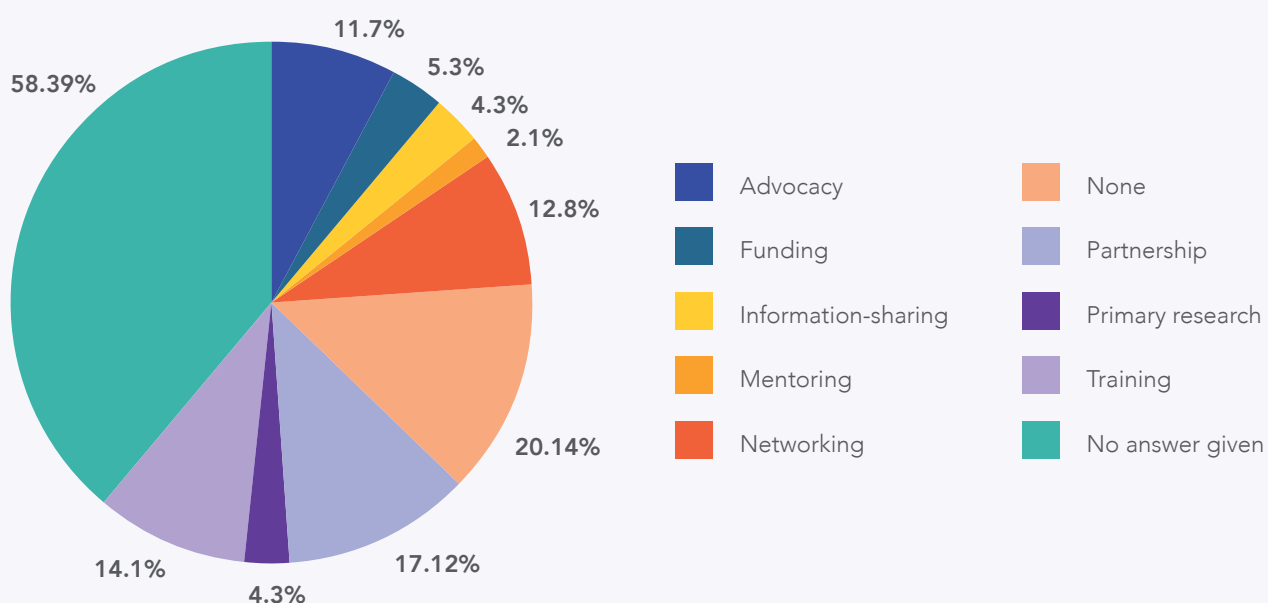


TABLE 3: WHAT ROLE IS THE AEN NOT FULFILLING THAT IT SHOULD BE?

THEMES	SAMPLE OF RESPONSES
Advocacy (11)	<p>Marketing itself within Africa; engaging in evidence consultancy to governments.</p> <p>AEN is not doing enough in engaging with governments and parliaments across Africa to advocate for evidence-based policy and law-making process.</p> <p>The AEN is not an everyday M&E workspace name, local associations are more well-known.</p> <p>I think political influence is not strong hence most decision are influenced by politicians.</p> <p>There should be more enlightenment and publicity programmes.</p>
Funding (5)	<p>AEN doesn't give grants.</p>
Information-sharing (4)	<p>Information sharing of evaluation results in the various sectors.</p> <p>Maintaining a regular database of evidence-informed research with a process that fully supports actors in the process of generating and publishing their findings.</p> <p>Making evidence available for non-English speaking population.</p> <p>Supporting researchers and conferences for dissemination of evidence.</p>
Mentoring (2)	<p>Mentoring</p> <p>Direct match-making and facilitating the building of regional ecosystems.</p> <p>Having all members in a group to share info; reaching the marginalised areas to make them part of the network; and introducing new members to incorporate them in the group so that others know what contribution they can rely on you to give.</p>
Connecting (12)	<p>More spaces of engagement.</p> <p>I think the AEN should be making it easier for members to get in touch with each other without having to go through the AEN. This is in line with the networking hub role I see the AEN as playing.</p> <p>It should provide platform for engaging budding professionals who are interested in policy, evaluation and other fields where evidence is required to make regions.</p> <p>Should develop strong working relationships with local VOPEs and public-sector departments, ministries and agencies.</p> <p>Visiting member institutions in different countries to learn and document about their activities including challenges and positive stories.</p>
None (20)	<p>AEN is performing well</p> <p>I feel a lot is being offered by the access to the roles is a problem to some of the people not on the internet</p> <p>I think it's doing a good job.</p> <p>None. AEN everywhere is AEN nowhere!</p> <p>None. The risk is thinking it needs to act as an NGO, which it is not or donor pressures to be what it is not (or needs to be)</p>

THEMES	SAMPLE OF RESPONSES
Partnership (17)	Nothing to worry about yet.
	AEN is fulfilling all its roles.
	Being more prevalent in other African countries who are more in need than e.g. South Africa.
	Bridging with other developing regions.
	More collaboration in in-country activities.
	Fellowship opportunities.
	Getting young researchers within the different teams.
	Helping struggling institutions using a collaborative approach. Through collaboration, young struggling institutions will grow and make impacts in their areas.
	I think the AEN has greater potential to connect people who are interested in similar fields or who would like to collaborate.
	More direct support to and collaboration with other organisations possibly in the future.
	Pairing members from across regions for better learning.
	Reaching out and partnering with other locally-based organisations doing much on evidence.
	Supporting upcoming partners, visibility in other countries and roadshows in other countries.
	Working more with other partners in Africa.
	Develop evidence tools/models to be used by policy makers
Primary research (4)	Policy-relevant primary research.
	Conducting grass root researches and empowerment of local people
	Building the capacity of early career African researchers
Training (14)	Capacity building can be improved
	Direct training
	Increase more training to policy analysts
	In-person training
	More training workshops to the local government bodies by its members within the country where the members live.
	Offering training in systematic reviews
	Organising workshops and training
	AEN should select certain committed organisations and develop organisation capacity rather than individuals. The program can be for 5 years but develop the capacity of the organisation.
	Proper coaching of members organisations

CAPACITY-BUILDING ROLE OF THE AEN

A set of questions in the survey specifically explored what role members feel the AEN should be playing in capacity-building on the continent. When asked what role in capacity-building on the continent should the AEN be playing (figure 22), respondents reported feeling that the AEN should either be offering a mentoring programme (n=59) or delivering capacity-building workshops and events through the Network (n=53). No member feels that it is important for the AEN to manage capacity-building activities on behalf of its members, and very few feel that hosting capacity-building resources is the most important capacity-building role the AEN could be fulfilling (n=8). Table 4 showcases other examples of what capacity-building roles members feel the AEN should be fulfilling.

Members were asked what they feel is the most important capacity-building role for the AEN to fulfil (figure 27). Most respondents (n=148) would like to see the AEN facilitate a mentorship programme as part of their role in capacity-building on the continent. Second to this option, respondents (n=139) feel that the AEN should be delivering capacity-building workshops. The least favoured capacity-building role for the AEN to be fulfilling according to respondents is to manage other members' capacity-building activities.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS BY THE AEN

The survey explored whether members feel the AEN is collaborating well with others in the evidence-informed decision-making space in Africa. Of those who provided answers to this question, most respondents (n=45) felt that the AEN was collaborating well with others in the EIDM space (figure 24).

In answer to this question, many respondents (n=64) emphasised the need for collaboration and provided suggestions for how the AEN might fulfil these suggested roles but did not specify how well they felt the AEN was actually collaborating. Generally, comments about the need for collaboration without reference to the AEN's specific collaboration fell into two themes: 1) suggestions for what the AEN specifically should be doing to increase collaboration, and 2) general comments on the necessity of collaboration without reference to the AEN at all (table 5). For example, some respondents stated that the "AEN has great potential to initiate collaboration and guide members to promote AEN objectives" (see more responses in table 5).

Of the respondents who reported seeing some collaboration but expressing a wish for more (n=24), many responses reflected the perception that the AEN collaborates mainly with large, well-established organisations as opposed to smaller, less-capacitated organisations (table 5). For example, one respondent stated that "There is collaboration but it's mainly with well-established organisations, there is need to promote and support less resourced and upcoming organisations".

A minority of respondents (n=6) felt that there was insufficient collaboration between the AEN and others in the EIDM space, with no respondents expanding on the reasons they felt there was insufficient collaboration or how the AEN might address this (table 5).

FIGURE 23: PREFERRED CAPACITY-BUILDING ROLE FOR THE AEN TO FULFILL

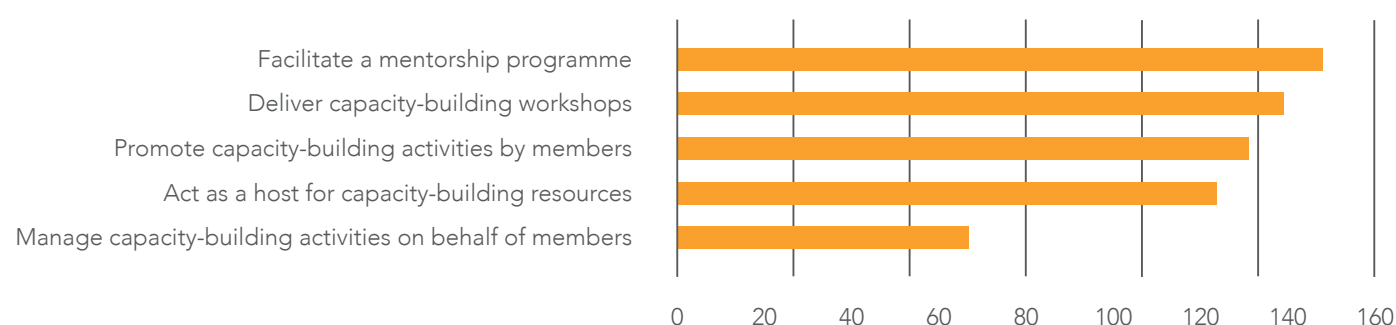


FIGURE 24: COLLABORATION BETWEEN AEN AND OTHERS SEEN BY MEMBERS

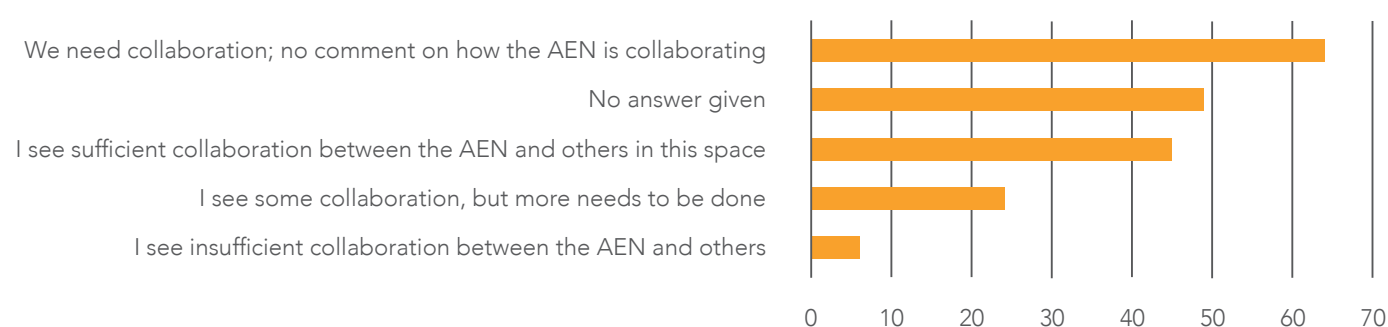


FIGURE 22: CAPACITY-BUILDING ROLES MEMBERS FEEL THE AEN SHOULD BE FULFILLING

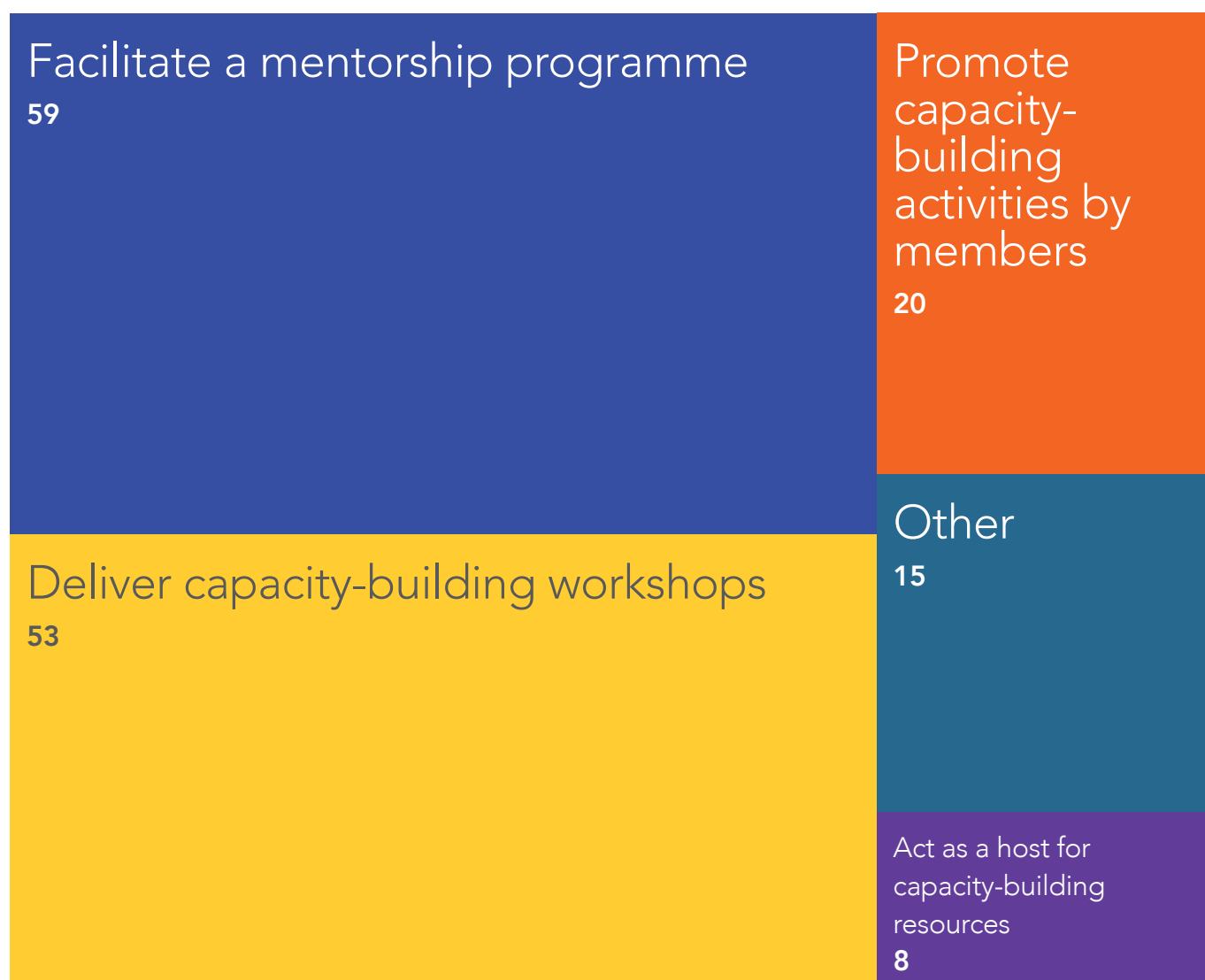


TABLE 4: OTHER SUGGESTIONS OFFERED BY RESPONDENTS

A balanced combination of virtual and face-to-face will work. Webinars
Accredited and in-person training
AEN facilitating face-to-face workshops
AEN should provide a job linkage platform for participants to explore their potentials
Engaging in social policy issues
Further support for in-country organisations and experts in embedding rapid evidence synthesis products
Get into and live in remote areas (not 50km from safe cities); work in real urban poverty - then you will understand
I think this basically restates the previous one
Collation of contact details for capacity-support offered by members (especially if this comes with rating system)
Knowledge brokering
Making it easier for people to get in touch with each other
N/A
Not sure
Retooling with policy guidelines, formats, templates to support evidence generation
Assist with linking members to good facilitators and training resources

TABLE 5: PLEASE DESCRIBE TO WHAT EXTENT YOU SEE THE AEN COLLABORATING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS/ INDIVIDUALS IN THE EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING SPACE IN AFRICA?

THEMES	SAMPLE OF ANSWERS
<i>We need collaboration; no comment on how the AEN is collaborating</i>	AEN can collaborate with networks in each country
	I see this as essential
	I think it is a good idea.
	It is a welcome idea especially in universities
	1. Partnering during in-country capacity strengthening activities. 2. Clearinghouse for experts/facilitators 3. Coordination of mentoring, learning exchange programmes 4. Supporting fellowship programmes
	Act as a regional coordinator
	AEN can partner with individuals and organisations to promote evidence-based policies in Africa and the use of best available evidence for practice guidelines development
	AEN should collaborate in building in-country expertise (for example in evidence synthesis and understanding the political economy of evidence) and build sustainable networks that facilitates and promotes the use of evidence in Africa
	AEN should collaborate with regional and continent-wide organisations as a key contributor to equipping members for producing and using evidences
	AEN should have a presence at major Pan African meetings / events with Heads of State and Ministers to present evidence to inform decision-making at a high level
	As a network, the AEN is an authority and has the capacity to lead and reach the rest of Africa in ensuring access and use of evidence. Coming up with a database of evidence will be important to ensure this
	As it matures, the AEN should consider partnering with regional institutions involved in research for policy and development for a wider coverage of the continent
	Contributing input to the professional training programmes of African Universities to impact the outlook of the middle class across the continent.
	Could collaborate with universities and research funders
	I think, AEN and CLEAR-AA, and other institutions can do a lot together. This collaboration is necessary, to share resources and also avoid duplication. Some programmes can be co-hosted.
	Liaise with academic institutions and research firms to develop an appropriate curriculum and conduct trainings. Develop and disseminate tools that other institutions can use to track evidence-use
	This is a key role that the AEN should play
	With resources and reputation, I believe the AEN has a big opportunity to collaborate with individuals and organisations across Africa, including working with ministries. The leadership award is a good example of how AEN is reaching out to individuals and should be encouraged. Activities identifying lead organisations will also be helpful with outreach.



THEMES	SAMPLE OF ANSWERS
<i>I see some collaboration, but more needs to be done</i>	AEN can improve its presence by collaborating with a number of stakeholders in the area evidence-informed decision-making
	AEN is taking bold steps in collaborations but a lot more needs to be done
	Currently AEN is confining itself in selected few member countries and institutions. It should open up to as many countries and institutions as possible
	I do not know but I feel that it should work more
	I think there are certainly efforts but I would love to see some of that translate to collaborations with non-university based research organizations that work closely with governments
	I think there is room for collaboration with other organisations especially those in the academia, particularly those training on monitoring and evaluation, public policy such that evidence production and use is embedded in the trainings
	I think to a larger extent, but I would like to see the AEN taking deliberate efforts to initiate projects related to the use of evidence in decision-making that could be implemented by stakeholders.
	It can do more to broaden collaboration with more organizations in each country, which could include smaller think-tanks and civil society orgs involved in EIDM (as opposed to the usual few suspects that are a favourite of the big donors)
<i>I see sufficient collaboration between the AEN and others</i>	It is in a good space but can still improve. I first knew about AEN at SAMEA conference, I think it can widen the association's even with other like-minded organisations in other parts of the world beyond Africa
	EIDM is a process depends on several agents. Yet it needs to be adopted systematically by other organisations public and private and individuals to enhance sustainable development and productivity. The AEN is greatly going to provide a role in KM and KT which are pivotal in the EIDM process
	Extensively
	I am familiar with the collaboration with Uganda and believe the way it has been facilitated was excellent.
	Networks, by definition, collaborate and communicate as their connective tissue
	To a greater extent with most organisations sharing their research results which in turn are also shared by all and discussed through some weekly or monthly meetings
	To great extent because there are so many institutions and organisation that are advancing the evidence cause in Africa, the academic institutions, research institutions, organisations like International Centre for Evaluation and Development, Campbell Collaboration etc
	To very extent because collaborating with organisations/individuals will help to report on evidence
	Well to greater extent since AEN is a global network and participates in big international events like previously AFRICA which was hosted by UEA in Uganda

SUGGESTIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

The survey requested from members suggestions of organisations in members' home countries that the AEN should be aware of to enhance the Network's collaboration within Africa. Collectively, respondents provided a list of 120 names of organisations, departments or institutions from their respective countries that the AEN should be collaborating with (Appendix 1). Some of the names of the list are past or current collaborators with the AEN, but irrespective this list will be fed into our marketing and engagement strategy for 2019 to ensure that the AEN embeds its work even deeper within Africa.

4.5. VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP AND VALUES THE AEN REPRESENTS

As in past member surveys, the 2018 survey explored whether members felt being part of the Network was valuable to their work. When asked whether they experienced value as members of the AEN in terms of partnerships and opportunities to engage with EIDM in Africa, the majority of the respondents (n=114) were positive that being part of the AEN has been valuable for them (figure 25). Some of the examples for why being part of the AEN has been valuable are provided below, with responses generally falling into one of the following reasons: the AEN makes collaborating with others easier, the AEN provides access to information that is useful to members, or the AEN supports a sense of community among its members:

- I feel that being part of the AEN has exposed me to a network of really powerful and formidable people in this field, but also to a network of really passionate, enthusiastic, against-all-odds kind of people.
- One gets to understand what is happening elsewhere and appreciates good practice.
- It provides me a platform to share my experiences with experiences with evidence generation to implementation and also to put out there the challenges I faced and getting possible solutions to these challenges.
- By being a member, I'm able to be part of the network in my area of work and part of the community.
- I get opportunities for partnership with others and share my experience in evaluation.
- With an initial background of systematic reviews (and publications), I had little interest in the phase that requires a direct interaction with stakeholders who implement or make critical decisions based on evidence from reviews. AEN has now motivated me to interface directly with all stakeholders, in order to influence policy.

Twenty-five respondents felt that they had not experienced the value of the AEN yet either because they were new members, self-described passive members, or merely stated that they saw the Network as potentially valuable (figure 25).

Ten respondents felt that belonging to the Network was not valuable for them in terms of opportunities for partnerships or exposure to opportunities in EIDM; some of these members' concerns are expressed below:

- There is no value added. AEN conferences are very expensive and most of the time they require abstracts as criteria for participation. This requirement should change in future.
- Besides being a member there is no evidence to show that you can present a strong case for partnership with other organizations in the struggle. We need more in terms of identity and ground work in different regions if not countries.
- I am not aware of who is doing what and where.
- I don't feel like [membership has been valuable] because though I do my research based on my interests, I have not interacted with others and I don't see people coming together to have discussions very often. Maybe this is because I am a new member [and] as I progress I will see the difference.

To gain an understanding of how members see the Network, the survey report asked what values members see the AEN as representing. The themes that emerged from this question can be seen in figure 26, with most respondents (n=21) stating that the AEN embodies the value of accountability.

FIGURE 25: VALUE OF AEN MEMBERSHIP

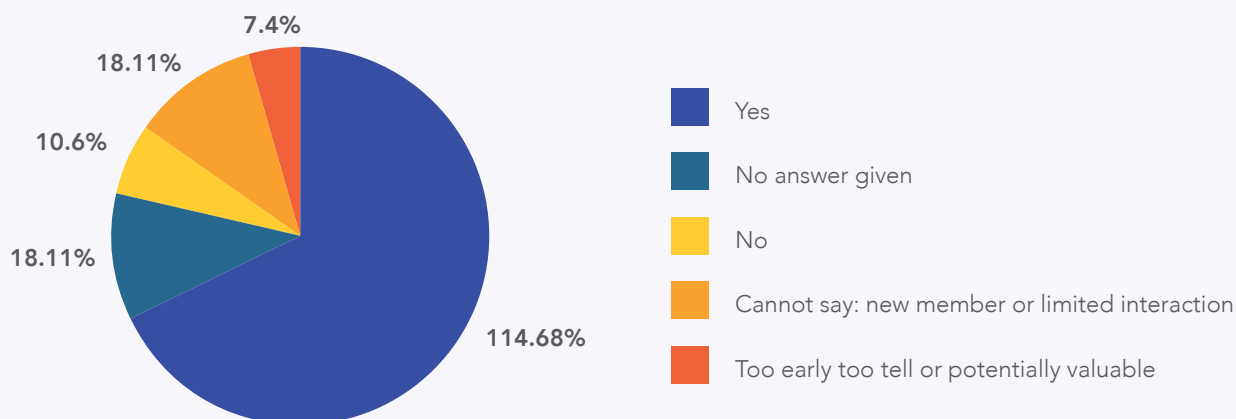


FIGURE 36: VALUES MEMBERS PERCEIVE THE AEN AS REPRESENTING

Quality Learning *Professionalism* *Rigorous Creativity* *Accountability* *Transparency* *Leadership Integrity* *Inclusivity*

HOW THE AEN HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE TO MEMBERS

A sample of survey respondents with positive experiences of belonging to the AEN were sampled and interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of what exactly had been valuable to members. Excerpts from these members' responses have been paraphrased below. Some of these responses mirrored the themes extracted from the survey data.

For example, one story (box 2) shares one respondent of belonging to something greater as part of the AEN. In addition, stories about the practical use of some of the services offered by the AEN – such as the newsletter and academic resources – were shared during these interviews (box 3).

BOX 2: MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS THAT LAST

Through the AEN, I met Rhona Mijumbi and collaboration has revolved around the kind of work we're doing. We met these individuals at conferences like EVIDENCE 2016 and the Global Evidence Summit, the introductions being facilitated by the AEN and ACE teams. Getting to know what kind of work they do, we're starting to work more closely with her. Her experience has validated the approach taken by our department, and it's been a useful avenue for advice and support. I am hoping it will develop into a co-learning relationship. While there are many people from the first world organisations that we can touch base with, it's useful to have more of a context that we can identify with from an African perspective. Being able to learn from those sharing context and similar structures that we need to go through for policy changes is particularly valuable.

BOX 3: FINDING PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE AEN NEWSLETTER

I think I can quickly say that much of what I've learnt is from the newsletter. Specifically, the May newsletter article on policy briefs on mobile technologies. I was able to see a policy brief and managed to start producing our own to influence policy-makers. We are going to be producing our first policy brief in July and we are already modelling the brief based on the one on the South African example. The newsletter gives you precisely what you need: I did try to google around and there wasn't much that was as clear as that one (in the newsletter). We'll hopefully presenting our policy brief to MPs on the effects/impacts of sexual violence on children in Swaziland.

Other answers from member interviews highlighted less-common avenues of value experienced by members. For instance, box 4 describes how one member found the AEN a useful knowledge sharing platform while another story (box 5) shares how the AEN was useful as one litmus test of potential Africa EIDM collaborators.

BOX 4: SHARING MY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH UPCOMING EIDM CHAMPIONS

I'm there to use the Network to share my knowledge – why is this important? Because it's then available as a public good. The AEN provides a space and a mechanism through its conference and that's a crucial value. You cannot confuse a network with an organization. A network exists as a connective tissue to share knowledge and information: this function is dependent on convening space to transfer skills. The way the Network is operating means that it has the respect of senior people within the field who want to invest in it. The AEN is not the only game in town. Senior people want to attend AEN events because the Network has a good reputation.

BOX 5: TESTING SUITABILITY OF POTENTIAL AFRICAN EIDM COLLABORATORS

I can't recall when I've been searching for a partner going to the AEN website. I've used the AEN more as a reference for work rather than a linking service. A linking service would be a great use of the Network for sure although I usually approach people or organisations I've worked with before because it's difficult to approach someone you've met online. Even so, if I have not gone through the AEN for partnerships, what I do do is that if I get to know partners in Africa, I question whether they know about the AEN (as well as other networks) as a way of testing their level of engagement with EIDM. The AEN is one of many important EIDM networks.

4.6. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP OF THE NETWORK

The AEN strives to be responsive to the call of its members in all aspects, including in how the Network is governed. As such, members were asked to share their view about the governance structures of the AEN and how these might evolve in future.

CO-CHAIRPERSONSHIP OF THE AEN

Members were asked if they feel the AEN should have a co-chair (figure 27). Few respondents (n=15) felt that a co-chair was unnecessary while the majority of respondents (n=104) felt that an AEN co-chair would be a good idea.

Upon closer examination (figure 28), the reasons provided by respondents for wanting a co-chair in the AEN were to enhance the representativeness of the AEN (n=16), share the workload between more than one person (n=16), ensure long-term continuity (n=8), and increase the Network's ability to achieve some of its goals e.g. capacity-sharing, increasing membership, and ensuring a larger footprint in Africa (n=18).

MAKING THE AEN A MORE FORMAL STRUCTURE

When members were asked their views on formalising the AEN (figure 29), the majority of respondents (n=71) felt that the AEN should become a more formal organisation while 33 respondents felt that the informal nature of the Network should be retained. Some respondents (n=28) gave more nuanced answers to this question; below are some samples of their responses:

- For recognition in this structured world I would recommend formal. For functionality I am happier with informal. Decision: Let's put it to the vote when we meet in September 2018.
- This is a difficult question and one that requires more engagement with the strategy of AEN. I am unable to answer this question right now, but I do prefer the informal nature of the network.
- It can remain with an informal first but with view to accumulating a certain number of members within a given time frame from which to adopt formal membership.
- I think making it overly bureaucratic might inhibit innovation and not speak to a younger crowd. You can make it formal but formal associations tend to inhibit real change.
- A more formal membership might potentially prove a barrier to participation for certain groups of members, especially, young, early career researchers. I think this is an issue that should be debated and determined at the biennial conference. Any move that may prevent a substantial number of members from participation should be avoided.

The most commonly-cited reason given for why the AEN should formalise is that it will make the Network more recognisable. Other reasons can be found in table 6, with accompanying samples of text. Table 7 reflects the reasons and sample texts of reasons why some respondents feel the AEN should remain an informal network.

FIGURE 27: MEMBERS' VIEWS ON HAVING AN AEN CO-CHAIR

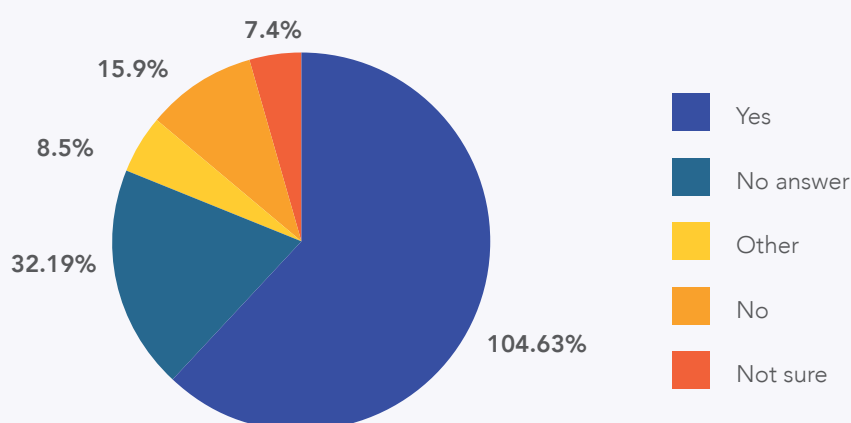


FIGURE 28: REASONS WHY THE AEN SHOULD HAVE A CO-CHAIR

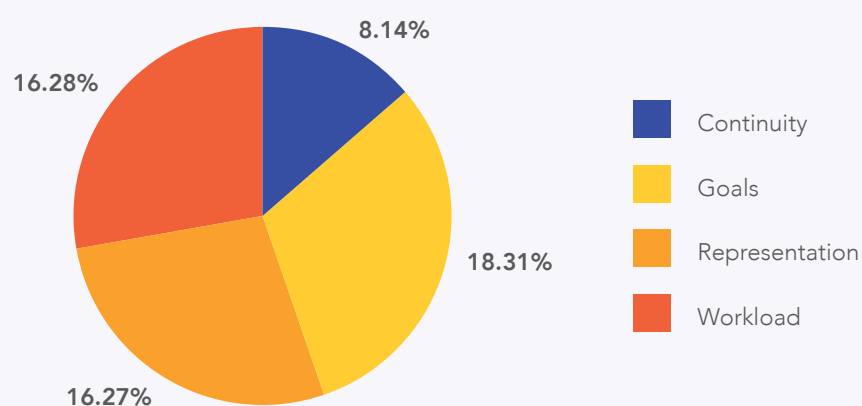


FIGURE 29: MEMBER VIEWS ON FORMALISING THE AEN

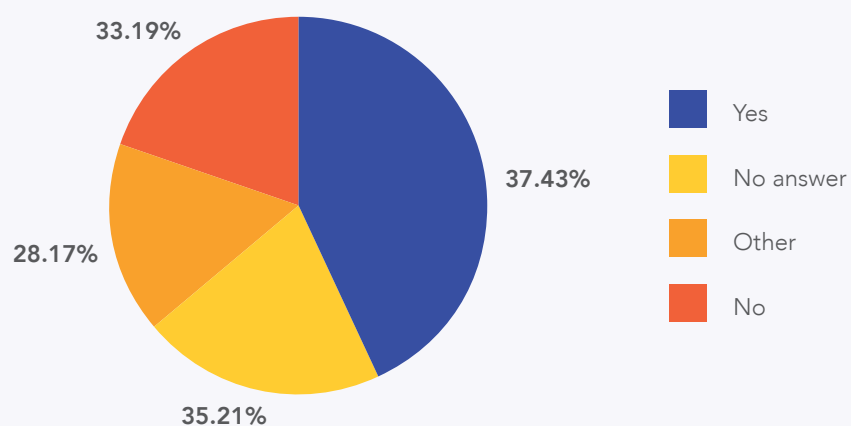


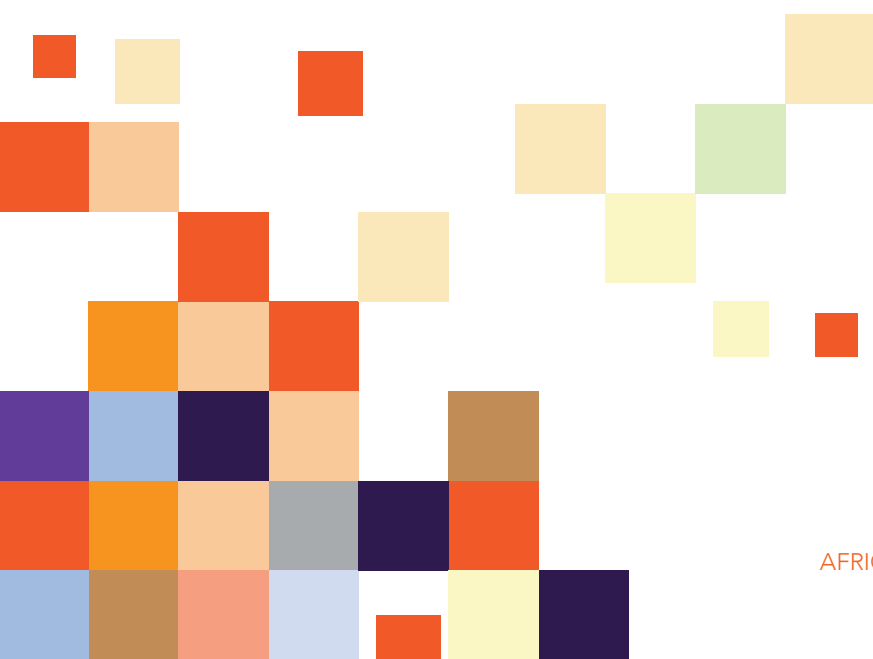
TABLE 6: REASONS PROVIDED FOR WHY THE AEN SHOULD FORMALISE

THEMES	SAMPLE OF ANSWERS
<i>Access to resources</i>	<p>It should be a formal membership body so as to streamline and focus, including improvement of systematic working and efficient utilization of resources.</p> <p>Formal membership will enable partnering with global organisations and create an engagement platform.</p>
<i>Taken seriously as a professional organisation</i>	<p>It does add value to members, e.g. something one adds to a CV. There is more specific role of members in guiding what the AEN does as opposed to being consumers of what AEN puts out.</p> <p>[The] AEN should be a formal membership body so that it is more recognised and can bid for projects in relevant areas.</p> <p>Formal is good and should be desired destination, can fundraise better, get more recognition, and hopefully grow</p>
<i>Increase membership</i>	<p>It needs to be more formal. It is very likely that some government institutions are reluctant to participate and /or provide information to an informal organisation. This might imply that members are currently missing out on both data and potential members</p>
<i>Encourage participation among members</i>	<p>It should move towards a more formal body. This will motivate members to be more active unlike in the current situation where members may not take issues seriously.</p> <p>A more formal membership body will motivate participation and enhance credibility.</p>

Of the 28 respondents who did not provide a definitive yes or no answer to whether the AEN should formalise, 12 acknowledged a that gradual move towards a more formal nature for the Network would be preferable. Other themes that emanated from these responses included that the AEN should very carefully consider the strategic objectives of the Network before moving on this decision (n=4) and a few suggestions that perhaps the AEN should consider some form of hybrid format between formal and informal (n=4).

TABLE 7: REASONS PROVIDED FOR WHY THE AEN SHOULD REMAIN INFORMAL

THEMES	SAMPLE OF ANSWERS
<i>Maintain a community spirit</i>	<p>Informal network of people who want to build networks.</p> <p>Informal, it is more accessible and less intimidating for members who are new to the field but interested in gaining knowledge about the use of evidence in their workspace.</p> <p>Informal, we are a loose community at this stage that is still growing and exploring. I don't think too much structure or governance is needed at this stage.</p> <p>Informal. Push now for formal and it will not be a network for very long, with the advantages of one, but just another membership association with all of its risks. Is this being driven by donors who want it to be more "normal" in what it does and its accountability? Is this driven by members who are also best placed to benefit from more of a structured hierarchy, budget and ways to influence workplans? Being a bit provocative because thinking this through very well is important.</p>
<i>Retains flexibility and space for innovation</i>	<p>Informal probably better, would mean less administration for you and thus resource can be devoted more to your members. Also means you can be more flexible in your work plans and react to new initiatives with more flexibility without the need for committee votes etc.</p> <p>[The] AEN should be a formal membership body so that it is more recognised and can bid for projects in relevant areas.</p> <p>Formal is good and should be desired destination, can fundraise better, get more recognition, and hopefully grow.</p> <p>Informal because there will be more flexibility and less bureaucracy.</p>
<i>Discouraging participation</i>	<p>Many people are not always able to be members of a network such as AEN because of membership costs but AEN tries a great deal to bridge this gap.</p> <p>So far, the informality has allowed AEN to reach across diverse countries. Formalising it might limit its reach due to strict regulations which may be involved.</p>
<i>Streamline decision-making and governance</i>	<p>Informal because there will be more flexibility and less bureaucracy.</p> <p>I think it should remain an informal network. Making it formal could make it look more of a political structure.</p> <p>The reason for this is mainly to ensure that actions are executed swiftly. I think the AEN offers many opportunities for members to participate and get involved and that what lacks is either access to online participation platforms or willingness to participate.</p>
<i>Preference</i>	<p>I really like the informal nature of a network, but I also appreciate that a more formal structure will enhance financial viability.</p>



4.7. NETWORK-MEMBER INTERACTION

An integral part of ensuring the Network remains member-directed is to ensure that there are effective mechanisms for communication between the members of the AEN and their secretariat. Additionally, the survey tried to determine the extent to which members felt they could drive change within the Network.

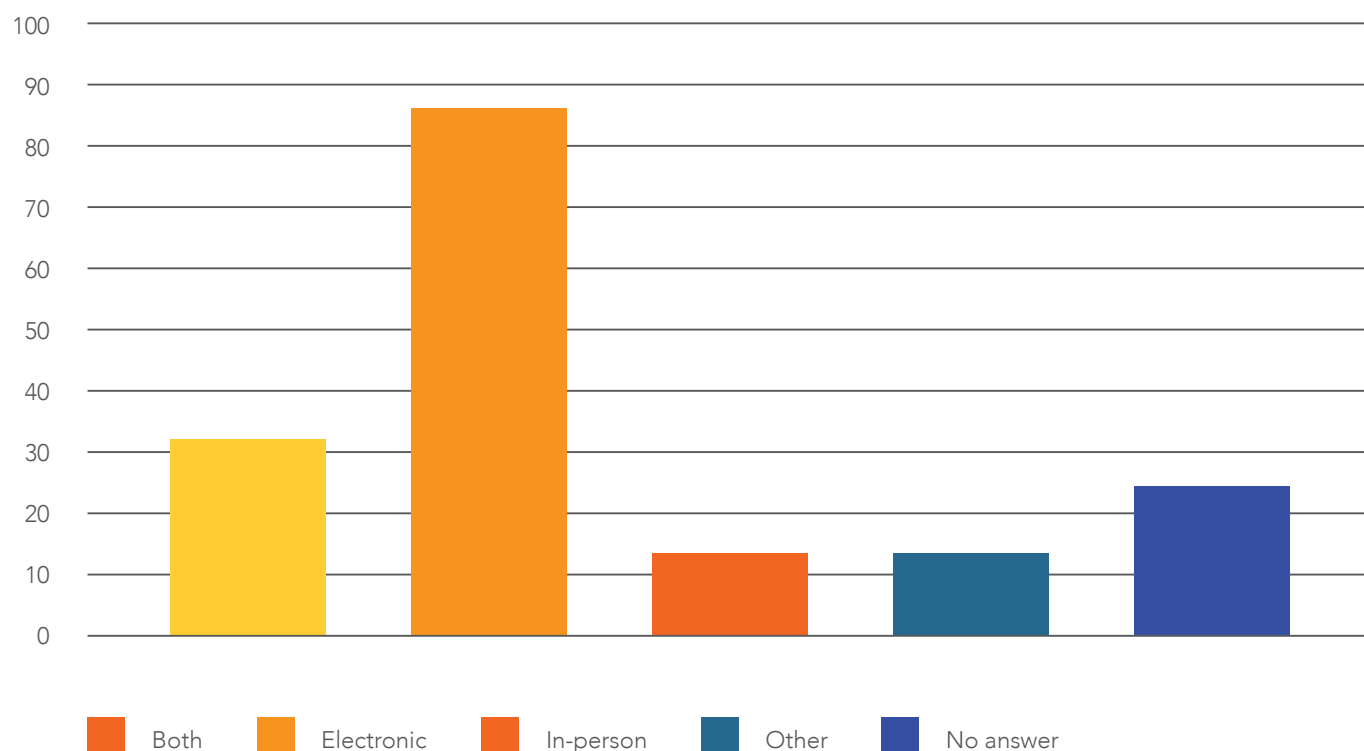
When asked how members would prefer to have the secretariat of their Network interact with them (figure 30), the majority of respondents stated they would prefer the AEN to interact with them on electronic platforms (n=86); common responses for the type of electronic interaction preferred by respondents included emails, the newsletter, and webinars. Thirty-one respondents felt that a combination of electronic (including social media) and in-person interaction (such as the biennial conferences) is the best way for the Network to interact with the members. Thirteen respondents felt that there should be more in person-interaction between the members and the Network, although it is not possible to determine whether they felt this should replace online forums of interaction or supplement these. Some respondents specifically mentioned the need for in-country chapters or local representation within different countries in Africa to supplement current interaction efforts.

In terms of interaction between the secretariat and the Network, respondents feel that while the AEN is interacting adequately with members, there should be some kind of coordinating effort. This effort was suggested as taking the form of either subject- or country-focused interaction. Another theme that emanated from these responses was the importance of making the content of the Network-member interaction substantial and fruitful.

Two-way interaction was highlighted by some members as important, with the need for the members of the AEN to engage the Network flagged in a few answers:

- In addition to the newsletter, it should demand reports from members on what they are doing.
- Virtually, face to face. There must be a two-way communication between the members and AEN.
- I think the interaction should resemble a two-way conversation. While initiatives have been put in place to ensure this, I believe in my opinion again that either access or willingness prevents members from participating frequently. The AEN can send out all the emails it wants, but if no one responds to calls for action, the interaction won't look like a conversation.

FIGURE 30: HOW SHOULD THE AEN SECRETARIAT INTERACT WITH THE AEN MEMBERS?



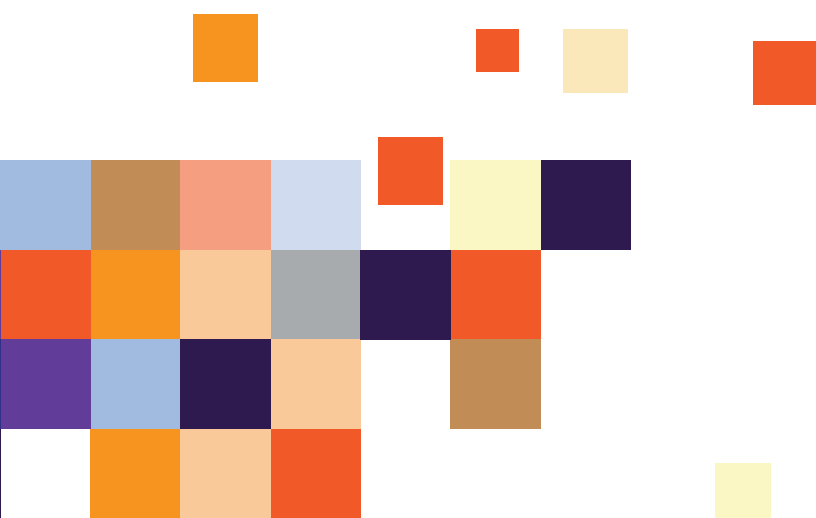
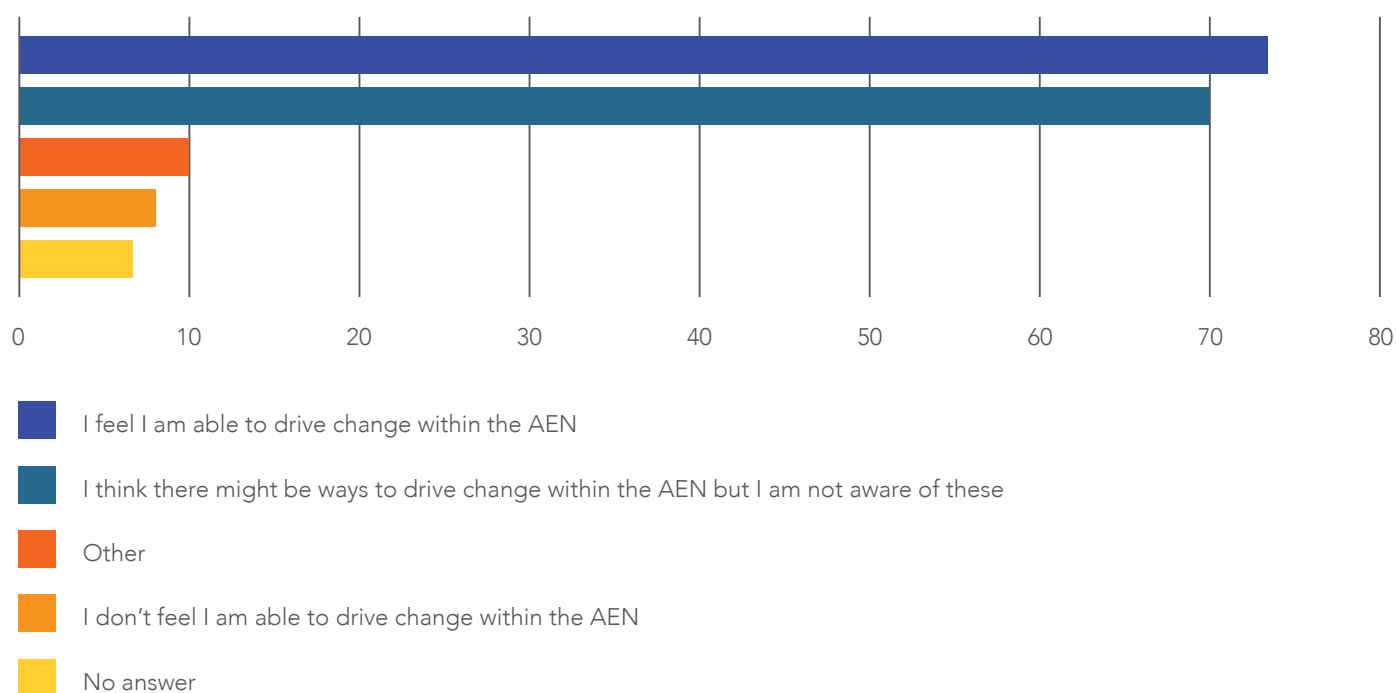
The survey also asked members to reflect on whether they felt heard by the AEN secretariat. Happily, only two responses of 169 stated they had had any difficulties with feeling heard by the AEN secretariat; see these below:

- In 2016, AEN refused to fund my flight from Canada to South Africa and present with attendance to other evidence business meetings. Therefore, I recommended my colleague (current AfrEA President) to replace me. It is unfortunate for AEN to not consider the nationality of African participant as the unique prove for e.g. bursary. Using travel airport in Africa as the condition for travel allowance could limit the participation of key African leader citizen working abroad.

- Well, I don't recall very well but some time ago I requested to know whether the AEN had a scholarship programme for its members but still wait in vain for a response.

When asked whether they felt members were in a position to drive change within the AEN, most respondents (n=73) stated they felt that there are mechanisms for members to drive change within the AEN. A slightly smaller number of respondents stated that while these mechanisms exist, they are not aware of them (n=70, figure 31).

FIGURE 31: DO MEMBERS FEEL THEY CAN DRIVE CHANGE IN THE AEN?



4.8. WAYS TO CONTINUE IMPROVING

Central to the overall process of consulting members on different aspects of being part of the AEN is the idea that members' experiences and views guide the direction the Network takes going into the future. As such, the survey included questions about how the AEN might continue to improve.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Members were asked to describe one way in which the AEN would know it has been successful: as seen in figure 32, the most common measure of the AEN's success relates to the membership of the Network (n=45)². The various sub-themes that emerge within this response can be seen in figure 33, with most respondents indicating that the AEN will recognise success when its members actively participate in the activities of the Network. Eight respondents indicated only that 'membership' should be the single measure of success for the AEN. Samples of respondents' answers to this question can be seen below:

- Opportunities realized as a result of connection formed via AEN platform/event.
- Growth in numbers as well as engagement between members.
- Coverage of its members by topic, country and language.
- Success stories from African members on how they have been served.

Change (n=28) and services (n=13) were the other two prominent measures of success listed by respondents to the survey. Within the sub-theme of change, the most dominant response centered on whether there are success stories about the use of evidence for decision-making from both within and outside of the AEN in Africa (n=10), with a second common response being the use of evidence observed in policies (n=8). Other responses within the sub-theme of change were isolated; these can be seen below:

- Institutional structures and processes for EIDM are created and maintained,
- There is an increase in knowledge translation products,
- Presence of evidence-use advocacy and evidence sharing,
- EIDM guidelines are produced in Africa; and
- The AEN applies lessons learnt.

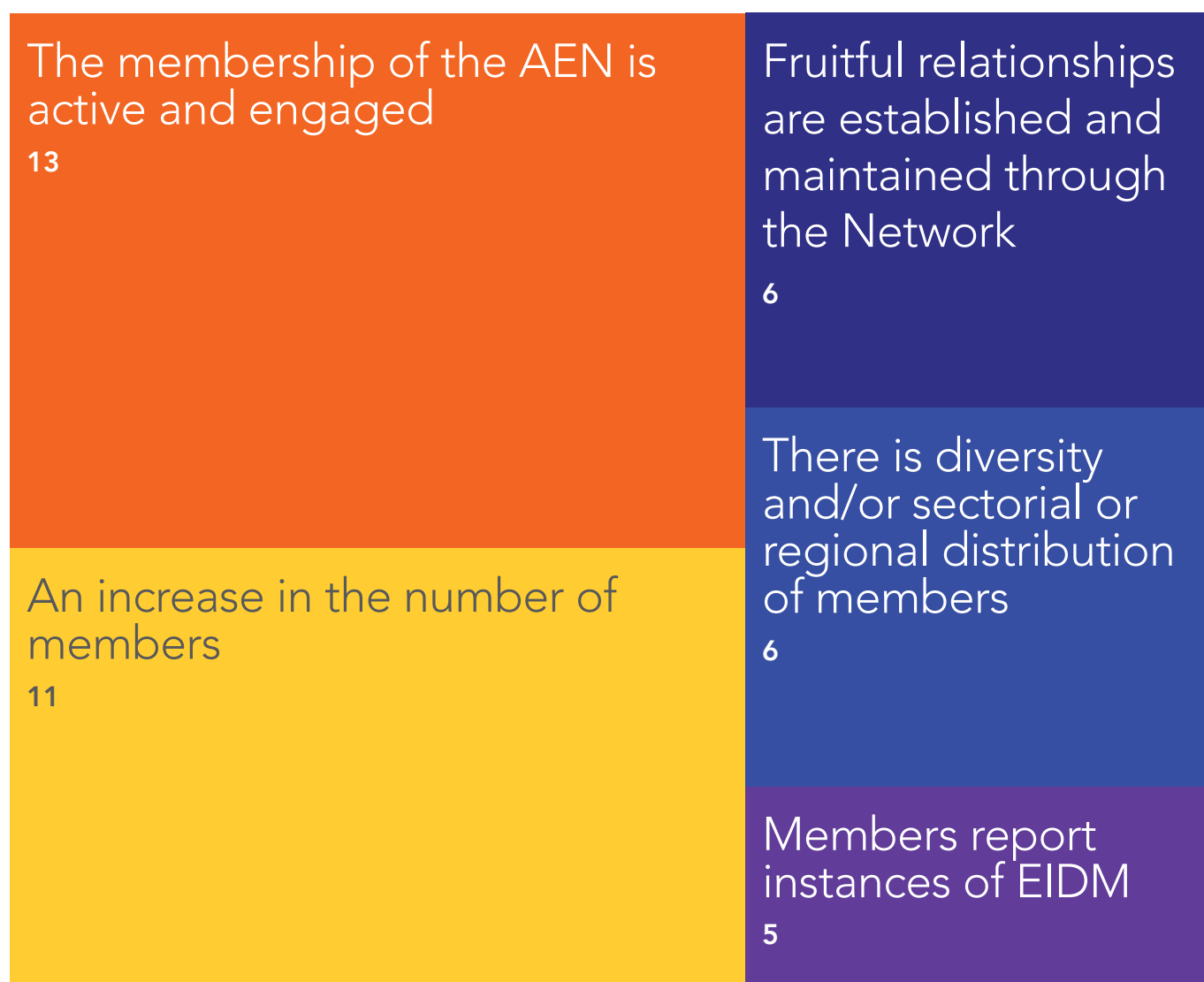
Services was the third most prominent sub-theme when members were asked to describe the single thing the AEN should use to measure its success (n=13). Common responses in this sub-theme included the provision of capacity-enhancing services such as mentorship programmes (n=9) and the quality of the services currently offered (n=3). One respondent mentioned that the number of blogs the AEN produced should be used to measure the Network's success.

FIGURE 32: HOW WILL THE AEN KNOW IT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL



² A large proportion of the responses to this question were either not provided (n=38) or unclear (n=35).

FIGURE 33: NUANCED ANSWERS TO HOW THE AEN SHOULD MEASURE SUCCESS



HOW THE AEN CAN IMPROVE

The survey also explored what members thought the AEN should focus on improving. In other words, what one thing do respondents to the survey feel the AEN is not getting right.

Seventy-eight respondents did not provide an answer to this question while 26 respondents felt there was no important thing that the AEN is not getting right currently. The two most common themes that emerged from the response of the remaining 65 members who answered this question (figure 34) were that the AEN should improve how it connects members together (n=12) and that the AEN should undertake to do capacity-building through the network (n=9). Some sample responses under the theme of connecting members better can be seen below:

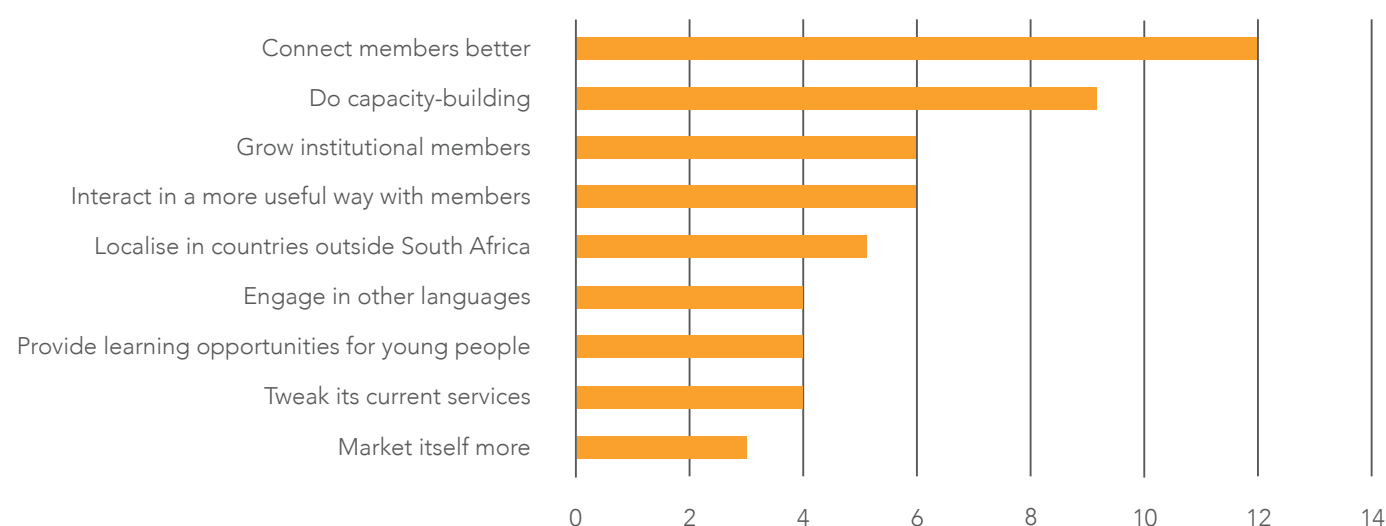
- I don't think the Network is linking people up enough. I think a membership database or monthly newsletters to a group of people with similar interests would remedy that to a certain extent.

- Not super clear when one joins how to connect with others, get involved in support capacity building etc (other than contributing blogs).
- Collaboration and interaction among country members.

A sample of responses under the theme of doing capacity-building activities can be see below:

- Involvement in university training.
- AEN is probably not supporting in members to build skills on evidence generation and hence should consider doing short videos on how to write blogs for AEN (something that can be taken for granted), opportunities for collaborations and the current trending issues.
- Arranging for its members come together in one gathering by hosting pure AEN workshops"
- Capacity-building, mentorship: run workshops on these.

FIGURE 34: HOW CAN THE AEN IMPROVE?



Another theme that came out of members' responses to this question included interacting in a more useful way with members (e.g. shortening the length of the survey, providing members with an alert service when the newsletter is published, having Twitter "convos" and webinars, and encouraging members to submit content to the AEN on a more regular basis).

The final common theme was the tweaking of the AEN's current services it already offers. For example, "the Award: keep it merit-based and not a popular vote-oriented. It's a great innovation that can achieve more" or "the bursary procedure should be revised to consider only the nationality of beneficiaries as the condition for bursary allocation, no matter their area of residence".

A total of 14 respondents' answers did not fit one of the below themes; they can be found in table 8.

TABLE 8: RESPONSES TO WHAT SINGLE THING THE AEN IS NOT GETTING RIGHT THAT DID NOT ALIGN TO A THEME

Not sure, but perhaps a stakeholder mapping exercise may be an important exercise to conduct
I am not sure whether you are doing this, BUT the issue of disseminating evaluation results for sectors in the different countries
AEN should do personalised follow ups with its members and I suggest that AEN considers having each of its members produce a blog on certain trending issues that relate to evidence production and synthesis
Timeframe for mentorship is too small so consider revising and increase the time for the course
Evaluate people's motivation to continue EIDM as their professional or active involvement in EIDM. You are doing a very good thing of getting Roadmap for funding Bursary. Fund Bursary to such people, may be special who have taken up the roadmap further in their country, as I have submitted abstract to take further the road map of my EIDM activities from 2012, 2014, 2016. These activities are increasing every year successfully and we have developed credibility among the professionals and institutions and funding organizations and slowly spreading EIDM in several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa
Stated above (considering evidence production, management and use within its political context - which is often not supportive of increased and transparent use of evidence)
Issuing of policy statements and participation in Pan African political platforms such as advising PAP, AU
Communication
Contributors at the workshops need to be very knowledgeable and cover enough depth to show that they are experts in their area of focus
Promoting more open access
Peace process
Get people to participate effectively

Many of respondents did not answer the question about what one change they would implement as the chair of the AEN; of the remaining 108 respondents, 22 respondents felt they would not do anything differently to the current chair of the AEN.

Other themes that emerged from the remaining responses can be seen in figure 35: most respondents stated they would either increase engagement (n=19), embed the Network's activities in African countries outside South Africa (n=16) or formalise the AEN (n=12).

When respondents spoke of increasing engagement (n=19, this commonly referred to matchmaking organisations or members together (n=7), facilitating direct engagement between members commonly through face-to-face meetings (n=3), improving the feedback mechanisms for members to engage with the Network (n=6), and the Network engaging with institutions of higher education (n=3). One interesting response was for the Chair to "deliver a message to members at beginning of the year".

Many respondents felt they would increase the visible presence and activities of the AEN in other countries. Some samples of responses coded under this theme include:

- Rotate the hosting of biennial conference to different blocks e.g. East Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, etc.
- Devolve power and create regional offices.
- Reach more people beyond South Africa.
- Develop a vibrant, regional sub-hubs so that members in member countries can interact better.
- Partner with local organizations across Africa where they will be able to give report on activities within their respective countries.

When suggesting that as chair of the AEN respondents would 'formalise' the network (n=12), they most often used the word 'formalise' with little further explanation as to what this would involve. Responses coded under this theme did however include the below samples:

- Seek for more membership and then formalize the operations with a view to sourcing for funds to enrich and sustain the work of AEN.
- Develop a strategic plan for membership, marketing, making AEN relevant for Africa.

In the theme 'provide opportunities', respondents' answers tended to fall into one of two categories: 1) provision of some kind of funding for members to attend events or workshop bursaries, and 2) AEN leadership opportunities for specifically early-career researchers.

In supporting a culture of EIDM in Africa (n=5), responses can be seen below:

- Telling Africa to more than ever before establish networks for generation of evidence informed data and information for policy and legal frameworks.
- To emphasize more the use of evidence-based information.
- Make national Networks more proactive and interactive.
- Creation of clusters within the network (small networks within the network with specific focus/mandate.
- Make all members feel part and parcel of the network – making the network a place where members can call upon for solutions in their career or professions.

Finally, when respondents spoke of enhancing accessibility of the AEN, they were referring to either making it easier to access members or – more dominantly – make services available in non-English languages like French or Spanish. Responses that did not really fit into a specific theme can be seen in table 9 (n=14).

FIGURE 35: WHAT MEMBERS WOULD CHANGE AS THE AEN CHAIRPERSON

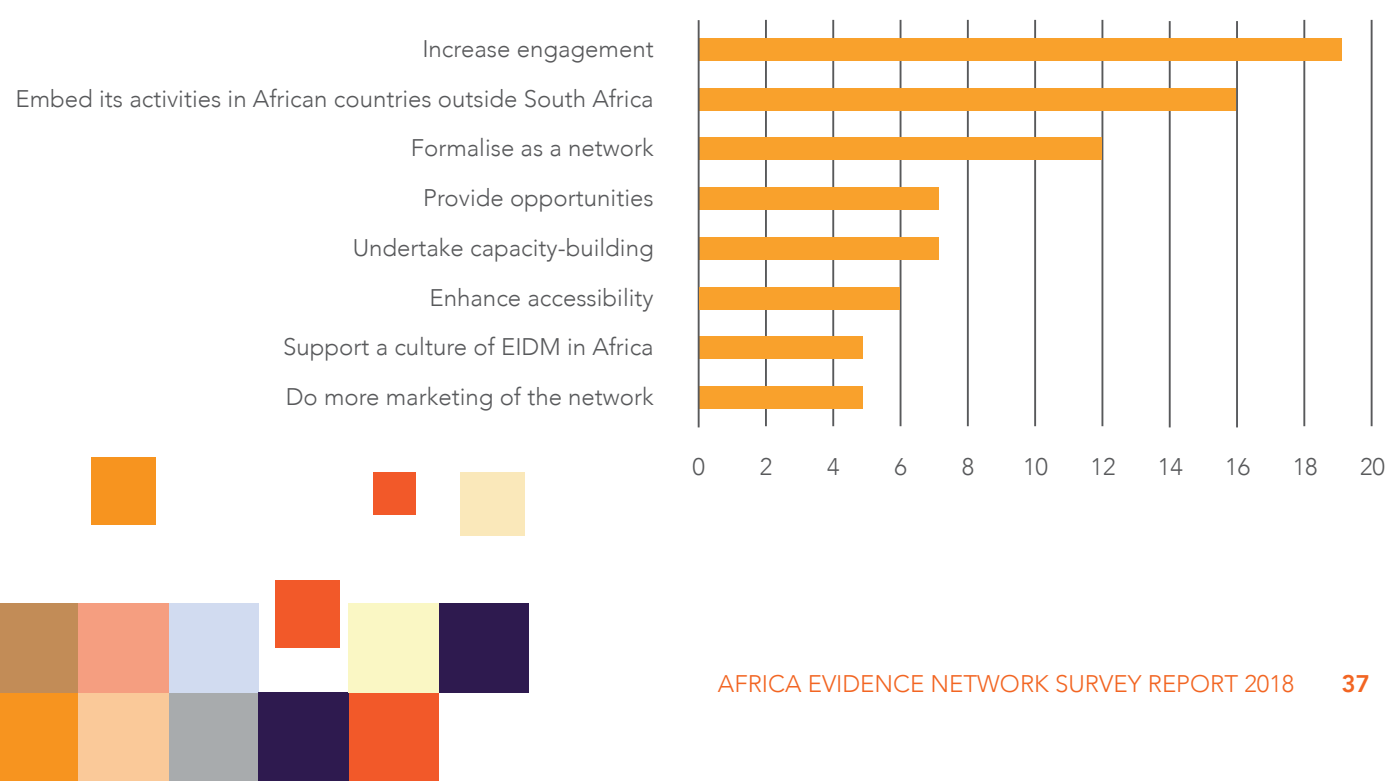


TABLE 9: OTHER RESPONSES TO 'IF I WERE THE AEN CHAIR, ONE IMPORTANT CHANGE WOULD BE...'

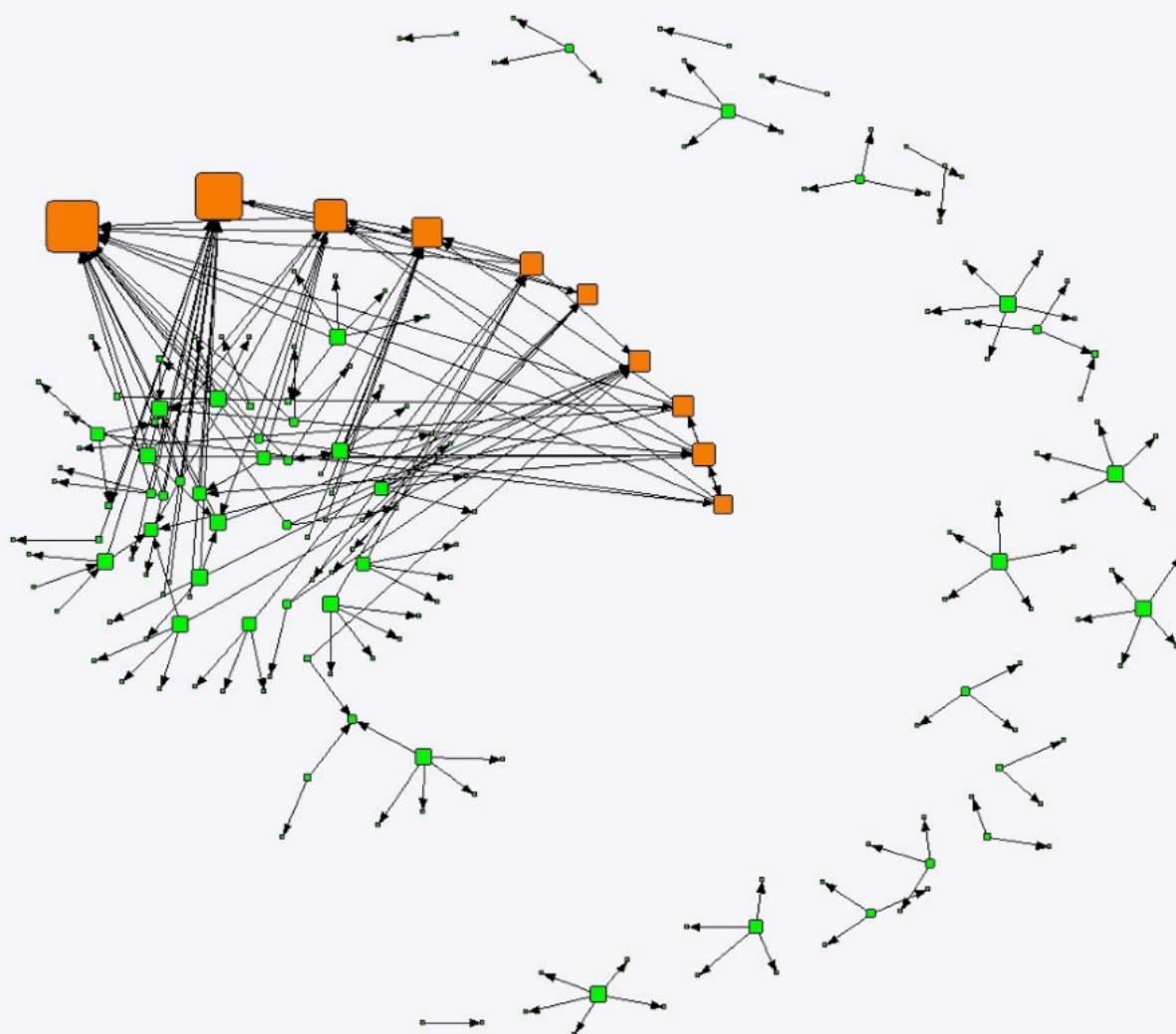
Draw a network diagram of relationship structures.
Create a platform involving all development partners for evidence generation and use. Some decisions geared towards development are made with no data nor evidence to back them up, thus failing the populations.
Work with different countries in securing grants for key areas identified.
I will advocate for increase in platform.
Reduce admin staff by half.
Develop a field of Evidence Science and Evidence Journal.
Change will include implementation of policy and program.
Provide a repertoire of funding organizations and institutions where members can compete for funding to realise their goals in EIDM.
Take AEN to African grassroots, use embed indigenous practises in EAN operations.
Base on the policy of the advisory committee .
Evaluate critically the motivation of Evidence event and how far they have progressed from last event, particularly who are receiving the bursaries.
Expand to more weak countries, where the need for evidence is highest. Invest into proper data collection.
My ne profile of site.

5. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS OF THE AEN

Of the 169 survey respondents, 133 people responded to the social network analysis questions. Eighty-one people indicated they had interacted with at least one person or more, two people cited confidentiality as the reason of non-provision of names, whilst the remaining 50 indicated no interaction. Seventy-two respondents indicated that of the people they had interacted with, they had known at least one more of these before joining the AEN. Twenty respondents indicated that of those they had interacted with, they knew at least one or more people that they had not known prior to joining the AEN. The analysis is carried out for the two groups.

Figure 36 presents a network of interactions of people that the respondents knew before joining the AEN, whereas Figure 37 provides an overview of the interaction amongst individuals whom respondents did not know before joining the AEN³. In terms of interactions with individuals known before joining the AEN, 189 individuals connected with each other, facilitated by 206 cross-linkages as shown in table 10. Interactions with individuals not known before joining the AEN comprises of 36 individuals and 37 cross-linkages.

FIGURE 36: INTERACTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS KNOWN BEFORE JOINING AEN

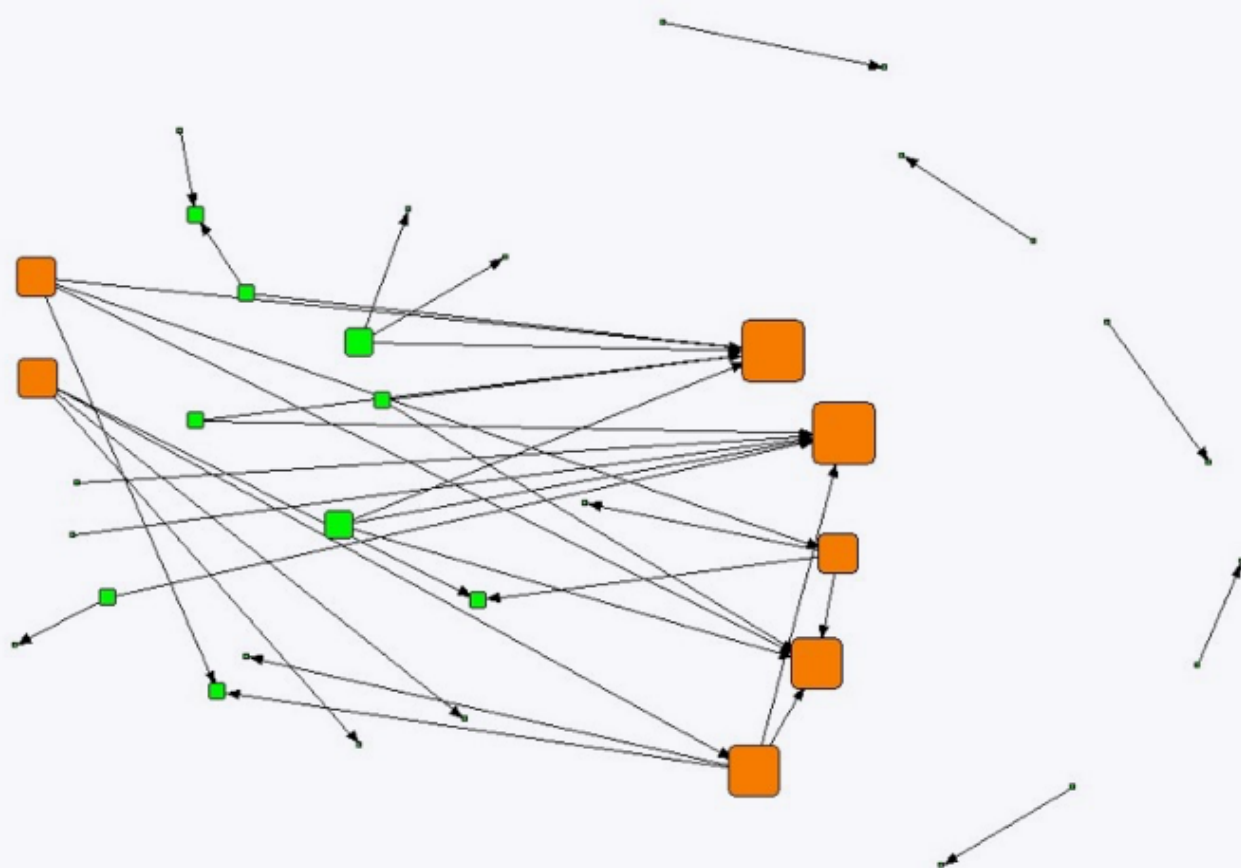


³ The network is arranged by degree of centrality, and index of the exposure of a node (person) in the network. In this case, the larger the dot, the higher the interaction of that person within the network.

According to table 10, on average individuals interacted with 1.09 other people on issues related to EIDM that they had known before joining the AEN and 1.028 people with individuals not known before joining the AEN. The density of interaction between individuals before and after joining the AEN was 0.006 and 0.029 respectively, with the overall level of connectedness between individuals having increased from 0.02 to 0.034. The level of fragmentation amongst the former group is 0.98 and 0.966 between the latter group. Table 10 shows that social network of interaction amongst individuals after joining AEN is more dense, compact, and connected even though it has fewer components (36 compared to 186 nodes) than that of interaction between individuals before joining AEN.

Figure 36 also depicts the individuals that are most interacted with by the respondents and includes six individuals operating in South Africa, and one from each of the following countries: Cameroon, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Uganda⁴. Five individuals from South Africa, one person in Uganda, and one person from Cameroon are the most central individuals for interacting.

FIGURE 37: INTERACTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS KNOWN AFTER JOINING AEN



⁴ These are highlighted in orange and individual name labels have been omitted for confidentiality purposes.

TABLE 10: KEY NETWORK PARAMETERS ON COHESION FOR INDIVIDUALS KNOWN AND NOT KNOWN BEFORE JOINING THE AEN

METRIC	INTERACTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS KNOWN BEFORE JOINING AEN	INTERACTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS NOT KNOWN AFTER JOINING AEN
Ties	206	37
Nodes	189	36
Avg Degree	1.09	1.028
Indeg H-Index	5	3
Deg Centralization	0.021	0.09
Out-Central	0.021	0.087
In-Central	0.09	0.146
Density	0.006	0.029
Components	186	36
Component Ratio	0.984	1
Connectedness	0.02	0.034
Fragmentation	0.98	0.966
Closure	0.148	0.143
Avg Distance	2.633	1.14
SD Distance	1.455	0.347
Diameter	7	2
Wiener Index	1830	49
Dependency Sum	1135	6
Breadth	0.99	0.968
Compactness	0.01	0.032
Small Worldness	172.013	53.128
Mutuals	0	0
Asymmetrics	0.011	0.059
Nulls	0.988	0.941
Arc Reciprocity	0.01	0
Dyad Reciprocity	0.005	0

6. WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT THE AEN MEMBERS WHO ANSWERED OUR SURVEY?

6.1. HOW THE AEN IS CHANGING?

It is difficult to comment accurately on how the membership of the AEN has shifted over the last two years because the sample of respondents is not necessarily the same between 2016 and 2018. What can be commented on is how many of the features of respondents between the 2016 and 2018 surveys have remained largely the same. Looking at the shifts we do see in the respondents, we see roughly the same proportion of female to male respondents as in 2016 (figure 38, table 11).

The representation of African countries has increased slightly from 2016, with a more diverse range of countries having a concentrated membership: in 2016, six respondents from Nigeria answered the survey while in 2018 21 Nigerian respondents answered the survey. Likewise, Uganda's representation too has increased from four respondents in 2016 to 16 respondents in 2018. South Africa remains a dominantly represented country in the AEN membership; this may relate to the physical location of the secretariat of the AEN being based in South Africa.

FIGURE 38: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RESPONDENTS FROM 2016 AND 2018 SURVEYS

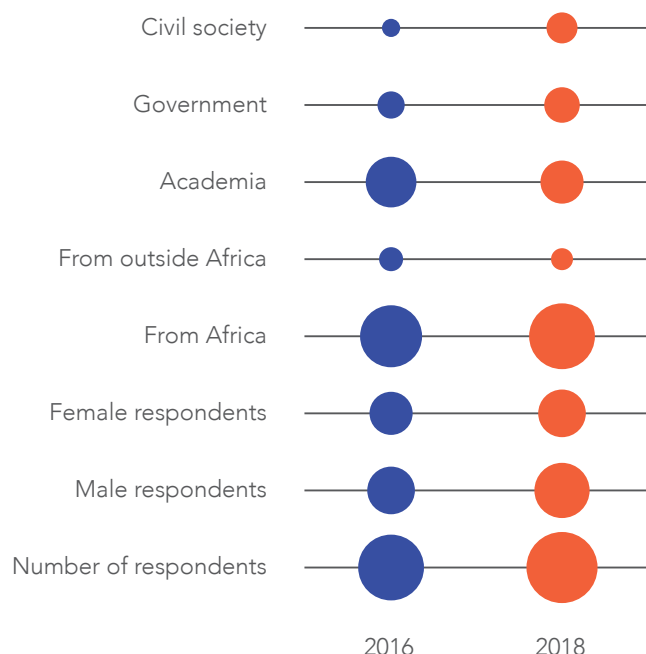


TABLE 11: DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS BETWEEN THE 2016 AND 2018 MEMBERSHIP SURVEYS

Feature	2016	2018
Survey respondents	138/722 ⁵	169/1571
Female respondents	63/138	68/169
Male respondents	75/138	100/169
From Africa	126/138	158/169
From outside Africa	12/138	11/169
Academia	83/138	59/169
Government	17/138	38/169
Civil society	7/138	35/169

⁵ Number of AEN members at the time of writing.

6.2. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES FOR THE AEN TO OFFER?

The most important function of the AEN, currently offered by the Network, that emanates from across the questions within the survey is information-sharing, currently in the form of the AEN website, newsletter, and social media. These services are valuable to members because the AEN is trusted to deliver relevant and informative information in an accessible way.

Although over half of respondents (n=68) describe themselves as active members, the most common way that members have participated in the activities of the AEN is fairly passive: 114 respondents had motivated others to join the network. This is in stark contrast to the 14 or 18 respondents who had participated in a more active way by either contributing to the newsletter or by writing a blog respectively, for instance. This uneven distribution of participation – coupled with the fact that half of the respondents participate in only a single activity (n=83) – can indicate that perhaps while the Network's reach is large, there is a smaller core group of individuals who actively participate in the different activities of the AEN.

Based on the responses to the survey, respondents self-identify as active members of the Network when there is a specific activity they are able to undertake. Examples here range and include being part of the reference or advisory groups, reading the newsletter and other communication from the Network, participating in the conference, or sharing experiences of the AEN with colleagues. Likewise, some of these activities – or rather the singularity of the activity – is provided as reason for why some respondents self-describe as passive members. As such, no standard image of what makes an active versus passive member emerges from the data provided in the survey for this specific question.

However, looking at the themes emerging from the respondents across questions within the survey, there emerges an image of what respondents think an active Network would look like: increased connection and interaction between members with members actively sharing information with one another, recognition as an AEN member that facilitates social media discussions between members, and more local visibility and presence of the AEN in countries outside of South Africa. The AEN secretariat or leadership may want to consider what the Network would consider active participation of members so to tailor services to members with different needs.

In terms of services that the AEN is not offering but should, it is important to note that most respondents are happy with the current service offering. Common potential services identified by respondents as possibly useful were firstly some sort of access to other members of the AEN and professionalisation of members of the AEN most commonly through capacity-building activities about real-world examples of evidence-informed decision-making delivered in face-to-face workshops. The Network leadership should carefully consider the best approach to facilitating access for members to the potential services mentioned above in light of the fact that most respondents reported being satisfied with the current service offering of the AEN. Considering that most respondents were both aware of new piloted activities and that most had participated in at least one of the pilot activities, the AEN seems to be reaching a majority of members in their communication about how members can participate. However, other comments throughout the survey indicate that not all members view the services of the AEN as adequate for their purposes. For example, one respondent felt that a useful service would be better exposure for her/his work. A question to explore in future surveys might be whether and why members do not use existing services – such as the blog or newsletter – to achieve this function, and how the AEN can publicise the various features of its current services more widely.

6.3. WHAT KIND OF NETWORK DOES THE MEMBERSHIP WANT THE AEN TO BE?

While the most valuable service of the AEN is its information-sharing service (through its website and newsletter), the role that respondents perceive the AEN as fulfilling is that of a connector between people or organisations. There is a need from within the respondents for the AEN to play this connector role more strongly. While most respondents were satisfied with the roles the AEN is playing, those that were not suggested the AEN fulfil one of three different roles more strongly: 1) the AEN should partner more, 2) the AEN should undertake training, or 3) the AEN should connect members together more. When asked what role in specifically capacity-building the AEN should be fulfilling, most respondents felt that the AEN should offer a mentoring programme. That this capacity-building activity won out over offering workshops and training events seems to indicate that the membership of the AEN wishes the AEN to be a more connected entity. Interestingly, the third most suitable option after the two mentioned above was for the AEN to promote the capacity-building activities of its members. This is an interesting observation for the AEN leadership to consider for two reasons: 1) the AEN currently offers this, yet the above answer would suggest that respondents do not really see it as doing so, and 2) if executed well, the promotion of others' capacity-building work in Africa would enhance not only the connectivity of the membership but also represent a low-cost option to fulfil this need of the AEN membership.

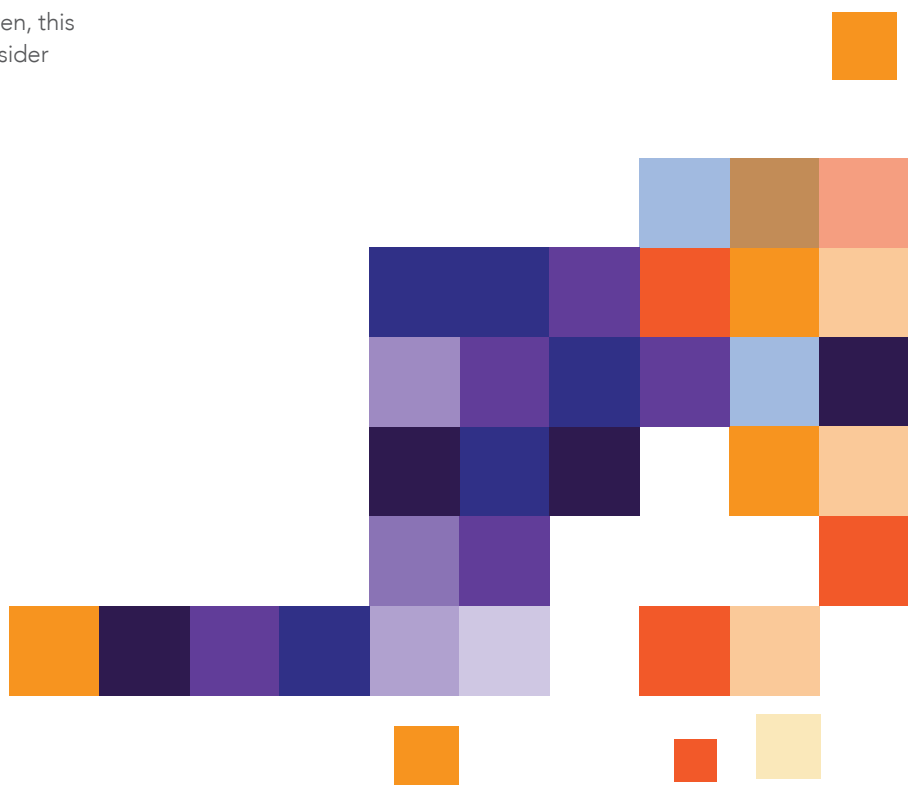
In terms of the AEN collaborating with others in the evidence-informed decision-making space in Africa, respondents wanting increased collaboration called most often for a change in who the AEN collaborated with, rather than how the AEN collaborated. For instance, in-country, under-resourced, non-English speaking implementing partners were provided as the kinds of organisations that the AEN should collaborate with more. The AEN leadership should consider exactly what is meant by collaboration and how different organisations may be partnered with differently.

This need for increased connectivity is one of the concerns the minority of respondents raised when asked whether they feel being part of the AEN has been valuable for them. The lack of connectivity to either other members or the activities of the AEN were cited as reasons for why AEN membership had not been valuable for the minority of respondents.

Most respondents to the survey felt that the AEN should formalise, including having a co-chair on a more permanent basis. Reasons for a co-chair included that it would act as a support to achieving the AEN's goals and increasing the AEN's representativeness within Africa. Formalisation was predominantly preferred by respondents as it is believed formalisation of the Network would allow for more recognisability of the AEN. These findings, and other responses from the participants in the survey, suggest that the respondents would like to see the AEN as either a career enhancement network or formal professional association that better connects individuals and organisations directly with one another. It is for the leadership of the AEN to consider whether the Network, with its current service offering and position in the evidence-informed decision-making landscape, can find innovative ways of becoming recognisable to members as this kind of entity in response to the participants of the survey. While respondents to the survey generally feel heard by the Network, awareness of mechanisms to drive change within the Network is not as widely applicable; in an effort to be more member-driven, this is an important element for the AEN leadership to consider how to enhance.

6.4. WHAT SHOULD THE AEN TRY TO DO DIFFERENTLY?

There are three things that respondents would like to see the AEN try and do differently. First, from across the questions within the survey, the AEN should innovate ways of connecting members more actively with one another. Part of what respondents feel would be a successful indicator of the Network achieving this would involve members actively sharing information with each other and engaging with one another via social media. The AEN should consider what offering capacity-building activities would look like for the Network; this is the second thing that respondents would like to see the AEN do differently. Respondents are eager for professional development through webinars and workshops that are distinctly AEN. This should be considered in relation to the segmentation that came through in the respondents to the survey: this survey report cannot answer whether established AEN members – as opposed to new members or members in the earlier stages of their careers – would agree with this need. Finally, the third thing that respondents feel the AEN should do differently is enhancing representation of the Network. Practically across the responses, this typically takes three forms. First, members should be able to perceive that the AEN is making an effort to move towards a multi-lingual service offering. Second, members should perceive the AEN as being present in their own countries, which could include hosting the conference in different countries throughout Africa. Having a floating chair was also thought by respondents as being able to enhance the representativeness of the Network. Finally, service segmentation should be considered for membership according to different focus areas (such as specific broad sectors like environment, health, etc) or membership type (individual versus institutional).





APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: NAME OF POTENTIAL COLLABORATOR SUGGESTED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

African Evaluation Association (AfrEA)
African Institute for Science Policy and Innovation at the Obafemi Awolowo University
African Institute of Health Policy and health systems Research studies
Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF)
Association of non-governmental organisations (CANGO)
BRIDGE
Cameroon Consumer Society Organisation (CamCoSO)
Centre for Best Practices in Health
Centre for Health Policy
Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI)
Centre for Social Research
Centre for Statistical Analysis and Research (CESAR)
Civil Society Organisation on Poverty Reduction (CSPR)
Cochrane
Cochrane Africa Network (West Africa hub)
Cochrane Nigeria
College of Medicine and its affiliates
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA
Credit Investment society Nigeria Limited
Dangote Group
Department for Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
Department of Research in the Ministry of Health
Development Practitioners Network of Zimbabwe
eBASE Africa
Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)
ehealth4everyone
Ethiopian Center for Policy Study and Research
Ethiopian Evaluation Association
Ethiopian Evaluation Association (EEvA)
Ethiopian Planning Commission

Ethiopian Statistic Agency
Evidence Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet)
Evidence-informed Decision-making in Nutrition and Health (EVIDENT)
Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA).
Felix Houphouet Boigny University of Abidjan
Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO)
Ghana Monitoring and Evaluation Forum (GMEF)
Globacom
GLOBAL INNOVATION FUND
Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC)
Guild of practitioners
Hadassah Nutrition
Health Systems Research Unit at the South African Medical Research Council
Health Systems Trust
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
IDinsight
Impact Solutions
Institute of Health Management and Leadership Zimbabwe
International Initiative for Impact evaluation (3ie)
International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP)
Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC)
Knowledge Transfer and Management Unit at Ministry of Health of Burkina Faso
Makerere University
Malawi Association of Monitoring and Evaluation
Maps Initiative Nigeria
Ministry of Health Research Unit, College of Medicine
Ministry of National Development Planning
Monitoring and Evaluation Association of Swaziland (MEAS)
MRC
National Centre for Technology Management
National Commission for Science and Technology

National council of Science and Technology, Uganda
National Food and Nutrition Commission
National Nutrition Programme
National Orientation Agency of Nigeria
National Registration Bureau
Nigerian Association of Evaluators (NAE)
Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER)
Nigeria's Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution
Nutrition Association of Zambia
OPM
PACIRAD
Palladium
PAPAC
Parliament of Uganda
PASGR
Planning Commission
Platform of National Civil Society Organisations (PLANOSCAM)
Policy Research for Development (Repoa)
Port Harcourt Nymeobari Cooperative
REACH Trust
Research and Advocacy Unit
Royal Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
SA SDG Hub
SAIEH
SAMEA
Save the Children International
SOME - UNIVERSITY OF SOL PLAATJIE
Southern Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA)
Stats SA
Sustainable Health Systems
Swaziland Evaluation Association
Tanzania Evaluation Association
The African Capacity Building Foundation
The Evidence Informed decision-making centre based at the College of Medicine, the University of Malawi
The Khana Group

The Office of the Prime Minister
The Social Policy Network
The University of Swaziland (UNISWA)
Think Tank Initiative
Uganda Bureau of Statistics
Uganda Evaluation Association
Uganda Evaluation Association
Uganda Evaluation Association
UK government via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
University of Malawi MERU
University of Zimbabwe
USAID
World Health Organisation country office
Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)
Zambia Association of Monitoring and Evaluation,
Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research
Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU)
Zimbabwe Evaluation Society
Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Networ (ZeipNET)





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