



**BUILDING CAPACITY TO USE RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

# Africa Evidence Network survey report

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## Executive Summary

The Africa Evidence Network (AEN) was established in 2014 with 23 members. The purpose of the network is to create a platform that allows professionals that function in the production and use of evidence to inform policy decision making in their countries. Over the course of the last three years the AEN has grown its membership to over 700 members. The AEN is housed and funded through the UJ-BCURE programme. This programme will come to an end at the end of 2016. The AEN is currently focusing on the way forward for the Network and working toward developing a sustainability plan that will carry the Network into the future.

As part of this plan, the AEN conducted an online survey during the month of May 2016 to all the members in order to understand what is it we are doing right, where we can improve and what opportunities can be created in order to generate income in order to keep the network running optimally. At the time in which the survey was carried out the AEN had over 600 members. Twenty percent of the total AEN membership responded to the survey. In addition to the survey, one-on-one interviews were carried out with a selected number of members in order to substantiate the finds of the online survey. A network analysis was also conducted to understand how we can expand our network with existing networks. The following report outlines the findings of the survey and network analysis. The limitations of the survey have been acknowledged, particularly since this is a single survey carried out at one point in time and not over a period of time, measuring changes in membership.

The report will demonstrate that the majority of respondents were from South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe. These are the countries the AEN have conducted road shows in and so has a bigger presence; however overall members from 19 countries responded. The majority of respondents saw the AEN as a provider of information regarding evidence informed decision making. The monthly newsletter also seemed to be the preferred service for communicating what was currently happening on the Continent with regards to EIDM. When asked what additional services the AEN could offer there was almost a fifty-fifty split between respondents saying they were happy with the current service offering and those who suggested that services that increase interaction between members and services that support capacity-building be additions to what is currently being done. It was observed that many of the respondents who answered the questionnaire are new to the AEN. Thus when asked if they had gained any value out of being a member, almost a third of respondents said no. Having said this, almost 50% of those who did respond said that they are willing to pay a membership fee. This demonstrates room for growth when considering the way forward for the current membership and the AEN as a Network. To support this, it was identified through the survey that members are very interested in participating in Network activities. More than 60% of respondents said that they would be interested in contributing to the newsletter and more than 50% offered to make evidence available. More than 70% of respondents said that they would be willing to motivate their colleagues to sign up to the AEN.

The findings of this report are very encouraging for the future of the AEN. The Network survey is part of a wider pool of information and data sources that is being gathered to support the sustainability plan for the Network. The sustainability report will be made available at the end of 2016, outlining the information gathered from this survey in conjunction with key informant interviews and data gathered from the Evidence 2016 Conference.

## Background

### History of the Africa Evidence Network

In December 2012, the Campbell Collaboration and 3ie held a mini-colloquium on Systematic Reviews in International Development in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Attending the mini-colloquium were a few delegates from Africa who, to varying extents, had backgrounds centred on research synthesis methodologies and evidence use. Included in these delegates were members of the South African and Ugandan governments, as well as colleagues from universities across Africa from Egypt to South Africa. The Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence programme based at the University of Johannesburg (UJ-BCURE) director Professor Ruth Stewart was among these delegates who decided to set time aside to meet during the colloquium, surprised by the large African contingent present at an event in Asia who had expertise in the field of evidence. 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 linking up people involved in research synthesis and evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) should be developed to share their experiences and ideas around EIDM. In December 2012, the Africa Evidence Network (AEN) circulated its first official communication with these founding members, and in 2014 – aided by funding received from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) for a project entitled Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) – the AEN was officially born. With the original delegates as the first 23 members, the AEN was established with the remit to facilitate connections between EIDM practitioners in Africa with one another and the wider EIDM field.

### Governance structure

The AEN has been funded through the UJ-BCURE programme based at the University of Johannesburg (UJ-BCURE). The UJ-BCURE programme aims to build the capacity of policy-makers to adopt evidence in their policy decision-making processes. The founding chairperson – Professor Stewart – volunteered to take on the role of AEN chairperson from the meeting in Dhaka. The network's activities are coordinated by Professor Stewart in collaboration with members and external partner organisations. All the activities of the AEN are overseen and carried out by a coordinator<sup>1</sup>. The development of the AEN is guided by inputs from the Steering Committee of UJ-BCURE programme which consists of partners to an end-beneficiaries of the UJ-BCURE programme. The AEN is funded as part of the UJ-BCURE programme with funds from DFID but operates as a completely separate body from UJ-BCURE on all counts.

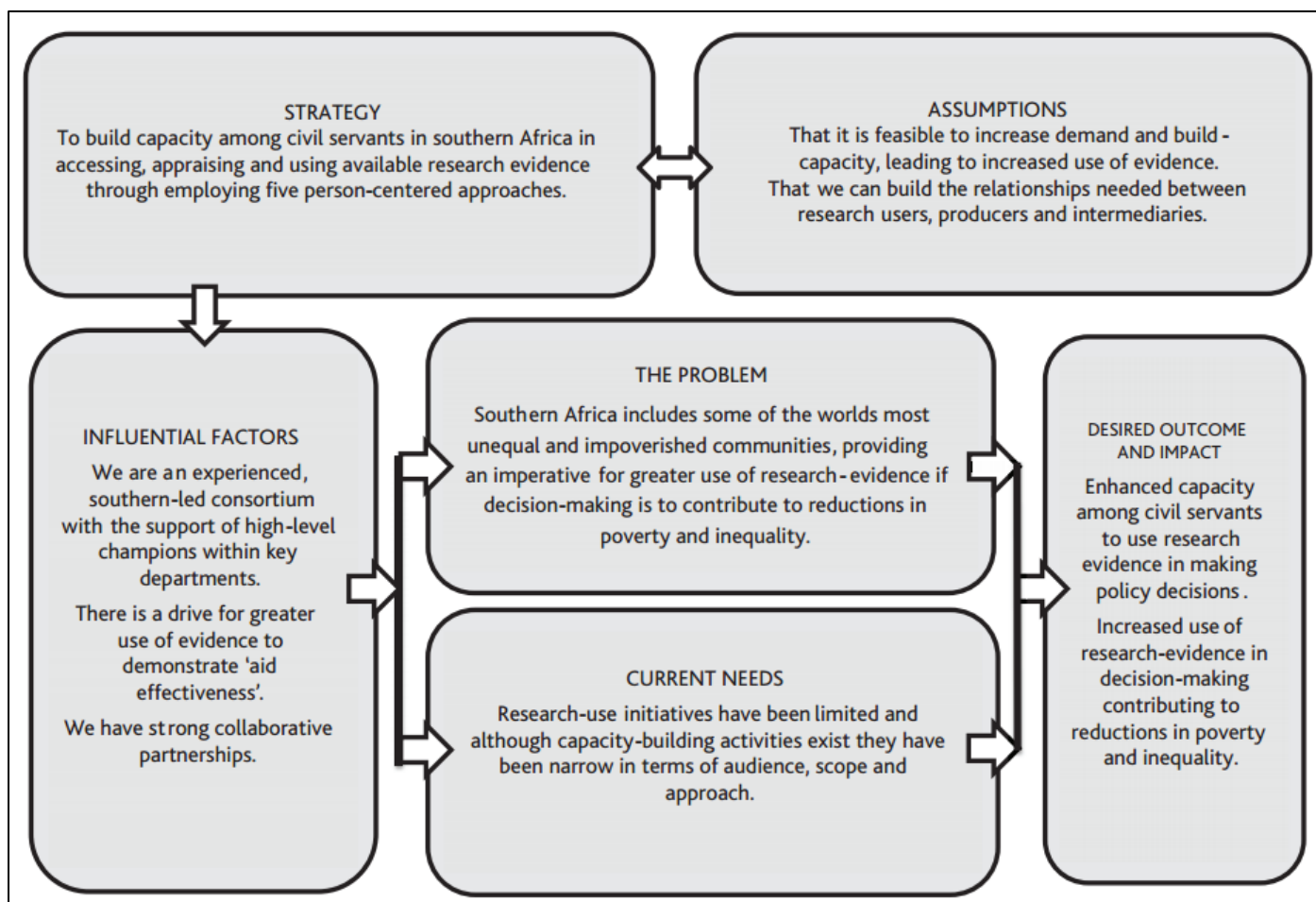
### Theory of change, remit, and activities

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 is based on the theory of change that underscores the work of UJ-BCURE (Stewart 2015). Funded as part of a project that seeks to increase the research evidence used in decision-making for the benefit of poor people in South Africa and Malawi specifically, the remit of the AEN includes growing a community of practice on the continent to act as a conduit for improved EIDM in Africa. The AEN achieves this aim by becoming a mechanism through which producers and users of evidence can connect, communicate, and collaborate. The AEN also acts as a body in which to embed the UJ-BCURE work within Africa so as to create meaningful and lasting change by providing members (both supply and demand side of the evidence chain) with a conduit through which to maintain relationships that are created. By working collaboratively in an environment presumably open to building relationships as depicted in the UJ-BCURE theory of change in Figure 1, the network achieves this role through a variety of activities:

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, the AEN coordinator was Ms Precious Motha; Ms Hazel Zaranyika was the AEN coordinator at the inception of the network.

Figure 1: Theory of change of the UJ-BCURE project (Stewart 2015)



### Promoting EIDM in Africa

In 2016 the AEN partnered with various other African organisations in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa to host events entitled roadshows. A roadshow was a small-scale event where both the AEN showcased themselves and their hosting partner presented the work they are currently involved in to individuals within the partner organisation's network who were not necessarily AEN members. The aim of the roadshows was to promote EIDM in Africa among civil servants and practitioners to generate demand for programmes undertaking to enhance capacity in using research evidence to inform decisions.

### EIDM capacity-building

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. The website also hosts a database of over 400 capacity building resources. All members of the AEN are able to download slides that cover topics such from 'Accessing Evidence' to 'Integrating Evidence'. Additionally, members are welcome to submit content regarding their own capacity-building work to the AEN.

### 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 as organisations external to the Network. The knowledge sharing role of the AEN can take a variety of forms, including sharing films from projects – such as the UJ-BCURE project – that highlight EIDM work active on the continent.

## Fostering a community of EIDM practice

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

## Growth of membership

The AEN was founded by 23 members; by the end of March 2014, that number had grown by 81 members to 104. By the end of 2014, the AEN membership had grown by 146 members to include a total of 250 individuals. The 2014 AEN colloquium made great strides in boosting membership, pushing the number of AEN members up by an additional 104 people (to a total of 354) by the beginning of 2015. By the end of that year, the AEN membership had grown by 32% to a total of 563 members. At the time of writing<sup>2</sup>, the AEN membership had grown to include 722 members from across the globe.

## Thinking beyond 2016

As the UJ-BCURE project prepares to wrap up its activities at the end of 2016, the AEN needs to look to its future and develop a strategy to continue with its activities in support of its remit. To this end, the AEN is developing a sustainability plan to guide the AEN into a future without direct donor funding. In order to develop the most suitable plan for making the Network self-sustaining, it is imperative to understand what the membership looks like, what role the members of the AEN see the Network fulfilling, how members use the services offered by the AEN, whether members feel they have gained value from being part of the Network, and the various ways in which members would be willing to participate in the AEN's activities. Due to the centrality of these issues in developing a sustainable network, the AEN Chairperson commissioned a survey of the membership. A clearer answer to the abovementioned issues will be the starting point for discussing various options available to the AEN for sustaining its activities beyond 2016. In addition, the AEN selected 40 people from the survey and conducted membership interviews with these people to probe deeper into their responses in order to guide the way in which needs could be met through a sustainability plan. The Chairperson of the AEN also commissioned key informant interviews with the friends and partners of the AEN in order to understand best practice in terms of running a network. The information and data collected from these interviews will be reflected in the AEN's Sustainability Report which is set to be completed by November 2016.

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<sup>2</sup> August 2016

## Analytical framework and methods

The analytical framework of the report is created to help the AEN collect, sort, prioritise and interpret the information and data collected for the sustainability plan. The purpose of an analytical framework is to give the study an analytical and disciplined methodology allowing a systematic evaluation of the data to enable the UJ-BCURE team to identify the main data needed to come to a conclusion.

### AEN survey

The survey was designed to be an online survey as currently the main method of communication with the AEN membership occurs via email.<sup>3</sup> The survey was designed to take a maximum of ten minutes and was piloted on members of the UJ-BCURE team as well as associates external to the team multiple times during April 2016 before it went live to the AEN membership. The survey was conducted throughout the month of May 2016. To motivate AEN members to participate in the survey, a waiver for the Evidence 2016 Conference registration fee was put forward as a prize. Reminders were also sent out to members on a weekly basis. Below are details of the methods used to gather and analyse the survey data.

### Survey questions

The AEN survey questions were designed in consultation with the entire UJ-BCURE team during a brainstorming session. The session took the work-plan that had been developed for the sustainability plan and designed questions to address the key guiding objectives mentioned therein. The guiding objectives that informed the development of the survey questions are as follows: 1. Understand who the AEN members are in terms of their demographics, sectors, affiliations, etc.; 2. Understand what services the AEN offers that are of significant value to members and those services that are not of value to members; 3. Become aware of any barriers that may exist to hinder the uptake of AEN services by members; 4. Make explicit opportunities that have been created for members through the AEN and where more opportunities for members may be created in future; and 5. Explore what options exist to sustain the Network, including asking questions around financial sustainability. The thematic areas that participants were questioned on included demographic information (including members' sector and gender), the perceived roles of the AEN, the frequency of service-use by members and experienced barriers to service-use, the perceived value of AEN membership including questions around the payment of a membership fee, how members would like to become involved, and questions on members' connections before and after joining the AEN to be used as part of the social network analysis of the AEN. The full survey can be accessed in Appendix 1.

### Survey analysis

The results of the survey were analysed using thematic analysis. The survey results were divided into three parts for analysis: a demographic description of the AEN members who responded to the survey, a description of themes in responses to each question of the survey, and a social network analysis. The frequency of each response within survey questions was reported, and at times specific comments were provided to illustrate a point. The free-text responses from participants were captured as fully as possible by clustering these into themes and reporting on trends that emerged from each answer. The social network analysis aimed to identify the overall structure of the membership relations in the AEN and how these have changed over time. That is, the social network analysis calculated the overall compactness and interconnectedness of network structures within the AEN. These were then visually represented in a network graph showing all the relationships between the surveyed AEN members before and after joining the Network. Thereby, the social network analysis allowed insights into patterns of interaction and relationships between AEN members in order to understand the nature of the AEN as an organisation.

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<sup>3</sup> The AEN coordinator maintains a database of current members' email addresses that is used to share a monthly newsletter, among other communications.

## Findings and discussion of the way forward for the AEN

The discussion brings together the three components of the analysis (the social network analysis, per question discussion, and the members' demographics) by drawing out similarities and differences in members' responses. The discussion also highlights questions that emerge from the findings of the survey report that should be addressed in the larger sustainability report by various other data.

## Limitations

As mentioned above, the survey was carried out during the month of May 2016 which limits the data collection to a single point in time: the membership is continuously growing and so the survey was only available to those who were members at the specific point of administering the survey. Many of the members are also new and so have not had enough time to make use of all the current services offered by the AEN. The survey results could have been made more reliable had two or more surveys been carried out over a period of time to measure changes in responses and members. Administering two or more surveys however was not possible in this instance as it can be time consuming and costly. Given the resources and capacity available to the AEN, carrying out more than one survey was impractical. While the online form in which the survey was administered was the most cost-effective way to gather the data, this method was limited from the perspective that it relies on recipients having reliable internet access. This dependence on an online format – especially in the context of Africa where internet connectivity may be either costly or unreliable – may have decreased the number of people able to respond to the survey.



## Members' survey responses

The findings of the survey are divided according to the various sections in the data collection tool. First, the demographics of respondents is highlighted, including information on the sector, designation, and gender of survey respondents. The next section of the findings addresses each question of the survey in turn, underscoring themes within members' responses. After that, the social network analysis (SNA) unpacks the network structure of the AEN generating insights on relationships between members and the patterns and clusters of interaction within the Network.

### Respondents' demographics

Of the 722<sup>4</sup> network members, 138 (removed three duplicates) members responded to the survey. Of these, the gender of the survey respondents was split fairly evenly: 45.6% (n = 63) of survey respondents are female with male respondents making up 54.3% (n = 75) of survey respondents. The designation of the survey respondents was attainable for 135 of the 138 members who responded.<sup>5</sup> Of these 135, 83 members are designated as researchers; 17 members are in government roles; seven members work in non-governmental organisations; and 28 members are in roles designated as 'other', which include journalists, consultants, and practitioners. Respondents were asked to provide in their own terms which sector their work mostly fell in. Many sectors provided were cross-cutting: for instance, one respondent described the sectors in which they worked as education, health, human rights, agriculture, research and development. For the verbatim descriptions of respondents' sector/s, see Appendix 2. The sectors most commonly and consistently named included health (n = 11), education (n = 9), development (n = 8), agriculture (n = 5), and academia (n = 6).

As Table 1 depicts, the majority of respondents were from Africa (n = 126 / 91.3%). The countries with the highest number of respondents were South Africa (n = 59), Malawi (n = 17), Zimbabwe (n = 15), and Kenya (n = 11). Survey respondents based outside of Africa were from India (n = 1), Portugal (n = 1), Switzerland (n = 1), the United Kingdom (n = 5), and the United States of America (n = 4). When members were asked whether they were part of other networks, 21% of respondents stated that the AEN was the only network to which they belonged. The remaining 79% answered that the AEN was one of several networks to which they were affiliated. Some of these networks included the Somaliland Statistical Association, the Cochrane Collaboration, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, and the African Evaluation Association.

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<sup>4</sup> All numbers correct as of August 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Data on the designation of three members were not on record nor could we find them via a desktop Google search.

Table 1: percentage distribution of survey respondents' countries

Africa													
South Africa	Malawi	Zimbabwe	Kenya	Nigeria	Uganda	Cameroon	Ghana	Tanzania	Tunisia	Somaliland	Somalia	Liberia	Ethiopia
42.8%	12.3%	10.9%	7.9%	4.4%	2.9%	2.9%	2.2%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
59	17	15	11	6	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1

Outside Africa				
UK	USA	Switzerland	India	Portugal
3.6%	2.9%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
5	4	1	1	1

### Per-question description

The following section takes the survey question by question and provides the participants' responses to the survey questions on the role of the AEN, the AEN services and barriers to service-use, the perceived value of being part of the AEN, and how members would be willing to contribute to sustaining the activities of the AEN.

### The roles of the AEN

There were six roles that were offered to the members as possibilities for the AEN to fill. These roles were in knowledge brokering, supporting a community of practice, matchmaking between individuals and institutions, sharing evidence, providing capacity-building resources, and raising awareness of EIDM. Table 2 shows to what extent respondents<sup>6</sup> felt the AEN fulfils each specified role. The three roles that respondents felt the AEN most often occupied was that of evidence sharing (71%), EIDM awareness raising (56%), and supporting a community of practice (50%). The role that the smallest percentage of respondents felt the AEN fulfilled most often was matchmaking between individuals and organisations (32%). This matchmaking role was also the role that the largest percentage (albeit still a minority at 28%) of respondents did not know about. Between 32 – 39% of respondents agreed that the AEN sometimes fulfils the roles of knowledge brokering, supporting a community of practice, matchmaking, providing capacity-building resources, and raising awareness of EIDM. The smallest percentage of respondents (20%) felt that the AEN only sometimes shares evidence: 71% of respondents felt that the Network fulfilled this role often. Again, this evidence-sharing role was the role that the smallest percentage of participants were unaware of (7%). In the case of all other roles, less than 20% of respondents were unaware that the AEN fulfilled these roles (knowledge brokering, supporting a community of practice, providing capacity-building resources, raising awareness of EIDM). A number of respondents suggested various additional roles that they felt the AEN fulfilled. These included “creating synergies between governments and research institutions and academia”, “inspiring the use of evidence”, “information and skills development”, “influencing policy and decision-making”, “networking and partnership”, and “policy development and advocacy”.

<sup>6</sup> A hundred and twenty nine of 138 survey respondents answered this question.

Table 2: The extent to which respondents feel the AEN fulfils various roles

Role/Activity	Frequency		
	Often	Sometimes	I didn't know about this role
Knowledge brokering	48%	32%	17%
Supporting a community of practice	50%	33%	15%
Matchmaking between individuals and institutions	32%	35%	28%
Sharing evidence	71%	20%	7%
Providing capacity-building resources	44%	39%	16%
Raising awareness of EIDM	56%	32%	10%

### The services of the AEN

The Network offers a multitude of services: the website, a resource database, capacity-building resources, monthly newsletters, a Twitter feed, regular blog posts, a LinkedIn page, a YouTube channel, and various AEN events<sup>7</sup>.

Table 3 details the breakdown of how frequently within the last 12 month period respondents have made use of the AEN's services. Of all the services offered by the AEN, the newsletter was used most by 94% of respondents (69% of respondents stated they used the newsletter often and 25% answered that they sometimes made use of the newsletter). The newsletter is delivered electronically in PDF format to the inboxes of members on a regular basis, making it the most easily accessible service available to members. The second most popular service among members was the website, with 37% often and 50% sometimes making use of this service. The website acts as a portal through which to access many of the others services of the AEN, including the membership database, access to the capacity-building resources, and the Network's blog posts. Since the inception of the Network, there have been over 29000 downloads from the AEN website. Over 50% of participants responded that they had made use of an AEN event (56%), the resource database (53%), and the capacity-building resources (55%) respectively.

The LinkedIn page of the network was the service identified as being used the least by respondents: 54% of respondents never use the LinkedIn page while 23% were unaware that the service existed. This finding is unsurprising, given that the AEN LinkedIn page is a recent addition to the suite of services offered by the AEN.<sup>8</sup> A quarter of the respondents were unaware of the AEN YouTube Channel, while 51% of respondents stated they never make use of the YouTube channel. Currently the YouTube channel is home to the various films produced as part of the UJ-BCURE project, which include a film about the growth of the AEN in its first year of existence. Five films are planned to be produced in 2016, one of which will be a film that can be used to promote the AEN, what the Network offers, who is part of it, and how it has made changes in the lives of its members. Sixty four percent of respondents stated that they either were unaware of the AEN's Twitter activities or that they never used this service.

In terms of the barriers that respondents experienced to using the AEN services, 128 (93%) of survey participants stated they did not experience any barriers to making use of the AEN services. Some of the reasons given by the minority who did experience barriers included limited time, unstable internet connectivity, lack of funding to attend the colloquium / conference, and lack of awareness about where to access resources. There was no recurring barrier to service-use provided by respondents.

<sup>7</sup> Events include the 2014 colloquium, the 2016 conference, and the roadshows that took place in 2016.

<sup>8</sup> The LinkedIn page was launched in March 2016.

Table 3: Frequency of respondents' use of AEN services

Services	Frequency of use			
	Often	Sometimes	Never	I didn't know about this service
Website	37%	50%	14%	5%
Resource database	12%	41%	28%	18%
Capacity-building resources	13%	42%	30%	14%
Newsletter	69%	25%	4%	3%
Twitter	15%	21%	52%	12%
Blog	12%	25%	46%	17%
LinkedIn	4%	19%	54%	23%
YouTube	2%	23%	51%	25%
AEN events	17%	39%	38%	5%

When questioned about what additional services respondents felt the membership of the AEN would benefit from, 77 (56%) respondents felt that the service offering of the AEN was sufficient and did not suggest any additional services be added. The remaining 44% of respondents suggested various services be added to those already offered by the Network. These can be roughly grouped into three categories: services that increase interaction between members, services that support capacity-building, and other services. The kinds of suggestions (in order of popularity) made by respondents that are part of the first group of services – those that facilitate increased interaction between AEN members – include online discussion groups, more face-to-face AEN events, public lectures, in-country chapters of the AEN, and an online discussion forum. Capacity-building services – which constituted the largest number of suggestions of additional services – included training to support capacity-building, academic courses, in-country learning events, peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities, and recommendation of courses where research can be accessed. The services suggested by AEN members in the 'other' category were opportunities to showcase members' work with those in their own countries, research publishing services, a list-serve, and fellowship and job opportunities.

A number of respondents suggested services that were similar if not the same as the services currently offered by the AEN. For instance, respondents suggested a platform to share recent research and showcase success stories, and advertise jobs: currently the coordinator of the AEN invites members to submit content of members' choosing for the blog and the following month's newsletter. Respondents also suggested more frequent conferences (at both local and international levels). The AEN hosted the first colloquium in 2014 in Africa and the second meeting in 2016; the sustainability report elaborates on the sustainability of hosting a biennial conference. Some network members who responded to the survey also requested a member directory and profiles of other network members. The member database exists on the AEN website in its current form to allow members to contact one another without compromising the privacy of members. A few respondents explicitly described the current service offering of the Network as sufficient: one respondent stated "I think it [the AEN] is doing more than enough", while another commented "I think a lot is being done but there is need for more publicity on some of the services offered".

### Value of being part of the network

When asked whether members had gained value from being part of the AEN, three quarters of respondents agreed that they had found their AEN membership valuable. Members consistently listed a number of reasons for having

gained value from being part of the AEN: 1) opportunities for networking with peers and EIDM practitioners; 2) the opportunity to learn from others; and 3) feeling up to date about the most recent developments in the EIDM sector both regionally and internationally. Other commonly cited reasons for respondents experiencing value as part of their AEN membership were the access members got to research, experts, and learning materials on EIDM; the chance for individuals to develop personally in their professional capacities; and being part of the EIDM awareness-raising movement in Africa. Many of survey respondents described themselves as new members, which is one possible reason for the 28% of respondents who felt their AEN membership had not been valuable.

Members were asked if they would be willing to contribute financially to the running of the AEN in the form of paying an annual membership fee for the AEN in its current form. Almost half of respondents (46%) indicated that they would be willing to pay, and specified, a membership fee for the AEN's current service offering. The size of the membership fee that respondents indicated they would be willing to pay varied greatly from \$335 to \$1.<sup>9</sup> The membership fees provided by respondents averages out to \$39 a year, while the most commonly mentioned values were \$20 (n=9), \$50 (n=9), and \$7(n=7). Some members saw the introduction of a membership fee as potentially beneficial, particularly if the services for and benefits to members were increased.

"I believe for the network to be effective it does have administration costs. Someone has got to meet these. In addition, this would enable the network [to] achieve even more in terms of activities and services for members".

"It depends on the amount but the membership is worthwhile though there might be need to increase benefits that members will enjoy".

There were members who explained that they would be willing to pay an institutional fee but that contributing financially to the AEN as an individual may be difficult. Eleven respondents (8%) either stated they were unsure about whether they would be able to contribute a membership fee or said they would pay a membership fee but did not provide a specific value. Sixty four survey respondents (46%) stated that they would not pay a membership fee for the AEN in the current form. Comments from members to explain their reasons for not paying (or to explain the selection of a specific amount) included the potential of a membership fee to exclude members who could not afford to pay it, difficult financial situations of members, and the difficulty of paying a team membership fee:

"I would be willing to pay the minimum amount like five dollars but would be willing to pay [the same] as others [members as] soon as situations improve".

"I would [pay a membership fee] in principle, but I'm part of a team. I wouldn't pay for individual membership and am not sure how we would approach team membership".

"[I'm] not sure. Our organisation would likely pay. However I would have concerns about [paying a membership fee] as I think our southern partners would possibly not be able to pay and would therefore be excluded".

### Member participation in the Network

There are a number of ways in which the membership of the AEN can get involved with the Network's activities. There were seven activities in which members could participate that were put to respondents in the survey; these were: promote the AEN through hosting an event through your organisation, write a blog post, contribute to the newsletter, make evidence available, make capacity-building resources available, motivate colleagues to sign up to the AEN, and match-make AEN members to individuals within your personal network (Table 4 highlights the specific number of members who would participate in each activity). The activity most respondents indicated they would participate in

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<sup>9</sup> All values have been converted to American dollars and rounded up to the nearest whole for the purpose of this report.

was to motivate colleagues to sign up to the AEN; the least popular selections were match-make AEN members to individuals within your personal network and write a blog post. Seven respondents did not make any selections.

*Table 4: Percentage of respondents willing to contribute to various activities of the AEN*

Promote the AEN through hosting an event through your organisation	Write a blog post	Contribute to the newsletter	Make evidence available	Make capacity-building resources available	Motivate colleagues to sign up to the AEN	Match-make AEN members to your personal network
44%	39%	68%	59%	45%	75%	38%

Respondents were also free to suggest additional activities they would be willing to participate in. These suggestions by members included the following: inviting students to AEN presentations, promoting the AEN through newly established organisations in other African countries, listing the AEN as a recommended resource on an EIDM journal's website, contributing to work on systematic reviews, and participating in the formation of in-country chapters of the Network.

### Key findings from the social network analysis of the AEN

The social network analysis (SNA) generated detailed insights in the structure of the AEN and interaction between Network members. Of the 138 survey respondents, 87 members stated they had ongoing interaction with AEN members, while 51 members reported no ongoing interaction with AEN members. Eleven members of those who reported ongoing interaction with AEN members stated that all their interactions and relationships were with people they had not known prior to joining the Network (i.e. these are new relationships facilitated purely by the membership of respondents to the AEN). Before interacting through the AEN, a total of 173 individuals connected with each other. This baseline EIDM network of 173 individuals facilitated 298 cross-linkages (or ties). However, at end-line, after being able to interact through the AEN, 240 individuals reported connecting with one another resulting in a total of 535 cross-linkages — a strong growth in interaction and relationships in the Network. On the other hand, over a third of survey respondents (n=54) did not report having any interactions with other members of the network.<sup>10</sup>

Unpacking the change in the African EIDM network and the AEN's potential contribution to that, the SNA provides encouraging findings. By all accounts, the AEN facilitated more interaction between a large group of people (nodes: + 67; ties: + 237). What is more though is that the AEN was highly successful in clustering and bundling interactions: that is, the Network succeeded in forming a hub for interactions and provided a central reference point for the EIDM community of practice in Africa. Figures 2 and 3 represent this development visually.<sup>11</sup> Before joining the AEN, respondents interacted on average with 1.7 other people on issues related to EIDM. After becoming members of the Network, this interaction increased to 2.2 individuals. The overall level of connectedness between individuals also increased from 0.12 to 0.43, and conversely the level of fragmentation in the EIDM networks identified decreased from 0.88 to 0.57. This finding underlines the performance of the AEN in centralising and channelling interactions and relationships between people.

The main contribution of the AEN is not per se that it leads to *more* interactions and relationships (although this happened too). Rather, the main role of the AEN as a social network has been to make the overall EIDM network *denser* and more *compact* with higher levels of *cohesion* (see Table 5) and more inter-linkages between members. This contribution can be illustrated by a network component analysis. Figure 4 shows that before joining the AEN, the

<sup>10</sup> This lack of reporting on interactions however may be as a result of hesitation to share this information on the part of the survey respondents.

<sup>11</sup> The mathematical calculations accompanying this finding can be made available on request. They have been omitted here in the interest of space.

overall network that people were a part of was clustered in 35 components. After interacting through the AEN, this network level decreased to 20 components as shown in Figure 5. For example, the components Zim 1-3 are now integrated as part of the AEN caucus; the same applies to Malawi 1, 4 and 5, INASP, and SA 2. The main component of the EIDM network in both data points was the AEN. However, only counting existing interactions before joining the AEN leaves the AEN component to consist of only 50 nodes. After interacting and connecting through the AEN, the AEN component has grown to 157 nodes: more than triple its original size. The same trend holds true for other components that are not linked to the AEN caucus such as SA 1; Malawi 3; SA 6 & Zim 4; these networks merge at a higher level too.

The SNA also identified the most central individuals in the EIDM network (both before after the establishment of the AEN). At baseline 27 central persona formed the backbone of the African EIDM network. After the AEN began facilitating interaction between members, 36 central persona held the networks together. However the overlap between these two groups is only 13 persona; 23 new central persona emerged through the AEN and the 14 existing persona were embedded within stronger network structures so that their individual centrality decreased.

In sum, the SNA shows that the AEN is not a homogenous body but rather consists of many sub-components: it is a network of many networks. It has been successful in providing a hub to bring organisations and networks together. The Network has greatly increased cohesion and compactness in the overall EIDM network / community of practice. This process seems to happen by connecting organisational clusters through linking individuals representing different clusters with each other. However, the AEN is less effective in providing a hub for unconnected individuals to link up with other members and a large number of individuals report no interactions with other network members. All in all, it is very encouraging to observe how the AEN draws existing EIDM organisations and institutions together, and formalises and strengthens the links and ties between these. More work is required to understand why individuals remain isolated within the Network and how individual members can be offered more opportunities for active engagement and connection with other individual members.

Table 5: Key network parameters on cohesion

Parameter	Relations/Interaction before AEN	Relations/Interaction after AEN
Nodes	173	240
No Ties	298	535
Density	0.010	0.130
Avg Degree	1.723	2.233
Indeg H-Index	5	7
Deg Centralization	0.037	0.079
Out-Central	0.037	0.079
In-Central	0.037	0.079
Components	35	20
Nodes of main component	50	157
Component ratio	0.198	0.079
Connectedness	0.117	0.433
Fragmentation	0.883	0.567
Closure	0.50	0.058
Avg Distance	4.436	4.983
SD Distance	2.329	2.020
Diameter	13	12
Wiener index	15510	123726
Dependency sum	12014	98898
Alpha	0.636	
Breadth	0.962	0.892
Compactness	0.038	0.108
Mutuals	0.010	0.009



Figure 2: Interaction between respondents before joining the AEN

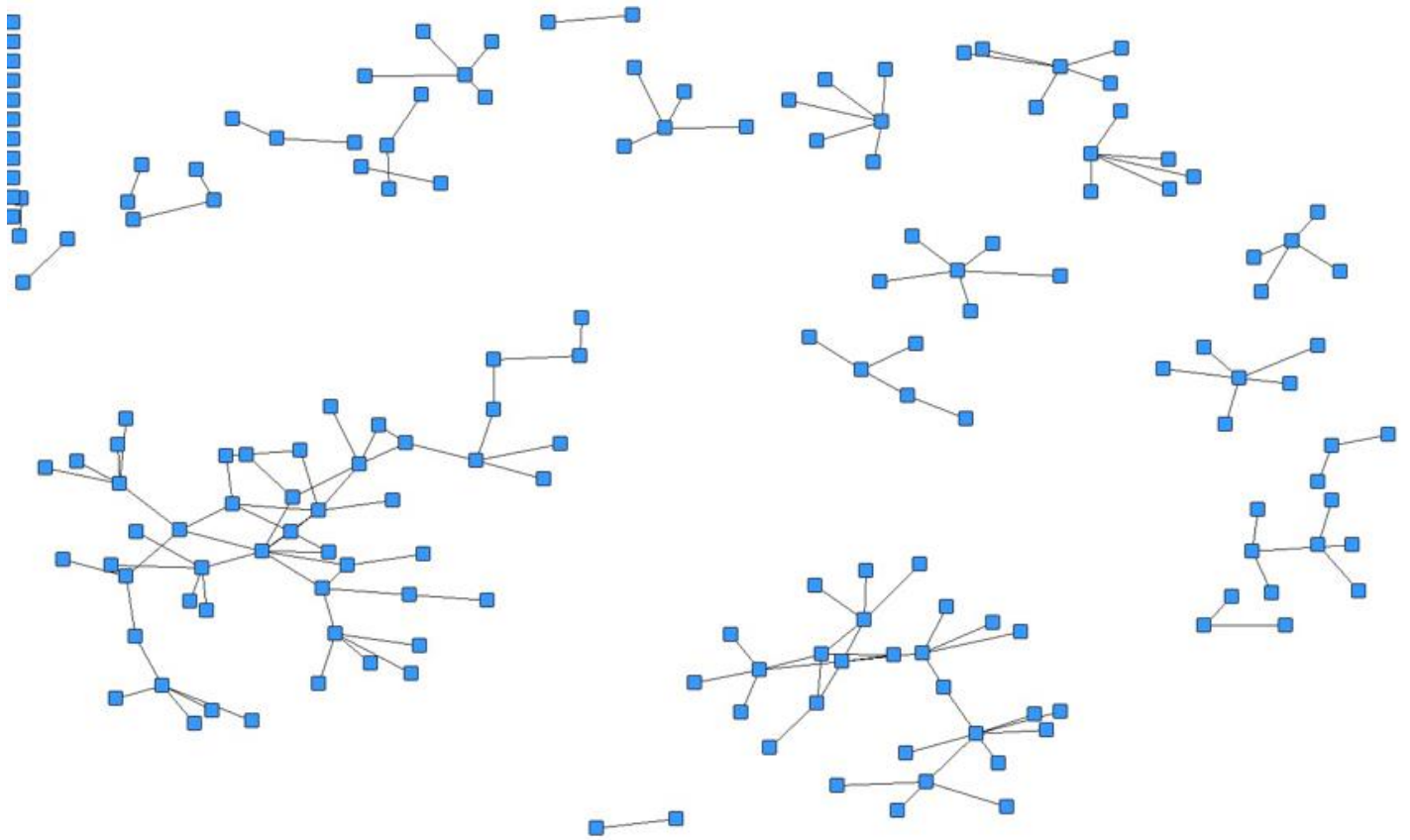


Figure 3: Interaction between respondents after joining the AEN

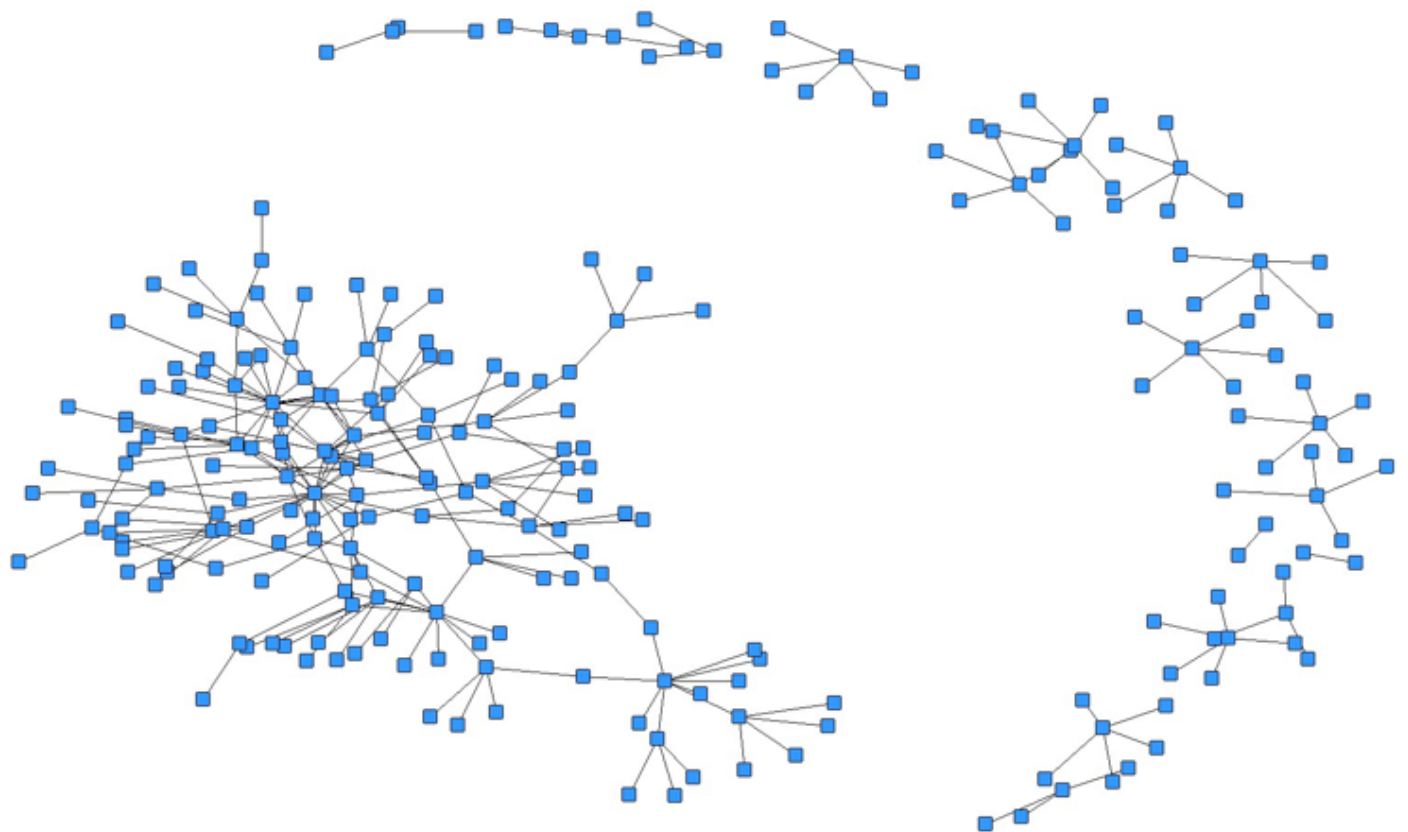


Figure 4: Network components before joining AEN

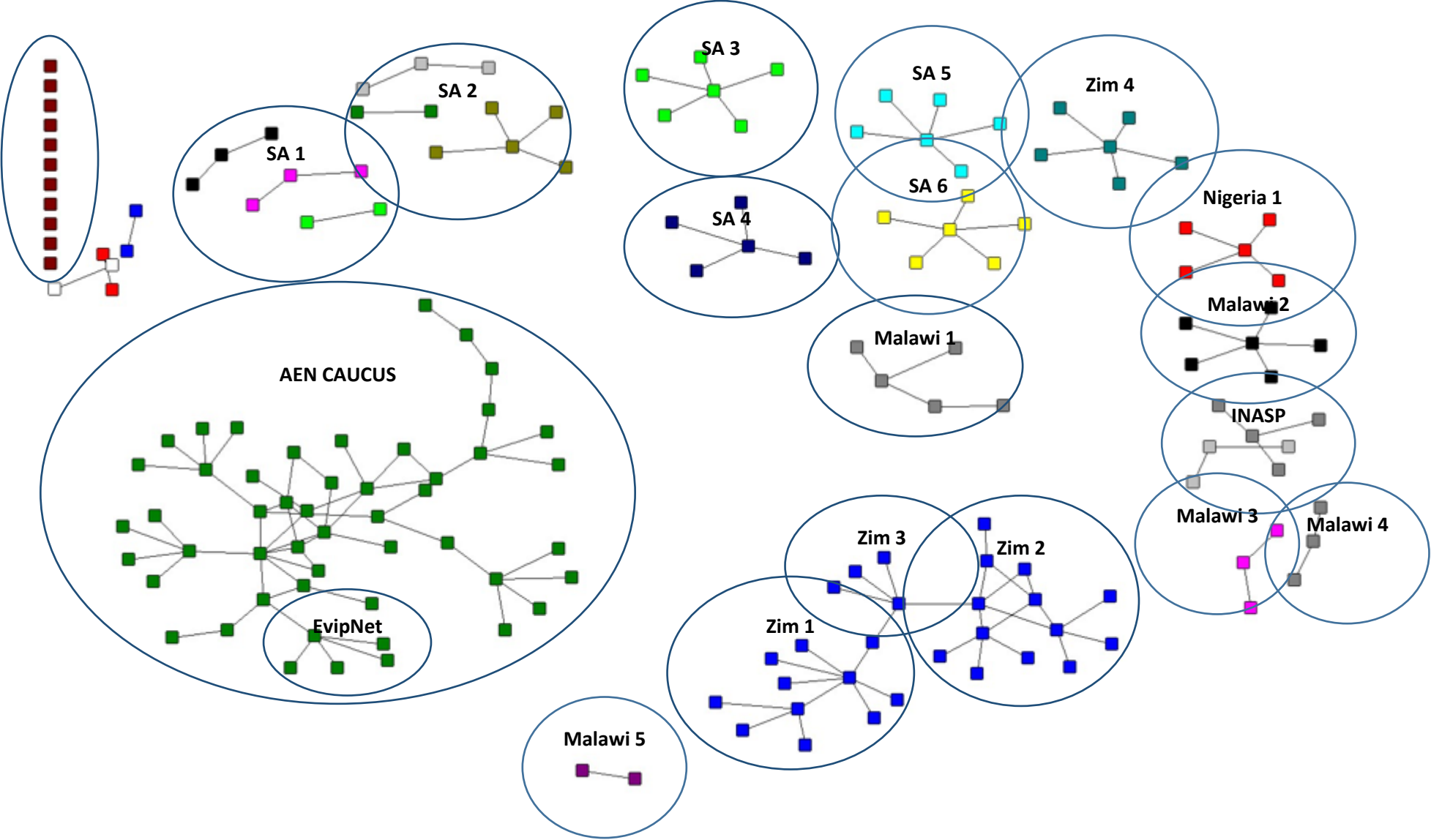
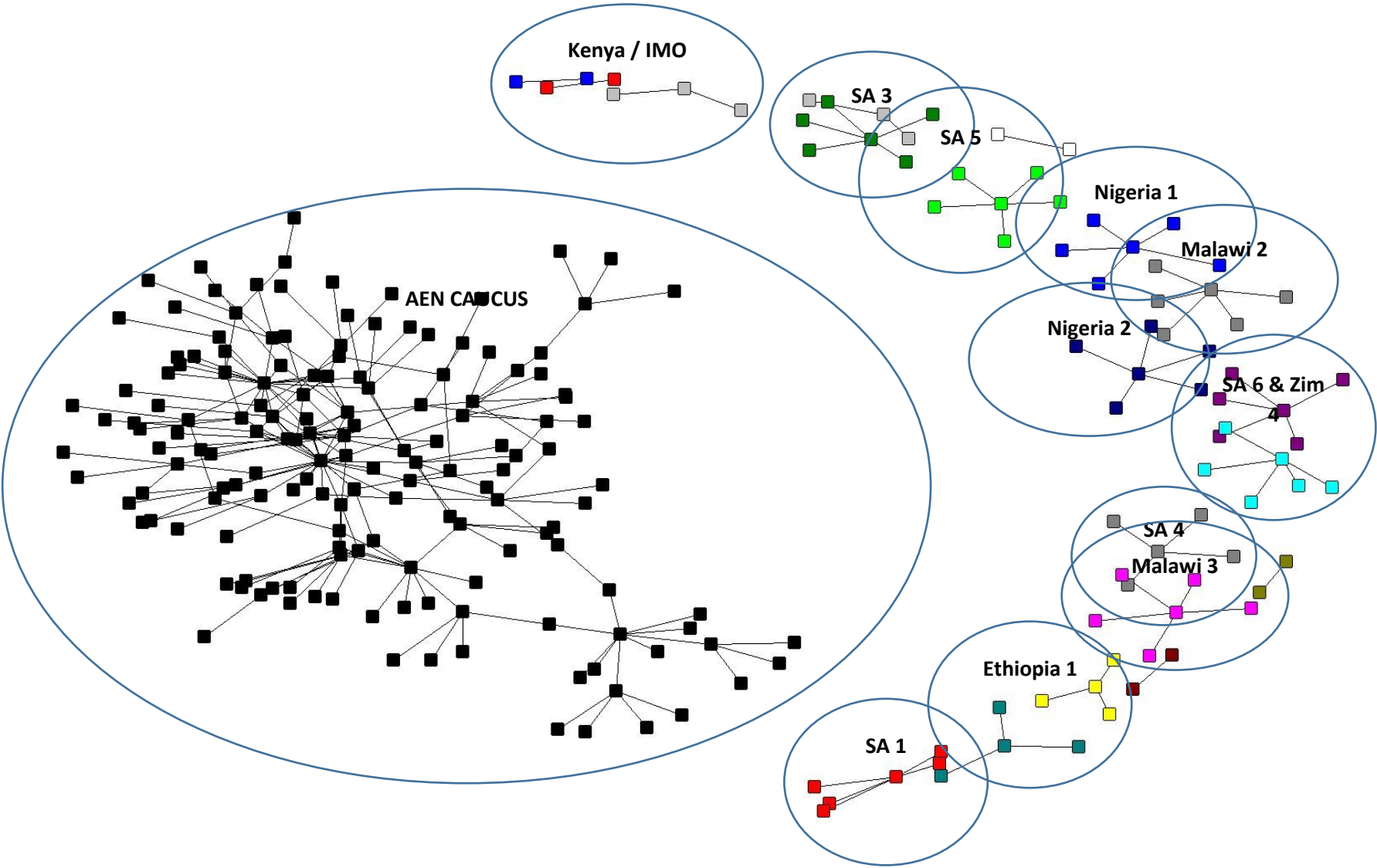


Figure 5: Network components after joining AEN



## Discussion

Following on from the demographic breakdown, per question description, and social network analysis, this section of the survey report makes an attempt at drawing out pertinent themes that have emerged from the survey responses. Specifically this section seeks to highlight themes that emerge from the survey which point to various questions to be addressed by the sustainability report on the AEN (available towards the end of 2016). The discussion section is divided thusly: members' perception of the AEN, the value members gain from being part of the network, what the members want from the AEN going forward, and the questions raised from the trends emanating from the survey results.

### Members' perception of the AEN

Members were asked to rate the frequency with which they believed the Network fulfilled certain roles (page 9 of this report), as well as the frequency with which they had used some of the services offered by the Network. Members were also requested to comment on what additional services, if any, they would like to see offered by the AEN. The below section details how survey respondents perceive the core role of the AEN, followed by a discussion of what members' suggestions for additional services may indicate for the sustainability for the Network.

### Members' perception of the core role of the AEN

Some members see the core role of the AEN as an intermediary connecting members and their organisations with one another to foster a community of EIDM practice in Africa; this view is reflected too in increased levels of interconnectedness and individuals with whom people interact after having joined the AEN. Members described the AEN as:

“[Providing] opportunities for showcasing what institutions offer related to evidence-informed decision making”

“Creating synergies between governments and research institutions and the academia”

Other members see the AEN's core role as being quite different to what the AEN is able to offer if the Network is to move into the future without donor funding. This disparate view of the core role of the AEN is seen in the additional services that some survey respondents feel the AEN should offer, many of which are simply beyond the capacity of the AEN to offer even now with a donor. Suggestions to “establish an academic journal”, offer “fellowship opportunities, job opportunities, [and]...exchange visits”, and “frequent conferences for network purposes [both] locally and internationally” indicate that members see the AEN as being in a strong, established position both financially and in terms of staffing. Further suggestions from survey respondents about future services support the view of the AEN as having a larger administrative team and financial resources than it does:

“[The] AEN should assist members and potential institutional members to launch their [in-country] chapters and also promote group funding as part of the Network. They should look for funds under the Network and give small grants to the members where possible”

“Allocation of more resources towards collaboration and partnerships between AEN [members] and African organisations that work in the research and policy environment”

“More visibility in the region by holding conferences [and] seminars in different countries”

While having these disparate views of the core role of the AEN is not necessarily problematic, it does present a potential challenge in terms of sustaining the network activities whose staffing to keep these activities going currently relies on successful finding bids. The services of the AEN are designed to be able to be offered on a voluntary basis with members participating to keep them going (e.g. submitting capacity-building content for the website, sharing researched generated during projects, writing blog posts and articles for the newsletters, etc). Members who view the AEN to be have more resources at its disposal than it does risk not participating in the abovementioned ways to sustain the activities of the AEN. The Network was set up to address the need for linking African decision-makers, practitioners,

and researchers interested in EIDM with one another but it can only achieve that goal as long as the AEN members actively participate in the services of the AEN. Their participation is directly influenced by whether they realise that without their input, the Network could not exist.

### The value gained from being part of the network

The vast majority of the respondents felt that being part of the AEN had been of valuable to them. There were two main reasons being a member was thought to be valuable – membership to the AEN allowed members to be made more aware of EIDM in Africa and stay abreast of developments in the field (both locally and internationally), and it allowed members to grow their professional EIDM networks into larger communities.

Membership to the Network has contributed to an increased awareness of EIDM in Africa among members. For instance, one respondent stated that “[the AEN has] made me more conscious of evidence in Africa”, while another stated that “now I know what other countries including Malawi [and] Zimbabwe are doing [in EIDM]”. These comments suggest that the AEN has successfully added to the awareness-raising around African EIDM and around EIDM in Africa. In terms of staying abreast of current affairs in EIDM, the AEN’s monthly newsletter specifically was commended extensively:

“I find the newsletter particular useful in keeping informed about initiatives and activities EIDM. As a research uptake communicator, I find it very useful and encouraging as a resource to help build my capacity and connect with other professionals”

“It [membership to the AEN] has been valuable mainly in terms of [my] use of its website and newsletter. These have helped me know what’s happening in the evidence-informed network”

“Periodic newsletters have been most insightful detailing current practices in specific fields”

“I have been able to find links to other opportunities through the newsletter”

“Helping to put EIDM on the agenda and not from [a] government perspective”

“It is very useful to know what is 'going on' within Africa and internationally (from the perspective of an African network)”

As the above comments reflect, the newsletter has been useful in exposing members to EIDM opportunities, keeping them informed with current EIDM practice from around the world and in Africa, and representing Africa’s perspective on EIDM. The other aspect of AEN membership that survey respondents felt was valuable was their ability to build communities around EIDM through the AEN:

“The annual meeting is an opportunity to network and for peer-to-peer learning”

“It’s been useful to network with other practitioners”

“My organisation has been approached by other organisations that we believe found us from the AEN database”

“Learning [about] what others are doing [in EIDM]”

“It’s good for learning exchange programmes considering that we don’t operate in a vacuum”

“It has helped me to learn from others and to build partnership with organisations and individuals implementing similar projects”

“[As a government employee,] it has allowed me to be involved in research synthesis projects established by the sector I’m in and partner with research synthesis experts”

“[I] have used it [the AEN] to put people in touch with each other and to suggest that they publish [together]”

“[Making] connections with other organisations”

All the above comments mirror the finding of the SNA that the AEN has functioned as a hub drawing to itself members that are part of other organisations to make the EIDM space in Africa more connected. This finding has potential for the sustainability of the AEN to act as a matchmaker between organisations in Africa to allow members of those organisations to establish relationships with one another.

### What members want from the AEN going forward

A number of suggestions were made by survey respondents for the AEN going forward. Some of the suggested additional services are already on offer; this section opens with a brief discussion of these. Other suggestions for what members want from the AEN going forward relate quite well to the core functions of the AEN – facilitating connection between people engaged with EIDM and enhancing the capacity of these to use, or encourage the use of, research evidence in decision-making. In addition to suggestions that fall within the abovementioned themes, this section also touches on the suggestions – or lack thereof – from members regarding the marketing of the AEN for the future.

### Members’ suggestions for additional services already offered

Many survey respondents indicated additional services or roles for the AEN to offer or fulfil that are actually already in place or where members would ideally take the lead. For instance, one member requested that a service be added to the current offering that allows for showcasing success stories in EIDM:

“[There should be] promotion and support for [an] avenue for members to share written experiences e.g. country case studies, success stories, and the like”

“[We] need to showcase success stories of evidence informed decision making and best practices”

Currently, the Network offers the newsletters and blogs as a platform for sharing members’ success stories in EIDM.

Survey respondents also requested additional services that already exist in the AEN offering but that depend on being taken up by members in order for them to happen. For instance, many respondents requested that more opportunities to link up with fellow Network members existed, stating that they “...would like to link up more regularly with AEN members” and that “more connecting between AEN members with individual members” would be beneficial. The idea behind the membership database and biennial conference is to facilitate initial connection and interaction between members of the AEN that could then be sustained by the members involved. It would seem that this connection is not happening as fully as members would like, since the SNA above indicates that more than a third of survey respondents did not report interactions with other AEN members. While there are likely a variety of valid reasons<sup>12</sup> for this lack of interaction between members, the AEN should consider in its sustainability report ways to ensure members are aware not only of how dependent on their activity the Network is but that they are aware of and able to use all the platforms available to them.

Another ‘additional service’ suggested by AEN members was the establishment of in-country chapters of the AEN. The desire for the AEN to have more of a presence throughout Africa may echo some participants’ feelings of being “side-lined” because of operating from outside of South Africa. Comments that indicate such feelings include:

“I live in Malawi and generally feel side-lined”

“Is there any way to decentralise AEN across regions of Africa?”

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<sup>12</sup> Two survey respondents stated that they had experienced a barrier when trying to access members online, although one member does not detail what that barrier was while the other refers to the need for an updated membership database.



“[The] AEN must expend in becoming accessible in other languages”

“AEN is a valuable platform and you need to try and make it Africa representative. Have representations from other countries”

“There is need for more collaborations and partnership between AEN an[d] other Africa[n] organisations who have a remit on research evidence in policy-making”

“Does the AEN use a quota system in selection of participants for periodic conferences?”

The above comments reflect among some members who responded to the survey a general feeling that the Network needs to have a more broadly African identity. The view of the AEN as not reflecting the diversity of countries within Africa is a point to be considered in the Network’s sustainability report as it has implications for potential members’ ability to identify with the Network and their desire to join the AEN: these factors may strongly influence the sustainability of the AEN in the future.

#### [Suggestions for additional services to facilitate connection](#)

Overwhelmingly, members desired more opportunities to connect with one another from the AEN. Opportunities to connect took one of two forms typically – online or face-to-face. Members were eager for online discussion fora as well as for an increase in the number of events in different countries across Africa:

“A forum for better interaction among members”

“[An] online interactive platform between members of the network (interact in real time to discuss a given topic of interest)”

“[The] AEN should create an internet discussion group for members whereby we can also interact through email”

“[There should be an] online networking forum where people could share experiences and ideas and even ask questions. If am not wrong the only time members can network is when there is an event...but not everybody attends”

“Have more open e-discussions blogs / talks and follow-ups. Update sessions with members whether online or ‘workshopping’”

“More face-to-face events”

“Peer-to-peer mentoring link-up”

“Peer-to-peer exchange activities”

“More visibility in the region by holding conferences [and] seminars in different countries”

Presumably increased opportunities for interaction between members via either online or in-person means will increase the connectedness of individual members within the Network. This potential benefit needs to be weighed against the cost and feasibility of the AEN offering such services; the sustainability report should explore this.

#### [Suggestions for additional capacity-building/enhancing services](#)

There was an immense call from those who completed the survey for the AEN to offer more complex capacity-building / enhancing services than it currently does. Suggestions included the AEN offering webinars, training on research methodologies for EIDM, workshops on professional development in EIDM, and online training courses. Some members suggested that the AEN simply recommend and signpost where members might access training and educational content related to EIDM.

“Linking up with bodies providing training on facets critical to capacity-building of AEN membership as per [their] needs. Such facilitation will go a long way in building a body of professionals to drive the EIDM agenda successfully”

“Does [the] AEN offer training courses in doing systematic reviews in Africa? If not, it should think about organising this”

“Education on the available evidence base, specialised workshops on various clusters”

The appetite for enhancement of members’ knowledge about EIDM and related topics showcases the incredible enthusiasm for EIDM in Africa. This eagerness presents a unique opportunity for the AEN to become a central hub for Africa on all things related to EIDM, linking to other networks and institutions as is necessary.

#### Pressing need identified by members

One thread running across questions within the survey and between respondents was the need for the AEN to publicise itself better. Many participants indicated that they were unaware of specific services that the AEN offered. Indeed some also made general comments about the fact that the survey had made them aware of all that the AEN does. Another aspect of the Network that some members were unaware of were the ways in which they could participate in the activities of the AEN. This lack of awareness made many participants call for better publicising of the AEN and its service offering. An excellent potential channel through which to advertise the AEN services may be the newsletter as this was the most popular service used by members of the Network. Members stated that publicising the Network would also assist in growing the AEN with new members, which indicates that members feel the AEN has something valuable to offer people operating in the EIDM field. The sustainability report should investigate potential ways in which the AEN could better advertise itself and what it has to offer.

“Robust marketing the network will make it known widely”

“[Our barrier to using the AEN services has been] no active involvement with and low awareness of [the] AEN's work”

“It [the AEN] is a very useful platform for learning [and] networking. Its visibility needs to be improved as many people are not yet aware of it”

“I do not know much about the AEN”

“The AEN needs to be more visible. People don't know about it”



## Questions going forward

The AEN was established with the aims of enhancing EIDM capacity in Africa, raising awareness of EIDM in Africa, sharing knowledge about EIDM, and growing a community of EIDM practice in Africa. Although there is no endpoint to achieving these goals, the AEN has made massive strides in accomplishing all four in significant albeit sometimes small ways. Reflected in this report is the first attempt at categorising the members of the AEN according to their various demographics, and assessing how the AEN is used, how the AEN is seen, and what the members of the Network want from the AEN going forward. This Network was established to address a need for supporting the growth of EIDM in Africa and connecting it to the larger field internationally. From the perspectives of the AEN members who answered this survey, the Network is carrying out that task very well.

Even though the AEN has been successful in working towards the goals set out for it by the founding members, many questions remain around what the AEN will be and what services it will offer beyond 2016 and the current donor funding. Some questions centre on the form the AEN should take:

- Should or can the AEN establish in-country chapters?
- Should or can the AEN become a fee-based body?
- What is the minimum membership fee that will sustain the current activities of the AEN and that will still be acceptable / feasible to the AEN membership?

Other questions that should be addressed by the sustainability report focus on the brand of the AEN:

- Will organisations pay to be affiliated to the AEN?
- How can the AEN sustain its current high standard of work without donor funding?

Finally, some questions raised look into what services the AEN should offer:

- Can the AEN sustain its activities by relying on the participation of the membership?
- What can the AEN do to increase the interactions and connections between members that is low- or no-cost?
- What low- or no-cost activities can the AEN engage in to promote its existence and services to continue growing the membership?

The sustainability report available towards the end of 2016 will delve into these, and other, issues regarding the sustainability of the Africa Evidence Network.

## References

Stewart R. 2015. A theory of change for capacity building for the use of research evidence by decision makers in southern Africa. *Evidence and Policy*, 1 – 11. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/174426414X14175452747938>.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Survey questions

EMAIL TEXT
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#### AFRICA EVIDENCE NETWORK SURVEY

Dear Mrs. Corne Engelbrecht,

Greetings from the Africa Evidence Network (AEN).

As a valuable member of the AEN, we need your assistance to plan for the future of the Network.

Firstly, you will note that AEN will be hosting its first conference – EVIDENCE 2016 – at the CSIR ICC from 20 to 22 September 2016. More information about the conference will follow shortly, but for now, please save the date.

As concerns the purpose of this message, I would like to request your time to help us improve the Network to meet your needs and expectations regarding the AEN. Thank you in advance for taking part in this AEN Member survey. The survey will help us to understand how the Network has grown in the last years, our current patterns of interactions and our progress to date. This survey includes a social network survey. This social network component maps the relationships between participants by surveying all members and then combining their answers. We need to use members' names on the survey in order to construct each person's web of contacts, however once submitted, data will be coded and de-identified.

**Individuals and institutions will be anonymous in all wider reporting of results.**

The survey will take around 15 minutes to complete. It would be very helpful if you could please complete this survey by **21 April 2016**.

To **Opt Out** of the survey, please email Corné Engelbrecht at [corne@confsa.co.za](mailto:corne@confsa.co.za).

To continue to the survey, please click the 'Start Survey' button below.

Thanking you in advance,

**Ruth Stewart**, PhD, Associate Professor

**Programme Director**, Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) and the Evidence-Informed Policy Team, Centre for Anthropological Research, University of Johannesburg

**Co-Director**, Johannesburg Centre of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence

**Senior Researcher**, Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre), Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

SURVEY TEXT
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**Welcome to the AEN Member Survey.**

The results from the survey will assist us in understanding how the AEN has grown in the last years, and inform us of current interactions between members to improve the service we offer to you. Your information will remain private,

once the survey is submitted data will be coded and de-identified. Please indicate where a question is not applicable to you. We thank you once again for your assistance.

Please answer all the questions. The survey will take around 15 minutes to complete.

**Please only put an asterix by questions that must be answered. The survey must not go through if not answered and must lead reader back to answering.**

1. \*Name (Full Name) \_\_\_\_\_

2. \*Contact email \_\_\_\_\_

3. \*What sector/s do you work in?

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4. \*Male ☐ Female ☐

5. What other networks and / or associations are you part of that relate to evidence-informed-decision-making (EIDM) or influences the work you do in your sector? (Please list) (This was not updated on the survey, it must read, 'part of')

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6. \*Please indicate how often you think the AEN plays the following roles:

This has changed to a likert scale

	Often	Sometimes	Never	I didn't know about this role
Knowledge Broker				
Community of Practice				
Matchmaker between individuals and institutions				
Sharing of Evidence				
Provision of Capacity Building Resources				
Awareness Raising for EIDM				

Other (Any other roles not mentioned above):

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7 has been deleted (8 now becomes 7)

7. \*Please indicate how often in the last 12 months have you made use of the below AEN services

**List services in a likert scale (Analysis does not need to be in a diamond graph, leave as likert scale)**

Services	Often	Sometimes	Never	I didn't know the services existed
Website				
Resource Database				
Capacity Building Resources				
Newsletter				
Twitter				
Blog				
LinkedIn				
YouTube				
AEN Events				

8. What other services (this includes products, online and offline services) would be useful to you that the AEN is currently not offering?

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9. \*Have you experienced any difficulties in making use of AEN services? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please specify:

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10. \*Do you feel being part of the AEN has been valuable for you, e.g. in terms of opportunities for partnerships with others who are interested in EIDM or getting better exposure to EIDM opportunities?

YES ☐ NO ☐ if Yes, please provide a specific example

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11. \*Would you pay an annual membership fee to be part of the AEN in its current form? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes ☐ please indicate how much you would be willing to pay and why. This was not updated it must read annual

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12. What would you be willing to contribute as a member to sustain the AEN? (update to fit )

Promote the AEN through hosting an event through your organisation ☐

Write a Blog ☐

Contribute to the Newsletter ☐

Make evidence available ☐

Make capacity-building resources available ☐

Motivate colleagues to sign up to the AEN ☐

Match-make AEN members to your personal network ☐

Other (Please specify) ☐

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## SOCIAL NETWORK QUESTIONS

In the following questions, we want to better understand the social structure of the AEN and the relationships and interaction between members. As indicated above, this information will feed into a social network analysis and will be fully anonymised in the analysis.

13. **Within the AEN**, name up to 5 people that you interact with regularly (either social or professional interaction). If you are not sure whether a person is an AEN member, you can write down their name nevertheless. Please indicate whether you knew the person before you joined the AEN, e.g. (John Maluwa, no). (You can no longer write names in here????)

List of AEN members	Knew before you joined the AEN	
1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

14. Name up to 5 people *you have most recently advised* on evidence-informed decision-making **within Africa**, please indicate their institutional affiliation. For example (John Maluwa, Department of Health). These can be people who are not AEN members as well as people who are. Advice on evidence-informed decision-making can refer to sharing of resources and tools; helping to find evidence; guidance on uptake strategies; linking researchers to decision-makers, etc. You may think of many more examples. Advice can be either formal or informal.

List of people you have advised on EIDM	Institutional affiliation
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	

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15. Name up to 5 people *that have most recently advised you* on evidence-informed decision-making **within Africa**, please indicate their institutional affiliation. For example (John Maluwa, Department of Health). This

can be people who are not AEN members as well as people who are. Advice on evidence-informed decision-making can refer to sharing of recourses and tools; helping to find evidence; guidance on uptake strategies; linking researchers to decision-makers, etc. You may think of many more examples. Advice can be either formal or informal.

List of people you have advised on EIDM	Institutional affiliation
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	

16. Please add any general comments or suggestion regarding the AEN, not included in the survey. This was left out on the survey

## Appendix 2: Sectors as written by respondents to the AEN survey

	N=138
Academia	6
Agriculture	5
Agriculture / fisheries	1
Agriculture, MSMEs, Agribusiness, Secure Livelihoods	1
All	1
Childcare Sector	1
Civic society, government	1
Conservation	1
Consulting	1
Criminal Justice Sector	1
Cross cutting – social development	1
Development	8
Development / research	1
Development and academic	1
Development evaluation and rural development	1
Early childhood development, capacity development of teachers and practitioners, network development and strengthening	1
Economic and social sector	1
Economic development, health, education, small business	1
Education	9
Education, health, human rights, agriculture, research and development	1
Education, women empowerment	1
EIDM, primary research and research synthesis, writing/editing, project management	1
Environment and agriculture	1
Environment sector	1
Environmental governance	1
Evaluation capacity development	1
Evidence synthesis, knowledge translation, health	1
Global health research	1
Governance	2
Government – industry and commerce	1
Government	2
Government / policy	1
Government social research	1
Health	11
Health / public health	1
Health and development	1
Health and livelihood development (planning, monitoring and evaluation)	1
Health department and environmental health directorate	1
Health education, epidemiology	1
Health policy and clinical practice	1
Health technology assessment	1
Health, development, social development, urbanisation, extractive industry	1
Health, education, monitoring and evaluation	1



Health, protection, livelihood and education	1
Health, water and sanitation, governance ,trade	1
Higher education	2
Information communication technology, science and technology studies, research uptake	1
International development	1
International development aid monitoring, evaluation and learning – education, economic development, environment, democracy and governance, health, energy	1
International development, public policy-making, evidence-informed decision-making	1
International public health	1
Invasive species sector	1
Knowledge brokering, evidence into policy, child rights, networking, policy dialogues and events	1
Knowledge management	1
Library information services (LIS)	1
Media	1
Medical device	1
Mining	1
Ministry of health, government institution	1
Monitoring and evaluation	1
National Registration Bureau	1
NGO	4
NGO / donor funders	1
NGO in evidence-informed policy-making	1
Non-profit (academia – social policy)	1
Non-profit, higher education, and research access	1
Population, health, environment, and development	1
Private sector development	1
Public	6
Public administration	1
Public health (2)	2
Public sector (policy coordination, monitoring and evaluation)	1
Public sector and community services	1
Public sector, criminal justice	1
Public sector: national government department	1
Public service (elections)	1
Research – environmental sciences	1
Research – poverty, humanitarian, social, public finance	1
Research (2)	2
Research and evaluation	1
Science communication	1
Security sector (police)	1
Sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, civil society engagement, community mobilization, regional integration	1
Social development and human settlements	1
Social policy, public policy, health, education, international development	1
Social sciences research	1
Social sciences research and science / research communications	1

Social welfare	1
SRHR, maternal and child health	1
Systematic reviews – health, education, environment, agriculture	1
Tertiary education, research related with social policies, and innovation	1
Traditional governance, local governance, development studies, socioeconomic rights	1
University (2)	2