

Working for solutions:

**a problem-based and
relationship-centred
approach to building
capacity to use research
evidence in Africa**

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Raising awareness of EIDM

Building capacity to engage in EIDM

Building relationships and networks for EIDM

Increasing the practice of EIDM

Jul '16 The South African DWS produced an evidence-informed draft national water stewardship policy, and committed to applying EIDM to future policy development

Jan '16 A high-level government group in SA around the practice of using evidence in government was facilitated by UJ-BCURE

Jul '16 AEN supported the production of 25 EIDM landscape maps across Africa

Aug '16 108 public servants mentored on a range of EIDM skills; 23 in-depth

Sep '16 A team mentorship with the South African DPME led to the co-production of an evidence map for DHS as an input into a White Paper on human settlements

At a glance: Selected highlights from UJ-BCURE 2014–2016

Sep '14 AEN hosted first colloquium on evidence-use in Africa

Dec '14 A database of capacity-building tools published online with 425 resources freely accessible to African decision-makers

Mar '15 A mentorship with the South African DBE yielded an evidence-informed Implementation Plan for e-Education, as well as a Strategic Plan for e-Education

Dec '15 Six cases of applied learning from Malawi were completed

Oct '15 UJ-BCURE international stakeholder feedback event held

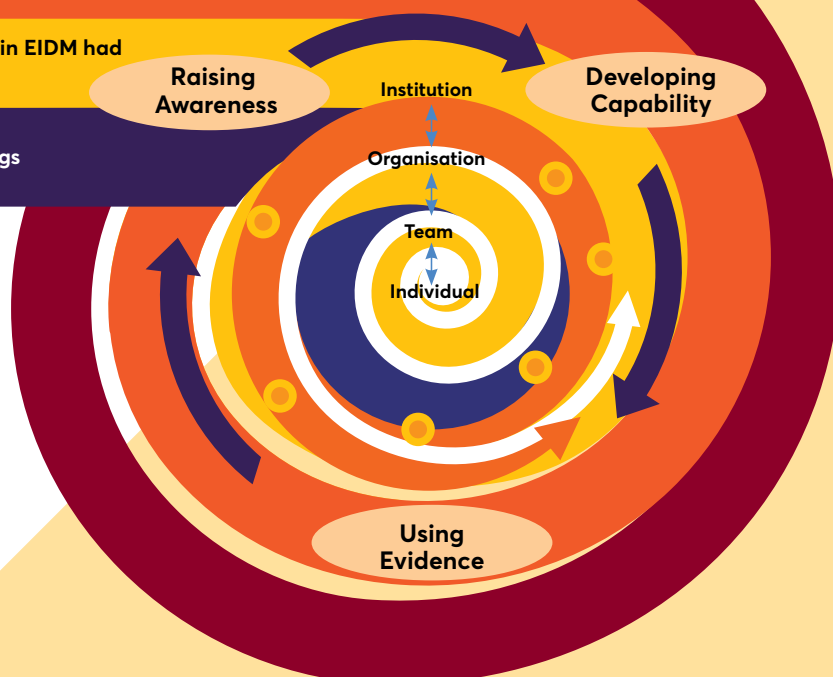
The University of Johannesburg-led programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) was part of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) consortium of programmes funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). It operated for three years from January 2014 to December 2016. UJ-BCURE focussed on increasing evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) among decision-makers in South Africa and Malawi through the application of EIDM training workshops and mentorships and supporting the growth of the Africa Evidence Network. This infographic represents a single snapshot of the programme's achievements and evolution over the course of its three-year lifespan.

Sep '16 AEN hosted second high-profile colloquium on evidence-use in Africa

Dec '16 A total of 614 workshop places on the process of EIDM provided for public servants

Dec '16 The number of connected individuals interested in EIDM had increased from 23 in January 2014 to a total of 1102

Dec '16 Thirteen cross-departmental meetings facilitated by December, including four meetings of the centre of government evidence group



Message from the Director of UJ-BCURE

As Director, UJ-BCURE represented one of the most exciting opportunities of my career: a chance to work in two of my favourite countries, Malawi and South Africa, to build relationships with others who shared our commitment to evidence-informed decision-making from across Africa, and to make a contribution, however small, to reducing poverty and inequality in the region.

I was privileged to lead an excellent multi-disciplinary and international team. Our achievements are due without a doubt to their dedication and ingenuity.

We set out determined to run a needs-led and relationship-centred programme, responsive to the decision-makers we were working with, and complementary to existing initiatives in the region. We planned a year-long inception period to enable us to tailor our activities appropriately, and then two years of implementation. We put together a consortium of delivery partners and worked hard to understand the evidence-informed decision-making landscape around us.

Over the three years we learnt an enormous amount, indeed so much so that we have shifted our language from 'capacity-building' for evidence-use to 'capacity-sharing'. We made mistakes and learnt from them, and are grateful that DFID allowed us a flexible programme to respond to needs as they arose. We met and exceeded all of our objectives within our workplan, delivering 614 workshop places and providing over 126 mentorship opportunities. We know of over 100 instances in which decision-makers changed their practice as a result of our engagement, increasing their understanding of and use of evidence. We can only assume there are many more examples out there.

As we reflect on our work now, we can only speculate on the longer-term impacts of our work with governments in Malawi and South Africa. I do not think it a coincidence that a recent survey of capacity to produce evidence for decision-making showed marked pockets of capacity in Malawi (UJ-BCURE team 2016a). I also do not think it is a coincidence, that the Department for Planning Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa is now embarking on a series of evidence maps to inform policy, nor that there is an established cross-departmental community of practice on evidence in government including senior officials from 10 departments. Indeed one of those officials has recently been promoted to lead National Treasury – the potential reach of our work is extensive. Perhaps our greatest achievement is the relationships that have been built as a result of UJ-BCURE as I firmly believe that relationships are at the centre of change. Our support to the Africa Evidence Network saw it grow from 23 to nearly 1000 members in just 3 years, with a hugely successful conference rounding off our work at the end of 2016.

The work of the UJ-BCURE programme has led to the formation of the Africa Centre for Evidence within the University of Johannesburg. Through this new centre, the work that UJ-BCURE started so well continues: we are learning about decision-makers' needs and engaging with a range of capabilities to produce research evidence that is useful and used. The team at ACE is committed to taking a problem-based and relationship-centred approach to supporting EIDM in Africa.



UJ-BCURE in brief

Its main goal was to increase the use of research evidence in decision-making by senior decision-makers and technical staff within national government departments working in pro-poor policy areas.

The programme was designed and delivered in partnership with the governments of South Africa and Malawi, alongside a consortium of Malawian and South African delivery partners. During its three-year long lifespan, the programme was supported by a consortium of expert individuals and organisations, including: the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-centre) at the Institute of Education at the University College of London, the South African Cochrane Centre, the Centre for Evidence-based Health Care at Stellenbosch, the South African Social Policy Research Institute (SASPRI), the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, and the Centre for Learning on Evaluation And Results for Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa.

UJ-BCURE and its partners in South Africa and Malawi developed workplans that were country-specific and responsive to partners' needs. UJ-BCURE's programme of work involved delivering workshops to raise awareness and build high-level capacity in research use (figure 1). UJ-BCURE also contributed to workshops coordinated by other organisations as indicated in Figure 1. Workshops were then followed by a more in-depth capacity-building approach comprising of different types of EIDM mentorship models that allowed mentees to enhance their application of learning, enabled experiential learning, and built individual and organisational relationships (figure 2). As an Africa-led programme of work, UJ-BCURE acted as the secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network (AEN) to build local institutional capacity, share capacity-building resources through the region, encourage knowledge exchanges, and strengthen relationships between members of the AEN (figure 3).

The University of Johannesburg-led programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) intended to be a problem-focussed, solution-oriented, and relationship-centred programme of work.

Figure 1: Overview of workshops delivered in South Africa showing how the topics were tailored to the audience

	Workshop	Theme	Main Dept	Attendees
Jan 2016	25 May 2016	Searching systematically for evidence on water stewardship	DWS	13
	10 May 2016	Mentorship as a means of increasing the use of evidence	All	20
	6 April 2016	Evidence in ICT & Education policy-making	DBE+	8
	13-14 January 2016	Evidence mapping methodology	DPME+	36
	28-30 October 2015	Evidence-Based Policy-Making and Implementation	All	53
	21-22 September 2015	The use of SRs in government	All	25
July 2015	13 August 2015	Unpacking barriers to EIDM	All	17
	6 August 2015	Research methods and systematic searching	DPME+	25
	1-2 June 2015	EIDM in government (general)	DBE+	45
	18-20 March 2015	EIDM and Social Policy	DSD	44
Jan 2015	9 March 2015	EIDM in DST's Innovation for Inclusive Development concept paper	DST	3
	6 March 2015	How to access evidence for ICT in education	DBE	5
	17 February 2015	EIDM in DST's Innovation for Inclusive Development concept paper	DST	2
	5 February 2015	Accessing evidence, SRs and strategic planning for ICT in education	DBE	7
	23 January 2015	EIDM in DST's Innovation for Inclusive Development concept paper	DST	3
	1 October 2014	EIDM in the implementation of ICT in education	DBE	7
	9-10 September 2014	EIDM in the implementation of ICT in education	DBE+	10
	26 August 2014	Capacity-building strategies	DPME	5
July 2014	14 August 2014	Monitoring and evaluation in government (pilot)	General	24

Figure 2: Overview of the departments UJ-BCURE engaged with during mentorships

A timeline of engagement showing the departments with which we have worked over extended periods of time through our mentorships

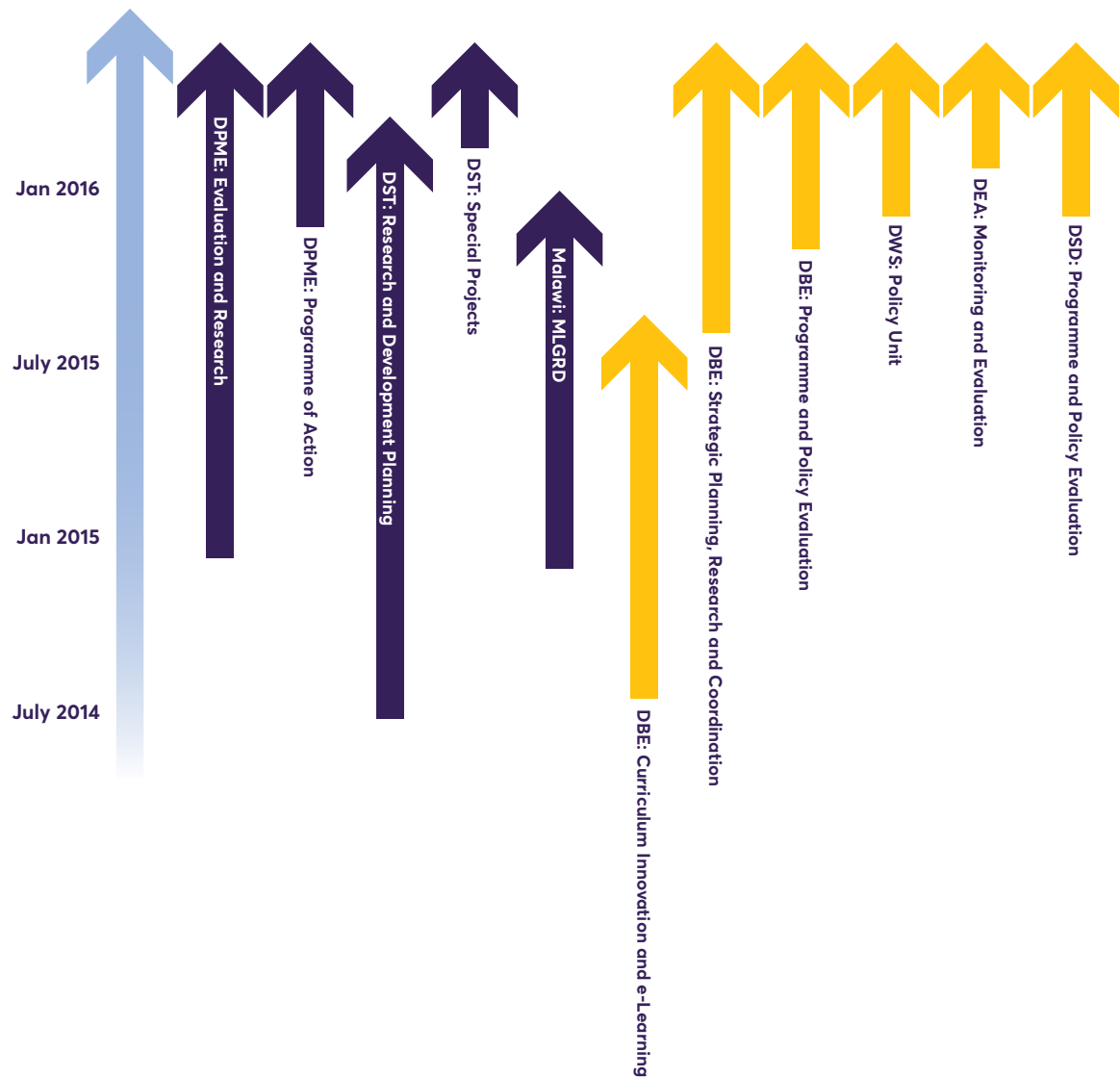
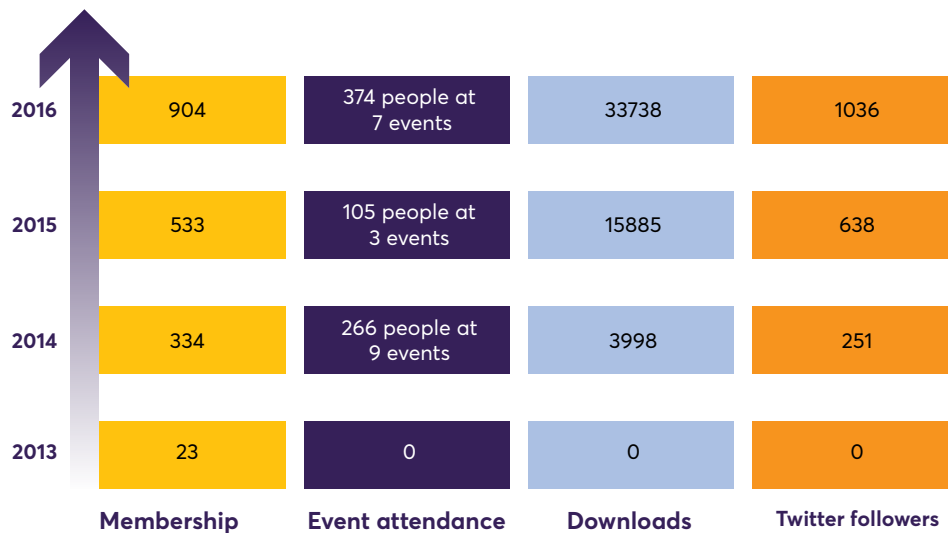


Figure 3: Overview of the growth of the AEN



Theory of change for UJ-BCURE

The UJ-BCURE programme set out to increase the use of research evidence in decision-making, and support government efforts to address the problem of poverty and inequality in two countries in southern Africa.

In addition to supporting government efforts to engage with EIDM, UJ-BCURE sought to answer the need for demand-led capacity-building activities outside of healthcare that move beyond training on how to use data in monitoring and policy planning. UJ-BCURE's theory of change, described in a paper entitled 'A theory of change for capacity building for the use of research evidence by decision makers in southern Africa', sought to address this need by applying five person-centred approaches in a mentoring-based model (figure 4):

1. Approach one: Develop workplans that are context-sensitive and informed by detailed needs assessments;
2. Approach two: Offer capacity-building workshops that enhance existing capacities and raise awareness of EIDM;
3. Approach three: Provide a mentorship programme that allows mentees to practically apply their learning;
4. Approach four: Support workplace visits that enhance relationship-building and experiential learning; and
5. Approach five: Embed all work within the Africa Evidence Network to support the growth of EIDM awareness and capacity on the continent.

UJ-BCURE's approach was underpinned by four of assumptions. First, it was assumed that it was feasible to build decision-makers' capacity to use research evidence and their demand for it. The second assumption was that increased capacity to use research evidence would lead to improved use of research evidence beyond the timeline of UJ-BCURE. Third, the programme assumed that delivering its work in partnership with local implementers through the AEN would make its capacity-building sustainable. The final assumption made by UJ-BCURE was that the relationships established during the lifespan of UJ-BCURE would be productive, meaningful, and sustainable.

The programme's theory of change also accounted for the influence of a variety of factors on the success of UJ-BCURE's work:

1. The pressure to use research evidence when making decisions as proof of 'development effectiveness' is increasing from donors and within governments alike.
2. The implementing teams are based in southern Africa and have extensive experience of working across the continent.
3. High-level EIDM champions within government and UJ-BCURE's consortium of partners supported the programme.
4. UJ-BCURE worked with departments whose remit in getting evidence used in decision-making worked across government sectors.
5. The UJ-BCURE programme also worked through the AEN to ensure it grew relationships as part of the wider community of collaborative partnerships and practice.



Figure 4: UJ-BCURE's theory of change



Building capacity in South Africa

How did it work?

The UJ-BCURE work in South Africa featured a complementary programme of capacity-building workshops and mentorships, which took place between October 2014 and October 2016. Decision-makers and practitioners were introduced to the programme at capacity-building workshops and often went on to become mentees in mentorships. The South African arm of the work included workshops on EIDM covering topics such as searching for evidence, accessing evidence, and appraising evidence. Workshop content was always tailored to meet the needs of the participants.

The mentorships commonly took the form of either individual or team mentorships, with optional workplace visits to enhance learning. In total, UJ-BCURE delivered 52 individual mentorships and six team mentorships for three teams, with 40 workplace visits facilitated. The mentorships were mediated by mentorship guidelines and a signed mentorship agreement, both in the case of individual and team mentorships. The topics covered within mentorships were determined by the specific interests and needs of mentees.

Some of the more prominent products from this arm of the programme include a co-produced evidence map, the co-development of a guidance note for decision-makers on producing and using evidence maps during policy design, and input into a draft national water stewardship policy. In terms of sustainability, the recognition from decision-makers of the usefulness of evidence synthesis methods for EIDM is an important element of UJ-BCURE's work.



The list of government departments that UJ-BCURE worked with in South Africa cut across a variety of development areas:

6. Department: Planning, Monitoring and Development (DPME)
7. Department: Science and Technology (DST)
8. Department: Basic Education (DBE)
9. Department: Social Development (DSD)
10. Department: Environmental Affairs (DEA)
11. Department: Water and Sanitation (DWS)
12. Department: Human Settlements (DHS)
13. Department: Public Service and Administration (DPSA)
14. National Treasury (NT)

What were the top achievements?

Four notable instances of evidence-use in South Africa that were supported by the UJ-BCURE programme.

1. Evidence mapping advocated by government

The UJ-BCURE mentorship with DPME was a highlight of the programme's work in South Africa for three reasons. First, the decision-makers being mentored co-produced a piece of research evidence (evidence map) and then drew from this to inform a national White Paper. In co-producing this map, a demand-led critical appraisal tool and an evidence mapping tool were also developed. Second, the methodology behind producing the evidence map was captured by decision-makers and their mentor for the benefit of other government departments wanting to use this approach. This learning was shared at various national and international meetings, including the November 2016 BRICS meeting. Finally, DPME – in addition to DEA – were successful with the UJ-based ACE team in securing funding to produce and use more evidence maps in 2017.

2. National policy based on evidence

In their mentorship with UJ-BCURE, DWS was supported in incorporating a broader range of evidence in the draft national water stewardship policy they were developing. The DWS team also shared their plans for incorporating EIDM into their existing policy development framework. When shared with wider stakeholders in the South African water sector, the policy was commended for being of an impressively high standard.

3. Sustainable relationships lead to innovations

Some of the mentorship relationships within the South African arm of UJ-BCURE lasted for almost the entire length of the programme. One of these long-term individual mentorships was between a Chief Director in DST and an experienced UJ-BCURE mentor. The mentor and mentee in this relationship continually renewed their mentorship agreement. By the end of the programme, this mentorship had assisted in the development of the Innovation for Inclusive Development (IID) Strategic Framework.

4. Evidence informs strategy, enhances M&E and White Paper

The DBE mentees and UJ-BCURE mentors engaged in a series of mentorships that sought to support the Curriculum Innovation and e-Learning unit within DBE during the entire lifespan of the UJ-BCURE programme. Through customised in-house workshops tailored to their needs, DBE were supported in developing an Implementation Plan for e-Education in South Africa: 2014 – 2019 as well as a Strategic Plan for e-Education. Using the support of the UJ-BCURE mentorship, the DBE also refreshed aspects of the e-Education White Paper.



Building capacity in Malawi

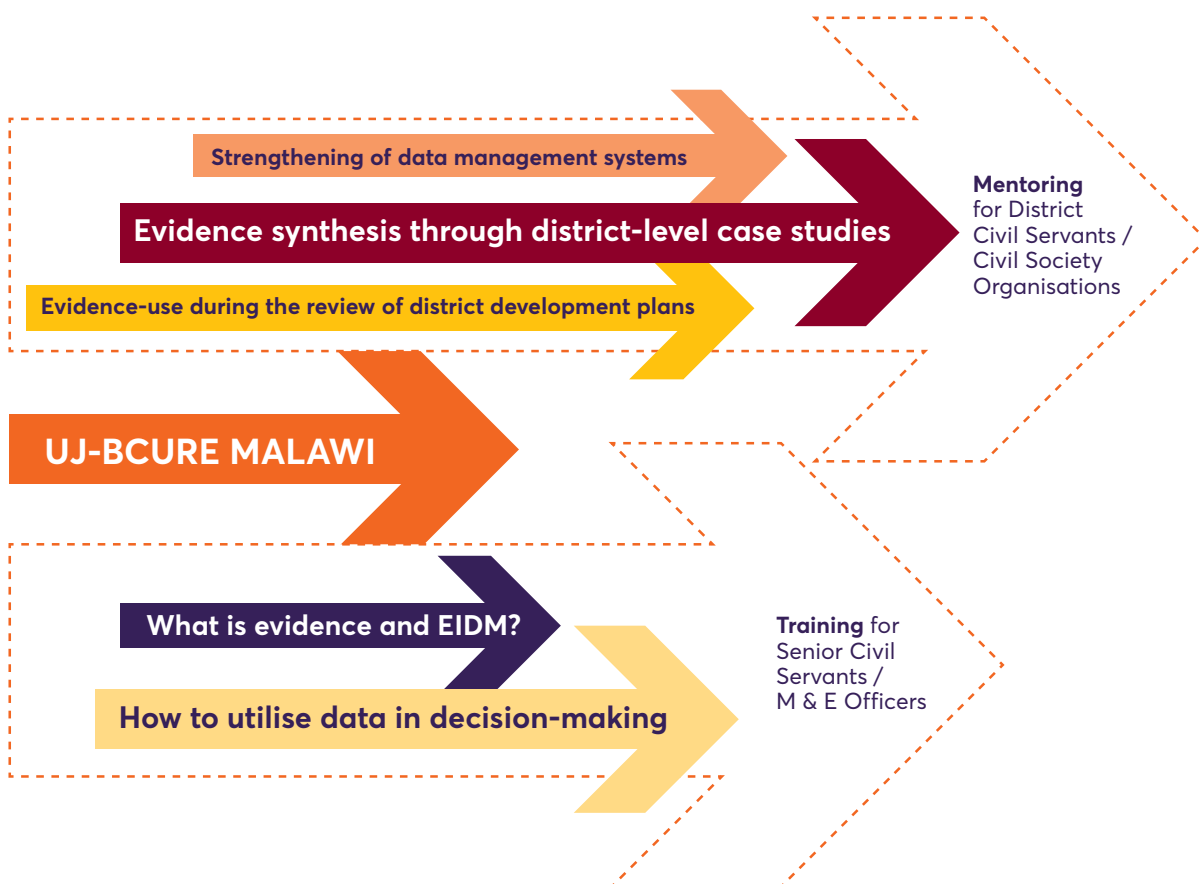
How did it work?

Capacity-building work in Malawi kicked off after extensive in-person consultations with possible representatives of government departments with overarching mandates for monitoring and evaluation. These consultations directed us towards working at local government level with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). The UJ-BCURE programme in Malawi was implemented in the districts of Mchinji and Ntchisi in 2015 for a period of 12 months.

During a year-long inception phase to ensure the establishment of meaningful relationships with government partners, two reports were produced: a landscape report of the EIDM landscape in Malawi and an assessment of the EIDM needs within the government in Malawi. The UJ-BCURE programme was implemented in Malawi by a local organisation: Citizens' Health (CH). The implementation of UJ-BCURE in Malawi aimed to increase the EIDM skills-levels of civil servants at local government level through training and mentorships that included – but was not limited to – the variety of topics shown in figure 5.

The training and mentorship took place in a group setting and focussed predominantly on members of the District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinating Committees (DMECC) – M&E officers representing different sectors, such as health, education, and agriculture. Further mentoring support was offered to individual DMECC members to identify cases of applied learning in relation to EIDM that related to their immediate day-to-day work.

Figure 5: Some of the topics covered in the UJ-BCURE mentoring and training in Malawi



What were the top achievements?

In a short implementation phase, the UJ-BCURE programme in Malawi achieved many small but significant objectives. A total of 215 group mentorship places and six individual mentorships were offered in Malawi. Building on the initial group mentoring, the focus shifted over time towards individual mentorships of DMECC officers.

The film entitled 'UJ-BCURE: Making a Difference in Malawi' features two cases of applied learning emanating from our individual mentorships. The first instance showcases a local government official investigating why antenatal care attendance by women in Ntchisi was low in order to increase the attendance rate. The second case of applied learning explains how the district officers within Mchinji drew on research evidence to develop a tailored approach to retaining water within one of the fish farms in that area.



**Excerpt from
monitoring data on
UJ-BCURE in Malawi**

Participation in antenatal care, particularly in women's first trimester of pregnancy, is very low in Ntchisi district. The reasons for this low level of attendance were unknown, and so an M&E officer from the Ntchisi health department was unsure of how best to improve rates of attendance. Acting on guidance received from UJ-BCURE and project partner Citizens' Health during workshops and mentoring, the M&E officer undertook an investigation of the reasons behind the low rates of first trimester antenatal care participation.

In August 2015, this UJ-BCURE mentee used data gathering techniques learnt from a UJ-BCURE workshop and group/individual mentoring on EIDM to interview pregnant women, village heads, and community health workers to establish what the specific factors were that contributed to low participation. He discovered various factors contributing to low participation rates, including but not limited to reluctance to share news of early pregnancy for fears of witchcraft, social taboos regarding women being touched by male doctors, and logistic factors that restrict women's ability to visit antenatal care facilities.

After learning of the variety of reasons for the low antenatal care attendance rate, the UJ-BCURE mentee intended to mentor staff in basic antenatal care guidelines, promote better communication between health workers and pregnant women, and raise awareness about pregnant women's rights. At a community level, he also identified the need for antenatal care sensitisation where village heads and other traditional birth attendants advocate for women to receive antenatal care early on in their pregnancies.

Supporting capacity through the Africa Evidence Network

How did it work?

The Africa Evidence Network (AEN) was established in 2012 before the existence of UJ-BCURE. The Network came about as the result of 23 African delegates attending the same evidence synthesis event in Bangladesh. These delegates – who would become the founding group (some shown in figure 6) – decided that a space where African practitioners, decision-makers, and researchers with an interest in evidence production and use could engage would be beneficial to the EIDM movement in Africa. The AEN was born from a single email (figure 7) and – through its symbiotic relationship with UJ-BCURE two years later – grew to be one of the most prominent EIDM networks in Africa.

In addition to sharing continent-wide news and activities relating to EIDM, the AEN provided a platform for sharing successes, lessons learnt, and resources from UJ-BCURE's work. The programme acted as the first secretariat for the AEN, using part of its budget to fund the activities of the Network. These activities included two conferences in South Africa and smaller EIDM events across southern Africa.

What were the top achievements?

Through UJ-BCURE the depth, reach, and the sustainability of the AEN were extended considerably. The AEN's membership grew from 23 people at its establishment to just under 1000 during the lifetime of the UJ-BCURE programme. Numerous resources were published and accessed, shared and discussed. Perhaps most significantly however, the Network became an established and recognised community for African EIDM. For a detailed explanation of this, please see the paper entitled *Moving the Africa Evidence Network forward: voicing African perspectives in evidence-informed decision-making* written by UJ-BCURE team members on the results of the 2016 AEN survey.

The activities of the AEN have been sustained by not only by the high-quality services the Network provide but also by the strength of the relationships the AEN has supported during UJ-BCURE. The first successful colloquium in 2014 evolved into the Evidence brand – a now prominent event in the EIDM calendar, with plans for Evidence 2018 already underway. By partnering with organisations across Africa the AEN co-hosted three smaller EIDM events in Cape Town, Harare, and Blantyre during the final year of UJ-BCURE. Host organisations included CLEAR-AA, the Centre for Social Research from Malawi, the Policy Action Network Children within the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa, and the Zimbabwe Evidence-Informed Policy Network in Zimbabwe. Through establishing and growing relationships with these partner organisations from across Africa the sustainability of these organisations – as well as of the AEN – is strengthened.

Figure 6: Some of the founding 23 in Bangladesh

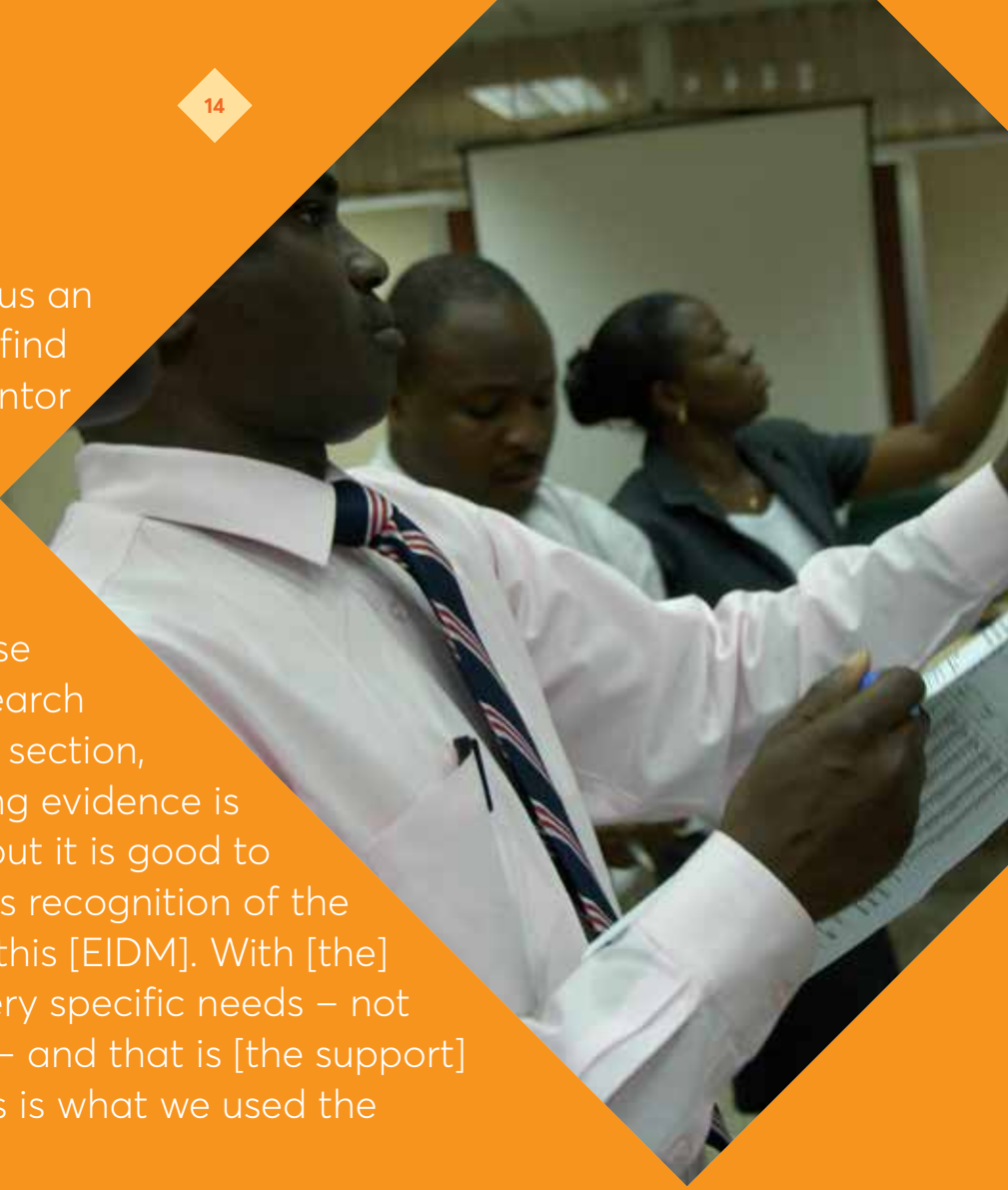




I am at [a research institute] and I am constrained because we do not have a big team: we have small money and a small team. So just the existence of [the] Network is useful because we can bounce ideas off each other. That adds value with...and builds up a movement and some kind of [EIDM] awareness. It beefs me up without me having to get more capacity [at my research institute].

We don't do training here – we just have some seminars so it is useful for me to be able to say I was involved in an AEN event. It ties me into something bigger.

Female researcher in South Africa



The AEN gave us an opportunity to find an external mentor to help build [our] capacity in terms of systematic reviews. Because I am in the research and evaluation section, the idea of using evidence is not new to us but it is good to see that there is recognition of the importance of this [EIDM]. With [the] AEN we had very specific needs – not general needs – and that is [the support] we got and this is what we used the AEN for.

Female government official from Ghana

First, I attended the AEN event in 2014, where I learned a lot and met [a] good number of likeminded professionals. This helped to expand my network of evidence-based professionals, researchers, and knowledge management experts. Second – I have used the AEN website for knowledge resources and advertising about [the] services [of my organisation]. I often follow the tweets from AEN staff. The event is an opportunity to learn and get updated on new developments in the field as well as an opportunity for networking with likeminded professionals – and don't forget the opportunity to disseminate our work, publications, and share our experiences.

Female practitioner from Zimbabwe

Figure 7: First official AEN communication sent by Professor Ruth Stewart.

Email message

Dear All,

As promised, this is the first email to our growing group of Africans with an interest in doing and / or using systematic review evidence - perhaps we can call ourselves the African Evidence Network.

It was great to meet you all and share an exciting week with you all in Bangladesh. As we discussed, I will write again in the new year with our first 'newsletter' which will include the following:

1. a consultation for you all about training (who wants it, who might offer it, and specifically what levels / types of training)
2. a chance to share about the reviews we are doing, opportunities / requests to get involved in reviews, and of course activities around using and commissioning reviews too
3. an update on our emerging plans for our 2014 Africa meeting (I will liaise with our friends in Ethiopia and at 3ie to confirm a time and place)
4. a chance to discuss ways of improving access to databases and literature

I would also like to include in that email news of:

- a) any related initiatives in Africa that any of us are involved in, or know of (including brief details and a contact name for further information)
- b) any related events in Africa that any of us are organising, or aware of (including when, where, who is included and a contact name for further information)

If you have any items for a) or b) please email me and I will include them in our January newsletter - use my London email address it is more reliable. I will collate your news and circulate it to everyone in the new year.

If you know of anyone in Africa interested in systematic reviews, research synthesis, evidence for policy etc who wasn't in Dhaka, please encourage them to email me and I will add them to our mailing list.

Lastly, I wish you all a restful break and will be in touch again in 2013.

With kind regards

Ruth

Building cross-cutting capacity

How did it work?

The problem-based and relationship-centred approach that UJ-BCURE employed allowed the programme to support a need that arose while carrying out its EIDM workshop and mentoring activities in South Africa. After a stakeholder event and steering group meeting in October 2015, feedback from various stakeholders of the UJ-BCURE programme indicated the usefulness of a programme like UJ-BCURE in enabling inter-departmental relationships in the context of EIDM.

The opportunity to support the establishment of such a group emerged organically from the support offered by UJ-BCURE to various centre-of-government actors representing what would become known as the cross-government group. UJ-BCURE held a whole series of meetings between more than one department or external agency to support a process of information-sharing and bridge-building between November 2015 and October 2016. The content of the meetings centred on discussions that enabled senior officials to share experiences, debate issues, and propose solutions together, contributing to an evidence agenda in the South African government. The meetings of this group have continued after the end of UJ-BCURE: this centre-of-government evidence group continues to date.

What were the top achievements?

The role that UJ-BCURE played in bringing this group together was a significant achievement for the programme in South Africa because it meant that UJ-BCURE's work had enabled a foundation on which to bring together the EIDM capacity already in South Africa. A culmination of this collaboration was the cross-government panel at Evidence 2016 (figure 8) where government colleagues from departments represented in this group engaged with the audience about their departments' experiences of engaging with EIDM, and reflected on the general issues and patterns of EIDM across government.

UJ-BCURE's ability to bring together colleagues from across government who did not usually work together and to enable them to start talking and working together was praised. The programme was encouraged to develop a specific 'cross-government' stream of work for 2016 to enhance UJ-BCURE's legacy and increase the sustainability of its work [UJ-BCURE monitoring data].

Figure 8: Colleagues from South African government who engaged with each other and the wider AEN audience about their respective departments' key achievements, lessons learnt, and challenges related to EIDM.



What we learnt from UJ-BCURE

Challenges and lessons abound in international development programmes, and UJ-BCURE was no exception. During the course of the programme, the UJ-BCURE team came up against obstacles that taught them many operational lessons about how to implement a programme like UJ-BCURE as well as many conceptual lessons about how best to support EIDM in Africa. Below, the highlights of the operational lessons learnt are described; the section thereafter describes UJ-BCURE's re-conceptualisation of how to support EIDM. Below, the highlights of the operational lessons learnt are described; the section thereafter describes UJ-BCURE's re-conceptualisation of how to support EIDM. Details of all the operational lessons learnt during UJ-BCURE were captured in three lessons learnt reports focussing on work in Malawi, mentorships, and workshops.

Operational lessons learnt from UJ-BCURE

Adapt, don't reinvent

Having open communication and a straightforward relationship with the funder allowed space for UJ-BCURE to admit to difficulties in implementing the programme, freedom to try all manner of solutions then agreed to by the funder and steering committee, and the power to divert resources into new opportunities that better-served the overall aim of increasing the use of research evidence in decision-making.

Don't just meet expectations: exceed them

Over the three years that UJ-BCURE consistently exceeded all milestones it was set, the trust between the funder and the programme team was strengthened. Paired with open communication, this increased trust resulted in space to respond to challenges with creative solutions involving less stringent requirements placed on the team in terms of quarterly reporting.

Never stop engaging

Viewing the landscape reports and needs assessments as opportunities to engage set the tone for the entire UJ-BCURE programme: never stop engaging. Through non-responsiveness, critique, and difficulties, the programme was driven to be centred on the relationships around which it was designed. Part of taking this approach involved a tenacity for never-ending engagement.

Individual relationships are the foundation of institutional ones

Throughout UJ-BCURE, multiple aspects of the programme have been successful because of the relationships on which the work was based. From the relationships of our experienced administrative team members to the relationships borne out of the actual programme work, the centrality of relationships to the success of UJ-BCURE cannot be overstated: it changes the way we think EIDM support should be provided.

Reconceptualising support for EIDM

In delivering our UJ-BCURE programme, we have shifted our thinking about how to support evidence-use in decision-making in two ways: 1) we identified five different dimensions to inform how EIDM support is provided, and (2) we positioned building relationships as an essential pillar through which supporting EIDM happens.

The first shift in our thinking has been in considering the key dimensions that can inform how support for EIDM is provided. Whilst the five dimensions we have identified are not necessarily new, they are rarely articulated together or in a coherent way. These include: desired outcomes, entry points for capacity-support, significant outputs, contexts, and capacity-support interventions. Each dimension is described in figure 9, and the relationships between them are captured in figure 10.

Off the back of UJ-BCURE's success however, we are proposing a new way of thinking about how to impact decision-making.

Figure 9: Five dimensions that support EIDM

Five dimensions that support EIDM

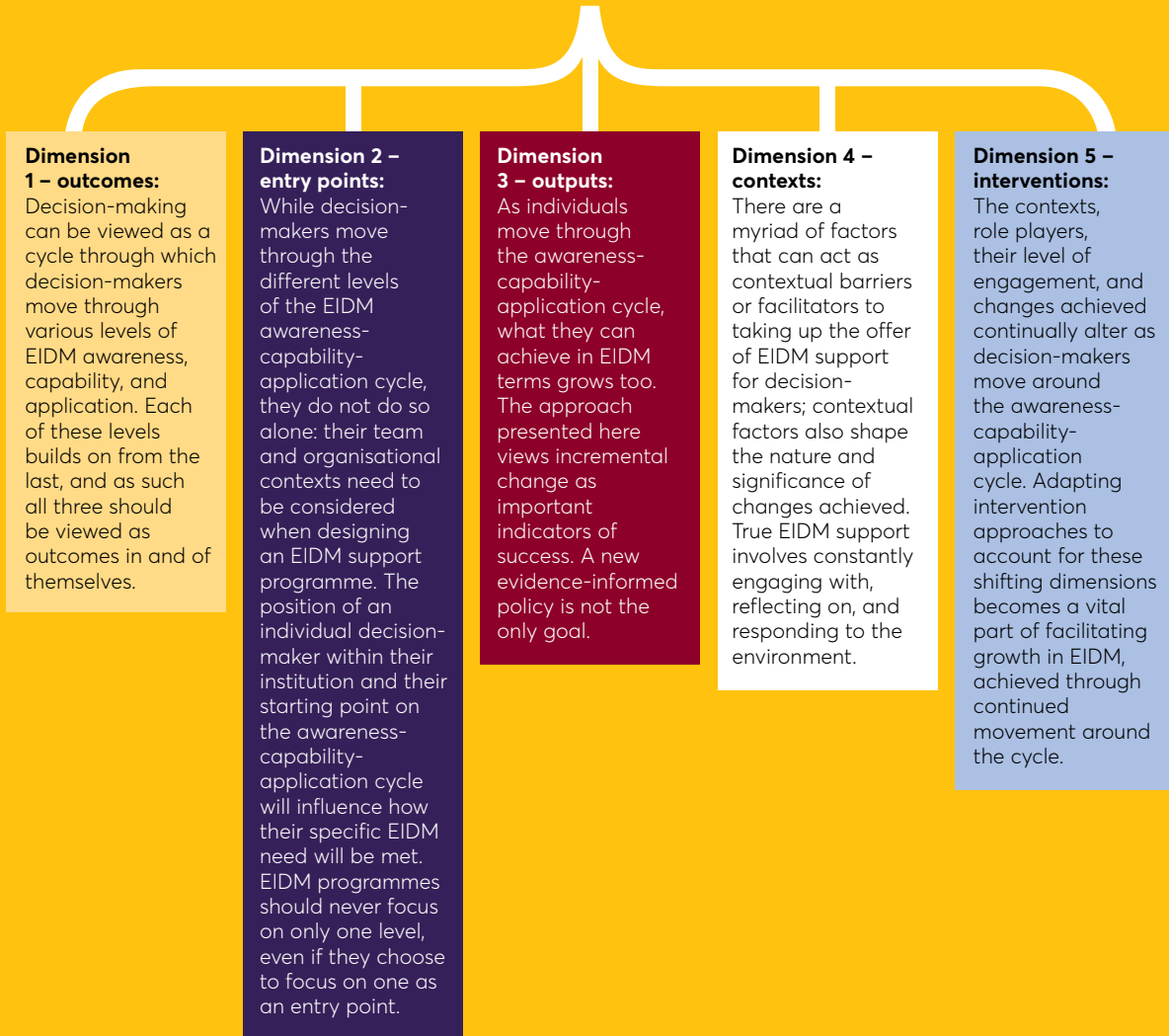
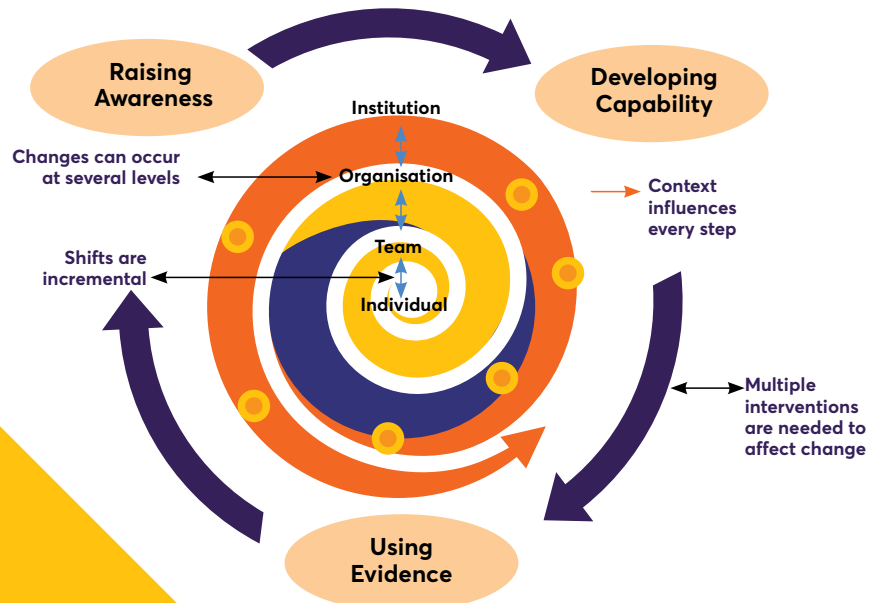


Figure 10: UJ-BCURE's spiral for conceptualising how evidence-use can be supported



Relationships are the crucial mechanism through which evidence shapes how decisions are made.

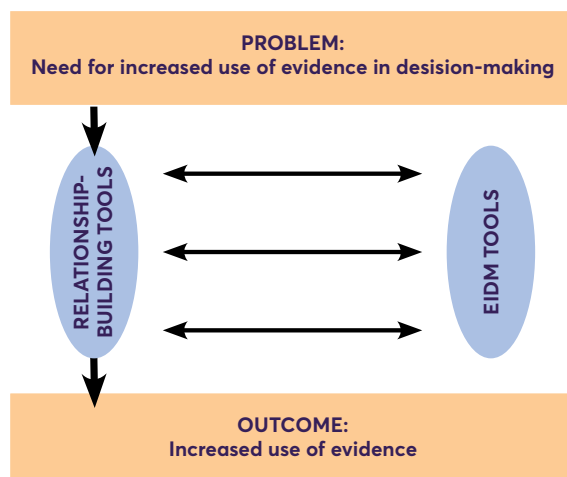
Building relationships for better evidence-use

A significant shift in how we conceptualise the mechanisms for increasing the use of evidence in decision-making focusses on the importance of relationships.

The many mechanisms that fall under the EIDM umbrella are generally considered the central activities to increase the use of research evidence. These include mechanisms for producing syntheses of research evidence; mechanisms for increasing the relevance, clarity, and accessibility of research; and mechanisms for supporting changes in decision-making systems. Relationship-building is often considered a 'facilitator' or 'environmental factor' which influences the effectiveness of these more traditional EIDM mechanisms.

Instead of relationships being merely a facilitator for other EIDM mechanisms, we view relationships as the main mechanism through which to support and increase the use of evidence. The variety of more traditional EIDM mechanisms are secondary to the essential mechanism of relationships. The experience of implementing UJ-BCURE has demonstrated how relationship-building can successfully influence how EIDM mechanisms are designed, implemented, and received by all those involved (see figure 11). Relationships can also influence the sustainability of capacity-building efforts: UJ-BCURE's experience has been that good individual relationships make the key difference in establishing future EIDM. One example of how relationships sustain capacity-building initiatives is shown by the formalised institutional relationship that grew from a mentorship between a mentee from the DPME and a mentor from SASPRI.

Figure 11: Relationship-building is the essential pillar through which evidence-use is facilitated



UJ-BCURE products

The core aim of UJ-BCURE to be needs-led guided the programme's work and is reflected in the legacy of work that UJ-BCURE leaves behind. This work can be grouped into different categories: needs assessments and landscape maps; capacity-building products; academic products; promotional products; and networking event products.

Needs assessments and landscape maps

From the outset, the UJ-BCURE programme aimed to be demand-led, answering challenges decision-makers faced. During its year-long inception phase, UJ-BCURE conducted two needs assessments reported in the South Africa (Choge et al 2014) and Malawi (Erasmus et al 2015). needs assessment reports. The aim of these assessments was to design contextually-relevant interventions that would build departments' capacity to engage with EIDM and complement (not duplicate) related EIDM activities undertaken by others.

These assessments were complemented by landscape maps that set out related EIDM activities, systems, and structures in the two countries (Choge et al 2014; Erasmus et al 2014). As part of understanding the wider EIDM ecosystem in Africa UJ-BCURE also supported the production of 25 EIDM landscape maps from across the continent. These were produced by AEN members as part of the Evidence 2016 bursary awards (see figure 12, AEN 2016a). The collection includes maps of the EIDM landscape from Malawi (5) and Uganda (5), Zimbabwe (3), Ethiopia (2), South Africa (2), Kenya (2), Zambia (1), Tanzania (1), Cameroon (1), and Tunisia (1). Two maps speak the EIDM landscape across the continent.

Throughout our work we invited stakeholders' views of and ideas for the AEN, producing an AEN survey, testimonial report, and roadmap report. These all helped to facilitate the future of the AEN beyond the UJ-BCURE grant (UJ-BCURE team 2016a; UJ-BCURE 2016b; AEN 2016b).

Capacity-building products

All of UJ-BCURE's capacity-building resources are freely available via the AEN website. These include EIDM workshop materials (EIDM series 2014) and our mentorship guidelines (UJ-BCURE team 2016c; UJ-BCURE team 2016d). We also produced an online searchable database of other organisations' capacity-building resources relating to EIDM, hosted via the AEN (Capacity-building resources for evidence-informed decision-making 2014). We are proud to have also contributed to the co-production of evidence maps and user guide to engage with these maps with South African government departments (Dayal & Langer 2016).

Academic products

An initial wave of academic articles discussing various aspects of the UJ-BCURE programme have already been published across academic journals (see box 1), with seven more papers currently under peer review or in preparation (see box 2). The team continue to write and publish papers emanating from the UJ-BCURE work; these include publications that address the lessons learnt from the programme, an academic perspective of mentorships, and a critical opinion on the role of per diems in development.

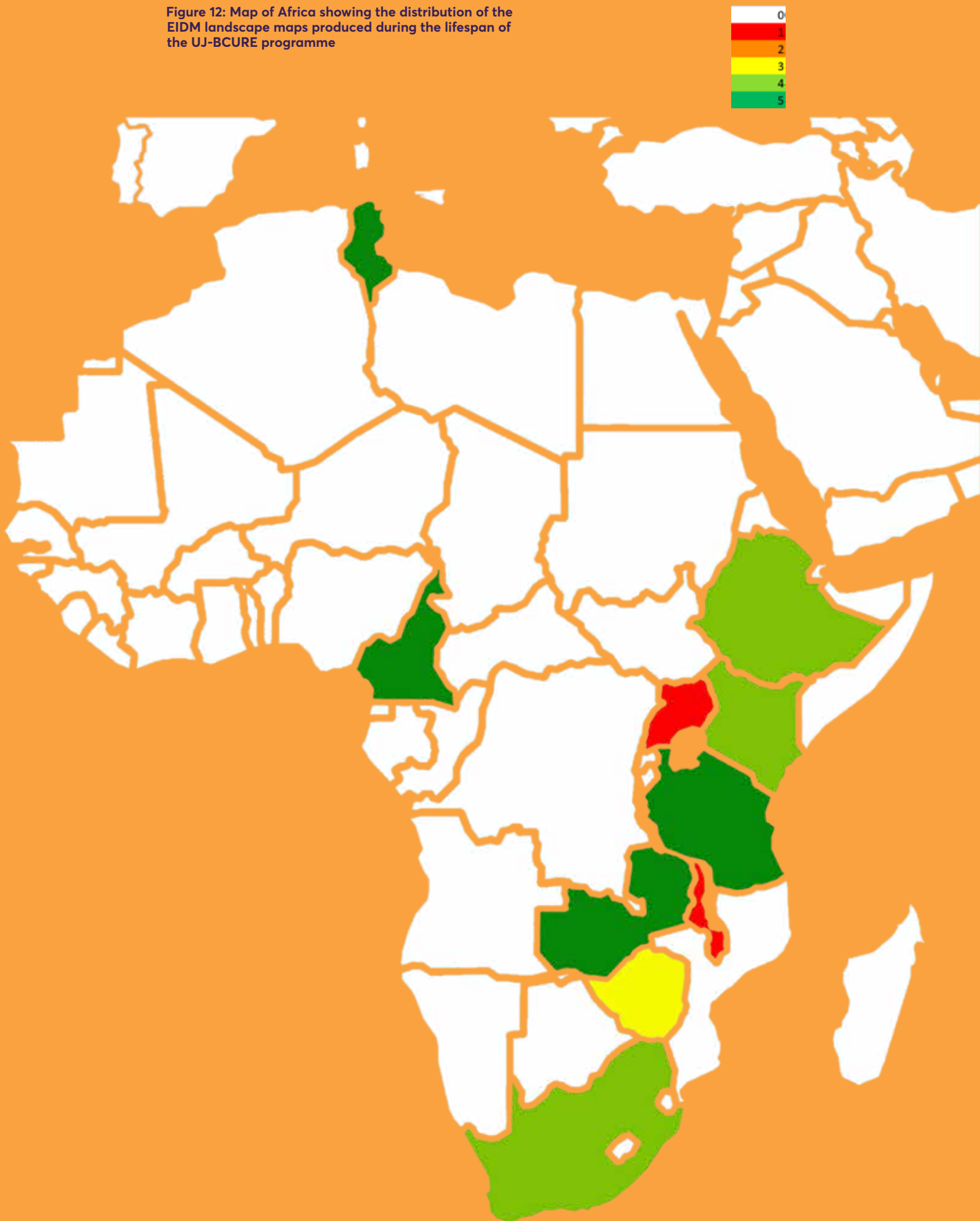
Promotional products

The promotional material produced by the UJ-BCURE programme includes 12 films made over the lifespan of the programme, including stories of how the UJ-BCURE work achieved change (see appendix 1 for full list of products). The films were (and continue to be) complemented by the AEN's monthly blog posts and newsletters on EIDM in Africa and abroad.

Network event products

With its emphasis on relationship-building, UJ-BCURE assisted the AEN in developing relationships among African evidence users and producers through a variety of networking events. UJ-BCURE ensured that the successes and lessons learnt from each event were documented in reports that are freely available on the AEN website. These include the 2014 Colloquium report (Langer & Rebelo Da Silva 2014), the Evidence 2016 report (AEN 2016c), and the Zimbabwe roadshow report (AEN 2016d).

Figure 12: Map of Africa showing the distribution of the EIDM landscape maps produced during the lifespan of the UJ-BCURE programme



Initial wave of published academic papers about UJ-BCURE

Walking the last mile on the long road to evidence-informed development: building capacity to use research evidence

(Langer, Stewart, Erasmus, de Wet 2015).

This article focusses on one way to achieve the use of evidence by national development policy-makers by proposing a people- and demand-focussed approach to capacity-building.

A theory of change for capacity-building for the use of research evidence by decision-makers in southern Africa

(Stewart 2015).

This paper proposes a demand-led approach for increasing the use of evidence in policy, presenting strategies supporting 'pull' activities and closer linkages and exchanges between producers and users.

Building capacity for evidence-informed decision-making: an example from South Africa

(Stewart, Langer, Wildeman, Maluwa, Erasmus, Jordaan, Lötter, Mitchell, Motha 2017).

The authors of this paper illustrate how UJ-BCURE navigated its position within the national evidence-policy interface through a review of the South African evidence-policy landscape and an analysis of a stakeholder event that brought EIDM role players in that country together.

Titles, tensions and terminology within evidence-informed decision-making

(Stewart, Langer, Dayal 2017).

This article examines a key premise underlying evidence-informed decision-making – that research is for all, including service users and potential users, service providers, and a wide range of decision-makers from local service leaders to national leaders.



Forthcoming academic papers about UJ-BCURE

A model for increasing the use of evidence by decision-makers

This article proposes a demand-side model, with multiple dimensions to conceptualise support the use of evidence by decision-makers which emphasises the need for multiple levels of engagement, a combination of interventions, a spectrum of outcomes, and a detailed consideration of context.

Mentoring to increase capacity for evidence-informed decision-making in Malawi and South Africa

This paper reflects on the experiences UJ-BCURE's mentoring which aimed to increase the capacity of decision-makers to use evidence in decision-making processes via four models.

Implementing an EIDM programme in a donor driven environment: reflections for theory and practice

A paper that will explore how EIDM programmes and poverty reduction projects operate on different assumptions, expectations and principles from one another, and how this can pose unique challenges for the management of EIDM programmes in poor countries.

Reflections on the role of per diems in international development projects: barriers and enablers to the project cycle

This paper seeks to explain the evolving nature of per diems and their use within the development context, explore how they serve as barriers or enablers in achieving project goals, and touch on their impact on the development project cycle.

Moving the Africa Evidence Network forward: voicing African perspectives in evidence-informed decision-making

The findings presented in this article show how the AEN has provided African public administration officials with a network of EIDM support which has strengthened and sustained an EIDM community in Africa and facilitated these public administration officials with an avenue to voice their EIDM experiences.

Mechanisms to support relationship-building are central to supporting the use of evidence in public administration

This paper/perspective makes the argument that there is a need to rebalance the conceptualisation of tools and mechanisms which aim to increase the use of evidence in decision-making to give much greater emphasis to relationship-building approaches.

Practical reflections on combining workshop and mentorships to build capacity in evidence-informed decision-making

This paper describes a unique combination of EIDM workshops and mentoring to build decision-makers' capacity to use evidence, and reflects how the deliberate design of a sequential workshop and mentoring capacity-building activities enhanced programme effects.

The UJ-BCURE team

Ruth Stewart

Isaac Choge

Natalie Tannous

Ormondi Otieno

Laurenz Langer

Sunet Jordaan

Yvonne Erasmus

Janine Mitchell

Louis Maluwa

Christa Heyneke

Precious Motha

Desyree Lötter

Hazel Zaranyika

Our Team

As the programme and centre director, Associate Professor Ruth Stewart was responsible for the conceptualisation, running, and overseeing of UJ-BCURE. She drew heavily from her evidence synthesis and stakeholder engagement background in managing the entire UJ-BCURE team. Her deputy, Dr Yvonne Erasmus, was also the Malawi country manager and worked as a mentor for the DWS team in South Africa.

Russell Wildeman was one of the South African country managers on the UJ-BCURE project and drew on his extensive professional experience of South Africa's governmental structures in working with UJ-BCURE. Sunet Jordaan was the mentorship manager – a role that grew organically after the start of UJ-BCURE. They were preceded by Dr Isaac Choge, who worked as South African manager between January 2014 and early 2015.

Louis Maluwa was responsible for documenting UJ-BCURE's progress against its milestones as the programme's monitoring and evaluation officer. Some of the data that UJ-BCURE reported on included growth data on the AEN and closely involved Precious Motha as the AEN coordinator. Prior to Louis and Precious joining the UJ-BCURE team, George Otieno fulfilled the role of monitoring and evaluation advisor for the programme, with Hazel Zaranyika as the first AEN coordinator.

The Malawi project manager role was filled by Desyree Lötter: as a non-governmental organisation project management consultant, she was well-placed to support UJ-BCURE's Malawi partners in aiming for their milestones. Janine Mitchell and Laurenz Langer were two specialists involved with the UJ-BCURE programme in a variety of ways. Janine is an EIDM specialist, while Laurenz is a specialist in the field of evidence synthesis.

The daily operations of the UJ-BCURE programme and much of its successes were underpinned by the unceasing support offered by Christa Heyneke, the centre and programme's administrator. During the final year of UJ-BCURE Natalie Tannous joined the team, and with her background in journalism and anthropology was adept at sharing the story of UJ-BCURE's successes through various formats.

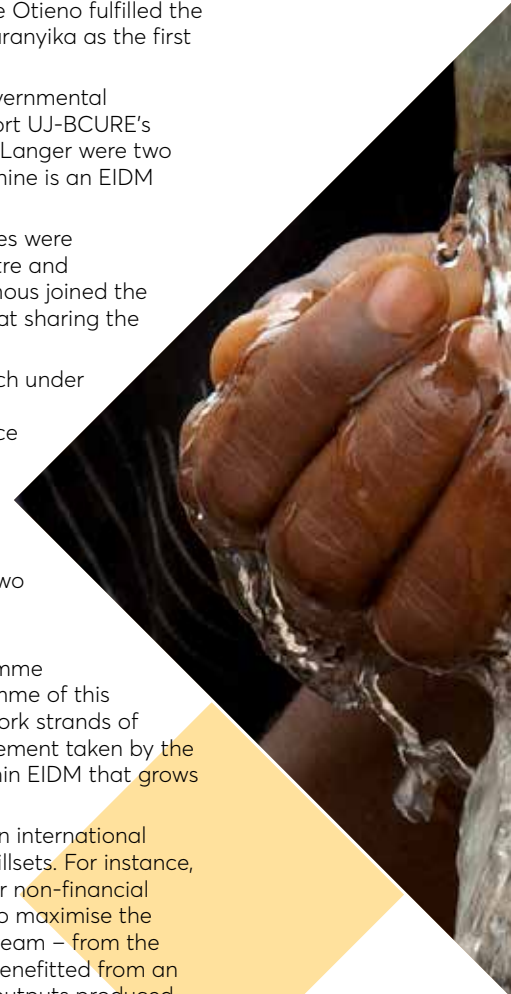
The team was hosted by the University's Centre for Anthropological Research under the leadership of Professor Thea de Wet. The success of the project led the University to form a new centre dedicated to ensuring that research evidence is useful and used: the Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE).

Building capacity in our team

One of the successful features of the UJ-BCURE programme was how the team itself grew from the experience of managing UJ-BCURE. There were two ways in which the team members of UJ-BCURE grew from implementing the programme.

The first way in which the UJ-BCURE team members grew from the programme included the experience and exposure gained from implementing a programme of this kind. The lessons learnt that are extensively captured across the different work strands of the programme demonstrate the reflexive approach to programme management taken by the team. The successes and growth of the AEN represent an African voice within EIDM that grows stronger and louder as time moves on.

Second, the task of managing a multi-million-rand programme as part of an international consortium enabled every single team member to enhance parts of their skillsets. For instance, the UJ-BCURE deputy director attended a financial management course for non-financial managers to enhance the team's administration of the UJ-BCURE budget to maximise the effects the funding would have in terms of real EIDM. Practically the entire team – from the administrator of the programme through to the communications officer – benefitted from an English grammar or academic writing course to improve the quality of the outputs produced by the UJ-BCURE team. Role-specific upskilling involved various team members attending monitoring and evaluation conferences (see box 3), copyediting, and photography courses. The skills, experience, and exposure that the UJ-BCURE team have achieved continues to benefit EIDM efforts in Africa through the University of Johannesburg-based ACE.



Building monitoring and evaluation capacity in Africa

UJ-BCURE began in 2014 as a DFID-funded programme. After the first year of inception activities, Louis Maluwa joined the team as a recent graduate in Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) from the University of Johannesburg; UJ-BCURE was his first role as an M & E officer.

During his time with UJ-BCURE, Louis re-designed the monitoring and evaluation system at UJ-BCURE, and presented on the development and application of the UJ-BCURE M & E system at the Southern Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) conference in 2015.

Towards the end of the UJ-BCURE activities in June 2016, Louis received a job post as an M & E Officer at FHI360 in Pretoria. The permanent role was a more senior one to Louis' role at UJ-BCURE and he would be responsible for the M & E of FHI360's Care and Support for Improved Patient Outcome (CaSIPO) Project in Gauteng Province, which involves amongst other things working with the South African government and CBO partners to assess M & E needs and priorities, developing and implementing M & E strengthening plans, and monitoring progress.



Partners

The UJ-BCURE programme drew on a wide range of partners from across a variety of sectors (figure 13). The programme focussed on building relationships with members of government departments in both Malawi and South Africa. In Malawi, the programme worked with the Ministry for Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). UJ-BCURE's relationships in South Africa included relationships with colleagues from the departments for: Planning Monitoring and Development (DPME) (including the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD) within the DPME), Science and Technology (DST), Basic Education (DBE), Social Development (DSD), Environmental Affairs (DEA), Water and Sanitation (DWS), Human Settlements (DHS), Public Service and Administration (DPSA), and National Treasury (NT).

The pool of professionals that UJ-BCURE worked with to provide mentorships to colleagues within government were from a range of institutions: Parent and Child Health Initiative (PACHI), Citizen's Health (Malawi), Mott MacDonald (South Africa), the Centre for Learning on Evaluation And Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), the University of Stellenbosch, the Medical Research Council, the South African Cochrane Centre, South African Social Policy Research Institute, the University of Iowa, McMaster University the EPPI-Centre at the Institute of Education at the University College of London, the University of Johannesburg, and finally within the UJ-BCURE team itself.

Additionally, a number of events were run with partner organisations during the lifespan of UJ-BCURE; these organisations included CLEAR-AA, the Centre for Social Research from Malawi, the Policy Action Network Children within the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa, and the Zimbabwe Evidence-Informed Policy Network in Zimbabwe.

The UJ-BCURE programme's activities and progress were guided by a dedicated and active steering group committee. This group was made up of a mixture of individuals from government and research backgrounds who gave invaluable guidance throughout the lifespan of the programme.

Figure 13: UJ-BCURE's partners

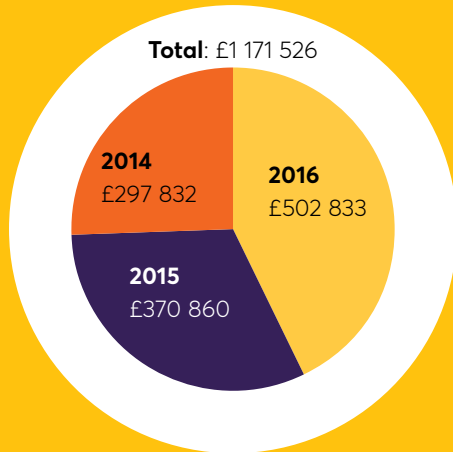


Funders and financials

The DFID-funded BCURE was a consortium which involved a number of programmes based in low- and middle-income countries that focussed on building the systems and skills necessary for better decision-making. The ultimate goal of this consortium was to improve the implementation of development interventions through decision-making that draws more from research evidence.

UJ-BCURE was funded as one of six programmes under this work. The total amount awarded to UJ-BCURE for the duration of three years was £1 171 526; figure 14 shows the breakdown of this amount per year paid on the achievement of our milestones.

Figure 14: Overall UJ-BCURE budget



Appendix 1: Full list of UJ-BCURE public products

Papers and reports

1. Africa Evidence Network. 2016a. Landscape maps. Available from: <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/resources/landscape-maps/>.
2. Africa Evidence Network. 2016b. Africa Evidence Network Roadmap 2017 and beyond: building a community of practice for evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) in Africa. University of Johannesburg. Available from: http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Africa_Evidence_Network_Roadmap_2016_PRINT.pdf.
3. Africa Evidence Network. 2016c. Report of the Africa Evidence Network second colloquium: Evidence 2016. Africa Evidence Network. Available from: <http://www.evidenceconference.org.za/>.
4. Africa Evidence Network. 2016d. Africa Evidence Network and Zimbabwe Evidence-Informed Policy Network roadshow report. Africa Evidence Network. Available from: http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AEN-ZeipNET-Roadshow-report_5-February-2016.pdf.
5. Capacity-building resources for evidence-informed decision-making. 2014. University of Johannesburg. Published via the Africa Evidence Network: <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/BCureV1.2.html>.
6. Choge I, Otieno O, Erasmus Y, Zaranyika H, Langer L, Stewart R. (2014). Landscape review: An overview of role players facilitating evidence-informed decision-making in South Africa. Johannesburg: UJ-BCURE, Centre for Anthropological Research, University of Johannesburg. Available from: <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Landscape-Review-of-Role-players-in-Evidence-Use-in-South-Africa.pdf>
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9. Stewart R, Dayal H and Langer L. (2017) Terminology and tensions within evidence-informed decision-making in South Africa over a 15-year period. *Research for All*, 1(2): 252–64. DOI 10.18546/RFA.01.1.03.
10. Erasmus Y, Lötter D, Rebelo Da Silva N, Stewart R. (In progress). Reflections on the role of per diems in international development projects: barriers and enablers to the project cycle.
11. Erasmus Y, Lötter D, Stewart R, Zaranyika H, Maluwa L, Tannous N, Langer L, Jordaan. (In progress). Implementing an EIDM programme in a donor driven environment: reflections for theory and practice.

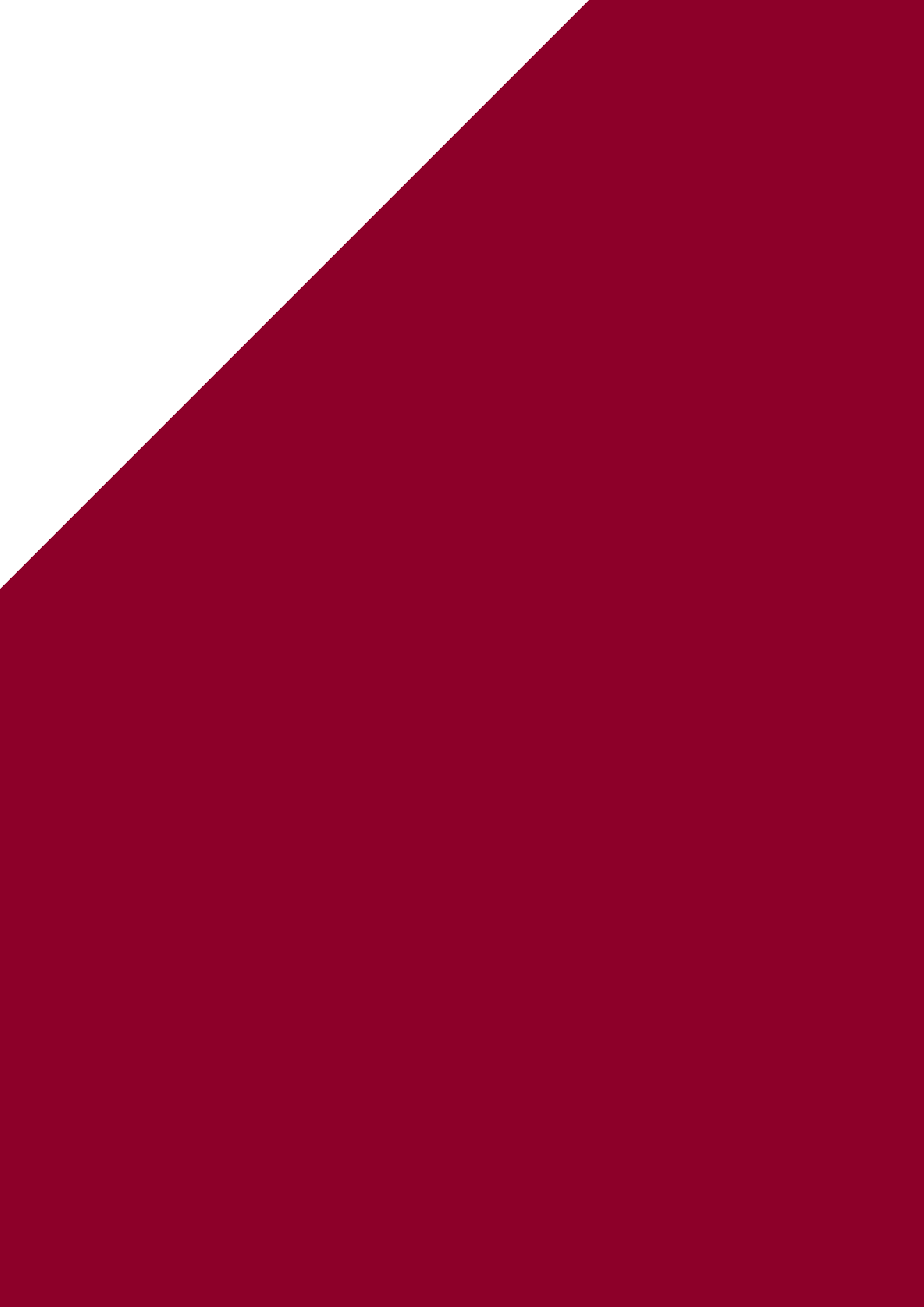
12. Erasmus Y, Zaranyika H, Weideman M, Choge I, Otieno O, Langer L, Stewart R. (2014). An overview of role players outside government that are central to evidence-informed decision-making in Malawi: A landscape review. Johannesburg: UJBCURE, Centre for Anthropological Research, University of Johannesburg. Available from: <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Malawi-Landscape-Review.pdf>.
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19. Stewart R, Langer L. Erasmus Y. (In progress). A new model for increasing the use of evidence by decision-makers.
20. Stewart R, Wildeman R, Jordaan S, Erasmus Y, Langer L, Maluwa L, Rebelo Da Silva N, Mitchell J. (In progress). Practical reflections on combining workshop and mentorships to build capacity in evidence-informed decision-making. Conditionally accepted: *Evidence & Policy*.
21. 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*. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/174426414X14175452747938>.
22. Tannous N, Langer L, Lötter D, Erasmus Y, Motha P, Mitchell J, Stewart R. Moving the Africa Evidence Network forward: voicing African perspectives in evidence-informed decision-making. Under review.
23. University of Johannesburg-led programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) team. 2016a. Africa Evidence Network survey report. University of Johannesburg. Available from: <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AEN-Survey-Report.pdf>.
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UJ-BCURE videos

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29. Africa Evidence Network. 2016b. UJ-BCURE a model for EIDM capacity support in Africa. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgkm6BwoXPY>.
30. Africa Evidence Network. 2016c. Mentoring as a means of supporting evidence uptake. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xBzqnBMsPQ>.
31. Africa Evidence Network. 2016d. Co-producing policy-relevant evidence maps. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7_9OczmT9M.
32. Africa Evidence Network. 2016e. Africa Evidence Network: building a community for EIDM in Africa. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlIumQFWNEE>.
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34. Africa Evidence Network. 2016g. UJ-BCURE: Malawi in 2015. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrkBnsY1VtE&t=4s>.
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DFID stories of change

38. University of Johannesburg-led programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE). 2016a. Finding answers for fish farming challenges: EIDM in Mchinji, Malawi. DFID Research and Evidence Division: Stories of Change Series.
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