

## Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || April 2015

### International Year of Evaluation launched in South Africa

On 20 March 2015, the International Year of Evaluation was **officially launched** at the Wits School of Governance.

Minister in the Presidency, Jeff Radebe (center) was in charge of the proceedings, formally announcing the Year of Evaluation in South Africa. The launch was organised by the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) at Wits, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), the Department of Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (DPME) as well as the Public Service Commission. The aim of the International Year of Evaluation is to highlight the importance of evaluation in development as well as to support efforts to increase the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in national government. The national M&E system in South Africa is often cited a pioneering example.

<http://www.wsg.wits.ac.za/wsg-news/evalyear-launched-at-wits/>



Two informative INASP blogs ([here](#) and [here](#)) give insights into the first experiences of training policymakers on the use of evidence in Zimbabwe. They identify a number of key challenges policymakers and evidence advocates face as well as innovative ideas on how to overcome them. For example, a senior policymaker acknowledged the importance of the need for institutional mechanisms to fight personal interests.

The Evidence for Policy Design Harvard BCURE programme **launched trainings** with Indian civil servants on the use of evidence in policymaking. The course includes modules on policy analysis and cost benefit analysis, for example. It combines online modules as well as in-class components and involved more than 60 senior civil servants.

A new **Politics & Ideas** post by Ian Goldman highlights how the Presidency's Department of Planning, M&E (DPME) in South Africa fosters the use of evaluation and research in policymaking. It recounts the history of DPME's creation as well as some of its initial and current activities. For example, the results of a survey assessing how senior decision-makers in South Africa use evidence are presented.

A strong motivation for the use of systematic reviews and meta-analyses is presented in **Aaron Carrell's article** explaining the limitations of basing arguments on single studies. Judging on single studies, for example, the 40-50 most commonly used food ingredients seem to both cause and prevent cancer at the same time.

### Evidence events

20-24 April: **IDS Impact evaluation Design course**

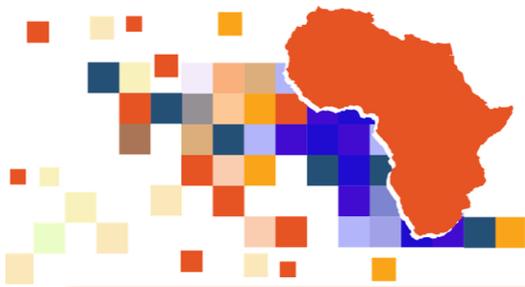
03-07 October: **Cochrane Colloquium**

12-16 October: **South African Monitoring & Evaluation Association meeting**

### Announcements

- We are pleased to announce that the Africa Evidence Network is now an official member of the Effective Institutions Platform.
- We look forward to welcoming Precious Motha as the new Network Coordinator from the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and look forward to her ambitions and plans for the AEN!

The recent **Africa Evidence Blogs** looked at how to increase interest among prospective researchers regarding evidence-informed policymaking as well as at a case study of successful evidence use in the South African labour market. Blogs submissions are open to anyone and can be submitted via the **website!**



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## 3ie annual report 2014: Evidence. Influence. Impact.

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) has published its [annual report for 2014](#). The report entitled *Evidence. Influence. Impact.* covers the NGO's efforts to support evidence-informed development policies and programming in the past year. Highlights of 3ie's activities in 2014 include: the publication of 21 impact evaluation reports; three systematic review reports; two working papers; three replication papers; and one scoping paper. At the same time, 3ie launched a number of new initiatives. For example, the Philippines Policy Window, the first rolling replication window with a focus on HIV prevention, as well as the production of the first 3ie video lecture series. 3ie-organised events, such as the Impact Evaluation Matters Conference in Manila and the London Evidence week further attracted large crowds and media attention.



## INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

DfID's Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme team recently won the Analysis and Use of Evidence Award at the 2014 Civil Service Awards. In an [insightful interview](#), Team leader Dr Joanna Macrae reflects on how the team started to put evidence at the heart of policymaking. She gives examples of the team's learnings and highlights the importance of asking the right questions. In the rapidly changing field of Humanitarian Assistance, it is further crucial to anticipate future evidence needs.

Kirsty Newman's [new blog post](#) opens up a debate whether public (mis)understanding of science actually matters? She is wondering whether a public that is prone to misinterpret and not use evidence in their daily decision-making will likewise pay little attention to the importance of evidence when it comes to decision-making at policy level. Would it be justified to point out or criticise people's unhelpful evidence-free decision-making?

The Guardian has compiled an interesting list about the top 20 things politicians need to know [about science](#), and, vice-versa, about the top 20 things scientists need to know [about policymaking](#). This useful resource gives some insightful tips and practical ideas of benefit to both policymakers and scientists. It extends from hands-on advice, e.g. 'there is no such thing as a policy cycle' and 'significance is significant' to meta-recommendations such as 'scientists are human' and 'policymakers can be experts too'.

## Evidence from academia

[Inter-American Development Bank](#): New Impact Evaluation hub launched

[Burchett et al](#): The usefulness of different types of health research: perspectives from a low-income country

[Lavis et al](#): Developing and refining the methods for a 'one-stop shop' for research evidence about health systems

[Hoey](#): "Show me the numbers": Examining the dynamics between evaluation and government performance in developing countries

The AEN team was highly entertained by the #DevelopmentAprilFools tweets! Here are the team's two evidence highlights:

@philaction: *Microfinance groups admit they may have overhyped microcredit a bit, even suggesting that it might end poverty* #DevelopmentAprilFools

@hlanthorn: *Cochrane/Kremer debate resolved, consensus: 'worms debilitate a bit, sometimes'* #DevelopmentAprilFools