

Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || April 2016

AFIDEP celebrates five years of making evidence matter in Africa's development

On 7 March 2016, the [African Institute for Development Policy \(AFIDEP\)](#) hosted a [dinner](#) to celebrate five years of promoting evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM) in Kenya and Malawi. The dinner was attended by government representatives, development partners, UN agencies, civil society, the media and AFIDEP's Board members and staff. AFIDEP's journey from humble beginnings began in 2010. Founder and Executive Director, Dr Eliya Zulu, focused the organisation on bridging the gap between research evidence and policy. Speakers at the dinner praised AFIDEP's rapid growth and achievement. The Ministry of Health of Kenya acknowledged and appreciated the positive impact of AFIDEP's capacity building programme had on health policy-makers in EIPM. AFIDEP has created [infographics](#) showcasing their milestones in the last five years.



Left to right:- Dr Eliya Zulu (Executive Director, AFIDEP), Hon Susan Musyoka (MP, Machakos County) and Prof Francis Dadoo (Chair, AFIDEP Board of Directors) Photo: Diana Warira

The latest [Sci Dev Net article](#) discusses how the citizen science model is helping South Africa (SA) manage water bodies. This model allows non-scientists to be part of research informing policy-makers. Currently SA is experiencing its worst drought in 23 years and has parts which are semi-arid. The United Nations predicts that semi-arid areas, which have low and erratic rainfall, will increase in size by 2080.

The [University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice \(GSDPP\)](#) is offering a three day introductory [course](#) on evidence-based policy-making and implementation from 23 - 25 May, in Cape Town. This is a high level course which is targeted at strategic leaders and top managers in the public service. Deadline for applications is 22 April.

The [Conversation article](#) explores how Africa can close its continent-wide gap in science funding. In addition to governments and international partners funding research and development, new resources include the private sector and Africa's wealthy individuals.

The [Knowledge Sector Initiative](#) has published a working paper entitled '[Using evidence to reflect on South Africa's 20 years of democracy](#)' written by Harsha Dayal, the Research Director at the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa. This paper describes how the government of South Africa engaged with evidence-based policy-making.

Evidence events

02-06 May: [3rd Pan-African Capacity Development Meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe](#)

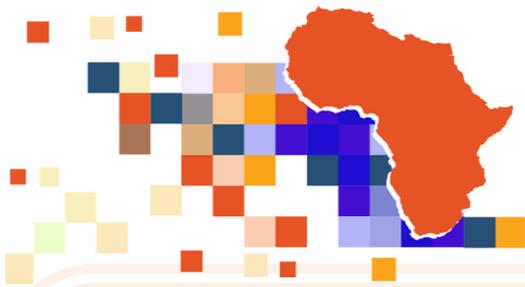
16-18 May: [Autumn International Scientific Conference on Food Safety and Security in Johannesburg, South Africa](#)

20-22 September: [Evidence 2016 Conference in Pretoria, South Africa](#)

Announcements

- [Call for abstracts and bursary application](#) for the Evidence 2016 conference
- This week is the final chance to complete the [AEN survey](#)

The latest [AEN blog](#) by Dr Yvonne Erasmus, Deputy Director of UJ-BCURE, focuses on good financial management for non-financial managers. The blog explores how the principles of evidence-informed decision-making can be applied to financial management and decision-making. AEN blog submissions are welcome on our [website](#).

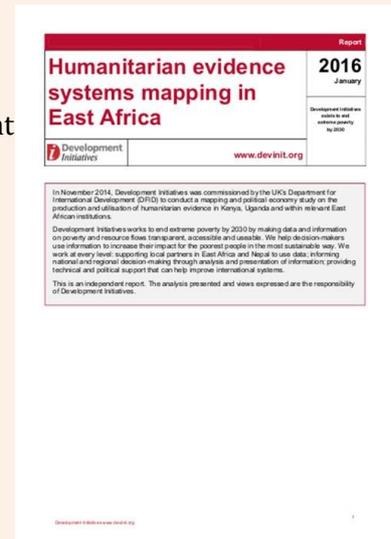


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Humanitarian evidence systems mapping in East Africa

In 2015, [Development Initiatives \(DI\)](#) carried out a political economy study on the production and uptake of humanitarian evidence defined as research and evaluation (R&E) in Kenya and Uganda. The study found that R&E has a limited strategic value in the humanitarian landscape in the above mentioned countries. It tends to operate independently of host governments and local actors, and is primarily driven by donors. The study found little evidence of research protocols. The use of evidence by decision-makers is impeded by the limited extent to which policy-makers and practitioners value and engage with R&E outputs, or are willing and able to act on findings. The study recommends building of host government ownership of R&E through their own co-ordination mechanisms. Systems to improve quality of R&E ought to be developed, such as research protocols drawing on social science research principles.



INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

The [Abdul Latif Jamel Poverty Action Lab \(J-PAL\)](#) is a network of 131 affiliated professors from over forty universities from around the world. The aim of J-PAL is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. J-Pal's [Post-Primary Education Initiative](#) which funds randomised evaluations, has published 25 [evaluations](#) on secondary, vocational and tertiary education.

The [World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group](#) article discusses whether accountability and learning is the next big dichotomy in evaluation. In the past there have been various debates about the different preferred methods for effective evaluation, for example a debate on randomised control trials as the true evaluation results. However, now the debate has shifted to whether accountability and learning are compatible.

[Evidence Aid's](#) latest [blog](#) by Dr Philip Davies unpacks the meaning of evidence. Evidence is characterised as being probabilistic, tentative and contestable. This means that the expertise, experience and judgment of evidence users is required to interpret and decide how to use it for the problem at hand. It is suggested that systematic reviews and other types of research synthesis are regarded as the highest quality of evidence available for decision-making.

Evidence from academia

[Davies and Mullan](#): 'Research capacity in Africa—will the sun rise again?'

[Elliot et al](#): 'Living systematic reviews: An emerging opportunity to narrow the evidence-practice gap'

[Marusic et al](#): 'Interventions to prevent misconduct and promote integrity in research and publication'

[What works in getting research used in decision-making?](#) This is a question that the 'Science of using science' study aims to understand. The study is a project by the [What Works Wellbeing](#), the [Wellcome Trust](#), the [Alliance for Useful Evidence](#), and the [EPPI-Centre](#) at University College London. AEN's [Laurenz Langer](#) is one of the contributors. The study focuses on better development and use of a sound evidence-base in government policy, and other decision-making. Further, the study identified six types of activities used to support evidence-informed decision-making and the evidence-base that underpins these.