

## Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || August 2014

### Johannesburg Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE) centre website now online!

The website of CEE Joburg, a regional centre of the CEE, has gone online. Established in 2012, the main mandate of CEE Joburg is to contribute to the work of the Collaboration by encouraging the need for systematic reviews to inform environmental policy and practice in Africa. As a team of experienced reviewers, CEE Joburg fulfills this mandate by offering training and support to environmental scientists, managers, and practitioners who wish to undertake or use systematic reviews. CEE Joburg is led by Dr Carina van Rooyen and Dr Ruth Stewart and based at the Centre for Anthropological Research (CfAR). The website hopes to inform about CEE's activities and to spread the use of reliable research evidence in managing environmental challenges in Africa. For more information visit [www.ceejoburg.com](http://www.ceejoburg.com), email [ceejoburg@uj.ac.za](mailto:ceejoburg@uj.ac.za) or follow @ceejoburg.



Collaboration for  
Environmental  
Evidence

The use of rigorous evaluation methods in South African education is growing. For example, a [new evaluation](#) on the effectiveness of Grade R (entrance level) has revealed that the impact of Grade R in South Africa is small and 'there is virtually no measurable impact for the poorest three school quintiles, while there are some impacts for the higher quintile schools'.

[Science in Africa is on the rise](#), finds *The Economist*. Albeit from a low base, African research output is found to have tripled in the past decade, to over 55,400 in 2013. This drive is fuelled by a mix of increased government funding, ICTs, and private sector research. With the continent's research capacity increasing, cautious optimism sees the beginning of a reversal of Africa's brain drain

A new [research to action](#) blog, investigates the issue of guiding principles for policy influence in emerging democracies. It identifies three helpful main rules: (1) *Stay true to the evidence*; (2) *Engage early, and discretely with the government on controversial issues*; (3) *Internal transparency is paramount*

What causes the poor quality of basic economic and social data in Africa? A new Centre for Global Development [report](#) finds that too many African statistics are systematically flawed and based on unreliable data. Much of this might be attributed to misguided incentives of data producers to overstate development progress.

### Upcoming events

1-5 September: ADB/3ie 'Making impact evaluation matter' conference in Manila, Philippines

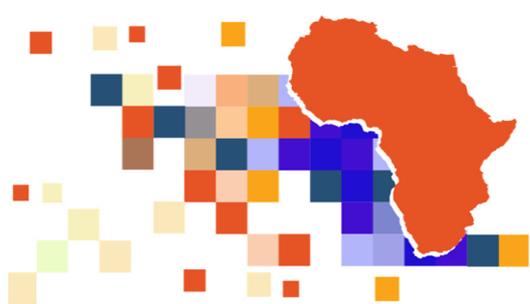
21-26 September: 22<sup>nd</sup> Cochrane Colloquium in Hyderabad, India

10-14 November: LIDC Short Course: Evaluation for Development Programmes

### Announcements

- [Registration](#) for the Africa Evidence Colloquium in Johannesburg, 25-28 November is now open!

On Monday 7th July 2014, the Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNET) hosted the first [in a series of Policy Dialogue events](#). The policy dialogues aims to foster discussions among key stakeholders in the policy process, effectively addressing the research to policy dialogue.



## Does research drive international development?

A DFID literature review addresses the crucial question of ‘What is the evidence on the impact of research on international development?’. It finds that, while research indeed has the potential to contribute to development efforts, “there are significant gaps in the capacity, incentives and systems necessary to ensure that research is systematically used in decision making.” This links in particular to an interesting sub-section of the report – the question whether evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM) has had a positive impact of development policy and practice. This issue is further taken up by [fhi360](#), a nonprofit human development organisation, which extends the review’s cautious findings on EIPM with practical examples of how fhi360 has increased the supply, demand, and use of research evidence in international development.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Kirsty Newman from DFID, shares on [Four basic rules](#) to improve capacity building in international development in her latest blog. These include ensuring that the assumed beneficiaries of capacity building own the endeavor; the selection of beneficiaries who are motivated to engage in the programme; and then applying pedagogic principles to learning; as well honestly measuring whether learning has taken place.

DFID receives praise for its evidence-informed policies in this year’s [‘What works’ report](#). The What Works report reviews the use of evidence within DFID and how it generates, transmits and adopts evidence in its decision-making. It finds DFID to exemplify good practice in EIPM and a notable passion for evidence among staff.

Strengthening health research capacity in LMIC is an important approach to advance health and development. However, systematic evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches remains limited, as their complexity and diversity make monitoring and evaluation (M&E) difficult. A recent [Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine article](#) showcases a number of snapshots on how to improve M&E.

## Evidence from academia

New journal [article](#):  
‘Quality evidence for policymaking: I’ll believe it when I see the replication’

European Journal of Development Studies [Special Edition](#):  
‘Impact evaluation – are we ‘off the gold standard’

New journal [article](#):  
‘Do Poverty Traps Exist? Assessing the Evidence’

**In our next newsletter:** *UJ-BCURE team visits Malawi!*

[A SciDevNet article](#) lays out different ways in which science can engage with development practice and policy. It identifies a need to discourage the scientific community from viewing their exclusion as inevitable and insurmountable. Further, attempts to make the public more science-literate, as opposed to providing high-level access to policymakers for selected scientists are seen as an effective starting point.