

South Africa celebrates National Science Week

Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, launched the 2016 **National Science Week (NSW)** on Saturday August 6. The launch signaled the start of week-long celebrations across the country from August 8 - 13. The theme for this year is "Sustainable Development and Improved Quality of Life". The **minister** said during the launch, "If we want sustainable development we must invest in these key areas, which are normally referred to as STEM, science, technology, engineering and mathematics". The NSW event is aimed at celebrating the role that science, mathematics, engineering and technology play in everyday life. Lastly, the Africa Evidence Network is also promoting public engagement on social sciences through the **Evidence 2016** conference taking place on 20-22 September where Minister Naledi Pandor is opening the **keynote** address.



FILE: Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor. Picture: GCIS.

AFIDEP in partnership with the Parliamentary Caucus on Evidence-Informed Decision-Making hosted a **workshop** for members of the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association. The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness among the members of parliament on the need to access and use the latest evidence when formulating laws and policies that address the real challenges faced by their constituents.

A **new study** conducted by the **Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies** analyses the South African food and agricultural policy and finds that the policy lacks coherence. This lack of coherence has important implications for a food system that is faltering in many respects, and for research or processes intended as evidence to inform policy.

Research to Action new post by Clara Richards shares literature that refers to evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM). The **Evidence Based Policy in Development Network** library is highlighted as a resource that focuses on this sector. This library has been updated with top-ten key resources on EIPM.

A new **blog** by Ronald Munatsi and Daphne Jena discusses a number of glaring gaps in evidence, which could compromise the drafting of a new Youth Empowerment Strategy in Zimbabwe. They argue that the limited background information on the current state of youth in Zimbabwe will make it difficult to implement a successful youth empowerment programme.

Evidence events

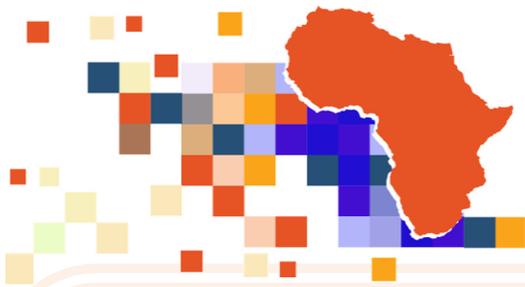
7 September: Knowledge into policy: going beyond "context matters" [webinar](#) at 14:00 (BST)

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

Announcements

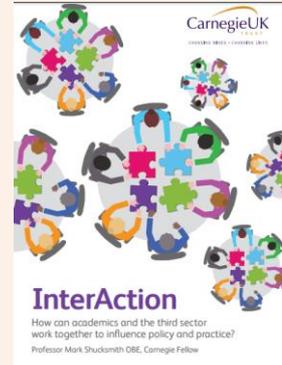
- Registration for the **Evidence 2016** conference closes 9 September 2016
- New **AEN film** about its achievements and the future
- **Call for submissions** of articles on evidence use in politics and policy-making

The latest **AEN blog** by Ms Ezethu Mandlelize, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer of the Anglophone Africa Centre for Learning, Evaluation and Results (CLEAR-AA), highlights the progress made by CLEAR-AA's Parliamentary programme in building capacity in M&E within the African legislatures. AEN blog submissions are welcome on our **website**.



How can academics and the 'third sector' work together to influence policy and practice?

The 'InterAction' is a new report written by Professor Mark Shucksmith for the Carnegie UK Trust. The report seeks to explore what scope exists for academics and the third sector (voluntary organizations, NGOs etc), to work together to influence policy and practice, and how this might be done. Further, the report investigates what barriers or obstacles may hamper cooperation, and what methods of interaction exist and have proved successful or unsuccessful in influencing policy and practice. Statistics reveal there is a total of 200,000 academics who work in UK universities compared to the smaller third sector; which underlines the imbalance between these two sectors in terms of size and resources. However, these statistics do not translate into influence: according to a survey of 484 policy-makers and practitioners, evidence from university research was the most trusted (always or usually trusted by 68% of respondents), but one of the least used sources of evidence. Whereas third sector organisations' evidence (and especially that of think tanks) was less trusted than university research, but their outputs were more likely to be read.



INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

The **Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)** explores how evidence in early intervention with children with signals of risk can lead to better services. EIF has published two **evidence reviews** and plans to support those who are interested in applying them. Therefore, the EIF will be running a programme of masterclasses discussing the findings and the application of evidence in local decision-making.

Policy Option's article focuses on linking academic research with the public and policy-makers. Statistics reveal that more journal articles are produced than cited. Some commentaries suggest that the reason is that universities still operate under an outdated system that values only scholarly output. Recommendations to address this included incentivising academics to engage with the media to reach mainstream audiences.

The **Think Tank Initiative (TTI)** shares its **experience** of evaluating the impact of support to policy research institutions in its first interim report. TTI is evaluating the programme's second phase which began in 2008 and ends in mid-2019. Policy research institutions are supported through a mixture of core funding and capacity development. Early findings of the interim report show that core funding is resulting in progress towards improved capacity to produce quality research.

Evidence from academia

Font et al: 'Tracing the impact of proposals from participatory processes: methodological challenges and substantive lessons'

Othieno et al: 'Applying social network analysis, centrality measures in identification of climate change adaptation opinion leaders'

The **Social Science Approaches for Research and Engagement in Health Policy & Systems (SHAPES)** and **Translating Evidence into Action (TWG)**, both Thematic Working Groups of **Health Systems Global (HSG)**, have developed a baseline inventory of global initiative for knowledge translation. The inventory identifies what each evidence translation initiative is, why it was set up and what its focus is. The HSG blog **post** highlights lessons learned during the inventory development. With 70 initiatives identified so far, however, the inventory list still needs knowledge translation initiatives from developing countries and non-English speaking countries. Contribute [here](#).