

**A new Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE) and secretariat to AEN**

November 2016 saw the creation of a new Centre to support Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM). Based at the University of Johannesburg, the **Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE)** is led by Prof Ruth Stewart, who explains the work of the Centre as both rigorous and relevant: “Our vision at ACE is to reduce poverty and inequality in our region by increasing the production and application of research evidence that is both useful and used.” The work of ACE includes producing systematic reviews and other evidence syntheses, as well as supporting decision-makers to use evidence. Prof Ruth Stewart explains that “Our capacity-support work builds directly on the experience of our University of Johannesburg-led programme (UJ-BCURE) which we’ve successfully run over the last three-years”. Perhaps most significantly for the AEN, the new Centre has committed to ongoing provision of the secretariat for the AEN, enabling us to continue to support the growth of the EIDM community across the continent.



Professor Ruth Stewart, Director of the new Africa Centre for Evidence at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

The **UJ-BCURE programme in South Africa** celebrates three successful years in supporting South African and Malawian government in increasing the use of evidence in decision-making through capacity building workshops. The workshops provided 614 (545 in South Africa and 69 in Malawi) learning places. UJ-BCURE documented over 100 cases of applied learning. It is recorded that close to 100 senior officials in government consistently attended capacity-building workshops in South Africa. Lastly, Prof Ruth Stewart and Dr Yvonne Erasmus **share** the programme’s experience over the last three years.

The **UJ-BCURE mentorship programme** is another mechanism that UJ-BCURE used as a means of supporting evidence uptake in Malawi and South Africa. Over the last three years, UJ-BCURE has offered 215 group mentorship places and 6 individual mentorships in Malawi, 52 individual mentorships with 40 face-to-face workplace visits and 8 team mentorship in South Africa. In addition, a successful mentorship relationship between South Africa’s **Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)** and UJ-BCURE produced an **evidence map**.

The **Africa Evidence Network (AEN)** finishes the year off on a high note with a total of nearly 1000 members from over the past three years. The AEN has hosted 732 people at 17 events (some co-hosted with other organisations or government departments) across the continent. As the UJ-BCURE programme comes to an end, the AEN secretariat will continue to be provided by ACE; the Network has created a **roadmap** to sustain itself.

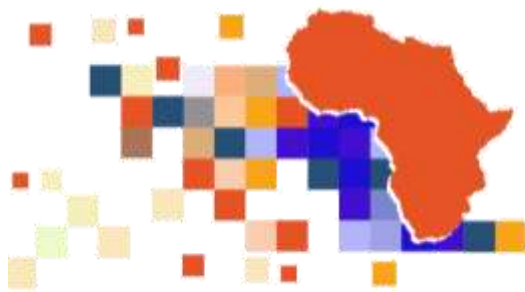
**Evidence events**

**13 December 2016: Going beyond ‘context matters’ free [webinar](#) at 1pm GMT**  
**27-31 March 2017: 8<sup>th</sup> AfrEA [international conference](#) in Kampala, Uganda**

**Announcements**

- **Prof Jimmy Volmink** steps down from Cochrane SA.
- The Global Evidence Summit 2017 **call for abstracts** opens on 5 January 2017.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> AfrEA international conference **call for abstracts** is extended till 14 December 2016.

The latest **AEN blog** highlights lessons learned by three BCURE programmes in Africa as the programme come to a close at the end of the year. BCURE is an initiative by the UK’s Department for International Development aimed to increase the capacity of policy-makers to use evidence in decision-making. Submit your AEN blog **here**.



### The world's first HIV vaccine efficacy study launched in South Africa

The new vaccine against HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is being tested in South Africa in what scientists say is the first large [study](#) of an HIV vaccine's effectiveness since 2009. The study aims to enroll 5400 sexually active young men and women. About seven million people in South Africa are recorded to be living with the virus, which is one reason why the trial is taking place there. The study is being led by South Africa's [Dr Glenda Gray](#), a university research professor and head of South Africa's Medical Research Council. According to the United Nations, more than 30 million people have died from AIDS since the 1980s. Recent breakthroughs in anti-retroviral treatments have improved the lifespan of AIDS patients. However, the only effective prevention remains abstinence from or the use of barrier methods such as condoms during, sexual intercourse.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

[Evidence in Governance and Politics \(EGAP\)](#) is a cross-disciplinary network of researchers and practitioners which is united by a focus on experimental research and is dedicated to generating and disseminating rigorous evidence. In February 2017 EGAP, in partnership with Malawi's Invest in Knowledge will be hosting a [workshop](#) on experimental methodology for social researchers.

The [Organisation Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) has updated its estimates on income inequality and poverty. According to the [brief](#) income inequality remains high in the face of weak recovery. Key patterns from the update include, income inequality remains at a record high despite declining unemployment and persistent long-term unemployment and slow wage growth prevented recovery of labour incomes among poorer households in many countries.

In a recent [blog post](#), the [World Bank](#) discusses how impact evaluation evidence continues to accumulate and policy-makers need to understand a range of evidence and not just individual studies. However, conducting a systematic review can be challenging due to lack of key information or unclear reporting from included studies. Therefore this post summarises the information researchers need to report for impact evaluations to be more useful and easily included in a systematic review of intervention effects.

## Evidence from academia

[Ross et al](#): 'Factors that influence the implementation of e-health: a systematic review of systematic reviews (an update)'

[Shah](#): 'Migration, HIV and Technical Education in Nepal'

[Snilstveit et al](#): 'Narrative approaches to systematic reviews and synthesis of evidence for international development policy and practice'

[Waddington et al](#): 'How to do a good systematic review of effects in international development: a tool kit'

On 18 November 2016, the [Impact Initiative](#) and the [Global Coalition to End Child Poverty](#) brought together researchers on child poverty from around the world. The day focussed on the reduction of economic and non-economic forms of child-poverty. In this [video](#) researchers were asked to finish a statement: "Research for child poverty has to ..."