

Africa Evidence Network impresses at BCURE meeting

The [Department for International Development \(DFID\)](#) and all six Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programmes were excited about the growth of the Africa Evidence Network (AEN) at a meeting recently held at the Crown Agents Offices in Sutton, London. Although the primary purpose of the three day meeting held from November 16 to 18 was to review the progress of DFID-funded BCURE programmes, there was also an element of BCURE teams learning from one another's experiences of trying to achieve the shared goal of ensuring evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM). Participants wanted to know more about how the AEN operates, and there was great interest in possibly becoming involved with the AEN in the near future. Fellow BCURE programmes were also impressed with the mentorship programme run by UJ-BCURE in Malawi and South Africa.



Reviewing & learning: Professor Ruth Stewart at the BCURE 2015 meeting in London.

Image courtesy of @DFID_Evidence via Twitter.com

The [UJ-BCURE programme in South Africa](#) celebrates a successful year where the number of government officials who attended and actively participated in our workshops grew by 226 places. During the year the mentorship model was reviewed and adapted to cater better for the needs of government officials, and we connected with senior officials eager to carry forward the spirit of the programme. UJ-BCURE South Africa was also invited to be part of departmental platforms and even asked to formally represent departments.

[UJ-BCURE in Malawi](#) finishes the year off on a high note. The first half of 2015 saw local government officials and MPs taking part in EIDM training activities; close to 80 workshop places were taken up. Monthly group mentoring sessions took place during the District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinating Committee (DMECC) meetings in the districts of Mchinji and Ntchisi. By the end of the year, six cases of applied EIDM learning were identified in various sectors across both districts.

In 2015 the [Africa Evidence Network \(AEN\)](#) welcomed 189 new members, which means overall membership of the Network is now over 500. The AEN is looking forward to engaging with local networks in the coming year, both through upcoming roadshows aimed at strengthening EIDM in Southern Africa and the second AEN international meeting, the Africa Evidence Network Conference to be held in South Africa September 20 – 22 2016.

Evidence events

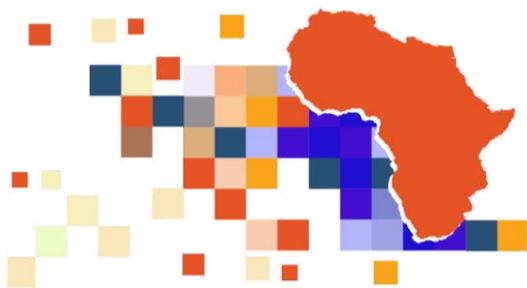
[January-March 2016: Africa Evidence Network road shows to Harare and Cape Town](#)

[20-22 September 2016: Africa Evidence Network Conference](#)

Announcements

- The Africa Evidence Network Conference is happening on September 20 – 22 2016, and the venue for the conference will be the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) International Convention Centre (ICC).
- Advance notice of DFID [call for systematic reviews](#) in 2016.

The [last AEN blog](#) post for 2015 features the highlights from a knowledge café on EIDM in Zimbabwe between representatives from the Public Affairs section of the American embassy and the [Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network](#). AEN blog submissions are welcome on our [website](#).



Tool attempts to track and rate departments' use of evidence

The UK-based [Alliance for Useful Evidence](#) has released a [report](#) that discusses in detail their attempt at creating a tool to rate government departments' use of evidence in policy decisions. The Alliance hopes to galvanize less well performing departments into improving their evidence use by sharing and celebrating departments that successfully integrate evidence into their policy decisions. Other issues discussed in the report include the reasons behind departments' difficulty in using evidence in their policy decisions, recommendations for how the tested framework can be used by both policymakers and those who hold policymakers accountable, and how the Alliance plans to use the framework to monitor and record government performance in the coming year.

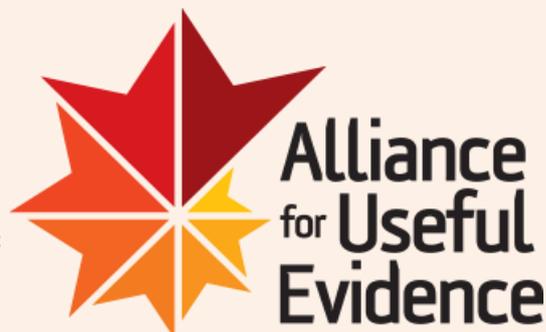


Image courtesy of <http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Team members from the Southern-led [Politics & Ideas](#) initiative share [lessons learnt](#) from running an online course aimed at addressing Latin American policymakers' needs for new ideas, tools, and support when integrating research into their policy decisions. Team members Vanesa Weyrauch and Leandro Echt further describe the need for such training.

The [New Researchers' Network](#) recently held an event during which a panel of academics shared their thoughts on what constitutes 'enough' evidence before policy can be implemented. Related questions of what types of evidence are preferred and how the rigour of such evidence can be tested were also explored. [Research to Action](#) attended the event and offers a [breakdown of the panel discussion](#).

In a recent [blog post](#), [3ie](#) shares lessons learnt for ensuring thematic window grants help answer decision- and knowledge-centred questions in a timely way. They attribute the culmination of their recent thematic window on voluntary medical male circumcision to three factors: the design of the thematic window to support rapid impact evaluations, how specific the theme was, and the excellent coordination within the thematic window team.

Evidence from academia

[Mirozev et al](#): 'Contextual influences on the role of evidence in health policy development: what can we learn from six policies in India and Nigeria?'

[Durose et al](#): 'Generating 'good enough' evidence for co-production'

[Samii et al](#): 'Effects of Payment for Environmental Services (PES) on deforestation and poverty in low and middle income countries: a systematic review'

[Raovita et al](#): 'What are the non-food impacts of GM crop cultivation on farmers' health? (systematic review)'

DFID, among other UK government departments, recently published a [policy paper on Official Development Assistance \(ODA\)](#). The paper highlights Britain's recently legislated 0.7% gross national income spend on ODA and provides a breakdown of where funds for ODA originate.