

Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || June 2015

Africa Evidence Network Regional Meeting, 3 June 2015

The Africa Evidence Network (AEN) hosted a regional meeting on the 3rd of June 2015. The meeting was chaired by Dr Laila Smith Director of [CLEAR-AA](#). The speakers for the day were Dr Yvonne Erasmus from UJ-BCURE and she presented on the [AEN's progress](#) and the keynote speaker was Dr Philip Davies from [3ie](#) whose presentation focused on [making evidence accessible and relevant for policy and practice](#). The meeting was attended by 30 delegates, who comprised of officials from the South African government departments, Universities and other institutions. Most of the attendees were AEN members, with a few non-members. This brought great opportunities for new memberships and networking among attendees. For example, we have seen a lot membership signups after the meeting and some attendees have shared their experiences on a blog, i.e. [ROER4D joins the Africa Evidence Network](#).



On 15 June 2015 the South African government together with the African Union (AU) commemorated the Day of the African Child. This year's theme was about ending child marriage. The [AU's](#) evidence show 58 million young women in developing countries have been married off before their 18th birthday. In response, the [A World at School](#) project is urging governments to adopt and enforce the legal age for marriage.

The Ebonyi State University from Nigeria has established the first [African Institute for Health Policy & Health Systems Studies](#). The creation of this Institute is the culmination of three years of work by the university with the [Alliance HPSR](#) programme aimed at supporting national processes for evidence-informed policy-making.

Louis Maluwa from UJ-BCURE has written an [article](#) featured in the OECD-based Effective Institutions Platform [newsletter](#) which discusses the role of evidence in public sector reform. Citing examples from two African governments, he argues that public sector reform can hardly be possible if decision-makers fail or refuse to utilize evidence when making policy decisions.

A blog post by [AID LEAP](#) looks at [why monitoring programmes are so bad](#). It suggests that M&E professionals use poor monitoring practices because it is believed that there is no need to use basic scientific rigour in monitoring. The author stresses that M&E is not some imagined scientific ideal but it is about the impact of the monitoring and what it is designed for.

Evidence events

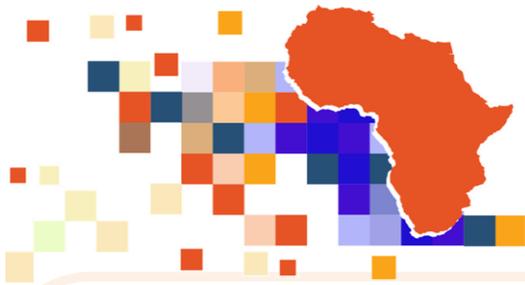
[16-18 September: ASSAf-TWAS ROSSA Young Scientist Conference 2015](#)

[12-16 October: South Africa Monitoring & Evaluation Association Conference](#)

Announcements

- UJ-BCURE will like to welcome back our Director Ruth Stewart from the 1st of July. We want to send our sincere appreciation, gratitude, and recognition to the outgoing Acting Director Sunet Jordaan.
- South Africa becomes the first middle-income country to invest in the [Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research](#).

The latest [AEN blog](#) by Ed Barney from [DFID](#) shares different online systems that assist in accessing evidence. He outlines a list of resources that are open platforms that provide access to synthesized research, impact evaluations and policy briefings with a development orientated focus. To name a few, [Ella](#), [3ie](#) and [Eldis](#). AEN blog submissions are welcome on our [website](#).



Marketplace of ideas for policy change report

[The Marketplace of ideas for policy change report](#) launched by [AidData](#) which reveals how external influence shapes developing country reforms. AidData aims to share its firsthand experience and observations of nearly 6 750 policy makers and practitioners in 126 developing countries with donors, international organizations and NGOs in order to gain understanding about how they can most effectively influence efforts on the ground. One of the key findings from the report includes, decision-makers in low and middle income countries prefer specifically policy guidance. External performance assessments are instrumental in harmonizing the policy preference of host government and development partners. External performance assessments also appeared to have more influence when local data are used. Country-specific assessment comprise of in-depth diagnostic and advisory content also appeared to have more popularity with the policy-makers across the developing countries.



INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

Louise Shaxon from the [ODI](#) has written a working paper titled: [Using Workshops to develop an evidence strategy: Lessons from UK Food Standards Agency \(FSA\)](#). This paper describes the processes that the FSA went through in 2009 to develop its Science and Evidence Strategy (S&ES). One of the key lessons is the significant role played by the S&ES in conducting the FSA's evidence related activities such as the participation in workshops.

The [second Annual Bank Conference on Africa \(ABCA\)](#) was held in Berkeley, California, on June 8-9, 2015. It covered various topics pertinent to the causes, solutions, and understanding of conflict and fragility in Sub-Saharan Africa. The conference also covered a range of impact evaluations and lab experiments to test policies and understand mechanisms in post-conflict environments. Some takeaways from the conference are shared [here](#).

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Mental Health Innovation Network (MHIN) have published a [Global Mental Health Policy Influence Toolkit](#). This kit consist of four tools: (1) mapping-policy makers, influencers and other stakeholders, (2) defining your role as a "knowledge broker", (3) creating a policy-influence and (4) identifying and accessing "champions". The toolkit aims to provide researches with testing innovations in mental health as well as a set of tools to help them develop their policy influence or engagement strategy.

Evidence from academia

[Cameron et al](#): 'Evidence for peacebuilding: an evidence gap map'

[Epstein et al](#): 'The value of words: narrative as evidence in policy making'

[Haddaway et al](#): 'Making literature reviews more reliable through application of lessons from systematic reviews'

[Baptist and Befani](#): 'Qualitative Comparative Analysis – A Rigorous Qualitative Method for Assessing Impact'

INASP's [AuthorAID](#) is the biggest free research writing course online. This year it has attracted 1 200 applicants and only 367 participants were chosen. The course is described as an interdisciplinary that includes researchers across the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities in 38 countries. The programme runs from 1 June to 19 July 2015 and is being offered via [Moodle](#), an open-source platform for online courses. Participants are expected to complete a number of activities and a certificate is awarded upon completion.