

Using evidence to strengthen health systems in Africa and the MENA region

UsEvidence is a collaborative project involving three partners – Makerere University (Uganda), American University of Beirut (Lebanon), and the Zambian Forum for Health Research (Zambia). The project builds on preceding efforts made by EVIPNet, REACH-PI in Uganda, and the IDRC's International Research Chairs' Initiative (IRCI). UsEvidence aims to, among other things, scale up the development and evaluation of rapid response services for health systems using evidence as a tool to support decision- and policy-making in the Sub-Saharan and MENA regions. UsEvidence researchers are involved in supporting the implementation of these services.



Photo: A number of the UsEvidence project researchers with Mr. Faston Goma – Dean, School of Medicine, University of Zambia (3rd right). 4th from the right is Dr. Marie-Gloriose Ingabire of the IDRC while 2nd right is Dr. Rhona Mijumbi-Deve, PI of the project.

The [University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice](#) has partnered with the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Atlantic Philanthropies in offering a [fellowship programme](#). This programme aims to train the next generation of leaders seeking to influence and facilitate changes in global policy, practice, and public dialogue around inequalities.

The [South African Early Childhood Review 2016](#) is a new release by [Ilifa Labatwana](#), the [Children's Institute](#), and the [Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation](#). This review presents a set of indicators to support inter-sectoral planning, and delivery and monitoring of a comprehensive package of early childhood development (ECD) services.

The Free Health Care Initiative in Sierra Leone has shared [six lessons](#) in providing free mother and child health services in the six years of free healthcare policy implementation. The success of the policy depended on taking a systematic approach and focusing on improving the main health system elements.

The Malawian [Ministry of Health](#) will be launching the [National Health Communication Strategy](#) at a function to be held in Lilongwe on 30 June 2016. Malawi's health sector is usually constrained by many health conditions which consume budgetary allocations. However, these challenges will be tackled through the various communication interventions.

Evidence events

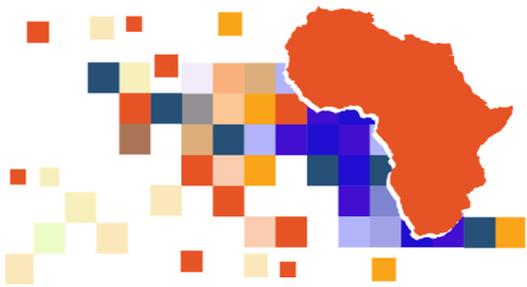
[29 June: Randomisation and its discontents webinar hosted by Measure Evaluation at 10:00 – 11:00 \(EDT\)](#)

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

Announcements

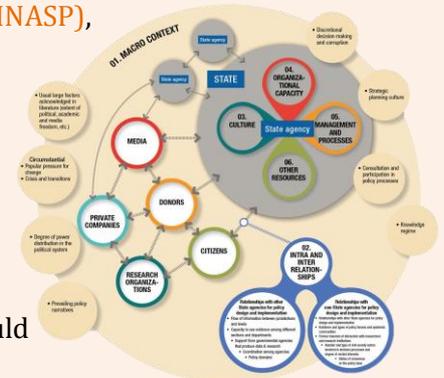
- [3ie](#) has released a funding call for the impact evaluation of a financial inclusion programme for smallholder farmers in Ghana and Kenya.
- [Call for peer-reviewed articles](#) for inclusion in a publication entitled: Evidence Synthesis for Health Policy & Systems: A Methods Reader

The latest [AEN blog](#) by Natalie Rebelo Da Silva, a researcher at UJ-BCURE, outlines the preliminary results from the AEN membership survey, which will help to inform a sustainability plan for the AEN beyond 2016. AEN blog submissions are encouraged and welcomed on our [website](#).



Six dimensions of how "context matters" in the use of knowledge into policy

The [International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publication \(INASP\)](#), in partnership with [Politics & Ideas](#), has released a new study entitled [Knowledge into policy: Going beyond 'context matters'](#). The study focusses on a conceptual framework to help policy-makers, researchers, practitioners, and donors better define windows of opportunity in different public institutions to focus efforts on promoting better interaction. In a few weeks, a practical paper will be released which proposes concrete ways in which the framework can be used. The framework consists of six dimensions of context that any government institution aiming to improve the use of knowledge in public policy should consider. These six dimensions fall into two categories: external and internal. These categories highlight the various and changing dimensions in a particular government setting. In understanding the context, users of this framework will be able to identify the most promising areas of change for different types of interventions.



INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

Jonathan Harle from [INASP](#) shares [insights](#) on doing research and using evidence in difficult places like Somalia and Somaliland. Research and knowledge systems in Somali regions operate in difficult environments of fierce political competition. One challenge highlighted is that research is not a government priority and is done mostly by foreign academics with Somali researchers being relegated to the role of data gatherers.

The [Innovation Network](#) is a nonprofit evaluation, research, and consulting firm providing expertise to help nonprofits and funders learn from their work to improve their results. The Network offers tools and resources to build nonprofits' ability to plan and evaluate their own programmes. The [logic model builder and workbook](#), for example, offers a step-by-step guide for articulating and connecting organisational or programme goals.

The [BetterEvaluation blog](#) discusses the need for post-project impact evaluations. Currently, impact evaluations tend to focus on only the short-term intended direct effect rather than the unintended emerging impacts of projects. The preoccupation with short-term impacts represents a serious gap in evaluation practice, theory, and design. The value of returning two to ten years post-project offers an opportunity to assess whether planned improvements have endured beyond the end of a project.

Evidence from academia

[Berhanu Abegaz](#): 'Challenges and opportunities for chemistry in Africa'

[Witter et al](#): 'The Sierra Leone Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI): process and effectiveness review'

[Haacker et al](#): 'Effectiveness of and financial returns to voluntary medical male circumcision for HIV prevention in South Africa: An incremental cost-effectiveness analysis'

EvalPartners have launched the [Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation \(GPFE\)](#) at the Parliament of Nepal. The goal of the GPFE is to advance an enabling environment for nationally owned transparent, systematic and standard evaluation processes in line with the national evaluation policies. The GPFE has also started a [Global EvalStory video campaign](#) that promotes the use and demand of evaluation work from the perspective of parliamentarians around the world. The campaign released its second [video](#) featuring Hon. Susan Musyoka, a parliamentarian from Kenya.