

Africa Evidence Network NEWSLETTER || May 2016

The launch of the National Research and Education Network in Sierra Leone

On 26 April 2016, the [West and Central African Research and Education Network \(WACREN\)](#) hosted a workshop at Njala University in Sierra Leone which involved key stakeholders in the research and education community, ministries and departmental agencies, telecom providers, donor agencies and colleagues from Liberia. The workshop was about the establishment of a National Research and Education Network in Sierra Leone (SLREN) and the need for Sierra Leone to join the WACREN. The main aim of SLREN and WACREN is to work collaboratively in securing high speed and affordable internet connectivity for the Sierra Leone research and education community. The success of the event led to the establishment of the SLREN and the creation of an interim committee.



Photo: WACREN media

The [Mama Ye initiative](#) under the Evidence for Action project has contributed to the [reduction](#) of maternal and neonatal deaths in Malawi's central district of Ntcheu. This is collaborative effort between Mama Ye and the implementing partner the Parent and Child Health Initiative (PACHI) funded by DFID. The project was implemented in six districts: Lilongwe, Kasungu, Balaka, Ntcheu, Mangochi, and Ntchisi.

A new [Conversation Africa article](#) discusses the overlap and relevance of the AEN work with the findings of the [Science of Using Science Review](#). It finds that South Africa has made great progress in evidence-informed decision-making, but also outlines a number of lessons, based on the Review, that show how the AEN can further support the use of evidence.

[INASP's](#) VakaYiko programme is launching the [Evidence-Informed Policy-Making Toolkit](#). This toolkit is a flexible, adaptable suite of online and offline resources to support skills, knowledge, and attitudes for use of evidence by civil servants and parliamentary staff in developing countries.

[AFIDEP](#) hosted a [workshop](#) for the staff of the Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) in Kenya to assist them to support members of parliament in using research evidence in decision-making. The workshop was facilitated by two PRS staff who shared lessons they learned from their one-month internship at the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

Evidence events

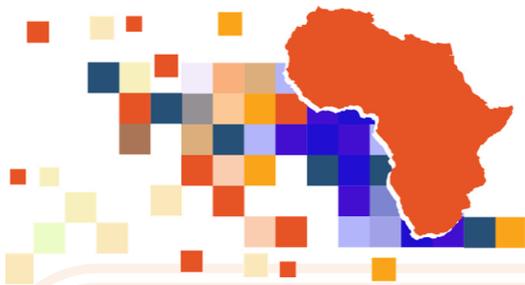
24 May: The VakaYiko Evidence-Informed Policy-Making Toolkit Launch via a [webinar](#) 11:00-12:00 (BST)

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

Announcements

- **31 May 2016** is the deadline for abstract submissions and bursary applications for the Evidence 2016
- [Call for consultants](#) for the UN World Food Programme
- [Call for applications](#) for extension scholarships for Masters and Doctoral students in 2017

The latest [AEN blog](#) by Russell Wildeman, a project manager at UJ-BCURE, is a summary of a recently-held UJ-BCURE workshop that addressed the role of evidence in ICT in education in developing countries. The blog focuses on the relationships between ICT interventions and educational outcomes. AEN blog submissions are welcome on our [website](#).



World leaders make the case for investing in nutrition

Every year, **malnutrition** accounts for half of the death rate of children under the age of five. Scientific evidence shows that 159 million children around the world have stunted growth. In combating malnutrition, global leaders launched the first **Global Investment Framework** called **Investing in Nutrition**. This report which was co-authored by the World Bank and Result for Development Institute, outlines cost effective tools to combat malnutrition. The report estimates that investing an additional \$2.2 billion per year in nutrition over the next 10 years will help save an estimated 2.2 million lives, and result by 2025 in 50 million fewer stunted children. To reach the 2025 goal, the report has proposed what it is calling a 'global solidarity approach' to financing nutrition. For the first five years, international resources would need to be scaled up, allowing time for developing countries to mobilise domestic resources.



INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

The **National Academies Press (NAP)** was created by the National Academy of Sciences to publish the reports of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The NAP publishes more than 200 books a year. Some of their books are freely available for download. Their latest book- '**Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy, and Practice**'- is available for **free download**.

The **Knowledge Sector Initiative** hosted an event entitled '**Demand and use of evidence: Insight from the inside**' that featured presentations by senior civil servants who had all previously worked in academic and policy research. Presenters shared insights on how they had had to learn the language of the bureaucracy and the politics of policy-making in order to contribute to the process of decision-making.

The **Guardian** shares **insights** on what scientists need to know in order to influence policy-making. Currently, there are limited publications with proven approaches on how to influence policy. The problem is that scientists tend to assume there is one arena in which policy-makers and scientists might engage. However the inter-action takes place in many venues at various levels involving different types of policy-makers. The solution is to understand the policy process before trying to influence policy-making.

Evidence from academia

Chernery et al: 'Use of academic social research by public officials: Exploring preferences and constraints that impact on research use'

James et al: 'A methodology for systematic mapping in environmental science'

Paul Cairney: 'The Scottish approach to policy-making: Implications for public service delivery'

Evaluation for Africa's latest **post** highlights how evaluation on the continent is progressive, growing, and transformational. Democratic values such as transparency and accountability create a demand for evaluation, while in non-democratic cultures evaluation enables these values to be established. Further, evaluation supports transformation, as evident in South Africa. Prior to 1994, evaluation was non-existent in government. Two decades later the country has built one of the strongest evaluation association (**SAMEA**), and monitoring and evaluation functions in most spheres of government.