

Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || November 2018

Africa hosts the biggest data conference

Africa hosted the biggest international data conference from 5-8 November in Gaborone, Botswana. The second edition of the [International Data Week 2018 \(IDW 2018\)](#) came to Africa for the first time this year. It is a global conference that brings the data community together to discuss issues that relate to data in research. This global event attracted over 800 delegates from more than 60 countries. This year's theme was 'The Digital Frontiers of Global Science'. It was organised by the Botswana Open Science and Open Data Forum. The event was officially opened by the [Botswana President - His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Masisi](#) who gave an opening keynote speech, highlighting that "data is the new currency".



Image: Botswana President – His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Masisi

.....

Have you ever wondered if there is a correlation between university ranking and quality? South African researcher [Ahmed Essop](#) argues in his [blog](#) that universities ought to prioritise teaching and not merely focus on the ranking which prevents diversity in universities. The universities must rather place more emphasis on ensuring that they provide quality education which is beneficial to the society.

The [African data revolution report \(2018\)](#), by Jean-Paul Van Belle, gives the present condition and the latest development of Open Data, with a major focus on Open Government Data in Africa. The report suggests that data should be owned by the individuals. Further, the publication of open data is promoted as it is both beneficial and functional.

[INASP](#) provides feedback on a discussion amongst more than 70 contributors who met in Kampala from various research, policy and civil society organisations. They developed a statement recognising the essential role that Ugandan research plays in development. The full details are presented in the [blog of the event](#).

[JPAL's](#) latest [blog](#) launches a new series of case studies in which they describe how evidence from RCTs has informed policy changes around the world. These describe seventeen case studies from around the world, including four accounts of evidence-informed policy decisions from across African countries.

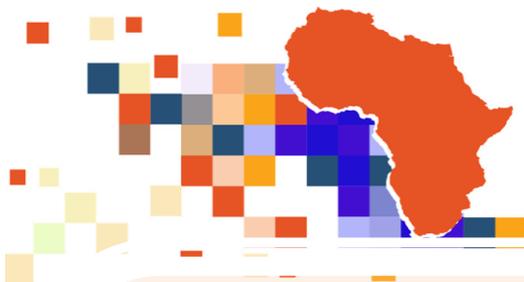
Evidence events

- 6 December: [Africa Evidence Webinar, Online.](#)
- 9-11 December: [European Commission Evidence-Informed Policy-Making Seminar: Water-Energy-Food-Health, Pretoria, South Africa.](#)
- 12-14 December: [Science Forum, Pretoria, South Africa.](#)
- 11-15 March 2019: [9th AfrEA Conference, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.](#)

Announcements

- [Call for abstracts](#) by Cochrane South Africa for the African Cochrane Indaba in 2019.
- [Call for expressions of interest](#) to join the GESI Network in low & middle-income countries.
- [9th AfrEA International Conference:](#) Abstracts submission deadline extended to 26 November 2018
- [Call for applications](#) for the CEBHA+ Doctoral Scholarship.

AEN member Ronald Munatsi writes about Zimbabwe's new dispensation in this month's AEN [blog](#). You can view the blog post [online](#). Use the Network to share your story - submit your blog post [here](#).



Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || November 2018

Chuks Nnaji receives the 2018 LMIC Award in Atlanta

The [International Society for Vaccines \(ISV\) Congress](#) is a 3 day annual global conference for vaccine related research and this year it was held in Atlanta. They offer several [LMIC awards](#) to support the delegates from Lower and Middle Income countries. After a nomination process, [Dr Chukwudi Nnaji](#), the senior scientist (Vaccines and Immunisation) at Cochrane Centre, South African Medical Research Council [received the 2018 LMIC Award](#). He took it as an opportunity to contribute different perceptions on the topic of vaccines with delegates from all over the world. He also managed to acquire knowledge and connect with others. He [presented](#) at the [Evidence 2018 conference](#) in Pretoria as an [Africa Evidence Network \(AEN\)](#) member.



Chuks Nnaji (centre) poses for a photo as he receives the 2018 LMIC Award: Congratulations for a wonderful achievement.

INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

[Duncan Green](#) shares [eleven tips for better blogging](#). These include having a “catchy” first paragraph and using words that you would use in conversations. You must have one main idea, write like a story, on different levels, use an active voice, and take criticism positively. You should guide the reader by clarifying concepts, admit when you are unsure, and avoid using too much technical terminology.

[Corey White](#), the managing editor of [R&E Search for Evidence](#) shares in a [blog](#) about how the “[toy-in-soap](#)” [intervention](#) has increased handwashing amongst children. The research findings show that children who were given soap with a toy inside were four times more likely to wash their hands using the soap than kids who were given a toy-less soap.

Lindsay Bingaman in the [Evidence Action blog](#), gives lessons from the [Neglected Tropical Diseases NGO Network conference](#). These include ensuring that the voices of local affected people should be heard, and that their needs should be integrated and not excluded from society.

Evidence from academia

[Frank et al](#): ‘Bridging the research–policy gap: the importance of effective identity leadership and shared commitment’

[Jimenez et al](#): ‘Mixing and matching: using qualitative methods to improve quantitative impact evaluations (IEs) and systematic reviews (SRs) of development outcomes’

[Stewart et al](#): ‘An integrated model for increasing the use of evidence by decision-makers for improved development’

[Yanovitzky, I. and Weber, M](#): ‘Analysing use of evidence in public policymaking processes: a theory-grounded content analysis methodology’

[Brigitte Nerlich](#) in her blog post entitled: “[the social construction of science: what does it mean](#)” argues that scientists are human beings who are capable of making mistakes, labs are places of “messy human practices” and science is not always accurate. She recommends 3Cs namely “creating, constructing and convincing.”