

Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || September 2014

A UJ-BCURE workshop on Evidence-Informed Implementation

After much anticipation and excitement, the first UJ-BCURE workshop was held at the Aha Idea Catalyst Centre in Pretoria. The two day workshop was attended by senior colleagues from the Departments of Science and Technology, Basic Education, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation and the Strategic Relations department at the University of Johannesburg (picture). The workshop was “hands-on” and allowed participants to apply the frameworks for evidence-informed decision-making in the Implementation Plan for the e-Education White Paper for the 2015-2016 period. A situational analysis was done, and the Implementation Plan’s logical framework approach re-worked. UJ-BCURE’s continued support to the Department of Basic Education will see the completion of the exercise. The next phases are intensive one-on-one mentoring followed by secondments.



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The African Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation have been challenged to misrepresent African research output by [SciDev.Net](#). Anastassios Pouris of the University of Pretoria in South Africa for example highlights: “There is no way that these countries produce [research output] in only one field”.

‘[A science-led agenda in Africa](#)’ was of high prominence during the US-African leaders’ summit. Key recommendations put forward at this meeting were that economic growth and a reduction of dependence on aid should be encouraged by pairing American and African scientific endeavours.

In a response to the lack of visibility of African research, Eve Gray suggests the development of a [mega journal](#) that will not only enhance research, but also appraise the actual impact on development. She further suggests that this will also avail opportunities for multi-disciplinary publishing thus encouraging interface between the natural and social sciences – increasing the chance of developmental research impact.

Data suggest political & social violence, unrest in SA is on the rise. Felicity Duncan, identifies the need to challenge headlines indicating a rise on labour unrest or rising political violence using [reliable evidence](#). Reliable long term data is available from the Department of Labour.

Upcoming events

21-26 September: [22nd Cochrane Colloquium](#), Evidence-Informed Public Health: Opportunities and Challenges Hyderabad, India

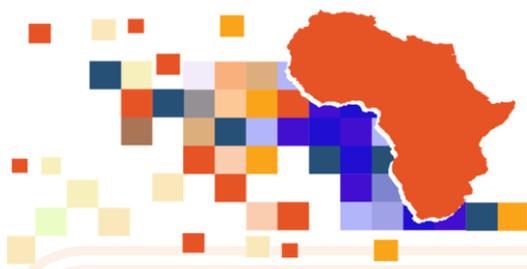
30 Sep-3 Oct: [Global Symposium on Health Systems Research](#), Cape Town

1-5 December: [Systematic Review and Meta-analysis course](#), Makerere University, Uganda

Announcements

- [Call for abstracts](#) for the Africa Evidence Colloquium in Johannesburg, 25-28 November closes on 1st October. Registration is still open. Reserve your place now!

The Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) has published a [map of](#) the social science research environment in South Africa with an overview of the commissioning, undertaking and dissemination of research.



African Evidence Network was well-represented at the Impact Evaluation Matters Conference

The first Impact Evaluation Matters conference was co-hosted by 3ie and the Asian Development Bank from September 1-5 in Manila, Philippines. The conference provided an opportunity for a number of AEN members to attend and discuss the importance of rigorous evidence from the continent. Johannesburg-based AEN members Evans Muchiri (picture) and Laurenz Langer both presented findings of systematic reviews of development interventions on the continent. Evans presentation highlighted the impact of smallholder farming interventions on food security and wealth of African farmers, whereas Laurenz reported on the effectiveness of mobile technologies to support educational outcomes. The conference was a wonderful opportunity to meet and incite evidence-informed conversations, and a number of new members have joined the network.



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INTERNATIONAL NEWS
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Research and policy relevance has become a topical knowledge translation issue. The debate on whether researchers should improve their efforts to engage policy makers or perhaps change their approaches to research in order to effectively engage policymakers is explored in a **blog** that assesses the different measures of policy relevant research.

The 3ie **'Making Impact Evaluation Matter'** conference held in the Philippines, Manila placed a main focus on the use of evidence to promote development policy and programmes and enhancing capacity building efforts in evidence-informed policy. The key findings were that Impact Evaluations are central in improving the welfare of people in low and middle income countries.

Interested in **meeting Mary**? A new World Bank blog explores how to give theories of change a less abstract feel. It highlights the importance of always keeping the human stories in mind when constructing and linking different casual steps.

A new **blog** reflects on experience from Latin America in developing a culture of evidence use among policymakers. It is found that supporting the individual policymaker's interest is as important as nurturing institutional mechanisms and incentives. For example, policymakers should be closer integrated in the setting the research agenda in knowledge translation.

Evidence from academia

New journal **article**:
What have we learned from the application of systematic review methodology in international development? – a thematic overview

New journal **article**:
Towards a systems perspective on evidence-based policy

New journal **article**:
Consultancy research as a barrier to strengthening social science research capacity in Uganda

How does one determine effective interventions in a complex and changing world? Whilst RCTs are a useful method for determining 'What Works', research shows that the findings of RCTs can be adapted to new contexts and their complex environments. A Special Series on **Evaluation: Complex Problems, Adaptive Solutions** depicts the usefulness of RCTs in different contexts.