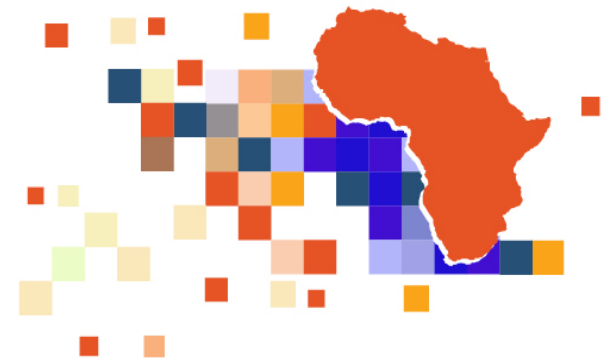


# What works to build capacity to use research evidence in South Africa and Malawi: a cross-government perspective

---



Yvonne Erasmus



# Presentation in three parts

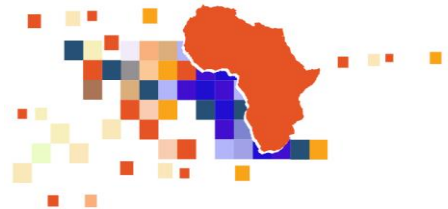
What did we  
set out to do?



What did we  
do?

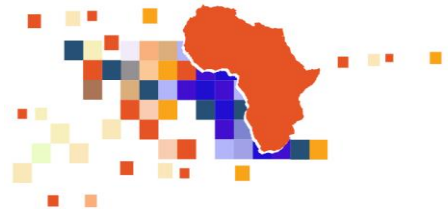


What does this  
mean for how  
we understand  
EIDM support?



# Part I: What did we set out to do?

- UJ-BCURE is a three year programme of work (Jan 2014 – Dec 2016) funded by DFID aimed at evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) capacity building and sharing among civil servants in South Africa & Malawi
- Set out to:
  - build on existing initiatives
  - work through the AEN
  - enhance awareness and demand for research evidence
  - build on and develop skills of staff in government
  - foster meaningful relationships



# Part II: What did we do?

Inception phase



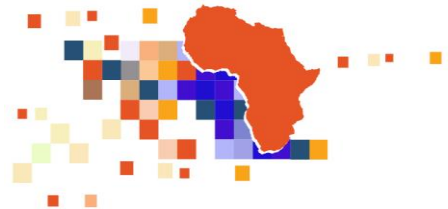
Workshops



Mentoring

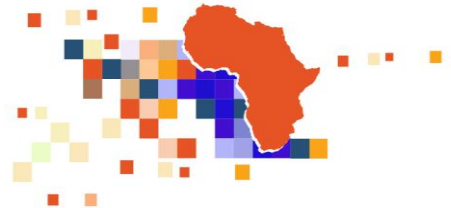


Cross-government



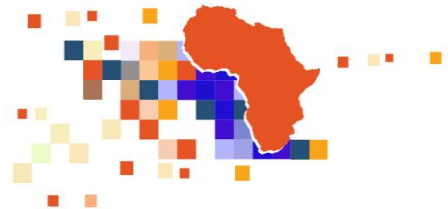
# Inception phase

- Year-long (2014) with the aim to:
  - Understand the EIDM landscape outside of government (landscape maps)
  - Identify departments, understand settings (needs assessments)
  - Explore specific needs of government departments and develop country-specific work plans
- Starting point was central government departments with overarching remits (DPME & MoFEPD)



# Workshops

- Start dates (June 2014 in SA, Feb 2015 in Malawi)
- Tailored to specific needs and contexts
- Focuses on awareness, then tools (e.g. evidence synthesis), requested EIDM support
- First step in causal chain to EIDM uptake and applied learning as workshops unlikely to lead to change on their own



# Workshops

## SOUTH AFRICA

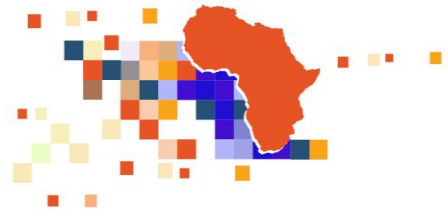
**General EIDM:** unpacking barriers to EIDM, the use of SRs in government

**Demand-led / specifically tailored:** e.g. EIDM in ICT in education (DBE), EIDM in Innovation for Inclusive Development concept paper (DST), EIDM in relation to water stewardship (DWS)

## MALAWI

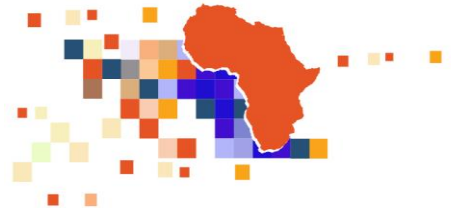
**General EIDM:** What is evidence? What is EIDM? Why is it important in decision-making?

**Demand-led / specifically tailored:** Evidence in decision-making, accessing information, using M&E data in decision-making (DMECCs)



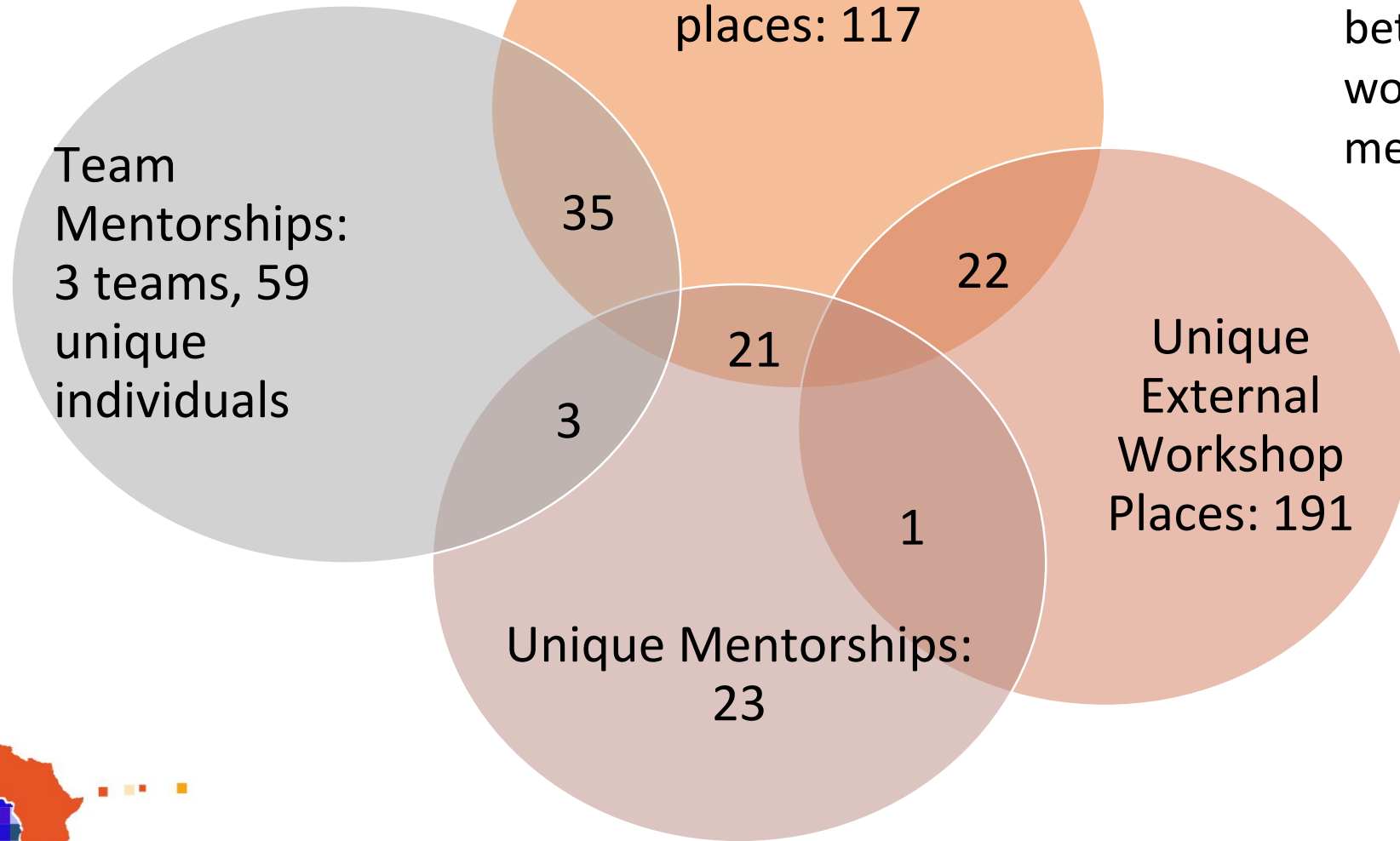
# Mentorships

- Key to approach to enhance capacity – more tailored, applied learning, deepens capacity
- SA: First individual mentoring, then revision to add in visits (mentorship plus), and addition of team mentorships
- Malawi: group mentoring and then select individuals
- Mentors drawn from range of partners, e.g. SASPRI, MRC, Stellenbosch University, Citizens' Health, UJ-BCURE team
- Relationship between workshops and mentorships





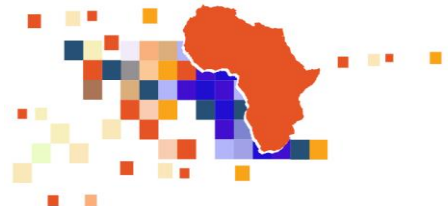
# Mentorships



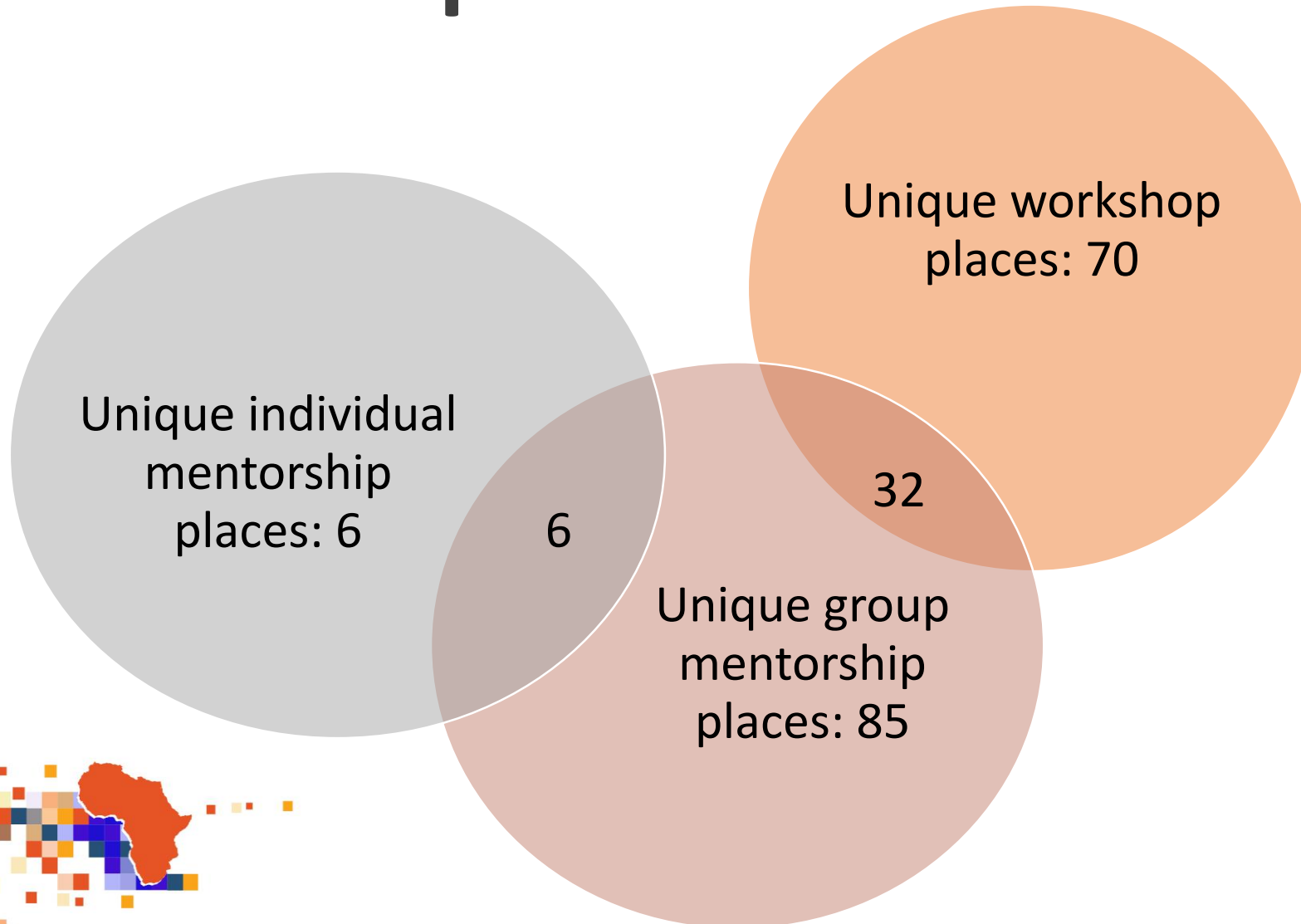
Overview of the relationship between mentorships, workshops and team mentorships in South Africa

**Individual mentorships:**  
DPME, DBE, DST, DEA

**Team mentorships:**  
DPME, DWS, DSD, DBE



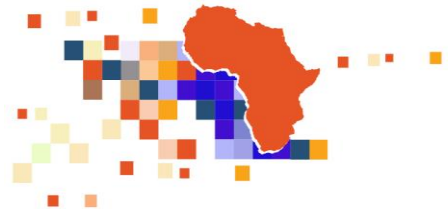
# Mentorships



Malawi: relationship between workshop and mentorship places

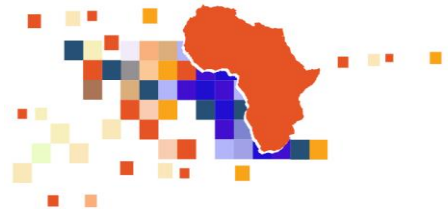
**Group mentorships:**  
DMECCs (MLGRD)

**Individual mentorships:** health, education, agriculture, fisheries, labour



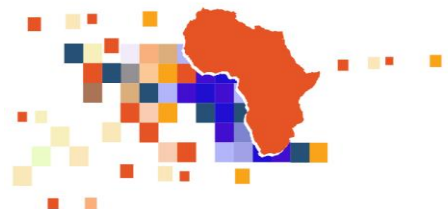
# Cross-government (SA only)

- Several initiatives directed at EIDM capacity, but often disjointed
- Idea for cross-government relationship building emanated from Oct 2015 stakeholder meeting and UJ-BCURE Steering group meeting
- Aim: to bring together the disparate initiatives within and outside of government to identify concrete ways to work jointly towards shared goal of increasing use of evidence in decision-making
- Important for sustainability



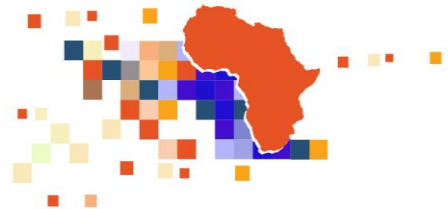
# Selected key learning

INCEPTION PHASE	WORKSHOPS	MENTORING	CROSS-GOV
Value of landscape reviews – understand context and getting people to engage	Expertise in evidence-synthesis set up apart	Very popular and we've been approached by others to share learning	Importance of including this into programme planning and budget
Willingness to learn & revise	Co-delivery of courses popular	Need to set clear objectives from the start	
Relationships underlies work	Demand-driven nature	Need to be flexible	
Need to update reviews	Need for ongoing capacity building	More explicit training of mentors	
	Frustrations around not providing technical skills	Length of mentorships	
	Timing of when workshops held		



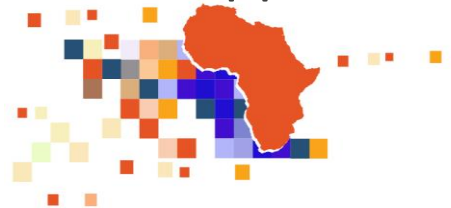
# Part III: What does this mean for supporting the use of evidence by decision-makers?

- The use of evidence requires specialised skills (e.g. accessing, appraising & synthesising)
- Thought that supporting the development of these skills could lead to increased ability and greater demand for research
- Although different approaches to EIDM capacity building been attempted, we know little about which approaches are most promising
- Models that conceptualise EIDM focus on supply-demand interplay, while model we propose focuses on demand-side of evidence use (activities and mechanisms that support demand-side actors)



# New model

1. Outcomes: Decision-makers move from awareness of EIDM to capability to actual evidence-use and back around to awareness again
2. Entry points: Decision-makers can enter the process according to their needs based on a combination of two parameters: their individual position within an institution, and their starting point on the awareness-capability-use cycle
3. Outputs: What can be achieved increases & changes as individuals move around cycle
4. Contexts: Contextual factors are hugely influential in defining the nature and significance of the shifts that take place
5. Interventions: In order to facilitate movement around the cycle, more than one approach is needed to facilitate change



Using evidence

Raising awareness

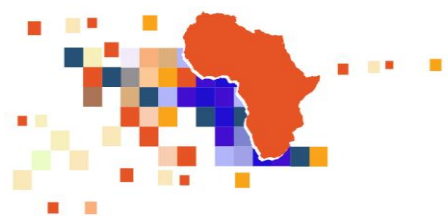
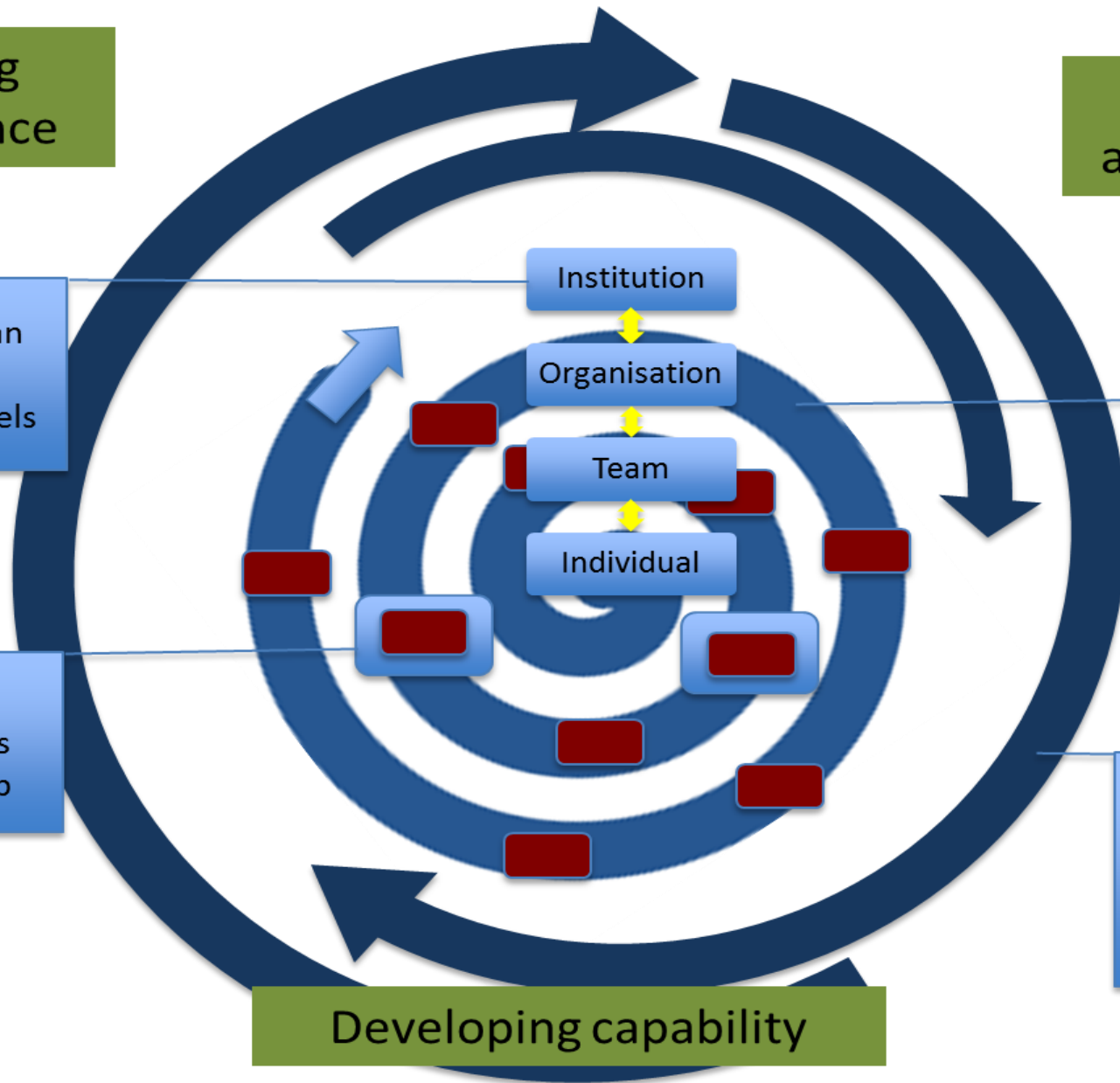
Change can occur at several levels

Shifts are incremental

Context influences every step

Multiple interventions are needed to facilitate change

Developing capability

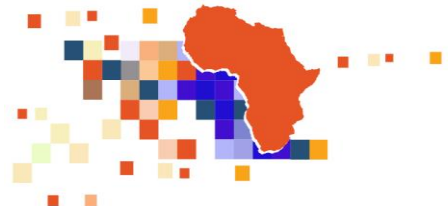


# Acknowledgements

Our work to build capacity to use research evidence is funded by the UK Department for International Development

The AEN is grateful for the support received as part of this DFID grant to the University of Johannesburg

With thanks to the teams, partners and contributors of both UJ-BCURE and the AEN





# Thank you

**Yvonne Erasmus**

UJ-BCURE

University of Johannesburg

yerasmus@uj.ac.za | [www.africaevidencenetwork.org](http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org)