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3. Getting Started in 2017
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6. Our Work in 2017
   - Providing the secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network
   - Hosting the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence’s Johannesburg Centre (CEE Joburg)
   - Reviewing the evidence on how ecosystem services can be used to support multidimensional poverty alleviation in sub-Saharan Africa
   - Reviewing the evidence on the abuse of children with disabilities in East Africa
   - Reviewing the evidence on technology and education
   - Providing training and capacity support
   - Building evidence communities
   - Engaging various audiences

7. ACE Outputs in 2017
   - Publications
   - Conference presentations and posters
   - Popular writing
1. Message from our director

It is one year since we opened the door of our Centre, the Africa Centre for Evidence, at the University of Johannesburg and it has been a truly remarkable journey. What our team has achieved in this short time with respect to our research projects, support to governments, funding secured, and academic outputs is remarkable. I am extremely proud of the talented team of people who have made this possible, and all those who have supported us along the way. None of the achievements laid out in this report would have been possible without them. I have no doubt that 2017 has seen the birth of a Centre that will remain on the map for many years to come. With thanks and congratulations to all concerned, our ACE team, our funders, and all our partners and supporters.

Prof Ruth Stewart
ACE Director

The Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE), based at the University of Johannesburg, was established in late 2016. Our vision is to make evidence available and usable in our region to reduce poverty and inequality by increasing the production and application of research evidence that is both useful and used. We work towards the following five strategic goals:

1. To produce useful research evidence to inform policy and practice across the region;
2. To support the production of high-quality systematic reviews, evidence maps, and other forms of evidence synthesis by others;
3. To support the use of research evidence amongst decision-makers;
4. To ensure that systematic review, mapping, and synthesis designs and methods are fully responsive to the contexts and needs of research producers and users in Africa; and
5. To build strategic local, national, regional, and international partnerships with the shared vision of ensuring research is of high quality, useful, and used.

Review full project descriptions on the ACE website: www.africacentreforevidence.org

www.africacentreforevidence.org

@ Africa Centre for Evidence 2017 ANNUAL REPORT 03

Evidence to the director

Introduction to the Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE)
Key accomplishments

Formal launch
Published 19 papers and reports
Obtained a five-star rating with Transparify for transparent reporting of our income
Director delivered the opening keynote address at the Global Evidence Summit in Cape Town
Director interviewed on both television and radio
Conducted 11 systematic reviews, evidence maps and rapid evidence assessments
Secured a three-year placement to ACE for the co-director of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence's Johannesburg Centre (CEE Joburg)
Shared our work with seven government departments in South Africa and two in the UK
Provided training for 77 people on various evidence topics
Supported 11 of UJ's postgraduate students in completing their studies through a writing retreat
Contributed to hosting South Africa's Department for Environmental Affairs' annual Biodiversity and Evidence Indaba
Secured R10 million of funding, which included support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for the Africa Evidence Network (AEN)
Became an active member of the Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative (GESI)

Launching ACE

The first year as ACE was very successful. We celebrated our establishment with a launch at the University of Johannesburg's Bunting Road Campus. Despite a huge storm during the last few hours of the day towards the start time of the launch, the event drew attendees from not only the University of Johannesburg (both academics and non-academics), but also colleagues from University of the Witwatersrand, and the University of Pretoria. Also in attendance were some of our business partners and government colleagues from the South African Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the South African Department for Social Development (DSD). Africa Check, a non-profit organisation that promotes accuracy in public debate and the media in Africa, was also present at the launch.

ACE colleagues

We are a multi-disciplinary team, and in all our work we collaborate with other institutions. Our team consists of full-time and part-time colleagues. We've also created an in-house mentorship programme to enable all colleagues to develop further and reach their full potential.

Our people

Ruth Stewart
Director
Siziwe Ngcwabe
Senior manager of the Africa Evidence Network
Christa Heyneke
Centre administrator
Desyree Lotter
Project manager
Precious Motha
Communication officer
Yvonne Erasmus
Specialist in evidence-informed decision-making
Laurenz Langer
Evidence synthesis specialist
Charity Chisoro
Researcher
Sunet Jordaan
Training manager
Mary Opondo
Researcher
Natalie Tannous
Researcher
Promise Nduku
Researcher
Zafeer Ravat
Researcher
ACE Advisory Committee

ACE established its Advisory Committee in 2017, in order to:

• Provide advice and guidance as appropriate to ACE on its design and implementation of various funded and cost-charged projects that include capacity-building for the use of research evidence across the continent;

• Provide advice and guidance as appropriate to ACE on its support to the AEN and CEE Joburg;

• Share members’ particular areas of experience and expertise to help identify possible pitfalls and opportunities in the delivery of the various funded and cost-charged programmes;

• Help the Centre to build networks and expertise by recommending contacts and resources when possible; and

• Becoming ambassadors for ACE and the AEN in members’ own work contexts.

The Advisory Committee consists of three members outside of Africa, three members within wider Africa, three members within South Africa, and one University of Johannesburg representative. The members come from various sectors including universities, government, and civil society.

Members of the ACE Advisory Committee

Harsha Dayal
Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa

Shanil Haricharan
Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, University of Cape Town, South Africa

John Lavis
McMaster University, Canada

Beryl Leach
International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), India

Rhona Mijumbi
College of Health Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda

Kammila Naidoo
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Sandy Oliver
The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre), University College London, United Kingdom

Rose Oronje
African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), Kenya

Josephine Watera
Parliament of Uganda, Uganda

Taryn Young
Centre for Evidence-based Health Care, Stellenbosch University, South Africa


5. Our funding in 2017

In 2017 Transparify awarded ACE a five-star rating, its top rating for financial transparency. What this rating means is that ACE is more transparent about its funding, making it easier to see where our funding comes from.

Source: http://www.transparify.org/5-star/

Below is a list of all the funders of ACE activities in 2017. With the exception of structural hosting of our Centre by the University of Johannesburg, all of our funding to date has been external and is project specific.

University of Johannesburg (UJ)
The University of Johannesburg provides our office space, as well as other structural support such as access to libraries and an academic community. They do not provide any financial support to the Centre. We received R42,000 in funding from UJ for the provision of a writing retreat for postgraduate students in the Faculty of Humanities in August 2017.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has funded ACE through grant of $545,000 to support the Africa Evidence Network (AEN) from 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019.

Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme (ESPA)
The Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme (ESPA) supported ACE through an evidence synthesis project grant worth £175,000 from 1 December 2016 to 30 November 2017.

Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)
The South African national Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) funded ACE through an evidence synthesis consultancy agreement (Evidence maps and synthesis: CAPABLE and Development State) worth R99,000 from January to March 2017.

International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)
The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) funded ACE through a systematic review consultancy agreement worth $23,955 from April 2017 to May 2018.

University of South Africa (UNISA)
We received R20,000 in funding from UNISA for the provision of training in evidence synthesis, including systematic reviews and evidence maps, in February 2017.

University of Cape Town
We received R12,500 in funding from the University of Cape Town for the provision of training in evidence-informed decision-making and research methods in February 2017.

Campbell Collaboration
We received R40,000 in funding from the Campbell Collaboration for the provision of training in systematic reviews in July 2017.

Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)
We received R20,000 in funding from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) for the provision of training in systematic reviews in October 2017.

Oxford University
We collaborated with the Department of Education at Oxford University on an evidence synthesis project supported by a project grant worth £50,000 from 1 January 2015 to 30 November 2016; this grant was extended until April 2017.

Department for International Development (DFID)
The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) funded ACE through a systematic review (Women in wage labour) project grant worth £70,000 from 1 November 2016 until 30 October 2017.
Our work in 2017

Reviewing the evidence on the effects of payment for environmental services (PES) in low- and middle-income countries

This ongoing project is being conducted in collaboration with 3ie. The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) funded this project to improve our understanding of the evidence on the effects of PES. The project team is leading on evidence synthesis to unpack the different factors influencing the effects of PES. In addition, the ACE project team is leading on evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review. The evidence syntheses products with sub-Saharan African decision-makers four rapid evidence assessments on policy priority areas. The project consisted of two parts: the development of an interactive evidence interface and the completion of a full systematic review.

Reviewing the evidence on the gender gaps in participation in wage labour

ACE hosts the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, which comprises 138 members from universities, civil society, and government. The members are based in 41 African countries and 20 countries outside Africa. Highlights for the AEN in 2017 include our participation in the conferences of the African Evidence Network (AEN), the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, and the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association’s biennial conference, where we hosted a cross-country synthesis. We facilitated a number of discussions and debates amongst our members on key issues around evidence production, presentation, and use. South Africa, there is strong interest in the conceptual and practical value of evidence synthesis methods for many of the development challenges we seek to undertake or use systematic reviews.

Reviewing the evidence on marine resource use, management and poverty alleviation in sub-Saharan Africa

ACE hosts the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, which comprises 138 members from universities, civil society, and government. The members are based in 41 African countries and 20 countries outside Africa. Highlights for the AEN in 2017 include our participation in the conferences of the African Evidence Network (AEN), the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, and the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association’s biennial conference, where we hosted a cross-country synthesis. We facilitated a number of discussions and debates amongst our members on key issues around evidence production, presentation, and use. South Africa, there is strong interest in the conceptual and practical value of evidence synthesis methods for many of the development challenges we seek to undertake or use systematic reviews.

Reviewing the evidence on multidimensional poverty in low-income countries

ACE hosts the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, which comprises 138 members from universities, civil society, and government. The members are based in 41 African countries and 20 countries outside Africa. Highlights for the AEN in 2017 include our participation in the conferences of the African Evidence Network (AEN), the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, and the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association’s biennial conference, where we hosted a cross-country synthesis. We facilitated a number of discussions and debates amongst our members on key issues around evidence production, presentation, and use. South Africa, there is strong interest in the conceptual and practical value of evidence synthesis methods for many of the development challenges we seek to undertake or use systematic reviews.

Reviewing the evidence on the impacts of marine resource use, management and poverty alleviation in sub-Saharan Africa

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Reviewing the evidence on decision tools for ecosystem services and poverty alleviation research

ACE hosts the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, which comprises 138 members from universities, civil society, and government. The members are based in 41 African countries and 20 countries outside Africa. Highlights for the AEN in 2017 include our participation in the conferences of the African Evidence Network (AEN), the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, and the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association’s biennial conference, where we hosted a cross-country synthesis. We facilitated a number of discussions and debates amongst our members on key issues around evidence production, presentation, and use. South Africa, there is strong interest in the conceptual and practical value of evidence synthesis methods for many of the development challenges we seek to undertake or use systematic reviews.
Our project in the rural Eastern Cape in South Africa. The ICT4RED project was further used as a case study for UJ-BCURE’s Technology and education for Justice and Constitutional Development on the introduction of EIDM. We trained 20 people from the Department to support the work of ACE and of our partners, DPME. We trained 14 people from the College of Accounting Sciences on the introduction of EIDM. The work was conducted in collaboration with Niall Winters from the Department of Accounting Sciences on the introduction of EIDM for Justice and Constitutional Development.

A charitable organisation that aims to make an impact in the well-being of those affected by abuse and its consequences. Our project focussed on conducting an evidence-based intervention in order to reduce the incidence of abuse. We trained 20 people from the Department of Psychology on the introduction of EIDM and EIDM-related training and capacity-building. The work was conducted in collaboration with Niall Winters from the Department of Accounting Sciences on the introduction of EIDM for Justice and Constitutional Development.

Researching the evidence on evidence-informed decision-making. We continued to play a role in the group in 2017. Whilst the work was unfunded and the group was informal, it was an exciting opportunity to help to build this important evidence community. The group’s meetings focused on potential protective and risk factors of abuse. Reviewing the evidence on different types of disabilities and types of abuse, as well as the emphasis on potential protective and risk factors of abuse. The evidence map visualised the relationships between them to drive research you are able to achieve a larger impact.”
Engaging various audiences

ACE has been involved in various public engagement activities, showcasing our work.

• MEDIA APPEARANCES

ACE's media presence in 2017 was impressive, with Professor Ruth Stewart handling a number of press interviews following the official launch of ACE. The first of these media appearances included a Skype interview on ENCA news show Morning News Today, anchored by Dan Moyane and Uveka Rangappa. This interview focussed on the ACE launch and the work of the Centre in tackling poverty. The second of these media appearances was a contribution to the national radio programme called Otherwise on SAfm with Shado Twala. The final media appearance was an interview with Ashraf Garda on the Afternoon Talk show on SAfm Radio. The latter focussed on ACE as an institution and the role of research centres in answering the question, 'Can we fully eradicate poverty in South Africa?'

• SOCIAL MEDIA

ACE has had an active first year on social media, in particular on Twitter via the handle @ACE_UJ. As well as participating in discussions on evidence-informed decision-making, we developed a weekly feature called 'What we are reading'. This feature shares interesting pieces of knowledge that the ACE team comes across in its work. In this space we are generally positioned as evidence synthesis methods experts. Our AEN YouTube channel is also very popular and creates a lot of interest.

ACE in social media numbers (as of 31 December 2017)

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<tr>
<th>Downloads from our websites:</th>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.africacentreforevidence.org">www.africacentreforevidence.org</a></td>
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<td>35 057</td>
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| Twitter followers for ACE (@ACE_UJ), AEN (@Africa_Evidence), and CEE Joburg (@CEEJoburg) | 3254 |
| AEN members | 1295 |
| Youtube hits | 264 |

• CONFERENCES

ACE delivered numerous presentations as part of roundtables, panel discussions, and oral presentations at conferences and indabas in 2017. Most notably is our Directors' keynote address at the Global Evidence Summit in Cape Town in September.

The ACE team was privileged to attend the first Global Evidence Summit that was held in Cape Town, South Africa, 13 – 16 September 2017, hosted by Cochrane South Africa. Five leading global organisations – namely, Cochrane, the Guidelines International Network, the Campbell Collaboration, the International Society for Evidence-based Health Care, and the Joanna Briggs Institute – joined forces to host an event under the theme: Using evidence. Improving lives.

Through the AEN, we contributed to a pre-Summit satellite session, co-hosted and facilitated by Beryl Leach from 3ie and our ACE Director and AEN Chairperson, Ruth Stewart. The satellite session focussed on the theme: Capacity building to produce useful evidence: who sets the agenda and what needs to change? Two members of ACE were part of the panel that included speakers from Centre for Learning Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), and the South African government’s Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). Laurenz Langer presented ACE’s key approach towards a more demand-led philosophy in evidence synthesis production, whilst Promise Nduku gave a presentation on the key highlights from our AEN survey that investigated the capacity within Africa for evidence synthesis methodologies.

The main Summit kicked off with the highlight: our Director, Professor Ruth Stewart, giving the opening keynote to the main Summit on Do evidence networks make a difference? In doing so, she shared a platform with Former South African Minister Trevor Manuel and Dr Patrick Okwen, research fellow at the Centre for Development of Best Practice in Health (CDBPH) in Cameroon.
In the context of evidence-informed decision-making, the Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE) focuses on various areas to enhance the quality and accessibility of evidence. In 2017, ACE published multiple reports and papers, contributing to the evidence base on environmental management, capacity building, and health systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

**Publications in 2017**


ACE has also engaged in various initiatives to disseminate evidence and promote evidence-informed decision-making. Some notable activities in 2017 included:

- Presenting at the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Annual Science Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Co-leading a joint learning event at the University of Johannesburg with colleagues from Makerere University in Uganda in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Delivering a learning seminar for Oxford Policy Management in Del, Ireland.
- Participating in the Africa Centre for Evidence’s Evidence Series in Development Studies workshop at Oxford University in Uganda in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Co-leading one of the conference’s five strands along with colleagues from the Environmental Evidence Centre, Centre for Environmental Management and Accountability, and the University of Pretoria.
- Stakeholder engagement has led us to reconsider terminology within evidence-informed decision-making.

ACE continues to work on combining workshop and mentorships to build stakeholder engagement and enhance evidence-informed decision-making in various sectors.