Africa Centre for Evidence

ANNUAL REPORT 2018
“South Africa belongs to all its people and the future of our country is our collective future. Making it work is our collective responsibility.”

South Africa’s National Development Plan 2030
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Message from our director

I am proud to report that the Africa Centre for Evidence has completed its second year and graduated to toddler status. Over the last year, we have strengthened our strategic planning, our operational systems, and our funding base.

We are committed to our mission to reduce poverty and inequality by increasing the use of research evidence. As you will read in this report, we are working across four portfolios: advancing the art and science of evidence-informed decision-making in Africa, conducting evidence synthesis, supporting evidence communities, and building evidence capacities.

In doing so, during 2018 we have contributed to many evidence bases on women’s wage labour, training for community health workers, eHealth for HIV/AIDS prevention, early grade mathematics teaching, spatial planning and transformation, and so much more. We have worked to understand evidence capacities, particularly impact evaluation capacities, and mentored, trained and supported others in both the generation and use of evidence. We have supported the development and strengthening of communities and networks across the African evidence ecosystem. We have researched and published on evidence-informed decision-making for a wide range of audiences, as well as hosted an international conference and a parallel online event. And this is only a taster of just some of what we achieved in 2018. You can see why I am so proud of what we are doing.

It is due to the dedicated and talented group of individuals on our staff, our distinguished and experienced advisors, the generosity of our funders, partners and supporters, and the enthusiasm of our students that all of this has been possible. To them I extend my thanks and my congratulations on a successful year. We are ACE!

Prof Ruth Stewart
ACE Director

‘We are committed to our mission to reduce poverty and inequality by increasing the use of research evidence’.
ACE’s values

THE AFRICA CENTRE FOR EVIDENCE IS:

• Committed to zero tolerance for any form of discrimination, harassment or abuse
• Motivated by making a positive, rights-based and socially-just difference
• Committed to social justice, equity and equality
• Speaking truth to power
• Building trust and relationships
• Sharing capacity and opportunity
• Respecting others’ expertise, experience and perspectives
• Delivering high-quality work, on time and to budget

THE AFRICA CENTRE FOR EVIDENCE IS MOTIVATED BY:

• Methodological rigour
• Innovative thinking
• Reflective practices
• Transparent practices and reporting
Poverty and inequality are complex and profound challenges for South Africa, and for Africa more broadly.

Evidence-informed decision-making has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the reduction of poverty and inequality in the region. There is therefore a need for African organisations to work to increase the use of evidence for decision-making to address the priorities of the region, and ensure Africa’s participation in the wider global evidence movement.

Over the last 20 years there have been a number of initiatives in South Africa to contribute to reductions in poverty and inequality through an increase in the use of evidence in decision-making. Many of our staff members have contributed to these initiatives, establishing deep relationships across the spectrum of evidence producers and users, building valuable experience and expertise in the evidence ecosystem, and establishing a strong standing amongst the wider evidence community. As a culmination of these initiatives and a reflection of the critical mass of experience, expertise and networks that we had established by 2016, the Africa Centre for Evidence was formally founded as a research centre within the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg under the leadership of Professor Ruth Stewart.

ACE’s mission is to reduce poverty and inequality in South Africa and across the region by increasing the use of research evidence. In doing so, we work towards a spectrum of outcomes from raised awareness of evidence-informed decision-making, to capability in using evidence in decision-making, to the actual use of evidence. We recognise that progress towards each of these outcomes is incremental, incorporating many small shifts that need to be measured and valued (success is not only a new evidence-informed policy).

To these ends, the Africa Centre for Evidence focusses on four strategic goals:
1. Better understanding the art and science of using evidence
2. Building stronger evidence capacities
3. Supporting meaningful evidence communities
4. Producing rigorous and relevant evidence syntheses

This annual report describes progress towards each of these goals achieved during 2018.
ACE is committed to addressing poverty and inequality in our continent. As this is our overarching aim, we use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to orient our work.

The SDGs are a call to all countries to commit to ending poverty, ensuring prosperity and peace for all people, and protecting the environment. As you read our annual report, you will see how in 2018 each of our projects has contributed to the various SDGs.

Closer to home, we are working with colleagues in South Africa’s government to ensure our work is aligned with, and contributes to, the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa by 2030. According to the plan, “South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society.” ACE is working to contribute to this realisation of the NDP goals by keeping the plan at the forefront of our agenda.

In 2018, we contributed to the following priority areas from the NDP: policy-making in a complex environment (chapter 1); economy and employment (chapter 3); economy infrastructure (chapter 4); environmental sustainability (chapter 5); transforming human settlement and the national space economy (chapter 8); improving education, training and innovation (chapter 9); promoting health (chapter 10); and building a capable and developmental state (chapter 13). And, in all our work, we aim to position South Africa in the World (chapter 7).

In 2018 we contributed to the use of evidence to tackle SDGs: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
ACE’s key accomplishments

1. We hosted the most diverse and integrated evidence conference of 2018 in Pretoria in September: Evidence 2018; 468 participants from government, academia and civil society from 52 countries joined us in person and via our online platform.

2. Our evidence synthesis work has expanded, particularly in the production of demand-led policy-relevant evidence maps, advancing methods, co-producing syntheses with government, and putting evidence directly at the fingertips of decision-makers.

3. We have extended our evidence synthesis work to provide rapid response services to government through two initiatives: our role within the Partners for Evidence-driven Rapid Learning in Social Systems (PERLSS) programme, and our work to support environmental decision-making in South Africa.

4. As well as growing our team both in numbers and in experience, we have appointed two Distinguished Visiting Professors who bring expertise and experience to our work: Professors Sandy Oliver and John Lavis.

5. We secured ZAR11.75 million in 2018 to support our current and future work.

6. We were increasingly recognised by others for our leadership in supporting the use of evidence in decision-making across the continent.

7. We published 18 academic papers and other written outputs and gave 35 presentations at national and international conferences.

8. We welcomed international visitors to ACE from as far afield as Chile, Canada, India, Uganda, the UK, and Nigeria.

9. We provided capacity development support to people in the generation and use of evidence for decision-making through 14 dedicated workshops.

10. We continued strengthening our strategic and operational planning to ensure ACE is well positioned for the future.
Our People

ACE COLLEAGUES

We are a multi-disciplinary team and in all our work, we collaborate with other institutions. This collaboration helps us to continuously learn and improve our work.

Our team consists of full-time and part-time staff members. We have an in-house mentorship programme that enables everyone who would like to develop their careers further and reach their full potential.

Charity Chisoro  
Portfolio(s): Evidence communities

Yvonne Erasmus  
Portfolio(s): Evidence capacities, Evidence synthesis

Christa Heyneke  
Portfolio(s): ACE operations

Sunet Jordaan  
Portfolio(s): Evidence capacities, ACE operations

Laurenz Langer  
Portfolio(s): Evidence synthesis, Evidence communities, Art and science of using evidence

Precious Motha  
Portfolio(s): Evidence communities

Likhwa Ncube  
Portfolio(s): Evidence synthesis, Evidence capacities

Promise Nduku  
Portfolio(s): Evidence synthesis, Evidence communities, Art and science of using evidence

Siziwe Ngcwabe  
Portfolio(s): Evidence communities

Zafeer Ravat  
Portfolio(s): Evidence synthesis, Evidence communities

Ruth Stewart  
Portfolio(s): Evidence communities, Evidence synthesis, Evidence capacities, ACE operations, Art and science of using evidence

Natalie Tannous  
Portfolio(s): Evidence synthesis, Evidence communities, ACE operations

Nkululeko Tshabalala  
Portfolio(s): Evidence synthesis

Carina van Rooyen  
Portfolio(s): Evidence communities, Evidence synthesis, Evidence capacities, Art and science of using evidence
**DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSORS**

**Professor Sandy Oliver** is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg.

She is Director of the Social Science Research Unit, and Deputy Director of the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre), at University College London's Institute of Education, London.

For thirty years, her interests have focussed on the interaction between researchers and people making decisions in their professional and personal lives. With this in mind, she has been developing methods to collate knowledge from whole bodies of research – systematic reviews – instead of only single studies. Most recently, this has been in the area of international health systems and development where she has conducted systematic reviews and built up a programme of support for research teams conducting reviews elsewhere. She is a member of the Board of the Campbell Collaboration, a Cochrane editor with their Consumers and Communication Review Group, and a member of the Centre for Excellence in Development Impact and Learning. She works with the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development and the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research at the World Health Organisation (WHO) to build capacity in systematic reviewing in low- and middle-income countries.

**Professor John Lavis** is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg.

He holds the Canada Research Chair in Evidence-Informed Health Systems, is Professor in the Department of Health Evidence and Impact, a Member of the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis, and an Associate Member of the Department of Political Science at McMaster University. He is the Associate Director of the Michael G. DeGroote Cochrane Canada Centre and also the Director of the McMaster Health Forum. He co-directs the WHO Collaborating Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy, and is co-chair of the WHO-sponsored Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Global Steering Group.

Professor Lavis is committed to helping policy-makers and stakeholders: 1) learn how to make decisions based on the best available research evidence; 2) find evidence through the McMaster Health Forum’s own products and the best available sources of pre-appraised, synthesised research evidence (including the Forum’s Health Systems Evidence, Social Systems Evidence, and the Forum-supported and citizen-targeted McMaster Optimal Aging Portal); 3) spark action through stakeholder dialogues, citizen panels and more; 4) embed support for evidence-informed decision-making by institutionalising promising and proven approaches; and 5) evaluate innovations in supporting evidence-informed decision-making.
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The ACE Advisory Committee provides advice and guidance to ACE on its strategic direction, and on the design and implementation of ACE portfolios.

Members of the Advisory Committee act as ambassadors for ACE. The Advisory Committee consists of three members from outside of Africa, three members from within wider Africa, three members within South Africa, and one University of Johannesburg representative. The members come from various sectors including academia, government, and civil society. The members of the Advisory Committee in 2018 are:

• **HARSHA DAYAL**, South African National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa
• **SHANIL HARICHARAN**, Llifa Labantwana, South Africa
• **JOHN LAVIS**, McMaster University, Canada
• **BERYL LEACH**, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, India
• **RHONA MIJUMBI-DEVE**, Makerere University, Uganda
• **KAMMILA NAIDOO**, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
• **SANDY OLIVER**, University College London, United Kingdom
  • **ROSE ORONJE**, African Institute for Development Policy, Kenya
  • **JOSEPHINE WATERA**, Parliament of Uganda, Uganda
  • **TARYN YOUNG**, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

As part of ACE’s contribution to broader academic citizenship, during 2018 staff at ACE supervised five Masters students and eight Doctoral students.

Masters students

- **Aziza Modise**, co-supervised by Carina van Rooyen, MA Anthropology, UJ, *Ke ngwana wa Mbeki: Rumours on the link between teenage pregnancy and the Child Support Grant*, under examination.

- **Whitney Noble**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, MA Anthropology, UJ, *The entangled lives of humans and mosquitoes at UJ – An environmental anthropological perspective*, under examination.


- **Charne Smith**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, MA Anthropology, UJ, *The gendered experiences of women professional hunters in South Africa*, ongoing.

- **Nina Noyahi**, co-supervised by Carina van Rooyen, MA Development Studies, UJ, *Refugeeship as adaptation to a changing environment*, ongoing.

Doctoral students


- **Sunet Jordaan**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen and Ruth Stewart, PhD Development Studies, UJ, *How mentorship programmes increase the use of evidence in decision-making in SA government*, ongoing.


- **Suvania Naidoo**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, PhD Development Studies, UJ, *Social constructions of water quality in the Blesbokspruit in the context of acid mine drainage and its treatment*, ongoing.

- **Karen Nortje**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, PhD Anthropology, UJ, *The social construction of natural resource scarcity – A qualitative study of three case examples from Venda*, under examination.

- **Sebeka Plaatjiie**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, PhD Development Studies, UJ, *Contestations about the meaning of local economic development: A case of the Aerotropolis Project in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality*, under examination.

- **Takatso Semenya**, supervised by Laurenz Langer, PhD Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, *Knowledge translation in the obesity research sector in South Africa*, ongoing.

INTERNS

In 2018 we welcomed three interns to ACE from McMaster University, Canada (Peter Youssef, Stephen Chen and Kathy Huang), and sent one of our team (Zafeer Ravat) to Canada as part of the McMaster Health Forum’s Queen Elizabeth Scholarship programme.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

ACE grew the number of research associates in 2018 because of our emphasis on collaboration.

- **Ekwaro Obuku**, Makerere University, Uganda
- **Desyree Lötter**, independent consultant, South Africa
- **Mapula Tshangela**, National Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa
- **Neal Haddaway**, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden
- **Shanil Haricharan**, Llifa Labantwana, South Africa
- **Harsha Dayal**, National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa
Our work

ACE’s projects are structured according to four portfolios: advancing the art and science of evidence-informed decision-making in Africa, building evidence capacities, supporting evidence communities, and conducting evidence synthesis.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF USING EVIDENCE PORTFOLIO

We aim to advance the art and science of supporting evidence use, with a particular focus on evidence capacities, evidence communities and evidence synthesis. To these ends, we research and review: the practical experiences and craft knowledge of people across Africa; the evidence about what works for supporting evidence use, how and why; and the contexts in which evidence-informed decision-making takes place, including political analysis. We also contribute to the development of theory and methods about evidence use. In 2018, we undertook the following work within this portfolio:

Contributing to a paper on the evidence ecosystem in South Africa

LED BY: Ruth Stewart
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Laurenz Langer, Carina van Rooyen, Harsha Dayal (DPME)
DATES: October 2018 – March 2019
FUNDED BY: Unfunded

The ACE director was invited to write a paper on the evidence ecosystem in South Africa for Palgrave Communications. This largely involved collating what we know. It involved consultation with several of our government colleagues from the original University of Johannesburg-based programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) cross-government community of practice, and has been expanded to include additional authors.

Collating the art and science on evidence-informed decision-making in Africa

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Ruth Stewart, Yvonne Erasmus, Promise Nduku, Zafeer Ravat
DATES: June 2016 – ongoing
FUNDED BY: Various

ACE has been working to collate knowledge on the art (craft/experiential evidence) and the science (research evidence) on evidence-informed decision-making in Africa. We have started to carve out some pieces of work towards this end. In 2018, this included further collation of information on evidence ecosystems from across Africa. Following our successful evidence ecosystem mapping programme as part of Evidence 2016, we received an additional 16 evidence landscape maps as part of Evidence 2018 bursaries applications. In addition, we developed a geo-map of evidence-informed decision-making institutions in Africa to develop a database of the key role players on the continent.

Contributing to cross-field discussions about key concepts for critiquing claims of effectiveness

LED BY: Iain Chalmers (James Lind Initiative) and Andy Oxman (Norwegian Institute of Public Health)
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Ruth Stewart and other international experts
DATES: December 2018 – May 2019
FUNDED BY: Unfunded

In 2018, the ACE director was invited to be part of an international group of experts across fields considering the key concepts for critiquing claims of effectiveness. Iain Chalmers convened the group that met in Oxford in December 2018.
EVIDENCE CAPACITIES PORTFOLIO

ACE’s evidence capacities portfolio focusses on enhancing others’ capability for conducting various types of evidence synthesis, including full systematic reviews, evidence maps, and responsive evidence services. We also support capacity development for building and supporting evidence communities, from communities of practice to broad evidence networks. The following projects were included in this portfolio in 2018:

Supporting systematic reviews for sure

LED BY: Ruth Stewart
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Yvonne Erasmus
DATES: September 2017 – November 2018
FUNDED BY: Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research – WOTRO

ACE staff were funded to provide methods support to three international review groups undertaking systematic reviews in the area of evidence-use. This was support in the production of systematic reviews as part of the Science of Using Research (SURe) project, funded under a programme of work by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

Scoping study on impact evaluation capacity in sub-Saharan Africa

LED BY: Yvonne Erasmus
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Sunet Jordaan, Ruth Stewart, Likhwa Ncube, Charity Chisoro
DATE: July 2018 – June 2019
FUNDED BY: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

ACE was commissioned to conduct a scoping study on impact evaluation capacity in sub-Saharan Africa, with particular focus on East and West Africa. The goals of the project were to understand the extent and nature of impact evaluation capacity to better develop that capacity.

Evaluating mentoring in supporting evidence use in the South African government

LED BY: Sunet Jordaan
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Carina van Rooyen, Ruth Stewart
DATES: January 2018 – ongoing
FUNDED BY: Unfunded

ACE investigated various mentorship models applied across sectors in South Africa that aim to increase the uptake of evidence in decision-making in government.
Providing training and capacity support

Within the evidence capacities portfolio, and over the course of 2018, ACE facilitated the following training and capacity support sessions.

**JANUARY:** A workshop at the 2018 HELTASA Teaching Advancement at University workshop at Kloofzicht on using IT for research purposes.

**JANUARY:** A panel discussion, arranged by the University of Johannesburg’s Tutor and Academic Staff Development, on the challenges and opportunities for teaching in higher education.

**MARCH:** A workshop on blended learning for the University of Johannesburg’s MPhil in Social Policy for Development with the University of Johannesburg’s Centre for Social Development in Africa.

**MARCH:** A workshop on evidence-informed decision-making for the 16th African Nutrition Leadership Programme.

**JUNE:** A training course on systematic reviews and evidence maps for the University of Johannesburg.

**JULY:** A single session on evidence maps and systematic reviews for a webinar series of the Learning Initiative for eXperienced Authors consortium.

**JULY:** A one-day training event on literature reviews and evaluation for the South African National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME).

**AUGUST:** A learning exchange in collaboration with DPME and ACRES on evidence mapping and rapid response services in Africa. This included a one-day closed event for cross-government departments, a one-day in-depth training session on rapid response services for DPME and ACE, and a public lecture at the University of Johannesburg on evidence maps and rapid response services.

**AUGUST:** Three-day training on evidence maps at the University of Johannesburg.

**SEPTEMBER:** A satellite session in collaboration with DPME and ACRES at Evidence 2018 on evidence mapping and rapid response services in Africa.

**SEPTEMBER:** A workshop in partnership with the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation at Evidence 2018 on capacity development to use evidence in decision making.

**NOVEMBER:** A workshop for the University of Johannesburg’s Centre for Academic Technologies on complexity and learning & teaching with technology.

**NOVEMBER:** A one-day training event on evidence maps and systematic reviews for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health.

**DECEMBER:** A Master Class on evidence maps and rapid response services as methods for evidence-informed policy-making in Africa. This class was part of the Master Class series of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission on ‘Evidence-informed decision-making: Water-energy-food-health’, and was co-hosted by the South African Department for Science and Technology and the African Academy of Science.

**THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:** ACE hosted nine seminars to discuss a range of topics related to evidence-informed decision-making in Africa.
EVIDENCE COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

We aim to nurture evidence communities, from broad open networks to smaller more focussed communities of practice. To achieve this we foster collaboration amongst those engaged in or supporting evidence-informed decision-making. We work to increase knowledge and understanding of evidence-informed decision-making, and we support the broader evidence ecosystem by advocating for evidence-informed decision-making in Africa. We also advocate for Africa’s full voice and participation in the national, regional, and global movements to increase evidence-informed decision-making. In 2018, this portfolio included the following projects:

Providing the secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network

**LED BY:** Siziwe Ngcwabe and Ruth Stewart
**TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):** Charity Chisoro, Yvonne Erasmus, Sunet Jordaan, Laurenz Langer, Rhona Mijumbi-Deve, Janine Mitchell, Precious Motha, Promise Nduku, Siziwe Ngcwabe, Ruth Stewart, Natalie Tannous, Carina van Rooyen
**DATES:** December 2012 – ongoing
**FUNDED BY:** William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, with the exception of support from the Department for International Development, United Kingdom 2014 – 2016

ACE provides the secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network (AEN). The AEN is a community of 2100 people who have an interest in evidence, its production, and use in decision-making in Africa. Members include researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers from universities, civil society, and government based in 42 African countries and 19 countries outside Africa.

Highlights for the AEN in 2018 include the successful hosting of its Evidence 2018 and Evidence Online 2018 conferences. The AEN also participated in conferences and events such as the Africa Evidence-Informed Policy Forum, the International Data Conference, and the South African Science Forum. Through our webinar series, we facilitated a number of discussions and debates with our members and the wider evidence community. We also formed our new Reference Group of representatives from across the continent in 2018 and established the first African award for evidence-informed decision-making to recognise the growth of innovation in evidence-informed decision-making in Africa.

Hosting the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence’s Johannesburg Centre (CEE Joburg)

**LED BY:** Carina van Rooyen and Ruth Stewart
**TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):** Likhwa Ncube, Natalie Tannous
**DATES:** April 2012 – ongoing
**FUNDED BY:** Unfunded

ACE hosts the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence’s only centre in Africa, CEE Joburg. The main mandate of CEE Joburg is to contribute to the work of the global Collaboration by encouraging the need for systematic reviews to inform environmental policy and practice in Africa. As a team of experienced reviewers, CEE Joburg fulfils this mandate by offering training and support to environmental scientists, managers, and practitioners who wish to undertake or use systematic reviews. We also have a member on the CEE board of trustees and on the editorial board of the journal *Environmental Evidence*.

Participating in the Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer and Ruth Stewart
**DATES:** March 2017 – ongoing
**FUNDED BY:** Unfunded

The Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative is an international collaboration to support the growth of capacity to undertake systematic reviews and other evidence syntheses in low- and middle-income countries. Along with a number of centres in Africa, ACE is a member of their global network.
Convening Evidence 2018 and Evidence Online 2018

Evidence 2018, hosted at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research International Convention Centre between 25 and 28 September 2018 carried forward the momentum from the highly successful Evidence 2016 conference. Grounded in the themes Engage, Understand, Impact, the Evidence 2018 conference programme focussed on four areas of priority in Africa: quality education, communicable diseases, climate resilience, and good governance. Two hundred and thirteen delegates registered for Evidence 2018 from different sectors including academics, civil servants and practitioners. Thirty-two countries were represented; 28 from Africa and six from outside Africa.

The AEN is always striving to extend its reach into Africa for those who are unable to attend the physical conference out of our sensitivity to the various difficulties many across the continent experience when travelling. In response to these challenges and in line with the AEN’s commitment to be member-driven and inclusive of members, we piloted a virtual component to the physical Evidence event. Evidence Online 2018 saw some of the physical conference’s sessions live-streamed to over 600 registered delegates from 96 countries across the world, including those registered for but unable to attend the Evidence 2018. In addition to this content, we filmed and live-streamed expert interviews and short discussions with conference delegates in a custom-built studio on the Evidence 2018 premises. Evidence Online 2018 also featured unique abstracts that did not appear in the physical event.

Participating in the evidence synthesis community in South Africa and further afield

LED BY: Laurenz Langer and Ruth Stewart
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): working with team members from the Medical Research Council, Centre for Evidence-based Health Care Stellenbosch, Cochrane South Africa, and the Centre for Public Health at the University of Witswatersrand
DATES: June 2017 – ongoing
FUNDED BY: Unfunded

The South African Medical Research Council, the Centre for Evidence-based Health Care at Stellenbosch University, Cochrane South Africa, the Wits Centre for Health Policy, and ACE have started a joint South African Evidence Synthesis Group. This group aims to present a forum for collaboration and discussion on evidence synthesis in South Africa. The five Centres came together for an inaugural meeting in June 2018 and since have collaborated on two training courses for evidence synthesis. In addition, there is a quarterly catch-up call between these Centres to keep up to date on one another’s activities and offer support when appropriate.
EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS PORTFOLIO

We engage in generating rigorous and relevant evidence syntheses. To this end, we produce ‘global-good’ evidence synthesis products that address questions of importance to decision-makers, populations, and civil society. Our evidence syntheses are responsive to the needs and contexts of African decision-makers and in-line with national and global development priorities. We also develop and refine technologies for evidence synthesis production that is suitable to African contexts. In 2018, this portfolio included the following projects:

**Synthesising the evidence on how to support women’s participation in wage labour**

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer and Yvonne Erasmus  
**TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):** Alison Bullen, Charity Chisoro, Mary Opondo, Zafeer Ravat, Ruth Stewart, Natalie Tannous, Carina van Rooyen  
**DATES:** November 2016 – June 2018  
**FUNDED BY:** the Department for International Development, United Kingdom

We conducted a systematic review of the evidence on interventions that aim to support women’s participation in labour markets in higher-growth/male dominated sectors in low- and middle-income countries. This review included an investigation of what interventions work to support wage labour participation and what design features such interventions entailed.

**Mapping the evidence on the use of mobile technology to support the training of community health workers**

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer and Niall Winters (Oxford University)  
**TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):** Promise Nduku  
**DATES:** January – November 2018  
**FUNDED BY:** University of Oxford

This project focussed on creating an evidence map on research investigating the use of mobile technology to support the training of community health workers in low- and middle-income countries.

**Synthesising the evidence on eHealth for HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment for key populations**

**LED BY:** Yvonne Erasmus  
**TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):** Laurenz Langer, Ruth Stewart  
**DATES:** May 2018 – ongoing  
**FUNDING:** the International HIV/Aids Alliance (now Frontline AIDS)

The aim of this evidence synthesis project was to assess how information-communication technologies can improve HIV programmes for transgender people in sub-Saharan Africa. However, given the dearth of evidence on eHealth interventions for transgender people in sub-Saharan Africa, the scope of this project was expanded to be global and include literature on all key populations.
Mapping the evidence on early-grade mathematics teaching and learning in South Africa

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Allison Bullen, Promise Nduku, Zafeer Ravat, and the South African National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation’s Research Unit
DATES: January – April 2018
FUNDED BY: the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa

We co-produced a policy-relevant evidence map with the research unit of a South African national government department to map the existing impact evaluation evidence of promising early-grade mathematics interventions in South Africa.

Developing an evidence portal on the National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF) in South Africa

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Allison Bullen, Promise Nduku, Zafeer Ravat, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation’s Research Unit
DATES: May – November 2018
FUNDED BY: the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), South Africa

This demand-driven evidence portal grew out of an evidence mapping project with the DPME. We conducted three linked work packages to collate a policy-relevant evidence-base on the National Spatial Development Framework. Work-package one was an evidence-to-policy ethnography based on historical documents and interviews with decision-makers on what evidence they currently use. Work-package two was an interactive spatial data map using evidence mapping methodology to map existing spatial data sets in South Africa. The final work package was a responsive evidence synthesis of the research included in existing evidence maps with relevance to the National Spatial Development Framework.

Synthesising the evidence on payment for ecosystem services with the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Promise Nduku and Zafeer Ravat
DATES: May 2017 – November 2018
FUNDED BY: the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

We conducted a systematic review on the effectiveness of payment for ecosystem services to support conservation outcomes and poverty reduction in low- and middle-income countries. This review was produced in collaboration with 3ie and included a linked thematic synthesis to the meta-analysis.
Mapping the evidence on research on innovation and inclusive industrialisation in South Africa

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Promise Nduku, Zafeer Ravat, Nkululeko Tshabalala
DATES: October 2018 – April 2019
FUNDED BY: South African Research Chair in Industrial Development

This project entailed the production of a policy-relevant evidence map on research on innovation and inclusive industrialisation in South Africa.

Updating and developing the International Initiative of Impact Evaluation database of systematic reviews

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Promise Nduku and Zafeer Ravat
DATES: October – December 2018
FUNDED BY: the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

This project involved supporting 3ie in their efforts to update a database of systematic reviews that is feeding into the development of a 3ie map of systematic reviews. ACE staff supported the 3ie team by recoding over 200 systematic reviews and their respective critical appraisals.

Collaborating with Partners for Evidence and Rapid Learning in Social Systems

LED BY: Laurenz Langer and Ruth Stewart
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Likhwa Ncube, Promise Nduku, Zafeer Ravat, Nkululeko Tshabalala
DATES: November 2018 – October 2021
FUNDED BY: the Hewlett Foundation and the International Development Research Centre

Along with partners from 13 other countries, ACE is supporting evidence-informed decision-making in the non-health Sustainable Development Goals. In our respective countries, each team in this project is forming partnerships across the evidence ecosystem and providing responsive evidence services to meet the needs of government colleagues.

Rapid response on the nature of land degradation for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

LED BY: Laurenz Langer
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Natalie Tannous, Carina van Rooyen
DATES: January – March 2018

This demand-driven evidence synthesis was produced in response to a request from the provincial government, which sought evidence on the issue of land degradation in KwaZulu-Natal.
Mapping the environmental evidence base for South Africa's Department for Environmental Affairs

LED BY: Carina van Rooyen
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Steven Chen, Kathy Huang, Laurenz Langer, Likhwa Ncube, Promise Nduku, Zafeer Ravat, Natalie Tannous, Nkululeko Tshabalala
DATES: January 2018 – ongoing

ACE is mapping the full environmental evidence base for South Africa. In time, this map will become the basis for a responsive evidence service offered to the South African National Department for Environmental Affairs.

Scoping review of models and methods of rapid response services to support evidence-informed decision-making

LED BY: Carina van Rooyen
TEAM (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): Steven Chen, Kathy Huang, Laurenz Langer, Likhwa Ncube, Natalie Tannous
DATES: April – November 2018

This supply-driven scoping review is developing a database of models for rapid response services in order to inform CEE Joburg's responsive evidence synthesis service.
Engaging various audiences

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

CONFERENCES

ACE delivered numerous presentations as part of roundtables, panel discussions, and oral presentations at conferences and indabas in 2018. Event contributions for ACE in 2018 included:


APRIL: Acting as members of the scientific committee and presenting at the second conference of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence in Paris, France.

MAY: Participating in Future Earth: seedbeds of transformation in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

MAY: Participating in Green Templeton College’s mHealth Conference in Oxford, United Kingdom.

AUGUST: Presenting at MERL Tech Jozi in Johannesburg, South Africa.

AUGUST: Participating in the Hewlett Foundation meeting on building the field of evidence-informed policy-making in Bellagio, Italy.


OCTOBER: Supporting the hosting of the annual Biodiversity and Evidence Indaba of the South African Department for Environmental Affairs in Pretoria, South Africa.

OCTOBER: Presenting at the Global Evidence & Implementation Summit in Melbourne, Australia.

NOVEMBER: Representing the University of Johannesburg in the University of Connecticut Global Business Program’s CIBER Case Challenge in Connecticut, USA.

NOVEMBER: Exhibiting at the International Data Conference in Gaborone, Botswana.


DECEMBER: Participating in the international multi-disciplinary meeting on key concepts across-fields convened by Sir Iain Chalmers and Andy Oxman in Oxford, UK.

DECEMBER: Exhibiting at the Science Forum in Pretoria, South Africa.
MEDIA APPEARANCES

ACE’s media presence in 2018 focussed on marketing the Africa Evidence Network’s biennial Evidence conference.

The Evidence 2018 marketing team had a number of campaigns to promote the conference to a wider audience through both social and traditional media. The AEN's social media campaigns informed potential delegates about what to expect at the conference and suggested activities around the Pretoria area for first-time visitors. In addition, the AEN marketing team wrote a number of articles and press releases to promote Evidence 2018 to different networks. This was made possible through the University of Johannesburg’s communications platforms and its access to the South African press. We published and promoted press releases about the Africa Evidence Leadership Award and the keynote speaker of the conference, Mark Heywood from SECTION 27.

The AEN Chairperson Professor Ruth Stewart wrote an article for The Conversation Africa titled ‘Africa takes steps to earn its stripes in using evidence to inform policies’, which discussed the award’s role in highlighting the importance of using reliable evidence to inform policy in order to tackle development challenges in Africa. The article was featured in other media publications such as Alternative Africa, Polity, The Conversation Australia and Quartz Africa. AEN members also promoted the Africa Evidence Leadership Award and the conference within their networks. The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa promoted the launch of the award, AFIDEP interviewed the first recipient of the award Ms Velia Manyonga, and the McMaster Forum and Cochrane South Africa – amongst others – promoted the conference in their respective newsletters.

The AEN chairperson Professor Ruth Stewart and one of the Evidence 2018 conference co-chairs, Dr Shamil Haricharan, were interviewed by the Cape Times newspaper at the end of Evidence 2018 for an article published on 1 October 2018 titled ‘Focus on decision-making’ which highlighted the three-day conference.

SOCIAL MEDIA

ACE had an active year on social media in 2018, particularly on Twitter via the handles @ACE_UJ, @Africa_Evidence, and @CEEJoburg. As well as participating in discussions on evidence-informed decision-making, our weekly feature called ‘What are we reading’ proved popular with our followers.

This feature highlights interesting pieces of reading that the ACE team comes across in its work. ACE also produced a series of blogs published on Twitter as part of its Citizens engage science series. The numbers from our social media and digital presence is reported below (as of 31 December 2018).

68 749
WEBSITE HITS ACROSS
www.africacentreforevidence.org
www.africaevidencenetwork.org
www.ceejoburg.com

33 535
DOWNLOADS FROM
www.africaevidencenetwork.org
(ACE and CEE downloads not available)

5 475
TWITTER FOLLOWERS ACROSS
@ACE_UJ
@Africa_Evidence
@CEEJoburg

493
YOUTUBE HITS FOR
Africa Evidence Network
Funding

Below is a list of all the funders of ACE activities in 2018. With the exception of the 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
The University of Johannesburg provides our office space, as well as other structural support such as access to libraries and an academic community. In 2018 the university provided financial support to ACE to the value of ZAR 600 000. In addition, the University Research Committee (URC) supported two research projects: one on the creation of an evidence map on environmental decision-making in South Africa, and the other a project on researching evidence-informed decision-making networks. The URC and the Faculty of Humanities also co-sponsored the live studio at Evidence 2018 Online.

DEPARTMENT FOR PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION
The South African National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation funded ACE through an evidence consultancy grant to the value of ZAR 203 205 between January and April 2018 for an evidence map on early grade mathematics. In addition, between May and November 2018 they funded ACE through another grant of ZAR 203 205 for an evidence synthesis related to the National Spatial Development Framework.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR IMPACT EVALUATION
The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation funded ACE through a systematic review consultancy agreement worth USD 24 000 from May 2017 to October 2018. They also funded ACE to assist with the updating of their systematic review database through a project grant to the value of USD 8 775 between October and December 2018.

INTERNATIONAL HIV/AIDS ALLIANCE (NOW FRONTLINE AIDS)
The then International HIV/AIDS Alliance supported ACE through an evidence synthesis project grant worth USD 22 438 between May and September 2018.

NETHERLANDS ORGANISATION FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH – WOTRO SCIENCE FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research – WOTRO funded ACE through a project grant of EUR 16 050 between September 2017 and November 2018 to support three international review groups undertaking systematic reviews in the area of evidence-use.
OXFORD UNIVERSITY
We collaborated with the University of Oxford on an evidence map supported by a project grant of GBP 24 710 from February until December 2018.

SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH CHAIR IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
We collaborated with the South African Research Chair in Industrial Development on an evidence map through a project grant of ZAR 341 000 between October 2018 and April 2019.

THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has funded ACE through a grant of USD 545 000 to support the Africa Evidence Network from 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019. In addition they have funded ACE through a project grant of USD 100 000 to from July 2018 to June 2019 to conduct a scoping study on impact evaluation capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION & THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE
ACE is part of an international collaboration as part of the Partners for Evidence and Rapid Learning in Social Systems project that secured funding to the value of USD 2 000 000, of which ACE has been allocated ZAR 1 041 453 between December 2018 and December 2021.
ACE outputs for 2018

PUBLICATIONS


**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS**


Winters N, Langer L & Geniets A (2018) A scoping review assessing the evidence used to support the adoption of mobile health (mHealth) technologies for the education and training of community health workers (CHWs) in low- and middle-income countries. *BMJ Open*, 8: e019827.


Winters N, Langer L & Geniets A (2018) A scoping review assessing the evidence used to support the adoption of mobile health (mHealth) technologies for the education and training of community health workers (CHWs) in low- and middle-income countries. *BMJ Open*, 8: e019827.


Langer L & Oliver S (2018) ‘What can the education and health sectors learn from each other in supporting evidence-informed decision-making?’ Panel presentation at Global Evidence & Implementation Summit, 22 October, Melbourne, Australia.


