



## APPENDIX 10: CASE STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIPS & INTERACTIONS MECHANISM

### Title of the case study:

The Africa Evidence Network: building evidence communities across Africa to support awareness of EBPM and shared learning.

### What mechanism is the case about?

*Mechanism: Building intra- and inter-relationships and interactions between researchers and policy-makers.*

This mechanism emphasises the importance of policy-makers interacting with each other and with researchers in order to build trusted relationships, collaborate, and gain exposure to a different type of social influence.

### What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?

The Africa Evidence Network (AEN) is a large and diverse continent-wide community of people interested in EBPM. As of January 2019, the network has over 2,000 members for 42 African countries, 30% of these being from government. The AEN provides different opportunities to build relationships and interactions in order to strengthen the African evidence ecosystem. The Network was established in 2012 by a group of 23 African delegates attending the same evidence synthesis event in Bangladesh. The founding members felt that a space where African practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers with an interest in evidence production and use could engage would be beneficial to the EBPM movement in Africa.

Since 2012, the AEN has grown into a vibrant and dynamic continent-wide network of people. It has hosted biannual large-scale evidence events attended by over 200 African delegates. These evidence conferences are a dedicated space for network members to interact, build relationships, and share experiences on using evidence to inform policy-making on the continent. In addition, the AEN hosts regular webinars and in-country roadshows to foster African conversations on EBPM. This is complimented by a dedicated set of social network activities, including Twitter and LinkedIn, as well as a regular Africa Evidence blogs.

Most AEN activities are bundled on its website which brings together the whole set of EBPM services that the Network has to offer to its members<sup>1</sup>. Specific high-profile outputs include a series of landscapes maps on EBPM in 14 different African countries as well as the Africa Evidence Leadership award. There is also a geo-map of institutions supporting EBPM on the continent accessible to members. Last, the Network maintains a range of EBPM capacity-building resources including a database of over 400 tools for such capacity-building, all of which are freely accessible to members.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/>



## What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?

The AEN is a reflection of the African EBPM community. From 2012 to 2019, the Network grew from 23 to over 2000 members. This shows the vibrant and dynamic nature of the African EBPM community. The AEN is a platform to share continent-wide EBPM efforts and to build connections between African policy-makers and researchers working in different countries. Its key contribution thereby lies in fostering African conversations on EBPM and to nurture the African voice in global EBPM conversations. In this, it also supports EBPM capacity through offering free resources for capacity-building and through connecting African individuals with complementary EBPM capacities and capacity needs.

The AEN's main strength and impact rests in its ability to bring members together. The strength and the depth of relationships is thus a key indicator of its success. To this end, the AEN runs a detailed bi-annual survey to explore how the strength and depth of its members' relationships have changed. These surveys include a formal social network analysis. Surveys run in 2016 and 2018 showed a strong growth in the overall number of relationships as well as their strength and depth.

Benefits of the AEN to members indicated in the survey reports illustrate diverse contributions that the Networks makes to members' efforts to support EBPM in Africa. For some, the AEN's ability to match-make and to link them to members with complementary skills and experience was most important; others appreciated the AEN's efforts in keeping them up-to-date with news on the fast-growing African evidence ecosystem. Representing Africa's voice on EBPM globally was also highlighted as a main benefit as was the ability to meet at face-to-face events organised by the AEN. A sense of increased awareness of EBPM and advocacy for its cause ran across the survey.

## What is the relevance of the case for South Africa?

The South African EBPM community is the largest sub-community within the AEN: a total of 706 South Africans are AEN members and the Network's secretariat is based in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, the Network has a strong footprint in the country and has fostered a range of relationships and interactions in the South African EBPM community. This includes increasing interactions and networks between different types of EBPM organisations in the country.

## Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?

Starting from only 23 members in 2012 to over 2000 members in 2019, the growth of the AEN reflects the wider growth of EBPM in Africa. It illustrates the importance of strong evidence networks and the desire of different African evidence communities to connect, exchange, and learn from one another. Only together can EBPM become a reality on the continent and no one organisation is able to institutionalise the use of evidence across policy-makers on the continent. The AEN, as a home of the African community of people interested in EBPM, is channelling this combined power of the African evidence ecosystem to mitigate against working in isolation and silos. In addition, it formulates an African perspective on and voice in global EBPM issues.

## For more information:

- Africa Evidence Website: <http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/>