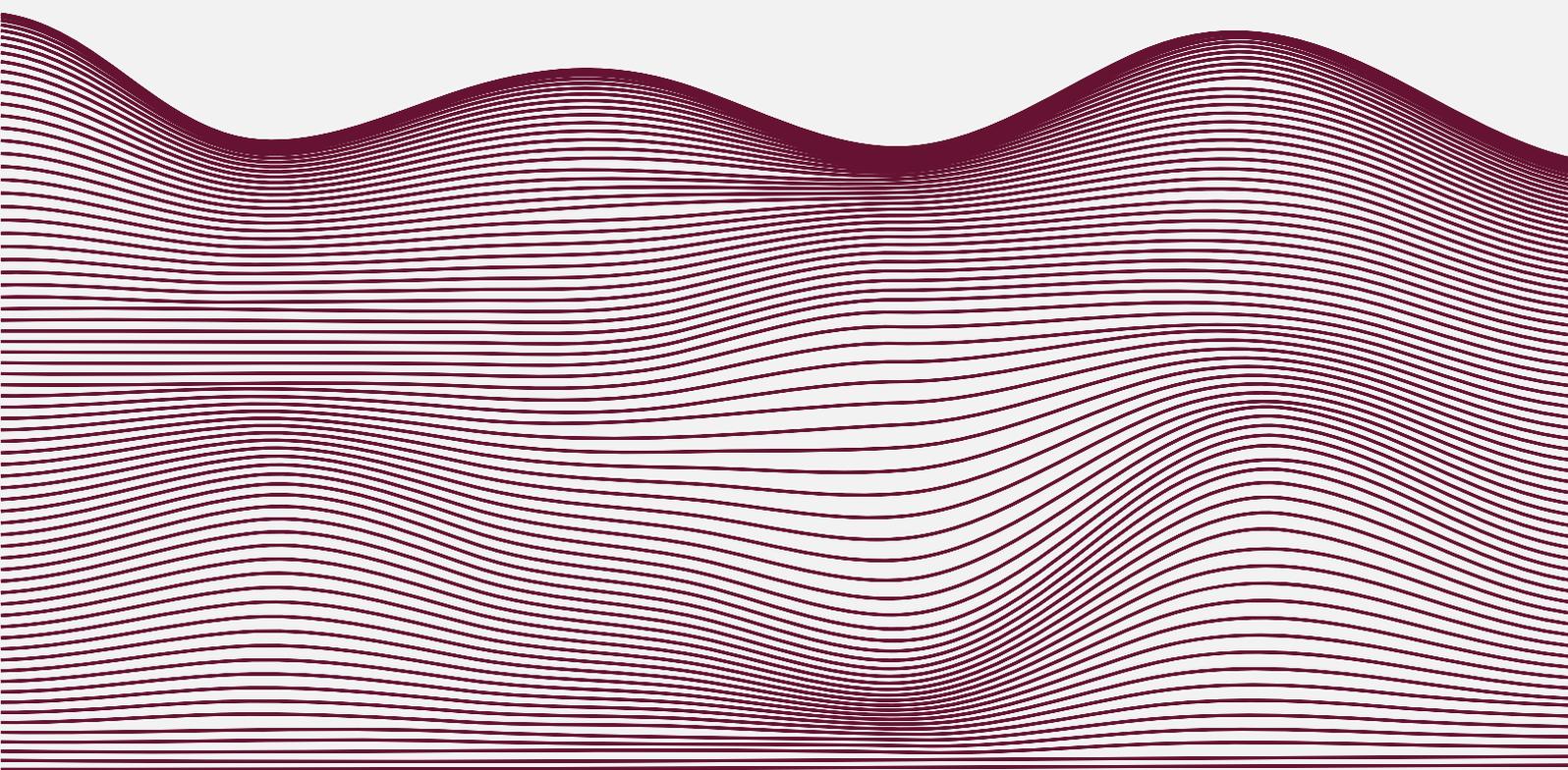


LANDSCAPE SCAN OF
**EVIDENCE INFORMED
POLICYMAKING IN
EAST & WEST AFRICA**

Trends and opportunities
from 2015 to today

JUNE 2023



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AI	Alternative Intelligence
AUC	African Union Commission
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
BRIDGE-U	Bringing Research to Impact for Development, Global Engagement, and Utilization
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSDPA	Cyber Security and Data Protection Agency
CSOs	Civil society organizations
D4D	Data for Development
DE4A	Digital Economy for Africa initiative
DEIJ	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EIDM	Evidence Informed Decision Making
EIP	Evidence-Informed Policymaking
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Fintech	Financial technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GEG	Gender Equity and Governance
GG	Good Governance
GIS	Geographic Information System
IAEG	Independent Expert Advisory Group
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MoH	Ministry of Health
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSS	National Statistical System
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PIPL	Personal Information Protection Law
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RCTs	Randomized Control Trials
RFPs	Request for Proposals
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TTI	Think Tank Initiative

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scope and purpose of the Landscape Scan

Dalberg Advisors is working with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to refresh its Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) grantmaking strategy. As part of the strategy refresh process, Dalberg conducted a broad landscape scan to document trends from the last seven years in the field of evidence-informed policymaking, including in East and West Africa. The foundation seeks to understand the current and future state of evidence-informed policymaking with particular interest in the African context, especially how it is evolving, given the profound shocks of the past five years, such as COVID-19, climate change, and rising authoritarianism. In addition, the scan aims to identify gaps and opportunities for future funding that complement and enhance the work of others.

What is Evidence Informed Policymaking?

One of the challenges in conducting evidence informed policymaking (EIP) work is defining what EIP is. There is no standard definition of Evidence Informed Policymaking (EIP). Broadly, EIP promotes the regular use of a variety of data and evidence to inform policymaking decisions in all sectors and levels of government. Evidence and data can be used in different ways at each step of the policymaking process, from agenda setting and policy formulation to legitimization and implementation. The Hewlett Foundation defines evidence in the context of its EIP strategy as encompassing traditional and new sources of data, policy research, and impact evaluation, with a special focus on those that are pertinent, up-to-date, and pragmatic for government decision-making across the policy spectrum, including implementation.¹

The broad EIP ecosystem includes diverse actors and three main overlapping communities of practice: evidence informed decision making (EIDM), data for development (D4D) and good governance. EIDM refers to the process of using rigorous evidence to inform decisions, including policy design and development programs, with the goal of maximizing social and environmental impact. EIDM is closely related to Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) but encompasses a broader range of decision-making beyond just policy. D4D focuses on producing and analyzing innovative sources of data to improve development programming, and goes beyond informing policymaking to empower citizens, improve service delivery, promote transparency and accountability, and foster social and economic development. With a focus on transparency, accountability, and inclusive initiatives, good governance aims to promote citizen engagement, including marginalized communities. In this regard, data and evidence are increasingly important tools used by African citizens to influence policymaking.

Despite engaging in EIP in different ways, many actors within the EIP ecosystem, such as research institutions, non-profit and private sector organizations supplying innovative data for development, good governance advocates, international development funders, government research and planning departments, and a variety of regional, national, and local government, ministries departments, and agencies (MDAs), may not consider themselves part of a coherent EIP field.

EIP in 2015

In 2015, at the start of the current Hewlett Foundation EIP strategy, new development goals and the data revolution were increasing the production of data around the world that could be used to inform policymaking. Both the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's African Agenda 2063 were launched in 2015. To monitor progress toward these new development goals and adjust policy priorities accordingly, the international development community and African governments recognized the need to generate more and better data. At the same time, the emergence of big data and the digital economy, alongside the Open Data and Data for Development movements, drove investments into new technologies and innovations that produced an unprecedented volume of data that could be used to inform policymaking. Despite

¹ See the Hewlett Foundation Evidence Informed Policymaking Strategy (2018), available here: <https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EIP-Strategy-March-2018.pdf>

this flurry of activity, UNDP reported in 2016 on the state of the Africa Data Revolution that “Considerable innovation and experimentation is currently under way within multiple data communities and ecosystems in many African countries. However, for the most part, these are small-scale, pilot, isolated or ad hoc initiatives.”² Much more needed to be done to strengthen data ecosystems and government statistical systems to strengthen reporting on progress toward development goals and enable the effective use of new data sources by governments to inform policymaking.

As part of this growing focus on data and evidence, interest in improving and localizing evaluations was rising across the continent. Alongside the need to track progress toward development goals, there was an increasing recognition that some development programs in Africa were not yielding expected results, which led to a greater focus on evaluations. In 2015, many evaluations were already being conducted on donor programs, government programs and public policies in Africa. Many African governments had existing planning, monitoring and evaluation departments or systems. The African Evaluation Association, and the African Evaluation Journal were active and growing at the time, and in 2017 an African Evaluation Database was established with thousands of entries. However, most evaluations were still commissioned by large donor agencies. Evaluation methodologies were thus rooted in standards set by Western organizations, even as the pool of African evaluation professionals was growing, and those professionals were conducting many evaluations. There was a strong push in 2015 to address this challenge by localizing evaluation methodologies, promoting more equal partnerships between global and regional evidence producers, and investing in training and capacity building for African researchers and research institutions.³

Several challenges limited the engagement of African research institutions in EIP. In 2015, some Africa-based research institutions and organizations were already engaging with governments and conducting EIP activities. Much of this work was relatively new in 2015. At the same time, much of the research community in Africa remained disconnected from government and focused on evidence production, while not producing evidence in formats conducive to inform policy decision-making. This disconnect was driven by factors including incentives to publish in academic journals to secure funding, distrust in some countries between governments and non-governmental organizations, and limited focus on EIP-specific training for African students and research professionals.

In 2015, research institutions, funders and other EIP ecosystem actors were increasingly recognizing the need to improve intermediation to connect the research and policymaking communities in Africa more effectively. Some actors in the EIP ecosystem were beginning to address this challenge, including research institutions, governments, donors, and civil society. Donors such as FCDO and private foundations including the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Open Society Foundation (OSF) and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) were funding programs and organizations working to improve the use of data and evidence by policymakers in developing countries. With bilateral and multilateral donors increasingly focused on accountability for development funding, more investment in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) put pressure on partner governments to demonstrate results. “Think do tanks” were growing in reach and influence, providing data-for-decision making services aimed at policymakers and development practitioners.

Despite this emerging intermediation work, in 2015 most governments in East and West Africa relied largely on their own data to inform development planning and policymaking. When seeking data or evidence to inform policy, most policymakers relied on national statistics offices, government research departments, and public think tanks, along with global data sets and data from donor partners. The availability of data and sophistication of national statistical systems varied greatly by country and sector. By 2015, African countries including South Africa, Benin, Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya had established national planning, monitoring and evaluation policies and systems to inform and assess the effectiveness of public policies. National data systems in many countries were and remain strong in health care, finance and macroeconomic policy. However, even in the most advanced countries, most public research institutions and departments were underfunded and lacked capacity, which limited the effective use of data and evidence to inform policymaking.

Funding, networks and enthusiasm for data and evidence in 2015 created a relatively strong enabling environment for EIP, but data governance was weak. Enthusiasm for the SDGs and the data revolution brought with it funding and networking opportunities to support the growth of data for development. Many actors

² UNDP (2016). The Africa Data Revolution Report 2016. Available from <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/africa-data-revolution-report-2016>

³ Blaser Mapitsa, Caitlin & Morkel, Candice & Pophiwa, Nedson & Tirivanhu, Precious & Ramasobana, Mokgophana & Khumalo, Linda. (2020). Evaluation Landscape in Africa -Context, Methods and Capacity. 10.18820/9781928480198.

including funders, civil society organizations, governments and research institutions were galvanized toward similar goals by this increased focus on data and evidence to improve development and public policy outcomes. Development agencies were investing in monitoring and evaluation, and several large private foundations were investing in EIP, as noted above. However, there was also an emerging recognition that stronger data governance regulations were needed to ensure the responsible and safe use of data by governments and others. Legal frameworks in most African countries did not provide safeguards able to keep up with the data revolution. As of 2016, data protection legislation had been introduced in several African countries, and the African Union had established a convention on cybersecurity and personal data (in 2014), but very few countries were implementing these frameworks and most legislation was not adequately adapted to address innovative new data sources.⁴

Progress and Trends in EIP Today

Today, many Africa-based research institutions are stronger in terms of capacity and influence. Many stakeholders interviewed for this report noted this trend and credited a broad shift toward localization and an increasing emphasis by donors and private foundations on funding, strengthening, and empowering African research institutions, and connecting them to global EIP resources. For example, in 2018 FCDO launched the Strengthening Research Institutions in Africa program. In 2021, USAID launched the BRIDGE-U program to facilitate partnerships between higher education institutions in Africa and the US, amidst a broad shift toward localization of USAID grantmaking activities in developing countries. Through various initiatives, these donor programs and other organizations have provided funding, technical assistance, and capacity building support to African research institutions, helping to build their expertise in data collection, analysis, and use. In addition, they have connected African research institutions to global networks and resources, helping to bridge the gap between African research institutions and their counterparts in other regions.

Increased capacity of Africa-based research institutions has also been supported by networks that drive a wide range of knowledge exchange and peer south-south learning across African countries. Organizations based in the North that work in the field of data and statistics for development have played a critical role in strengthening Africa-based research institutions.

Also, donors and regional institutions have increased investment in training African students as economists, researchers, and institutional leaders. Partnerships between global and local institutions have increased the influence of local players and demonstrated the value of their capacity to contextualize evidence and build responsive, trusted relationships with governments. Despite this strong progress, stakeholders also reported that many research institutions across Africa remain disconnected from policymaking.

A growing number of research institutions and other EIP ecosystem actors are shifting focus to improving uptake by policymakers of many different types of data and evidence. Since 2015, intermediation efforts have expanded and become more sophisticated in East and West Africa. Stakeholders noted a growing interest and willingness amongst more evidence producers and intermediaries to engage in the political economy of EIP in recent years. Research institutions are doing more by building relationships and investing in human resources with political acumen, aligning research agendas to national policy priorities, and establishing help desks and dialogue platforms. While randomized control trials (RCTs) are considered the gold standard for evaluating the impact of interventions, this trend includes a recognition of the value of other types of research methodologies as a menu of options to meet the specific needs of policymakers. Stakeholders noted a rise in the use of various methodologies including quasi-experimental methods, qualitative research, evidence syntheses, meta-analysis, and new tools from data science. Suppliers of innovative new data sources (geospatial data, drone data, artificial intelligence, etc.) are also working closely with governments to build technical capacity and demonstrate the value and relevance of their data. As the profile of new data sources rises, large donor partners such as the World Bank and African Development Bank are also supporting governments to incorporate innovative data in development projects.

Civil society and funders are increasingly advocating for and focused on the responsible use of data through improved data governance. Since 2015, in reaction to the data revolution, international and local civil society organizations have been increasingly advocating for improved data privacy, protection for individuals, and the

⁴ The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2021). Bridging the Data Policy Gap in Africa: Working Paper. April 2021. Available here: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf

need to address misinformation online (among other topics), while balancing a recognition of the value data for development can provide. A range of CSOs and related institutions based in Africa are driving a conversation on what data governance should look like in an African context. Beginning with the 2014 Malabo Convention, and now with the 2022 introduction of the African Union Data Policy Framework and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, a range of Africa-based stakeholders are driving national-level conversations and pushing for enactment and enforcement of data privacy laws and other data regulations across Africa. While this trend has sometimes caused tension between civil society and governments, African governments also recognize the value of the digital economy and in many countries, government officials are keen to gain knowledge and expert advice on issues of the digital economy and digital rights (e.g., digital identification, fintech regulation, digital taxation) and the best-practice data governance therein.

In some government agencies in East and West Africa, policymaker demand for and use of data and evidence has increased and become more sophisticated, driven by civil society advocacy, pressure to report on development progress, global crises, and the work of EIP institutions supported by champions within government. Many stakeholders emphasized that at both national and local levels of government across East and West Africa, citizens and civil society are increasingly drawing on open data sets, generating their own data, and demanding more data and evidence from governments to monitor public service provision and influence policy. This important trend is increasing political incentives for policymakers to use data and evidence to inform policy and demonstrate results. Pressure to report development progress toward the SDGs and Agenda 2063 and improve good governance, alongside crises including COVID-19, inflation, and climate change, have increased policymaker demand for more timely and higher quality data to address uncertainty and respond to urgent citizen needs. At the same time, work by EIP institutions to build trust and technical capacity in governments has increased policymaker ability and incentives to use data and evidence. This work has been enabled and supported by data and evidence champions within governments.

Despite this rise in demand, African governments continue to rely largely on their own data and evidence for policymaking, with a gradual shift towards the incorporation of more non-governmental sources. Data shows that African governments are increasingly demanding even more data and evidence from their national statistical systems. However, investment in increased capacity for those systems has not matched increased demand.⁵ Increased demand has led in some cases to more investment in national statistics offices and public research institutions. Data shows that national statistical capacity across Africa has improved slightly over the last decade, with large variations by country, driven in part by pressure to report on the SDGs and Agenda 2063. However, national statistical systems remain underfunded and under capacitated in all African countries compared to other regions.⁶

Increased demand has led to policymakers gradually relying more on non-governmental evidence suppliers and intermediaries in some countries, as governments recognize the importance of leveraging external data to supplement their own. In important social sectors such as agribusiness and education, governments are forming partnerships with private sector companies and research institutions that specialize in data collection and analysis. They are also engaging with NGOs and CSOs that work on data-related issues. These organizations provide technical assistance, advocacy support, and capacity building to help governments build more robust and responsive data ecosystems that can better serve the needs of their citizens.

The networks, norms and regulations that support EIP activities have improved within siloed communities of practice, while funding and collaboration across practice areas have not improved. The EIP ecosystem includes at least three overlapping communities of practice: evidence-informed decision making (EIDM), data for development (D4D), and good governance. Within these, smaller communities exist such as those for African evaluators or data scientists. Research institutions, innovative data providers, and data governance advocates

⁵ Paris21 and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa. April 2021. Available at: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf.

⁶ The Statistical Capacity Index (SCI) measured by the World Bank shows an increase in the Africa continental average from 56 to 57.2 points from 2004 to 2019, and the number of fully funded National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDSs) in Africa jumped from 4 in 2017 to 12 in 2020. See: Paris21 and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa. April 2021. Available at: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf. Another example is in Ghana the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation completed renovations in the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research to establish a High-Performance Computing Centre with the goal of increasing the governments' ability to analyze, model, and simulate big data to address developmental challenges. See: <https://mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/budget-statements/2020-Budget-Statement-and-Economic-Policy.pdf>

are building on global and regional norms and best practices within their areas of expertise to improve the quality of their work.

However, while networks are driving knowledge exchange within existing communities, they are less often connecting EIP ecosystem actors across siloes. Despite the collective enthusiasm for monitoring progress toward the SDGs and Agenda 2063 seen in 2015, these siloed communities of practice have not since come together to develop approaches to overcoming common barriers specific to evidence-informed policymaking. On the funding side, many funders continue to support projects relevant to EIP, but key funders have also moved away from providing general support for EIP and research institutions to focus on evidence as a tool to address sector- and issue-specific challenges. This shift is driven by pressure to demonstrate the impact of investments, the need to leverage partnerships with other stakeholders, and increasing competition for funding from global crises and pressing social and environmental needs. By focusing on sector-specific challenges, funders report that they can pool resources and expertise with other stakeholders more easily and achieve more measurable progress toward addressing specific development challenges.

Barriers to Progress

Most funders and many practitioners see evidence as a tool to support sector- or issue-specific projects, which limits collaboration and flexible funding for evidence producing institutions. Evidence producers and intermediaries report that because most funding is tied to specific short-term sector- or issue-specific projects, this makes it difficult to raise general operating support funding, invest in long-term institutional development, invest in long-term relationship building with governments, or respond opportunistically to government demands. Furthermore, many practitioners active within the EIP ecosystem, such as innovative data providers, data governance practitioners or good governance activists, use data or evidence as a tool in their work but do not think of themselves as part of a coherent EIP field, which in turn limits opportunities for collaboration with adjacent actors. The lack of a common vision for EIP amongst actors across the ecosystem also limits the scale and breadth of progress toward EIP goals. Without a common vision, actors do not often collaborate or network across practice siloes to develop and scale effective approaches specific to EIP. For example, policymakers need both impact evaluations and innovative new data sources, but providers of those different types of data and evidence are not actively engaging with each other to overcome barriers such as political motivations, inefficient data systems, or lack of technical capacity that prevent policymakers from using various types of data and evidence regularly in their decision making. Similarly, both good governance activists and many evidence producers/intermediaries would like to address the political incentives that prevent policymakers from making evidence-informed decisions, but these actors do not often coordinate their work toward common EIP-specific goals.

Another potential barrier is that successful intermediation approaches based on relationships are costly and may be difficult to scale. Long-term relationship building is being used by a growing number of EIP ecosystem actors successfully to drive uptake of data and evidence by policymakers, but this approach is costly and time consuming, which makes it difficult to scale. Throughout East and West Africa, stakeholders noted that a significant disconnect persists between policymakers and evidence producers, both for government research departments and non-governmental research institutions. Many universities, think tanks, INGOs and research institutions (both global and local) remain disconnected from or uninformed of policymaker priorities and evidence needs. Stakeholders also cite the widespread need to improve the quality, accuracy and timeliness of data and evidence to make it relevant for policymakers. EIP actors are successfully addressing this challenge in isolated cases by improving communication between government research departments and policymakers, and building trust through long-term relationships between non-governmental evidence providers and governments. Over time, this intensive work is starting to lead to norms and regulations that entrench the use of evidence in policymaking more sustainably (for example, in Ghana). However, the need for more effective intermediation across East and West Africa far outweighs the resources available to supply it. More scalable approaches are needed.

Political incentives are also preventing the regular use of evidence in policymaking in many countries, even when policymakers have access to evidence, technical capacity to use it, and good relationships with evidence providers. Many stakeholders cited this barrier in interviews, including government officials themselves. Interviewees described how many policymakers seek and use evidence to support existing views or political positions, and tend to ignore data and evidence that counters these positions. Trust-based relationships

between evidence producers/intermediaries and governments can increase the use of data and evidence by policymakers by improving access and technical capacity, and demonstrating the value of tailored data and evidence to solve policymaking challenges. But even these trusted relationships are often unable to overcome political disincentives. This challenge is certainly not limited to African countries – policymaking is a political process in most countries. The most common response when asked what could be done to address this barrier in East and West Africa, was to promote good governance, and empower citizen advocates and the media to demand more transparency and accountability from their governments. Stakeholders also described how evidence-informed debates in parliament and with opposition parties in some countries are contributing to improved governance and policy outcomes.

Chronic underinvestment in national statistical systems and data infrastructure is limiting access and thereby preventing the regular use of data and evidence by policymakers, with notable exceptions in some sectors such as health and finance. Most policymakers and government officials continue to rely most on their own data systems, and are increasingly demanding more from those systems. However, investment in national statistical systems and data reporting infrastructure is not keeping pace with increased demand. National data systems in most countries across Africa are underfunded, inefficient and hard to fix, especially for funders that are not able to finance governments directly, and/or do not have the scale of financial support available to make large data infrastructure investments. Inefficient data systems also prevent governments from effectively accessing and using new forms of data made available by the data revolution in a consistent way.

Technical capacity amongst policymakers to access and effectively use data and evidence also remains a challenge. In relation to EIP this has improved in some sectors such as healthcare and finance but remains limited across most levels of government in most countries, for all different forms of data and evidence, including in more mature EIP ecosystems like Ghana, Senegal, or Kenya. Some funders and organizations are working on capacity building, but the enormity of this need, the rate of policymaker turnover, and competing priorities for funding in other areas, and to address urgent crises, limits the scale of these efforts.

The complexity and length of the policymaking process makes it difficult to ensure that interventions at any one point in the process lead to improved wellbeing for people. Data and evidence play an important role in all stages of the policymaking process, from agenda setting to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. At each of these stages, many decision-makers and complex influencing factors are involved. Many stakeholders noted challenges around heavy investment by EIP ecosystem actors in the early stages of the policymaking process, which can be negated by poor implementation in later stages. Stakeholders noted that much less focus and investment has been placed by EIP actors on improving policy implementation. Similarly, relationship building that influences just a few of the policy decision makers can be limited in its impact if other decision makers with control over the same policymaking process are not reached.

Opportunities

To bring more coherence to EIP as a field, there may be opportunities to promote more engagement across diverse EIP ecosystem actors led by the evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) community. The EIDM community is active, hosting various conferences and networking opportunities, with actors working toward common goals to improve the effectiveness of social and environmental programs through evidence use. This includes a strong focus on evidence-informed policymaking. However, EIDM networking events often focus on research institutions, development practitioners and policymakers, with less engagement of innovative data providers, data governance practitioners, or good governance advocates. Promoting events, platforms or programs that intentionally engage actors across these communities could drive knowledge exchange, partnerships, and new approaches to addressing EIP-specific challenges.

As part of this broader engagement, one of the most significant opportunities is in good governance and citizen advocacy. The generation and use of data and evidence by citizens, CSOs and the media to hold governments accountable is growing in many African countries, which is in turn incentivizing policymakers to use more data and evidence to inform decisions and demonstrate results. This creates space to elevate data and evidence as effective tools for advocacy, work to address the proliferation of misinformation in digital data and new media sources, and work with good governance funders and organizations to advance EIP goals. This is a significant opportunity cited by many stakeholders, that could address barriers to EIP related to political incentives.

More could also be done to align and leverage other sector- and issue-specific resources to advance EIP goals. Opportunities include:

- **Data for Development:** The momentum, widespread interest and funding for D4D and the digital economy could be leveraged to focus more intentionally on addressing policymaker needs and gaps in government data systems.
- **Data governance:** A number of donor agencies and private foundations are funding data governance initiatives, with growing interest in the space. However, data governance work addresses a wide range of issues, not all of which are relevant to EIP. There may be potential to collaborate with other funders to leverage these efforts toward more EIP-specific goals with a focus on addressing citizen mistrust in government access to and use of data, and a lack of harmonization across borders that prevents data sharing and could present barriers to the effective use of data for EIP.
- **Impact measurement and management:** At the organizational level, there may be opportunity to improve research institutions' understanding of their impact on people's wellbeing. This would improve their ability to prioritize investments in more impactful or effective work, and in turn enable them to raise more funding from sector and issue-specific development funders.
- **Co-financing:** Likewise, there exist opportunities to match sector or country-specific project funding for research institutions and other EIP ecosystem actors with general operating support to achieve both institutional growth and targeted, measurable impact through co-financed projects.

To scale evidence intermediation efforts, there may be opportunities to invest in replicating and scaling up successful relationship-driven models, and/or space to consider less costly, more easily scalable approaches. Models such as embedded learning units or the relationship-based approach to working with parliaments could be expanded to other countries and government agencies. More support to organizations to document and disseminate lessons could encourage replication and scale, including perhaps analysis around how to reduce the cost and time intensity of these models. Other approaches could include consideration of the potential to scale successful models through regional policymaking bodies to achieve a broader impact that could cascade across countries. Existing sector networks active in policy advocacy, and policymaker peer networks also offer opportunities to advance evidence intermediation and close the evidence to policy gap at scale. Parliamentarians, ministries, and other government agencies also convene often with peers from other countries and regions in existing forums that could be leveraged consistently to build trusted relationships with EIP actors and bridge the evidence-policy gap at lower cost and greater scale.

There is a pressing need to invest more within governments, but doing so sustainably requires large-scale, long-term funding; there may be opportunities to address this need with catalytic interventions. Many stakeholders noted the need to invest more broadly in studying the evidence-related needs and priorities of policymakers, the need to increase the amount of EIP-tailored capacity building available to a broader range of policymakers and other government officials, the need to invest in improving national statistical systems at all levels, and the need to focus more on evidence-informed policy implementation to ensure impact on people's wellbeing. Without addressing these larger interlinking challenges, isolated investments to increase access or capacity for governments can be effective in pockets but are limited in their scale, sustainability and long-term impact. Smaller-scale funders like the Hewlett Foundation could explore ways to catalyze the large amounts of funding needed in these areas. To improve technical EIP capacity for policymakers, catalytic investments could focus on integrating EIP approaches to public policy education (which some Hewlett grantees are already doing), and civil servant training and hiring practices, especially in countries where awareness and demand for EIP have improved. Catalytic investments could also pilot innovative approaches to improving national statistical systems and data infrastructure with the aim of scaling up successful models through funding from large donor agencies. Specific focus could be placed on improving national data systems to facilitate more effective monitoring and course corrections during policy implementation. Catalytic funders could also promote EIP interventions specific to the policy implementation stage. More knowledge sharing could also be facilitated focused on lessons around government decision-making needs and the policy implementation stage.

Conclusion

Since 2015, increased support from private foundations and multilateral and bilateral donors has empowered Africa-based research institutions by providing technical assistance, capacity building support, and funding, enabling these institutions to increase their capacity and influence. Additionally, partnerships between global

and local institutions have boosted the influence of local players, and training programs have invested in African students as economists, researchers, and institutional leaders. Despite progress, many African research institutions remain disconnected from policymaking. However, intermediation efforts are growing in East and West Africa. There is a growing interest among evidence producers and intermediaries to engage in the political economy of EIP. Civil society and funders are advocating for the responsible use of data, and, recognizing the value of the digital economy, African governments are increasingly seeking expert advice on digital economy and digital rights issues. Although African governments continue to rely largely on their own data to inform policy decisions, they are shifting towards more engagement with non-governmental institutions and more diverse research methodologies.

However, while large volumes and more diverse types of data and evidence are available to inform policymaking, widespread and consistent uptake remains limited by inefficient data systems, lack of technical capacity, and competing political priorities. Addressing these constraints across the region would require enormous investment, and scaled investment in EIP is limited by a lack of common goals amongst EIP funders and practitioners, and intense competition for funding to address many urgent global crises.

Crises are driving the use of evidence in some areas and reducing investment for EIP in others. COVID-19 and climate change have led to investment in fit for purpose data systems (real time health care data and contact tracing, early warning systems, etc.), that are improving lives by helping countries mitigate and adapt to crisis. Many African citizens under pressure from economic shocks and frustrated by shrinking civic space and corruption are also demanding more accountability through data and evidence – this is important to support. However, the competition for funding to address urgent social and environmental needs is limiting the amount of funding available for research and institutional growth that is not directly linked in the near term to solving a specific issue or sector challenge.

Going forward, EIP proponents could explore several ways to improve the sustainability and long-term impact of EIP interventions. There are opportunities to foster more collaboration across the evidence informed decision making (EIDM) community and actors working on good governance and data for development; to co-invest with sector and issue specific funders to ensure institutional growth for research organizations and other evidence producers and intermediaries; to catalyze more investment into governments to address barriers to sustainable, regular use of evidence in governments and improve policy implementation; and to study the long-term impact of these different approaches on people's wellbeing to enable EIP actors to select interventions that maximize impact for people.

I. INTRODUCTION

Scope, purpose, limitations, and methodology

INTRODUCTION

Scope and purpose of the Landscape Scan

Dalberg Advisors is working with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to refresh its Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) grantmaking strategy. As part of the strategy refresh process, Dalberg conducted a broad landscape scan to document trends from the last seven years in the field of evidence-informed policymaking, including in East and West Africa. The foundation hopes to understand the current and future state of evidence-informed policymaking with particular interest in the African context, especially how it is evolving, given the profound shocks of the past five years, such as COVID-19, climate change, and rising authoritarianism. In addition, the scan aims to identify gaps and opportunities for future funding that complement and enhance the work of others.

Methodology

The research methodology for the Landscape Scan was designed to inform the EIP strategy refresh process. Research questions and approaches were therefore tailored to inform strategic choices that will need to be made as part of the refresh process, in light of the evolving landscape, prevailing EIP models, key stakeholders, drivers of success, and strategic opportunities. These choices include: Should Hewlett's goal change or be refined? How should impact pathways and target outcomes change to reflect progress, lessons and shifting EIP field opportunities? Should Hewlett's focus be broader, narrower, or remain constant as is? And, how might Hewlett tailor its practices to better support its grantees in driving progress in the EIP space? Are there trends that Hewlett's EIP team ought to react to?

Research questions

Specific research and learning questions explored in this report to inform the strategic choices above and test assumptions in the current EIP theory of change, included:

- How do stakeholders and grantees define evidence?
- Which problems and obstacles to EIP are top of mind for stakeholders?
- What shifts have we seen in EIP over the past five years?
- What is EIP's relative importance to the big issues of today? On the list of things policymakers need right now, how high up there is EIP overall, and in specific policymaking areas?
- What is the state of maturity of different parts of the EIP field?
- Which political economy factors drive policy decisions, and what is needed to shift political incentives toward consistent use of evidence?
- How do successful EIP models in one location influence change in another?
- What is the role of evidence in citizen advocacy?
- What type of evidence do policymakers demand and use? In which issue and topic areas is evidence needed and used most? Does the current supply of evidence match demand?
- What are the main obstacles preventing better implementation of policies?
- What are the main trends and gaps in funding for EIP?
- Where are there currently opportunities to drive impact in EIP? Which of these opportunities have the largest potential to improve people's wellbeing? Are there significant upcoming opportunities for impact that exist on particular countries' policy agendas?
- Who are the major players doing exciting things in EIP in East and West Africa? In which countries do they work? On which topics? Who are the players working on policy implementation?

Research Activities

The findings in this report are based on primary and secondary research conducted by Dalberg Advisors over three months of data collection in late 2022 and early 2023. Research sources included:

- Desk review of selected Hewlett Foundation and EIP grantee publications, and major EIP reports and literature reviews that provided context for stakeholder feedback

- 52 responses to an online survey of EIP grantees from 44 grantee organizations
- 5 EIP grantee focus groups on thematic focus areas (institutionalizing evidence use, data revolution, data governance, citizen advocacy)
- One-to-one interviews with 38 external stakeholders, and 24 EIP grantees, representing every major EIP ecosystem and actor category, as shown in the graphic below, including interviews with policymakers and government officials in Senegal, Ghana and Kenya.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ)

We approached the data collection process using Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) as guiding principles. In selecting interviewees, we aimed for a balance of stakeholders based in the Global North and African countries, targeted a geographic balance within the African continent, and aimed for a gender balance amongst interviewees.

Our research also interrogated DEIJ-specific learning questions, including:

- How can data and evidence help to overcome barriers that prevent policies from benefiting marginalized communities?
- What prevents women and marginalized communities from having more influence over policy decisions that affect them? How could evidence address these challenges?
- Where is progress being made and what approaches have been most successful to benefit women and marginalized communities through EIP? How does this vary by country and region?
- Are there significant opportunities for impact on women or marginalized communities in specific EIP thematic areas or countries?

Limitations

The lack of a commonly agreed understanding of and sheer breadth of EIP as a field has presented significant limitations in developing this Landscape Scan report. The scope of the EIP ecosystem covered in this report includes many types of data and evidence, diverse actors and distinct communities of practice, every step of the policymaking process, in all sectors and all levels of government, in dozens of countries.

Many good, longer reports have been written about EIP in a single country, or single evidence value chain, which provides the opportunity to explore ecosystem dynamics in much more depth. By contrast, the purpose of this broad report is to capture high level trends, and to understand how the many pieces and overlapping ecosystems in the global EIP puzzle are working together (or not) to drive (or inhibit) progress toward the regular use of data and evidence to inform policies that can improve people's wellbeing in East and West Africa.

The bird's eye view provides us insight into the trends, barriers, and opportunities across Africa. There is much more to learn. Our hope is that the insights highlighted here can serve as a jumping off point for further investment and inquiry in EIP.

II. EIP ECOSYSTEM

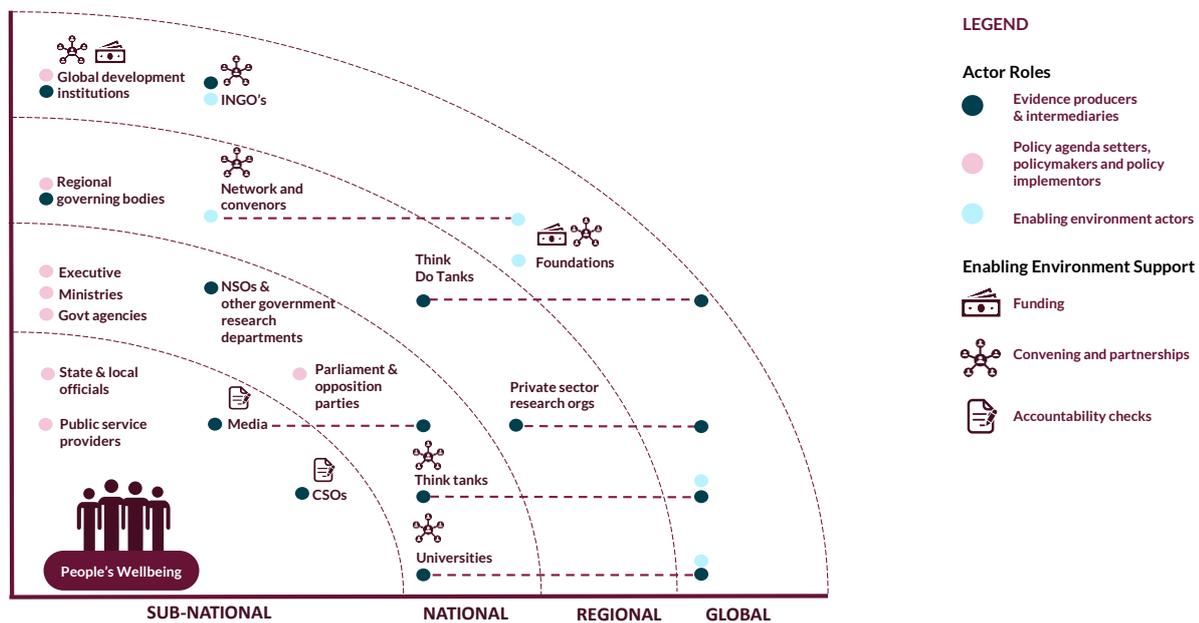
Defining EIP, data and evidence,
the policymaking process, and
EIP actors

THE EIP ECOSYSTEM

Ecosystem overview

The EIP ecosystem encompasses diverse actors and overlapping communities of practice, including those who do not think of themselves as part of a coherent EIP field, but who engage in EIP in different ways. These actors include research institutions, non-profits and private sector organizations supplying innovative data for development, inclusive governance advocates, international development funders, government research and planning departments, and a variety of regional, national, and local government agencies, ministries, and departments (MDAs). They can be grouped into three main categories: evidence producers and intermediaries; policy agenda setters, policymakers and policy implementors; and enabling actors. A simplified map of the EIP ecosystem is shown below.

Figure 1 Illustrative evidence informed policymaking ecosystem for East & West Africa*



*Note: Not exhaustive; EIP ecosystems vary considerably by country, and involve a complex set of players

Defining EIP

There is no standard definition of Evidence Informed Policymaking (EIP), but across its iterations EIP promotes the regular use of a variety of data and evidence to inform policymaking decisions in all sectors and levels of government, with the aim of improving social and economic policies, and by doing so, improving people's wellbeing.

The Hewlett Foundation defines EIP in its 2018 strategy goal as: "Governments systematically use evidence to improve social and economic policies over time. We expect to advance this goal by helping to improve country-level policy processes and systems that make evidence use integral to policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring; contributing to evidence-informed improvements in specific government policies and programs that have potential for wider influence; and fortifying the emerging field of evidence-informed policymaking. We focus on East and West Africa, and also fund global work that enables greater progress at the country level."⁷

In an online survey conducted by Dalberg in 2022, more than 50 responses from Hewlett Foundation EIP grantees highlighted various critical elements in their definitions of EIP. Their definitions are diverse in focus, reflecting the diverse communities of practice in which they operate, while also being largely congruous and mutually reinforcing. Important elements of their definitions included:

⁷ Hewlett Foundation EIP Strategy 2018, available here: <https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EIP-Strategy-March-2018.pdf>

Characteristics of data and evidence

- **Rigorous:** Most grantees used terms related to rigor and quality to describe the type of data and evidence used for EIP, such as “the best available”, “objective”, “empirical”, “scientifically generated”, “accurate, reliable and timely”, and “quality data processed into knowledge”.
- **Relevant:** Several grantees also noted the importance of “matching appropriate data and evidence to decision-making needs in context,” and translating and summarizing data and evidence into “digestible policy recommendations.”
- **Innovative:** A smaller set of grantees, many from the data revolution cluster, noted the importance of “cutting edge research”, “innovative data sets”, “alternative sources of data”, and “data sharing ecosystems”.

Forms of engagement in the policymaking process

- **Answering priority questions to inform decisions:** some grantees cited the importance of responsive EIP to fill critical knowledge and evidence gaps and answer priority questions that policymakers might have on any number of topics. These answers tended to be less process oriented.
- **Prioritizing development resource allocation and improve program effectiveness:** many grantees talked about the need to use policy and program performance monitoring data and evaluations, from both local and global contexts, to prioritize investment in policies and program designs that work; some emphasized a long process of using data and evidence to translate policy goals to effective program design, monitoring programs for impact and cost effectiveness, redesigning programs to enhance impact and effectiveness, and scaling up programs that are working.
- **Ensuring transparency and citizen engagement:** other grantees emphasized EIP as a pathway to promote accountability in the policy process through “meaningful public engagement”, “consultative decision making”, and an “open democratic process,” to ensure that citizens have a say in the policies and programs that affect their lives.

The purpose of EIP

- **Improve lives through inclusive development:** almost all grantees indicated that the purpose of EIP is to improve lives, through “better services for people”, address the “material needs and aspirations of populations”, addressing development challenges, reducing poverty, and ensuring that “no one is left behind”.
- **Challenge and innovate:** a few grantees saw EIP as a chance to challenge the status quo, innovate, and test new ideas.

Defining data and evidence

Building on the grantee definitions of EIP above, it is useful to clarify what we mean by “data” and “evidence”. The Hewlett Foundation defines evidence as encompassing traditional and new sources of data, policy research, and impact evaluation, with a special focus on those that are pertinent, up-to-date, and pragmatic for government decision-making across the policy spectrum, including implementation, in the context of their strategy.⁸ Various other definitions exist. For the purpose of this report, we have considered data and evidence in the context of EIP according to the summary definitions below.

Data often refers to raw information, collected in the context of EIP in the form of policy, program and public service monitoring data, as well as many new forms of data that can inform policymaking decisions by providing demographic information about citizen needs, the impact of climate change, and the reach and implementation of public services. New data sets are being produced by citizens, mobile phones, drones, artificial intelligence, geospatial scans, and other digital technologies. Data on its own is usually insufficient to effectively inform policymaking. It must be aggregated, analyzed, summarized, and synthesized to inform decision making.

Evidence often refers in the EIP context to research on the performance and effectiveness of policies and programs, i.e., “evidence of what works”. This could include any number of research methodologies and approaches such as impact or process evaluations, randomized control trials, qualitative research, quasi-

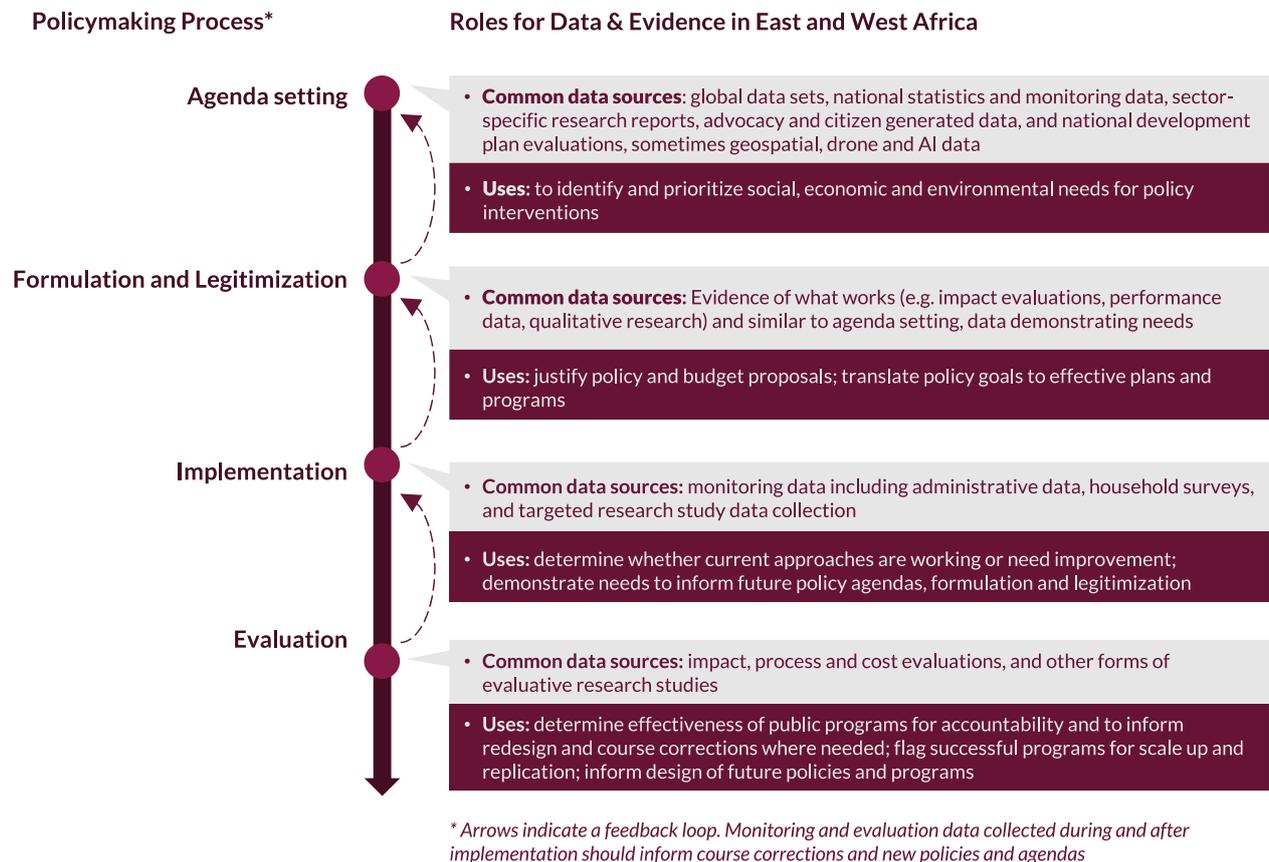
⁸ Hewlett Foundation EIP Strategy 2018, available here: <https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EIP-Strategy-March-2018.pdf>

experimental methods, meta-analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, open science, evidence synthesis, or even indigenous knowledge. Evidence is informed by data, including the many types of data mentioned above.

Using data and evidence in the policymaking process

Evidence and data can be used in different ways at each step of the policymaking process, from agenda setting and policy formulation to legitimization and implementation, as shown below.

Figure 2 Using data and evidence in the policymaking process



The policymaking process begins with agenda setting, which is influenced by various actors such as national governments, global development partners, regional governing bodies, and in some cases political party manifestos. National governments then summarize policy agendas in national development plans, which are then translated into sector and district-specific plans and used to develop specific policies and programs. The proposed budget for policies and programs are then examined by parliament and other decision-makers before being approved, adopted and ultimately implemented by civil servants and public officials and evaluated for effectiveness. As shown in the graphic above, different forms of data and evidence play different roles at each step in this process.

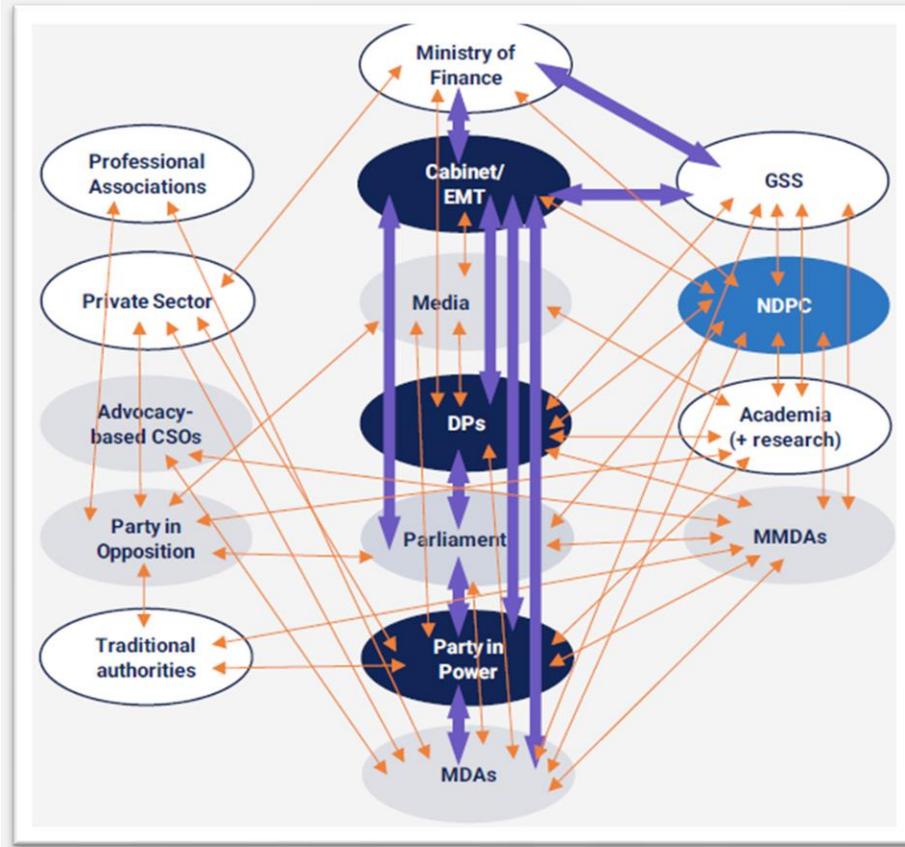
In reality, policymaking processes are extremely complex, involving many different actors and decision makers at global, regional, national and local levels. The dynamics, actors involved, and types of data and evidence used vary significantly by sector and issue area. The process map for economic development policymaking in Ghana shown below is one good example of how complex the policymaking process can be in a single sector, in just one country. This makes it challenging for EIP actors to know where to introduce data and evidence into the policymaking process to maximize impact, how to ensure they are addressing all of the interconnected puzzle pieces required to have an impact, and to track the impact of their work that could happen many steps removed, sometimes many years later, far downstream from their original intervention.

Box 1 The complexity of the policymaking process in Africa

In reality, policymaking looks less like Figure 2 above, and more like this example below from Ghana in Figure 3, with significant multi-directional complexity, and variation by issue area, sector, country, level of government, individual power dynamics, and relationships between technocrats, politicians, funders, and vested interests.

This complexity demonstrates that **demand for and use of evidence to inform policy decisions varies greatly at each step in the process** according to many contextual factors and competing inputs.⁹

Figure 3 Stakeholder Mapping for Economic Development in Ghana



Source: SEDI (2021), Author's construct. A representation of the relationships between the different stakeholders of economic development policymaking, showing a powerful actors (dark blue-shaded oval shapes) and potentially powerful actors (light blue-shaded oval shapes). Large arrows indicate the most important and influential relationships and smaller ones represent more routine (less influential) relationships.

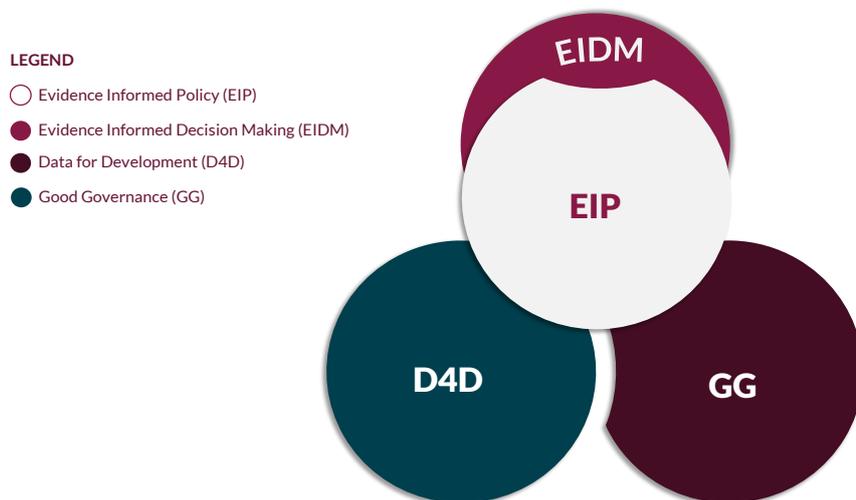
⁹ Gatune, J., Commodore, R., Darko, R., Atengble, K.O., Harris, D., Osei, D.R., Oteng-Abayie, F.E., Shah, N., Bainsong, A.K., Fenny, A., Osei, C., and Rosengren, A. (2021) The role of evidence in policymaking in Ghana: a political economy analysis, SEDI: Oxford.

Understanding EIP ecosystem actors

Overlapping communities of practice relevant to EIP

EIP ecosystem actors operate in three overlapping but somewhat distinct communities of practice.

Figure 4 Overlapping communities of practice relevant to EIP



Evidence Informed Decision Making (EIDM)

- Focused on the production and uptake of rigorous evidence to inform decision making, including the design and redesign of policies and development programs to maximize positive social and environmental impact
- Closely aligned with EIP, but goes beyond a focus on policymaking to consider decisions made in international development and poverty alleviation programming more broadly

- Includes research institutions, think do tanks, governments and policymakers, international development donors and practitioners, and the private sector

Data for Development (D4D)

- Focused on producing and analyzing innovative new sources of data that can improve the effectiveness, transparency and inclusiveness of development programming
- Goes far beyond data to inform policymaking, but is increasingly a tool for EIP through empowering citizens, improving service delivery, promoting transparency and accountability, supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, and fostering social and economic development
- Includes non-profits and private sector actors working on the digital economy, big data, mobile data, drone data, artificial intelligence, geospatial data, data systems, data science, data governance, data privacy, ICT infrastructure, etc.

Good Governance (GG)

- Focused on promoting citizen engagement in governance, including equitable engagement by women, youth and other marginalized communities, through advocacy, transparency, accountability and good governance initiatives
- Data and evidence are one tool amongst other approaches used by inclusive governance advocates, but increasingly citizens in Africa are leveraging the open data movement and mobile data to influence policymaking
- Includes CSOs, INGOs, individual citizens and the media working on transparency, accountability, and good governance initiatives

Description and role of different EIP actors

Institutions and organizations engaged in activities relevant to EIP can be loosely grouped into four categories.

National Governments and Global Development Partners

National governments and global development partners produce most of the data used by policymakers in East and West Africa. Working together, these powerful players set agendas and development plans that inform

policies. Data produced by a range of government entities that make up the national statistical system (NSS), is widely used by policymakers. However, government-produced data is often limited in quality, timeliness, and relevance because of challenges including limited funding and human resources, a lack of standards, and weak or non-existent digital infrastructure. Governments primarily produce monitoring and demographic data. Conversely, global development partners have greater access to funds enabling them to produce more expensive, sector-specific, micro-oriented evaluation data. This support is often limited to specific sectors or projects, contributing to uneven evidence supply.

INGOs, Universities and Think (Do) Tanks

There is a symbiotic relationship between Global EIP institutions and regional and national actors, as the former develops public goods and shares expertise through partnerships with the latter, who have closer relationships with policymakers and can supply evidence more directly. INGOs, universities, and think (do) tanks are increasingly establishing strong partnerships with governments by investing in long-term relationship building, which is helping to overcome suspicions amongst some policymakers of political bias and lack of trust in the data produced by some of these non-governmental institutions. Partnerships between global and regional organizations are growing and are increasingly symbiotic and bidirectional allowing African institutions to elevate their innovations, best practices, and methods for data production. Partnerships with organizations based in Africa have helped to increase evidence uptake for global EIP actors. Local organizations understand context and culture, enabling them to serve as knowledge brokers and build trusting relationships with policymakers.

Media, Citizens, and CSOs

When most effective, the media and CSOs can empower citizens with the opportunity to engage in the processes of policymaking—elevating the voices and lived experiences of the most marginalized community members. Traditional and new forms of media are shifting the policy narrative by serving as a venue for discussion. This has increased citizens' access to evidence, policies, and policymakers, in turn driving accountability. With access to the internet and social media, citizens are generating their own data. This data is being used to fuel social movements that strive to fill in the gaps in government data sets and elevate the needs, viewpoints, and stories of more vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Private Sector

The private sector takes on a more specialized approach to data production, resulting in innovative and new technologies. The private sector's engagement in data sharing and capacity building can support work toward development goals, particularly as more companies develop corporate social responsibility strategies. Private sector market research studies on social sectors, such as agriculture, health care or energy, are used by industry networks and civil society to advocate for improved sector policies, and are sometimes commissioned directly by governments to inform policy. The role of the private sector varies greatly by country, with most activity and innovation coming out of regional investment hubs such as Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana. In some cases, these innovative services spread over time to neighboring countries.

EIP as a Field

As discussed throughout this section, the EIP ecosystem is diverse and fragmented. This fragmentation is limiting the cohesion and productivity of EIP as a “field”.

The ecosystem includes many different types of actors, from governments and research institutions to good governance advocates and innovative data producers. These actors function in at least three overlapping fields of practice: evidence informed policymaking, good governance, and data for development. Many of them have similar understandings and definitions of evidence-informed policymaking. However, these ecosystem actors are often working in siloes with different focus areas and goals. Within these siloes, actors may be well networked. But across them, actors are less often forming partnerships, exchanging knowledge, or coordinating their efforts.

For example, an actor focused on impact evaluations may understand the value of evidence-informed policymaking, and conduct activities to promote the use of impact evaluations by policymakers, but the main focus of their work and the goal they are working toward is to strengthen the field of impact evaluations. They

are not likely networking or coordinating with an organization focused on data governance, which may be working on issues such as data privacy, data protection, data sharing, or data infrastructure that are essential to support evidence-informed policymaking. In this way, the two organizations may be missing out on opportunities for collaboration and mutual learning, and the potential impact of their work on policymaking and governance may be limited. Similarly, even an organization that promotes a variety of types of data and evidence to inform decision-making may not be coordinating directly with good governance advocates on how to shift political incentives toward more transparent evidence-informed policy decisions. The lack of a common vision for the field also makes it harder to attract resources to address common barriers. Weak government data systems may prevent policymakers from consistently using both impact evaluations and geospatial data, but neither impact evaluators, geospatial data producers nor those who fund them are collaborating to address this challenge because it is not central to their goals.

Thus, the diversity of actors involved in the EIP ecosystem, their lack of a common goal, and the siloed nature of their work is limiting the cohesion of EIP as a field of practice. As shown in the table below, the EIP field remains relatively weak across most elements of a field of practice (knowledge base, actors, agenda, infrastructure and resources). The resulting lack of knowledge exchange, partnerships and coordination is limiting collaborative problem solving amongst EIP ecosystem actors and making it difficult to coordinate resources to scale progress toward EIP-specific goals.

Figure 5 The Five Characteristics of a Field, and EIP¹⁰

Field characteristics and definitions drawn from "Building a Strong Nonprofit Sector: A Toolkit for Boards and Leaders" by the Bridgespan Group

1. **Knowledge Base:** A field's knowledge base is the body of academic and practical research that helps actors better understand the problem, identify and analyze shared barriers to solving it, and develop solutions."
2. **Actors:** "A field's actors are the set of individuals and organizations that together bring a sense of shared identity and common vision to the field."
3. **Field-Level Agenda:** A field-level agenda refers to the strategic suite of approaches that aims to address shared barriers and unlock collective progress. It is co-created (and continuously adapted) by the field's actors.
4. **Infrastructure:** Field infrastructure is "connective tissue" that strengthens each of the other four field characteristics as well as the complementarity between them. Infrastructure exponentially enhances the efforts of actors in the field by making them more coordinated, connected, and effective.
5. **Resources:** A field's resources comprise both financial forms of capital as well as nonfinancial support.

The current EIP field of practice is relatively weak in each of the five field characteristics:

1. **Knowledge Base:** EIP ecosystem actors share a similar definition of EIP but are not all working to address a common problem, which limits coordination to develop solutions to shared barriers.
2. **Actors:** The diversity and breadth of actors in the EIP ecosystem, many of whom work toward different goals, has limited the sense of shared identity or common vision for the field.
3. **Agenda:** Lack of a common vision or goal has prevented an EIP field-level agenda from being formed and limited collective progress toward EIP-specific goals.
4. **Infrastructure:** EIP ecosystem actors are coordinating within but not across siloes, which is limiting the effectiveness of their EIP-related work.
5. **Resources:** The lack of a common vision, limited coordination and lack of collaborative problem solving have made it hard to attract more resources to strengthen EIP as a field or overcome EIP-specific barriers.

¹⁰ The Bridgespan Group, "Field Building Diagnostic Tool," March 2020, <https://www.bridgespan.org/getmedia/29a0c7c4-7328-4f30-8f5f-ee41a6a8689b/field-building-diagnostic-tool-march-2020.pdf>.

III. EIP in 2015

The EIP landscape at the start of the current Hewlett strategy period

EIP IN 2015

Monitoring progress toward new development goals

In 2015, many funders and other EIP ecosystem actors were focused on strengthening data and evidence production, driven in part by a need for data to monitor progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs / Agenda 2030) and the Africa Agenda 2063. Both agendas were launched in 2015 with similar development priorities and the aim of aligning development efforts toward common targets. Enthusiasm for the SDGs and Agenda 2063 spurred a drive to increase the volume of data that was needed to plan, monitor, and hold governments accountable for progress. Beyond data collection, development actors recognized the need to develop systems that could produce more timely and trustworthy data that could be used to bolster the decision-making process, engage citizens, and enable everyone in society to contribute to sustainable development.

Given the complex nature of the SDGs and the intricacy of the actors' networks, relationships and coordination involved, the President of the UN 70th Assembly, Mogens Lykketoft, described the endeavor as a "unprecedented statistical challenge."¹¹ In response to these new challenges Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary General, recognized there would need to be a "revolution in data" and created the Independent Expert Advisory Group (IAEG) on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development in 2014.¹²

Because the SDGs were designed to be nationally owned and country-led, and the process of producing the data for the SDGs required enhanced capabilities, expanded capacities and a hefty financial investment—an estimated \$650 million per year¹³—a variety of country specific solutions were created. However, despite widespread enthusiasm in 2015, financing towards achieving SDGs was generally insufficient (and has since been made worse by global crises), which greatly constrained actual investment in monitoring progress towards the SDG goals.¹⁴

The SDGs commitment to "no one left behind" necessitates that as a part of Goal 17 there be a targeted focus on enhancing countries' abilities to capitalize on the "availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts."¹

¹United Nations. 2021. "Goal 17 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs." Sdgs.un.org. 2021. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>.

Data for Development and the Data Revolution

Amidst the Ebola outbreak that ravaged West Africa in 2013-2016, the data being produced and shared as a result of new innovations played a profound role in allowing policymakers to be responsive and agile in its approach to pandemic, constantly assessing the impact of its public health measures.¹

¹Bell, Beth P. "Overview, control strategies, and lessons learned in the CDC response to the 2014–2016 Ebola epidemic." *MMWR supplements* 65 (2016).

As part of the push to measure progress toward the SDGs, new technologies and new sources of data that could significantly increase timeliness, accuracy, and precision were emerging. The "data revolution" marked the integration of traditional evidence sources, like household surveys and administrative data, with new innovations such as geospatial, mobile, drone, social media, alternative intelligence, and citizen-generated data. This movement was aided in part by a concurrent digital revolution which caused an exponential increase in the amount of data produced and brought new actors to data production enabling rapid growth in data volume, data types, and data currency. These new forms of data were seen as one solution to supporting

¹¹ MacFeely, Steve. 2020. "Measuring the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators: An Unprecedented Statistical Challenge." *Journal of Official Statistics* 36 (2): 361–78. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jos-2020-0019>.

¹² UN Data Revolution Group. 2014. "UN Data Revolution." UN Data Revolution. 2014. <https://www.undatarevolution.org/>.

¹³ Macfeely, Steve. 2019. "To Keep Track of the SDGs, We Need a Data Revolution | UNCTAD." *Unctad.org*. January 17, 2019. <https://unctad.org/news/keep-track-sdgs-we-need-data-revolution>.

¹⁴ APRM. 2021. "APRM Baseline Study - Implementation of the UN-CEPA Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development in Africa." *Africa's Self-Assessment for Good Governance*. <https://www.aprm-au.org/publications/aprm-baseline-study-implementation-of-the-un-cepa-principles-of-effective-governance-for-sustainable-development-in-africa/>.

policymakers across Africa by supplying them with the information they needed to make timely and informed decisions.

In 2015, the private sector began playing a larger role in the data revolution as both producers and consumers of data. Given that large amounts of data were collected passively as a by-product of many business models, policymakers and citizens alike were provided with an alternative resource from which to draw data and evidence. For citizens this meant a greater awareness of a new mechanism to engage in the policymaking process. By producing data themselves, and by having access to data, they were better-placed to hold policymakers accountable for their actions.¹⁵ This was especially valuable in regions with gaps left by their country's statistical services.

While policymakers prior to 2015 understood that data was essential for driving forward and managing their policies, the increase in and access to data allowed by the “digital revolution” engendered a growing appreciation by non-government actors and citizens for data and statistics. This democratization of production and access helped establish clear mechanisms for the use of data in policy, planning, good governance, accountability, and measurement. In addition, it helped recalibrate the relationship between data producers and data users by bringing them closer together. In a shift from their previous role in the periphery of statistical systems, African policymakers began demanding evidence and data that could better-inform their decisions.¹⁶

Despite this flurry of activity, UNDP reported in 2016 on the state of the Africa Data Revolution that “Considerable innovation and experimentation is currently under way within multiple data communities and ecosystems in many African countries. However, for the most part, these are small-scale, pilot, isolated or ad hoc initiatives.”¹⁷ Much more needed to be done to strengthen data ecosystems and government statistical systems to strengthen reporting on progress toward development goals and enable the effective use of new data sources by governments to inform policymaking.

Box 2 The High-Level Conference on Data Revolution was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in March of 2015

The two-day event brought together African policymakers, open data and data governance/privacy advocates, and civil society organizations and resulted in an Africa Data Consensus.

This consensus acknowledging the existing challenges for building an African data ecosystem including a lack of common standards, limited capacity and capabilities, and insufficient funding. In response to these challenges, the Consensus laid out key actions that could be taken to create “an inclusive data ecosystem” specifically highlighting the importance of partnerships “involving government, private sector, academia, civil society, local communities and development partners that tackles the informational aspects of development decision-making in a coordinated way.”

In addition to partnerships the Consensus emphasized the adopting of international norms and standard and the needed investment to strengthen the African ecosystem through increasing the capacity of researchers and supporting the institutions that make up the ecosystem.¹

Investing in and localizing evaluations

As part of this growing focus on data and evidence in 2015, interest in improving and localizing evaluations was rising across the continent. Alongside the need to track progress toward development goals, there was an increasing recognition that some development programs in Africa were not yielding expected results, which led to a greater focus on evaluation and accountability. Evaluation was also seen as an important tool to achieve progress toward the SDGs. The SDGs highlighted the importance of using data to identify gaps and track progress in areas such as poverty reduction, health, education, and environmental sustainability, driving more

¹⁵World Bank. 2021. “World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives,” March. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1600-0>.

¹⁶ Kiregyera, Ben. *The emerging data revolution in Africa: Strengthening the statistics, policy and decision-making chain*. African Sun Media, 2015.

¹⁷ UNDP (2016). *The Africa Data Revolution Report 2016*. Available from <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/africa-data-revolution-report-2016>

investment into monitoring and evaluation. Through these increased investments, donors and governments were better able to link action to impact by moving away from monitoring inputs and process indicators to making use of newer assessment methodologies that could correlate the inputs with the outputs and the impact.¹⁸

In 2015, many evaluations were already being conducted on donor programs, government programs and public policies in Africa. Many African governments had existing planning, monitoring and evaluation departments or systems. The African Evaluation Association, and the African Evaluation Journal were active and growing at the time, and in 2017 an African Evaluation Database was established with over 9000 entries from 20 African countries. However, most evaluations were still commissioned by large donor agencies. Evaluation methodologies were thus rooted in international development and standards set by Western organizations, even as the pool of African evaluation professionals was growing, and those professionals were conducting many evaluations. There was a push in 2015 to address this challenge by localizing evaluation methodologies, promoting more equal partnerships between global and regional evidence producers, and continuing to invest in training and capacity building for African researchers and research institutions.¹⁹

Diversifying forms of evidence

Randomized control trials (RCTs) have for a long period of time, been seen as the “gold standard” in development economics for establishing causal relationships.²⁰ While RCTs have been a popular method for impact evaluation for many years, in 2015 there was an emerging shift towards using other types of evidence and methods, including quasi-experimental designs and mixed methods approaches. The international development community began to engage with critiques of RCTs in the context of social sciences,²¹ and to question whether the time, money, and resources put towards RCTs produced data that could substantively respond to the questions of policymakers, given their specific policy contexts.

Building the Capacity of African Institutions

In June 2014, the African Union came together for their 23rd Ordinary Session and the African Heads of State requested ECA, AfDB, UNDP, and AUC to join in organizing a conference on the data revolution taking place in Africa and its implications for the post-2015 development agenda and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.²² In response to the call for data “for Africa, by Africa” efforts were made to diversify those producing evidence by increasing capacity of African researchers and research institutions through funding and training. The Carnegie Corporation was funding research fellowships, universities and research networks across the continent to improve and localize research capacity.²³ And the Wellcome Trust was funding the African Institutions Initiative to foster locally relevant health research agendas and local research capacity in Africa.²⁴

Across East and West Africa, African institutions have long been producing evidence and engaging in capacity building efforts. The supply of data was strengthened through the establishment of partnerships between global and regional evidence producers and the investment in increasing the number of and capacity of African researchers, think tanks, and evidence ecosystem actors. The SDG requirements called on states to deliver high quality, timely, and internationally comparable data in sectors where these types of data did not exist or in situations where the states’ statistical services were incapable of producing such data.²⁵ In areas where it did exist, governments across the world often struggled to build the capacity, access, and technological

¹⁸ OECD. *Development Co-operation Report 2015 Making Partnerships Effective Coalitions for Action*. OECD, 2015.

¹⁹ Blaser Mapitsa, Caitlin & Morkel, Candice & Pophiwa, Nedson & Tirivanhu, Precious & Ramasobana, Mokgophana & Khumalo, Linda. (2020). *Evaluation Landscape in Africa -Context, Methods and Capacity*. 10.18820/9781928480198.

²⁰ van der Meulen Rodgers, Yana, Anthony Bebbington, Catherine Boone, Jampel Dell'Angelo, Jean-Philippe Platteau, and Arun Agrawal. "Experimental approaches in development and poverty alleviation." *World development* 127 (2020): 104807.

²¹ Deaton, Angus, and Nancy Cartwright. "Understanding and misunderstanding randomized controlled trials." *Social science & medicine* 210 (2018): 2-21.; Ioannidis, John PA. "Randomized controlled trials: Often flawed, mostly useless, clearly indispensable: A commentary on Deaton and Cartwright." *Social science & medicine* (1982) 210 (2018): 53-56.; Young, Alwyn. "Channeling fisher: Randomization tests and the statistical insignificance of seemingly significant experimental results." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134, no. 2 (2019): 557-598.

²² High Level Conference on the Data Revolution. 2015. "Final Version Adopted by the High Level Conference on Data Revolution -A Side Event of the 8 Th AU-ECA Conference of Ministers." <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Africa-Data-Consensus.pdf>.

²³ Madhani, Naureen. "Investments in Higher Education and Research in Africa 2010–2019." (2021).

²⁴ RAND Corporation. "Evaluating the Wellcome Trust's African Institutions Initiative." RAND Corporation. Accessed March 14, 2023. <https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/african-institutions-eval.html>.

²⁵ Kiregyera, Ben. "Securing the future of statistics in Africa through National Strategies for the Development of Statistic." *Statistical Journal of the IAOS* 36, no. S1 (2020): 15-25.

infrastructure to make use of the data. Inefficient statistical systems and services hindered the use of data within the policy process leaving policymakers with data that was not relevant to the issues.

In 2015, some Africa-based research institutions and organizations were already engaging with governments and conducting EIP activities. Much of this work was relatively new in 2015. At the same time, much of the research community in Africa remained disconnected from government and focused on evidence production, while not producing evidence in formats conducive to inform policy decision-making. This disconnect was driven by factors including incentives to publish in academic journals to secure funding, distrust in some countries between governments and non-governmental organizations, and limited focus on EIP-specific training for African students and research professionals.

At the time, while there was some uptake of technology within national statistical systems in 2015, it remained slow and many of the satellite national statistical offices (NSO), particularly in rural areas, still relied on the usage of power-based survey forms and hard copy data storage. African NSOs to begin moving towards leveraging new technologies, like geospatial technology, which allowed for more affective data collection in areas of agriculture, urban planning, and forestry.²⁶ The investments into Southern Think Tanks made by the Hewlett Foundation's Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and the African Capacity Building Foundation helped further strengthen the capacity of think tanks to serve as resources with the nuanced local knowledge to produce context and policy-specific evidence along with the networks to put that evidence to work.²⁷ This also provided an entry point for these actors to begin engaging in the production of evidence as an alternative to the inefficient government statistical systems and services.

Collaboration between governments and other EIP ecosystem actors

Along with efforts to improve research capacity on the continent, funders and other actors began to consider the gap between the research community and policymakers that was preventing the use of data and evidence in the policymaking process. In 2015, several funders, including the BMGF, FCDO, and the Hewlett Foundation were supporting the intermediation of data and evidence between research institutes and governments. This included the 5-year FCDO funded Development Research Uptake in Sub-Saharan Africa (DRUSSA) that created research uptake capacity in 24 universities. DRUSSA aimed to enhance the capacity of universities in engaging with their stakeholders by introducing Research Uptake Management (RUM), a new specialized university management field. The goal was for universities to fulfill their role as primary producers of knowledge and key intermediaries. The DRUSSA program emphasized that research intended only for academic audiences has limited impact. To address this, the program introduced Research Uptake Management (RUM) systems and skills to assist Sub-Saharan African universities in consistently contributing to local pro-poor development programs and making research evidence available, accessible, and useful not only within and between institutions, but also amongst other stakeholders.²⁸

In Sub-Saharan Africa around 2015, bilateral and multilateral donors were increasingly focused on accountability for development funding, leading to more investment in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and placing pressure on partner governments to demonstrate results. For example, USAID and the FCDO both made significant investments in M&E in the region, with USAID launching its Evaluation Policy in 2011 and FCDO establishing its Independent Commission for Aid Impact in 2011 as well.²⁹ Additionally, the World Bank's focus on results-based management in its lending and grant-making activities also contributed to the emphasis on M&E in the region. This increased focus on evidence-based decision making placed greater pressure on partner governments to provide reliable and accurate data on development outcomes and to demonstrate the impact of funding on poverty reduction and other development indicators. The demand for data and evidence also

²⁶Ntwalha, Wilbrod. 2015. "Improving African National Statistical Systems Will Change Lives." Development Initiatives. November 15, 2015. Devex. "Improving African National Statistical Systems Will Change Lives." Devex, 11 Mar. 2022, <https://www.devex.com/news/improving-african-national-statistical-systems-will-change-lives-99925..>

The African Capacity Building Foundation. "25 Years of Capacity Development Impact." The African Capacity Building Foundation, 2021, <https://www.acbf-pact.org/sites/default/files/25%20Years%20of%20Capacity%20Development%20Impact.pdf>.

²⁷ William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. "Hewlett and Partners Pledge \$30 Million to Strengthen African Think Tanks." Hewlett Foundation, July 1, 2009. <https://hewlett.org/newsroom/hewlett-and-partners-pledge-30-million-to-strengthen-african-think-tanks/>.

²⁸ FCDO. "Development Research Uptake in Sub Saharan Africa (DRUSSA)." DevTracker Programme GB-1-202004 Documents. UK - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Accessed March 14, 2023. <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-202004/documents>.

²⁹ USAID. "Evaluation Policy: Strategy and Policy." U.S. Agency for International Development, October 1, 2020. <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/evaluation>. ; FCDO. "Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) Review: Terms of Reference." Policy paper ICAI review: terms of reference. GOV.UK, October 28, 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-commission-for-aid-impact-icai-review-terms-of-reference>.

highlighted the need for greater capacity building in M&E within partner governments to ensure that they had the necessary tools and resources to meet the increasing demands for data and evidence.

In 2015, "think do tanks" were growing in reach and influence, providing data-for-decision making services aimed at policymakers and development practitioners in Sub-Saharan Africa. These organizations were focused on conducting rigorous evaluations and research studies to generate high-quality data that could be used to inform policy decisions and improve development programs. These organizations were seen as playing a critical role in bridging the gap between research and policy by providing policymakers with access to high-quality data and evidence to inform their decisions.

Despite this emerging intermediation work, in 2015 most governments in East and West Africa relied largely on their own data to inform development planning and policymaking. This included national statistics offices, government research departments, and public think tanks, along with global data sets and data from donor partners. As of 2015, some African countries including South Africa, Benin, Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya had established national planning, monitoring, and evaluation policies and systems to inform and assess the effectiveness of public policies. However, even in the most advanced countries, most public research institutions and departments were underfunded and lacked capacity, which limited the effective use of data and evidence to inform policymaking. And in many African countries, even basic population data was not readily available. In 2015, nearly half of Africans lived in countries that hadn't conducted a census since 2009, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the last census had taken place in 1984.³¹ According to a survey conducted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) published in 2017, 46% of the 54 countries surveyed had "no legal provision for the transmission of data from civil registration offices to a government agency entrusted with compiling national vital statistics."³⁰ This lack of accurate, basic data made it difficult for governments and international organizations to develop effective policies and allocate resources to address the needs of their populations.

Enabling Environment and Data Governance

Funding, networks and enthusiasm for data and evidence in 2015 created a relatively strong enabling environment for EIP. Enthusiasm for the SDGs and the data revolution brought with it funding and networking opportunities to support the growth of data for development. Many actors including funders, civil society organizations, governments and research institutions were galvanized toward similar goals by this increased focus on data and evidence to improve development and public policy outcomes. Development agencies were investing in monitoring and evaluation and several large private foundations and bilateral donors were investing in EIP, as noted above.

However, there was also an emerging recognition that stronger data governance regulations were needed to ensure the responsible and safe use of data by governments and others. Unfortunately, legal frameworks in many African countries were struggling to keep up with this rapid technological advancement. However, in 2014, during the Africa Malabo Convention, the African Union recognized the critical importance of improving data collection, analysis, and sharing to enhance decision-making and policy formulation. As a result, the African Data Consensus was developed and adopted in 2015. This consensus called for the creation of a data usage culture, the improvement of data infrastructure, and the strengthening of legal and regulatory frameworks for data governance.³¹ However, very few countries were implementing these frameworks and most legislation was not adequately adapted to address innovative new data sources.³²

The implementation and enforcement of data protection laws in East and West Africa have encountered significant challenges due to capacity issues and the absence of clear, comprehensive data protection laws and regulations in many countries in these regions. In some instances, data protection laws existed, but they were either outdated or inadequate in addressing modern data privacy concerns. This state of data governance has significant implications for both businesses and individuals operating in these markets. For example,

³⁰ United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. 2017. "Report on the Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa: Outcome of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems Monitoring Framework." Addis Ababa: UN. ECA. <https://hdl.handle.net/10855/24047>.

³¹ High Level Conference on the Data Revolution. 2015. "Final Version Adopted by the High Level Conference on Data Revolution -A Side Event of the 8 Th AU-ECA Conference of Ministers." <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Africa-Data-Consensus.pdf>.

³² The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2021). Bridging the Data Policy Gap in Africa: Working Paper. April 2021. Available here: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf

multinational companies operating in the region faced challenges in complying with disparate data protection laws across countries, with the lack of harmonization posing potential legal risks.³³ Furthermore, individuals often had limited knowledge and control over their personal data. One stakeholder described the atmosphere as one of "data optimism" due to the increasing number of African individuals using smartphones, computers, and the internet for the first time. They were optimistic about the benefits of technology and less concerned about how data produced by individuals might be used by others.³⁴

³³ Kshetri, Nir. *Cybercrime and cybersecurity in the global south*. Springer, 2013.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

IV. EIP TODAY

Progress and trends

EIP TODAY

In 2023, the EIP ecosystem globally and in East and West Africa reflects the progress made in the past decade, which can be tracked through four main trends. **First, many Africa-based research institutions are stronger in terms of capacity and influence** due to a broad localization trend in international development, the growth and support of regional EIP-related networks, investment in training for African researchers, economists and leaders, and partnerships between global and African EIP actors. **Second, EIP stakeholders are shifting from focusing on producing evidence to a much broader recognition of the need for intermediation** to improve uptake by policymakers of many different types of data and evidence. This trend includes a move toward providing a menu of data and evidence to address specific policy needs, including innovative new data sources. **Third, while uptake remains a priority there is a growing focus on the responsible use of data through improved data governance.** The emerging trend in data governance involves finding the optimal balance between harnessing data effectively and protecting data privacy and individual rights, emphasizing the importance of responsible data practices and advocacy. **And fourth, policymaker demand for and use of data and evidence has increased and become more sophisticated** in some government agencies in East and West Africa, driven by government champions, civil society advocacy and donor pressure that have shifted incentives toward evidence use, global crises that have led to data infrastructure investments, and the work of EIP institutions that have begun to establish a culture of evidence use through relationship building.

This section discusses the drivers and actors involved in each of these overarching trends that are advancing progress in the broad EIP ecosystem. Barriers to progress, and implications for EIP going forward are then discussed in the following sections.

Progress Trend 1: African EIP Institutions are getting stronger

Over the last eight years, many Africa-based research institutions have grown stronger in terms of capacity and influence due to a broad localization trend in international development, the related growth and support of regional EIP networks, partnerships between global and African EIP actors, and investment in training for African researchers, economists and leaders.

Localization

A major change is taking place in international development to shift implementation, fund management and decision-making power to organizations based in developing countries. This move toward localization, sometimes called "decolonizing aid" has led influential bilateral and multilateral donors, private foundations, and

"The most significant opportunity for Southern and Southern-led institutions like [ours] in the decolonizing of global aid and the localization agenda. We are increasingly seen as a promising African institution that can contribute strategically to optimizing EIDM in the public sector and help build the capacity of local organizations working in the EIDM ecosystem."

– Grantee (Across Africa)

large international NGOs to invest in supporting locally based organizations so that they can allocate funding and implement development programming directly in partner countries and regions, recognizing that their partner countries' local expertise and contextual knowledge can greatly improve the effectiveness and ownership of development programs.

This push has led to more funding for organizations based in Africa to build capacity through financial support, to implement and improve their financial management systems to manage increased funding, and more partnerships between global and local practitioners to elevate the local organizations' work and share resources. This trend that is taking place with the research and data for development communities cuts across all social sectors.

Localization has contributed to significant institutional growth and influence for a variety of EIP institutions in Africa. In 2021, USAID launched the Bringing Research to Impact for Development, Global Engagement, and Utilization (BRIDGE-U) program. The BRIDGE-U program builds on USAID's broader shift towards localization of grantmaking activities in developing countries, which seeks to empower local institutions and actors to take

ownership of development initiatives and drive sustainable development outcomes.³⁵ The program aims to foster long-term partnerships between African and US institutions, with the goal of creating a network of higher education institutions that can collaborate and leverage their resources and expertise to address development challenges on the continent. As one large EIP think “do” tank operating across Africa noted: “We have seen and support a shift towards investing more in locally-based actors, including academics, universities, think tanks, policymakers, and more to be the ones driving the research agenda on the continent, which maps to the field’s broader focus on supporting a localization.”

EIP institutions in Africa confirm this experience. One stakeholder from a university in East Africa described how localization is working in practice: “We have worked with researchers in the Global North in a way where we can set the agenda in Africa... We collaborate in areas where we lack expertise, but we have African-led research initiatives.”

The move toward localization of research agendas and methodologies is improving their relevance and impact. One representative from a large international development agency noted, “For evaluations to be impactful in terms of policymaking at the host country level, you need local stakeholders that find the evaluation questions important. You need buy-in into the methodology as well, ensuring close coordination with local actors and opportunities for them to exercise their viewpoints.”

However, in many ways the shift toward meaningful localization in African knowledge systems is still in its infancy. Many stakeholders noted challenges related to limited capacity of local talent amongst research institutions based in Africa. Another challenge facing localization is the marginalization of African methodologies and tools, leading to a loss of valuable knowledge and skills. Western tools, research methodologies, and systems are often seen as more accurate and reliable, so they are often preferred during evidence production and usage. Meanwhile, African systems, research methodologies, and tools have often evolved over generations and are based on indigenous knowledge, culture, and history. They are deeply embedded in local communities and often involve community participation and ownership. There is also much more that can be done to localize evidence down to sub-national levels, which is challenging due to widespread human resources, technical capacity and infrastructure constraints across the continent. Despite the impressive strides in recent years, these challenges continue to constrain African EIP institutions leaving them to lag behind similar institutions in the Global North in terms of size, funding, and infrastructure.

Education and Training

Despite continued capacity challenges noted by many stakeholders when discussing the shift toward localization in Africa, much progress has and is being made to educate and train students and professionals in practice areas relevant to EIP in many African countries.

Regional institutions are investing in training African students as economists, researchers, statisticians, and institutional leaders. This is a long-term process, but significant progress has been made. As noted by a stakeholder from one program supporting students in Africa: “Through our help, several African students were able to apply to and accept international graduate program offers. Furthermore, we are overall raising awareness to the issue and are seeing a shift in the acknowledgement of the problem from other organizations. The process of strengthening the pipeline for African students into the economics profession is a lengthy goal to which we are contributing one step at a time.”

Advances in research capacity also vary significantly by country and region in Africa. According to research published in 2018, within Africa, South Africa had the highest capacity of African researchers producing impact evaluations; followed by East Africa where Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia led the way in regional publications and had institutes that provided training opportunities for impact evaluations. West Africa had fewer authors than East Africa, with capacity concentrated in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Côte d’Ivoire.³⁶ The lower number of impact evaluations out of Francophone West Africa can be attributed to

³⁵ “Bridge-U.” USAID Innovation, Technology, and Research, n.d. <https://www.usaid.gov/innovation-technology-research/research/bridge-u>.

³⁶ Goldman, Ian, Albert Byamugisha, Abdoulaye Gounou, Laila R. Smith, Stanley Ntakumba, Timothy Lubanga, Damase Sossou, and Karen Rot-Munstermann. “The emergence of government evaluation systems in Africa: The case of Benin, Uganda and South Africa.” *African Evaluation Journal* 6, no. 1 (2018): 1-11; Altshuler, Norma, and Sarah Staats. 2019. “A New Look at Impact Evaluation Capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.” <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/A-New-Look-at-Impact-Evaluation-Capacity-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>; Trends in evidence synthesis publishing across disciplines in Africa: A bibliometric study

the language divide: “particularly the access of French-speaking impact evaluation practitioners to funding opportunities.”³⁷

There is a broad recognition in the research community that African-led research has a number of benefits for EIP, including greater data relevance, reflection of local needs, and in turn greater uptake with policymakers because African researchers have the established relationships with policymakers and the cultural and political context that can help them communicate their results in a more relevant and accessible manner.³⁸ Africa - educated experts can help government officials understand and interpret complex data, identify trends and patterns, and use evidence to inform policy decisions.

While still relatively new, institutions have developed curriculums in organizational leadership in response to a growing recognition that part of the success of EIP institutions comes from African students having more than just an academic training. They need strong leaders experienced in organizational development and management, and they need staff who can engage with both funders and governments to drive institutional sustainability and evidence uptake. Once they are educated and trained, graduating researchers and leaders must then find their way into strong local and regional EIP institutions and government research departments to conduct work relevant to EIP. Much more could be done on these fronts, to connect progress made on training academic researchers, policy intermediators, and organizational leaders, to progress made on EIP.

Networks

The growth of regional networks has also supported the growth of EIP talent and EIP institutional maturity in several ways. Networks play a crucial role in supporting knowledge ecosystems by facilitating communication and collaboration and bringing together the right combination of stakeholders to address a problem. They can help researchers by enhancing their credibility and bridge the gap between research and policy by facilitating the translation of research findings into policy-relevant language and recommendations.³⁹

In the last few decades, several organizations, including the Campbell Collaboration and Cochrane Collaboration, have emerged to support the production of evidence across sectors. These organizations have recently focused on launching Africa specific organizations which provide both regional partners and the field broadly with a menu of global public goods: data systems that can be customized to local needs, data sets, methodologies for conducting evaluations, capacity building support, networks, and platforms to drive uptake.

Data networks have played a vital role in supporting EIP globally and within Africa. These networks have brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, CSOs, and data practitioners, to improve the quality, availability, and use of data for decision-making. In Africa, these data networks have helped to strengthen national statistical systems, build capacity in data collection and analysis, support the development of evidence-based policies and programs. Globally, these data networks have advocated for increased investment in data collection and analysis, supported the development of international data standards, and promoted data sharing and collaboration across different sectors and regions has served to bolster both the global and local EIP ecosystems.

Other growing networks have driven a wide range of knowledge exchange and peer south-south learning across African countries that is valued by EIP stakeholders.

Sector-specific networks, such as the African Health Economics and Policy Association (AfHEA), also aim to promote the use of evidence in policymaking and practice. AfHEA provides training, resources, and

³⁷ Erasmus, Yvonne, Sunet Jordaan, and Ruth Stewart. "Scoping the impact evaluation capacity in sub-Saharan Africa." *African Evaluation Journal* 8, no. 1 (2020): 11.; Altshuler, Norma, and Sarah Staats. 2019. "A New Look at Impact Evaluation Capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa." <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/A-New-Look-at-Impact-Evaluation-Capacity-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>.; Trends in evidence synthesis publishing across disciplines in Africa: A bibliometric study

³⁸Sam-Agudu, Nadia A., Elijah Paintsil, Muktar H. Aliyu, Awewura Kwara, Folasade Ogunisola, Yaw A. Afrane, Chima Onoka et al. "Building sustainable local capacity for global health research in West Africa." *Annals of global health* 82, no. 6 (2016): 1010-1025.; Kok;Maarten Olivier, John Owusu Gyapong, Ivan Wolffers, David Ofori-Adjei, and Joost Ruitenber. "Which health research gets used and why? An empirical analysis of 30 cases." *Health research policy and systems* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1-18.;Kasprowicz, Victoria O., Denis Chopera, Kim Darley Waddilove, Mark A. Brockman, Jill Gilmour, Eric Hunter, William Kilembe et al. "African-led health research and capacity building-is it working?." *BMC Public Health* 20 (2020): 1-10.

³⁹ Ranchod, Rushil, and Christopher Vas. "Policy networks revisited: Creating a researcher-policy maker community." *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice* 15, no. 1 (2019): 31-47.

mentorship to policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, and facilitates the sharing of knowledge and best practices across the region.⁴⁰

Many stakeholders interviewed noted that while these networks have supported the growth of EIP institutions, they have largely done so in siloes. And many EIP practitioners reported that they continue to lack connections to other actors in the space, especially actors from other sectors. Given the interdisciplinary nature of EIP, this is a barrier to further growth and innovation in the space.

Partnerships

“Partnering with organizations in the regions/countries we work in has proved effective as they naturally design tools and methods and conduct analysis with a stronger lens of adoption, uptake, and use of the end user given their deeper and more nuanced understanding of the local contexts.”

– Grantee, Think Do Tank (Global)

Increasing partnerships between research institutions based in the Global North and those based in Africa has also led to symbiotic knowledge exchange, technical capacity building, and increasing influence and leadership by African institutions. These partnerships have further demonstrated the value of working with local institutions that are better-placed to contextualized research methodologies and content to the local framework, and build relationships with governments that drive the uptake of research by policymakers.

In the research community, capacity building and partnerships can take various forms, including connecting African researchers to global forums and supporting them to publish in

international journals. By doing so, their profiles are raised, voices amplified, and they become connected to international debates. To support this, in 2018, FCDO launched the Strengthening Research Institutions in Africa program, aimed at enhancing the research capabilities of African institutions to address development challenges on the continent.⁴¹ The program provides grants, technical assistance, and capacity building to support sustainable research programs and partnerships with institutions in Africa and beyond. Such programs have led to a significant growth in the publications of meta-analyses, systematic reviews, RCTs, and impact evaluations, particularly in non-health related sectors. While most of these publications are produced by authors in the Global North, the number of publications from authors in the Global South is slowly increasing.⁴²

Partnerships between Global North and African research institutions are not without challenges. Feedback from Hewlett grantees indicated for example that one challenge is striking the right balance between African and non-African norms. Strong partnerships make it easier to contend with these choices, considering norms and preferences on both sides.

Progress Trend 2: Increased focus on data intermediation and working more closely with governments

Over the last decade, EIP ecosystem actors have shifted from a focus on producing evidence, to include a much broader recognition of the need for intermediation to improve uptake by policymakers. Research institutions are doing more by building relationships and investing in human resources with political acumen, aligning research agendas to national policy priorities, and establishing help desks and dialogue platforms.

“One critical lesson is that it is challenging to identify staff who are well grounded in research and very interested in promoting evidence uptake.”

– Grantee (Across Africa)

⁴⁰ Ceder Ecowas. n.d. “What We Do | West African Health Organization.” www.wahooas.org. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.wahooas.org/web-ooas/en/what-we-do>.

⁴¹ “GB-GOV-1-300781.” DevTracker, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, accessed March 17, 2023. <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300781/summary>.

⁴² Fontelo, Paul, and Fang Liu. “A review of recent publication trends from top publishing countries.” *Systematic reviews* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1-9.; Fontelo, Paul, and Fang Liu. “A review of recent publication trends from top publishing countries.” *Systematic reviews* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1-9.; Altshuler, Norma, and Sarah Staats. 2019. “A New Look at Impact Evaluation Capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.” <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/A-New-Look-at-Impact-Evaluation-Capacity-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>

According to one stakeholder who worked on intermediation across Africa, getting a statistician to understand what a policymaker wants is like “trying to get a Martian to talk to someone from Venus,” emphasizing the growing recognition of the importance of working with intermediators who know how to engage with policymakers. “Success with governments is where we can rattle off personalities of the people and what’s on top of their minds-what’s keeping them up at night-what’s stressing them out- we need to be relevant to them.” However, finding the right staff who can both understand research findings and translate them to policy recommendations remains a major challenge, even for institutions that recognize its importance.

“There’s a difference between evidence and data for science and evidence and data for policy. Evidence for policymaking is inherently political. When evidence is produced by those who are seen as “other” by politicians, essentially institutions that are not government entities, politicians are wary. They are thinking who can I trust, who can I have a frank conversation with, and who can explain the relevance of this data to me? Without someone to bridge the gap between politics and evidence production, politicians’ suspicion grows as they are unsure and at times unable to navigate the realm of data and evidence.”

– Network and Associations (Global)

EIP intermediaries in Africa have been successful in establishing dialogue platforms that bring together policymakers with experts from academia, civil society, and the private sector to debate complex policy decisions. Given the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive policymaking, there has been greater use of policymaking models that involve engaging a range of stakeholders in the process, including civil society organizations, community groups, and marginalized populations. Intermediaries are key to facilitating these engagements by making evidence more accessible, relevant, and actionable.

“Embedding technical staff into ministries and government offices allows for a constant open line of communication between the producers and the users. It creates buy-in from both parties in the evidence-informed policymaking process. This buy-in and communication are what create an effective partnership that results in the transformation of policymakers into evidence champions even after the partnership ends.”

– Government Research Institute (East Africa)

Additionally, some EIP institutions are using successful embedded staffing models to engage more closely with governments over many years and drive a culture of evidence use in governments: technical staff embedded in government offices work closely with other stakeholders, such as researchers and civil society organizations, to gather and analyze data, and ensure that evidence is used in a transparent and inclusive manner. This approach helps build trust and buy-in for evidence-informed policymaking among government officials, as well as other stakeholders.⁴³

The embedded staffing model for increasing the use of evidence in policymaking in Africa is most productive when there is a clear commitment from the government, strong partnerships between stakeholders, an enabling policy environment, and a recognition of the importance of local knowledge and expertise.⁴⁴

For example, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) uses an embedded staff model to support evidence-informed policymaking in African governments. AGRA's technical staff, who are experts in fields such as agronomy, economics, and statistics, work directly with government officials to build their capacity to collect, analyze, and use data in policymaking. Through this approach, AGRA aims to promote a culture of evidence-based decision-making in African governments. By embedding technical staff in government, AGRA can provide tailored support to meet the specific needs and priorities of each country, ensuring that data is used in a way that is relevant and useful for policymakers. AGRA's embedded staff model also helps to build trust and collaboration between different stakeholders in the policy process.⁴⁵

⁴³ Wye, Lesley, Helen Cramer, Jude Carey, Rachel Anthwal, James Rooney, Rebecca Robinson, Kate Beckett, Michelle Farr, Andrée le May, and Helen Baxter. "Knowledge brokers or relationship brokers? The role of an embedded knowledge mobilisation team." *Evidence & Policy* 15, no. 2 (2019): 277-292.

⁴⁴ Uneke, Chigozie Jesse, Issiaka Sombie, Ermel Johnson, and Bilikis Lyabo Uneke. "Lessons learned from strategies for promotion of evidence-to-policy process in health interventions in the ECOWAS region: a rapid review." *Nigerian Medical Journal: Journal of the Nigeria Medical Association* 61, no. 5 (2020): 227.; Verboom, Ben, Paul Montgomery, and Sara Bennett. "What factors affect evidence-informed policymaking in public health? Protocol for a systematic review of qualitative evidence using thematic synthesis." *Systematic reviews* 5 (2016): 1-9.

⁴⁵ AGRA, "AGRA's Approach to Agricultural Transformation," accessed February 28, 2023, <https://agra.org/policy-engagement-and-building-state-capacity-for-delivery/>

Some suppliers of innovative new data sources (GIS, drones, AI, etc.) are also working closely with governments to build technical capacity and are demonstrating the value and relevance of their data to address policy priorities. As a result, interest in the use of new data sources is increasing amongst some policymakers, often driven and/or funded through non-government actors. For example, the World Bank has been working with many African governments for many years to leverage geospatial data and open data to map national energy sector needs.⁴⁶ The private sector firm, FRAYM works with governments and international development agencies in East and Southern Africa to apply geospatial mapping data to energy as well as other sectors including healthcare and agriculture.⁴⁷ The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank have worked with FRAYM on a number of geo-mapping for development projects, including projects conducted directly with African governments to guide national development programs. AfDB also partners with technology companies that provide crowd sourced and mobile data to inform development projects in partnership with local and national governments. In agriculture, many policymakers and businesses are increasingly looking to drone data and remote sensing to understand productivity and sector needs.

Some of this work is being driven by an increase in public-private partnerships (PPPs) that enable governments to access new forms of privately-held data (such as MNO data) for development. PPPs are also being used to employ digital data systems and innovative data collection techniques that enable less expensive, real-time data access to better-inform decision making. Beyond their support in data production, PPPs are mobilizing investments to strengthen information and communication technologies infrastructure, which is enabling less expensive and more timely production and use of data.⁴⁸

Progress Trend 3: Balancing the data revolution with adequate data governance

Beyond the focus on intermediation to drive uptake of data, there is a growing focus on the responsible use of data and unlocking the potential of the digital economy through improved data governance. This trend is being driven in response to the exponential growth over the last decade in Africa of both the digital economy and the data revolution. CSOs have played a critical role in shaping data governance practices around the globe particularly through their advocacy for the development of data protections laws that regulate the collection, use, and sharing of personal data. Many large bilateral donors, multilateral development agencies, private foundations and large INGOs are increasingly investing in data governance, data privacy and the regulation of the digital economy. These investments are made in the form of capacity building, technical assistance, and funding to bolster civil society and the government agencies' legal and technical expertise. Investments are also made into networks and partnerships to develop and implement data governance and privacy initiatives. The investments being made into data governance are made globally and locally and are wide ranging encompassing a broad range of issues related to the collection, management, and use of data. This trend presents opportunities to leverage these growing resources to drive responsible progress in digital data production and data use by governments for EIP.

African governments understand the value of the digital economy and in many countries, government officials are keen to gain knowledge and expert advice on issues relating to the digital economy and digital rights (e.g., digital identification, fintech regulation, digital taxation, and best-practice data governance therein). Cross-border gatherings bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to collaborate and coordinate are vital for the development of common standards and best practices for data governance. These gatherings are "underdeveloped compared to those in other fields where cross-border spillovers are more pronounced, including finance and health."⁴⁹ However, as the importance of data governance grows, greater efforts have been taken to come together on data governance.

⁴⁶ Arderne, Christopher James, Naichen Zhao, and Yann Tanvez. 2017. "Mapping Africa's Energy Infrastructure: Open Data Lights the Way." [Blogs.worldbank.org](https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/mapping-africa-s-energy-infrastructure-open-data-lights-way). May 18, 2017. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/mapping-africa-s-energy-infrastructure-open-data-lights-way>.

⁴⁷ Fraym. n.d. "Fraym | Mapping Humanity." Fraym. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://fraym.io/>.

⁴⁸ Kitege, Seleman Yusuph. 2021. "Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Africa's Reliable Driving Force for Industrialisation | AUDA-NEPAD." [Www.nepad.org](https://www.nepad.org/news/public-private-partnerships-ppps-africas-reliable-driving-force-industrialisation). April 29, 2021. <https://www.nepad.org/news/public-private-partnerships-ppps-africas-reliable-driving-force-industrialisation>; African Development Bank Group. 2016. "Towards Private Sector Led Growth: Lessons of Experience Independent Development Evaluation African Development Bank." https://idev.afdb.org/sites/default/files/Evaluations/2020-03/IDEV%20PSD%20Report_Executive%20Summary_WEB.PDF.

⁴⁹ Moore, C., and G. Steen. "Governing Data for Development: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities." 2020. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/governing-data-development-trends-challenges-and-opportunities.pdf>.

Recognizing the potential of the digital economy and, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Africa's economies, African leaders came together with the World Bank to create the Digital Economy Country Assessment for the World Bank Group launch of the Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A) initiative in 2020.⁵⁰ The initiative aims to accelerate the development of digital technologies and infrastructure in Africa to promote economic growth, create jobs, and improve access to services such as healthcare, education, and financial services. The initiative aims to facilitate the digital economy by creating an enabling environment for digital business and by promoting the development of digital regulations and policies. It further seeks to support the development of data platforms and data-driven decision-making, to help governments, businesses, and other organizations to use data to inform policy and investment decisions.⁵¹ The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a free trade area agreement among African Union (AU) member states, serves as another example of stakeholders recognizing the importance of data governance for promoting regional economic integration and growth. It was established on May 30, 2019, with the goal of creating a single market for goods and services across the African continent. One of the key objectives of the AfCFTA is to establish a digital economy that can support the free flow of goods, services, and data across the continent.⁵² To achieve this, the AfCFTA is investing in various initiatives aimed at strengthening data governance and digital infrastructure across the continent. This includes the development of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System to facilitate secure and efficient cross-border payments and settlements.⁵³

In efforts to regulate the digital economy, African governments are building on earlier progress to develop and implement laws and regulations to govern data protection, e-commerce, and online platforms. These regulations aim to ensure the protection of consumers and to create a conducive environment for the growth of the digital economy.⁵⁴ Introduction of the African Union Data Policy Framework and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa is also driving national-level conversations and enactment of data privacy laws and other data regulations in many countries.

It is worth noting that the laws in place in Africa are not always enforced and some are still not implemented due to low capacity, a lack of funding, or politics, so the level of data protection in practice varies greatly across the continent.⁵⁵ Many African countries also do not yet have data protection laws in place. This includes countries such as Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan. Some countries have drafted laws that have not been passed yet.

The data governance approach in Africa has been influenced by laws and frameworks in other regions, which have provided inspiration and benchmarking, facilitated international cooperation, and promoted adoption of best practices, thereby raising awareness. However, balancing data governance with the potential benefits of data is complex, especially in the African context. More forums are needed to facilitate examination of available models and approaches, and development of regulations suited to local circumstances, priorities, and needs that can facilitate data use and adequately protect citizen data and privacy rights.

This balance has been a challenge for example in South Africa, where the South African Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) was heavily influenced by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).⁵⁶ Small businesses and startups in South Africa have found it challenging to comply with POPIA's strict regulations, leading to a burden

"I think while some policymakers do care about protecting citizens' rights, the development and enactment of the DPA [Kenya Data Protection Act, 2019] was in part due to wanting to align the state's position with the region given the AU frame and the global emphasis to do so. There's been a real asymmetry between what was legislated and putting it into practice. It's the case because data governance in Kenya is so top-down leaving little space for citizen input."
– Grantee, University Research Institute (East Africa)

⁵⁰ World Bank. n.d. "Digital Economy for Africa Initiative." World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/all-africa-digital-transformation>.

⁵¹ Pazarbasioglu, Ceyla, Jose Luis Irigoyen, and Atul Mehta. 2018. "African Leaders Committed to Building a Digital Economy." World Bank Blogs. May 30, 2018. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/african-leaders-committed-to-building-digital-economy>.

⁵² African Union - African Continental Free Trade Area. "About." African Union - African Continental Free Trade Area. Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://au-afcfta.org/about/>.

⁵³ Pan African Paper Mills (East Africa) Ltd. "About Us." Pan African Paper Mills (East Africa) Ltd. Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://papss.com/about-us/>.

⁵⁴ Devermont, Judd, and Marielle Harris. 2021. "Digital Africa: Leveling up through Governance and Trade." Wwww.csis.org. June 9, 2021.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/digital-africa-leveling-through-governance-and-trade>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Babalola, Olumide. "Data Protection Legal Regime and Data Governance in Africa: An Overview." (2022).; Greenleaf, Graham, and Bertil Cottier. "International and regional commitments in African data privacy laws: A comparative analysis." Computer Law & Security Review 44 (2022): 105638.

on the economy.⁵⁷ Additionally, some experts have argued that the focus on personal data protection in POPIA does not adequately address the challenges unique to the African context, such as the need to promote access to information and stimulate economic development.⁵⁸

The issue of copying data governance laws from other countries, particularly China, is a matter of concern for the protection of citizens' data and privacy rights in Africa. China has a complex and evolving set of data governance laws, including the Cybersecurity Law and Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL), designed to protect personal data and to ensure that companies operating in China comply with certain data security requirements. Some African countries have looked to China's data governance model as a potential source of inspiration for their own laws. For example, Zimbabwe's government has reportedly been working with Chinese experts to develop a new cybersecurity law that would include provisions for the protection of personal data.⁵⁹ China's data governance laws have been criticized for being used to control citizens and monitor their online activities. Zimbabwe's adoption of China's data governance model raises concerns that its new cybersecurity law may prioritize state security over citizens' privacy and data protection.

The extensive influence of data governance regulations from other regions presents the challenge of how to best develop data governance relevant to the context of African countries, and to ensure the needs of citizens and the private sector are accounted for. Wealthy countries, particularly in the Global North, are often the ones shaping the conversation and influencing the creation of global standards. Meanwhile, less wealthy countries are left to adopt these standards without much input or influence on the process, becoming "standard takers."⁶⁰ This dynamic can have significant consequences, as data governance standards can have major implications for economic development, privacy, and security.

African countries have been heavily influenced by GDPR given it requires that personal data can only be transferred to non-EU countries if the European Commission determines that the country provides an adequate level of protection for personal data that is comparable to EU law. This has led to African countries having to adapt similar data protection standards to those of the EU to be deemed adequate, as they seek to maintain their business relationships with European partners—to date, no African countries have been granted "adequate status."⁶¹ The pressure to comply with EU data protection standards has driven African countries to adopt laws and regulations that align with GDPR principles, which has had a positive impact on the protection of personal data for African citizens. However, critics argue that this approach may also reinforce existing power imbalances between the EU and African countries, as the EU's standards are often seen as the default benchmark for global data governance.⁶²

In reaction to the data revolution, there has been increasing focus by international and African civil society on data privacy, protection for individuals, and addressing misinformation online. Large influential INGOs along with a proliferation of local civil society organizations that have long promoted human rights across Africa are now taking up work on data governance. There is a broader trend in the development sector, which recognizes that data can be a valuable resource for improving social and economic outcomes, but also acknowledges that the collection and use of data must be governed by ethical principles that respect the rights and dignity of individuals.

CSOs and the media have also become increasingly influential local actors in many African countries, empowering citizens to call for more data governance and protection. Increasingly, CSOs and media outlets are collaborating to promote data governance and protection in Africa. For example, some CSOs are working with journalists to provide training on data privacy and security best practices, while media outlets are partnering with CSOs to raise awareness about data governance issues through investigative reporting. The media often

⁵⁷ Nel, Russell. "GDPR matchup: South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act." INT'L ASS'N OF PRIVACY PROF'LS (Sep. 5, 2017), <https://iapp.org/news/a/gdpr-matchup-south-africas-protection-of-personal-information-act/>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "China is helping Zimbabwe to build a surveillance state." *The Economist*. December 15, 2022. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2022/12/15/china-is-helping-zimbabwe-to-build-a-surveillance-state>.

⁶⁰ Moss, Todd, and Ingo Pitterle. "Governing Data for Development: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities." Center for Global Development. Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/governing-data-development-trends-challenges-and-opportunities.pdf>.

⁶¹ "Adequacy Decisions." European Commission. Accessed March 17, 2023. https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection/international-dimension-data-protection/adequacy-decisions_en.

⁶² Moss, Todd, and Ingo Pitterle. "Governing Data for Development: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities." Center for Global Development. Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/governing-data-development-trends-challenges-and-opportunities.pdf>.

reports on data breaches, privacy violations, and other data-related issues, and helps to bring these issues to the attention of the public and policymakers.

Interest in data governance is growing in African countries with both democratic and more authoritarian governments. In the latter, efforts are often communicated with more urgency, citing the need to prevent regimes from using data against civilians for surveillance, repression, or censorship. In September 2020, the Zimbabwean government announced plans to establish a Cyber Security and Data Protection Authority (CSDPA) in response to concerns about government surveillance and repression of political opponents.⁶³ The CSDPA was tasked with developing and enforcing policies related to cybersecurity and data protection, as well as monitoring and responding to cyber threats and crimes.⁶⁴ While the move was seen as a positive step towards protecting citizens' personal data and improving Zimbabwe's international image, some critics remain skeptical about the government's intentions and whether the CSDPA will operate independently and effectively. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), an NGO that promotes media freedom and freedom of expression in Southern Africa, expressed their concerns about CSDPA: "with the claw-back approach on regulations governing media, privacy, expression, and access to information in Zimbabwe. It's a typical case of moving one step forward and three backwards."⁶⁵ But even in more democratic countries, concerns are growing about data breaches and the use of personal data for political and commercial gain. During the 2022 Kenyan general election, concerns were raised about potential voter manipulation and electoral fraud.⁶⁶ Some people filed complaints about being registered with political parties without their knowledge or consent, leading experts to speculate that this could be part of a scheme to manipulate voter registration for the upcoming general elections. Others alleged that political parties were inflating their membership numbers. To address these concerns, Immaculate Kassait, the Kenyan Data Commissioner, issued a statement assuring the Kenyan people that her office would resolve all complaints and that she would work to prevent data abuse from impacting the free and fair elections.⁶⁷

Private sector companies are now playing larger roles in elections as many social media platforms are ground zero for political debates and interactions between politicians and their constituents. These organizations are using social media to track public opinion, monitor political and social developments, and gain insights into consumer behavior. In countries with authoritarian regimes, there is a risk of policymakers gaining access to citizens' data and using it for surveillance purposes, as well as potentially restricting citizens' access to social media due to minimal regulation and enforcement in this area. For example, in Uganda, the government shut down access to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter during the 2021 presidential election, citing concerns about the spread of misinformation and election interference.⁶⁸ In recent years, the Sudanese government has frequently shutdown the internet and social media platforms during periods of political unrest and protests. In recent years, the Sudanese government has frequently shutdown the internet and social media platforms during periods of political unrest and protests.⁶⁹ In 2021, the continent was responsible for 53% of social media restrictions which targeted WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.⁷⁰

Policy work to improve data governance and data privacy for citizens across Africa remains inconsistent, with many challenges. Data sharing and harmonization across borders is one of the largest barriers currently to achieving a balance of data governance and responsible data use and maximizing data's economic and developmental value. The African Union has developed the African Common Position on Data Protection, which aims to harmonize data protection laws across the continent and to align them with international standards. But stakeholders report enormous challenges to data sharing in practice. Getting this balance right will have significant consequences for the future of the data revolution in Africa, including the ease with which

⁶³ "Zimbabwe: Data Protection." DataGuidance. Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://www.dataguidance.com/jurisdiction/zimbabwe>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ MISA Zimbabwe. "Analysis of the Data Protection Act." Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe. December 6, 2021. <https://zimbabwe.misa.org/2021/12/06/analysis-of-the-data-protection-act/>.

⁶⁶ The Standard Digital. "Relax, You Can Join and Dump a Political Party from Your Phone." The Standard. January 14, 2021. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/politics/article/2001428829/relax-you-can-join-and-dump-a-political-party-from-your-phone>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Odula, Tom. "Uganda's Museveni Takes Early Lead in Election Results." AP News. January 15, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/bobi-wine-yoweri-museveni-kampala-violence-elections-3380fab539eca08cab1529f776eeb975>.

⁶⁹ Taha, Dalia. "Internet Shutdowns in Sudan: The Story Behind the Numbers and Statistics." Global Voices. June 8, 2020. <https://globalvoices.org/2020/06/08/internet-shutdowns-in-sudan-the-story-behind-the-numbers-and-statistics/>.

⁷⁰ Ovuorie, Tobore. 2022. "Increased Social Media Use Puts African Leaders on Edge | DW | 01.04.2022." DW.COM. January 4, 2022. <https://corporate.dw.com/en/increased-social-media-use-puts-african-leaders-on-edge/a-61303854>.

governments can leverage data to inform policymaking decisions, as well as the amount of personal data that citizens are willing to share with their governments to inform policymaking decisions.

Progress Trend 4: Increased demand for and use of evidence

Policymaker demand for and use of data and evidence has increased and become more sophisticated in some government agencies in East and West Africa. This progress has been driven by government champions, civil society advocacy and donor pressure that have shifted incentives toward evidence use, global crises that have led to data infrastructure investments, and the work of EIP institutions that have begun to establish a culture of evidence use through relationship building.

Citizen advocacy and the media

Citizens and civil society are increasingly drawing on open data sets, generating their own data, and demanding more data and evidence from governments to monitor public service provision and influence policy. Citizens and civil society are engaging in both the act of producing their own data and advocacy through data. Citizen-generated data refers to information collected by individuals through their own devices or sensors, while citizen advocacy generally encompasses all efforts by citizens to influence public policy, regardless of the data source, whether personal or from other sources. This important and growing trend is shifting political incentives toward greater EIP in many African countries.

When asked about what could shift political incentives toward more consistent use of data and evidence by policymakers, many different stakeholders interviewed for this report talked about the essential role of citizen advocacy and the media. Over the last decade, CSO's and citizens across Africa have increased their demand for and use of data to hold policymakers accountable, in turn, challenging corruption, demanding transparency, and identifying gaps in services and implementation that can be acted on. In many African countries, the media also serves as a vocal watchdog, setting the agenda for public discussions on policies, and providing a forum for political expression.

Box 3 In Their Own Words: EIP Stakeholder views on citizen advocacy, the media, and EIP

"What is really changing in EIP is that data is for citizens not just for policymakers. The more it is accessible and usable for all and citizens especially, the more you expand data literacy and can hold governments accountable." – Multilateral Organization (Global)

"You cannot be sure that those in power will have the right motivations for policymaking, but you can institute good governance systems to ensure there is some level of accountability and transparency to countervail those intentions" – Multilateral Organization (Global)

"How do you create activism around data? First is engagement with media. Media amplifies when there are gaps in delivery of service and put questions to policymakers based on the data" –Policy Institute (Regional)

Citizens also often provide information about their needs directly to local government officials and civil servants. This serves as a form of "data" that influences decisions by policy implementors. Mobile technology and CSOs that organize, and train citizens can amplify this voice and make it more systematic. Nonetheless, direct communication is a traditional and effective lever for practical policy change.

Across the continent there are numerous examples of data being used to inform and empower both citizens and governments. In

Kenya, citizens have used mobile technology to report cases of corruption and mismanagement to government officials. For example, in 2008, a group of Kenyan bloggers and developers who wanted to use technology to help gather and share information during a period of political violence in Kenya founded Ushahidi. Through their

"Dress makers and market women always ask for evidence of what the government is collecting fees for; they might say this is too high, we can't pay, reduce it, and we agree to reduce it."

– Local Government Official (West Africa)

organization they would go on to create the Uchaguzi platform, which allows citizens to report incidents of electoral malpractice and other forms of corruption during elections through SMS and mobile app.⁷¹

Another example of citizens using data to hold governments accountable is the Twaweza program in Tanzania. This program uses mobile technology to collect data on citizens' perceptions of government services and to provide feedback to policymakers. This includes using mobile surveys to collect data on citizens' experiences with healthcare, education, and other public services, and using this data to inform policy decisions and hold government officials accountable.⁷² Starting in 2017, the Ghanaian government began directing data to TransGov, a startup and online platform where citizens can track and give feedback on civic works projects. To make sure that its data is accessible to low-income individuals, TransGov makes information on infrastructure projects financed by the government available through its website, app, voice response technology, text message, and in-person interactions. The startup, through its collaboration with the government, has worked to link communities with data on projects that are most important to them, and promoting political participation throughout the country.⁷³

A Hewlett Foundation grantee in Uganda shared how citizens in a rural district of Uganda lacked the medical supplies to adequately serve their community. The citizens began tracking the medical inventory delivered to their health centers, and after collecting that information for a few months they found a pattern of missing inventory. This story was picked up by the media and came to the attention of the Ministry of Health (MoH). In response, the MoH opened an investigation, and it was revealed that the goods were stolen in transport. The MoH responded by increasing transportation security to ensure the medical supplies were delivered in full.

Box 4 EIP opportunities through citizen advocacy in Kenya

The confluence of strong civil society, influential social media, and an advanced technology ecosystem presents significant opportunities for advocacy driven EIP in Kenya. One CSO based in Kenya described the current landscape: "An increasing number of community organizations in Kenya have the capacity and the technology to be data-driven, presenting an opportunity for funders to fund local organizations with sufficient maturity, and strengthen them to develop pathways to influencing policymakers... the communities are the data."

The powerful voice of citizens in Kenya also makes the country's dynamic election cycles and opportunity for EIP. Elections present an opportunity to encourage use of evidence for policymakers' demonstration projects. Similarly, working in alignment with election cycles is beneficial. One stakeholder in East Africa noted, "In the Kenyan elections, social media platforms are reframing democracy as Kenyans organize digitally into grassroots advocacy organizations, lobbying candidates and holding political debates."

Another practitioner working on providing innovative data sets to African governments noted a similar potential, saying, "The next frontier in the Africa EIP space is matching attitudinal data with media consumption habits to generate next-level elevated data for advocacy organizations."

Work with governments by EIP institutions

Increasing demand for and uptake of data and evidence by policymakers has also been driven by the work of EIP institutions to build trust and technical capacity in governments, alongside the demonstration of effective EIP approaches. This work is discussed in detail in the section above on intermediation (progress trend 2).

Collaboration between evidence producers and policymakers through long-term partnerships has proven to be a successful approach to institutionalizing evidence use in the policymaking process. This type of partnership allows for a more flexible and responsive approach to policymaking, as it allows for quick action when opportunities arise, the ability to tailor research to be more useful for policy, the ability to identify and work with key stakeholders, and the ability to maintain partnerships even when there are changes in leadership or

⁷¹ Uchaguzi. 2019. Uchaguzi.or.ke. 2019. <https://uchaguzi.or.ke/views/map>.

⁷² "About Us - Twaweza." n.d. Twaweza. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://twaweza.org/about-us/>.

⁷³ "About | TransGov." n.d. Transgovgh.org. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://transgovgh.org/about-transgov>.

administration. Additionally, working on multiple projects over time allows for greater institutional learning compared to a single, one-time evaluation.⁷⁴

Technical capacity building in EIP for policymakers is also driving demand for EIP in some countries and government agencies where long-term investments are being made. Evidence-to-policy partnerships that bring together local researchers with policymakers not only contribute to improved policy, but they are also driving more demand for evidence informed policymaking, and driving the uptake of evidence in the policymaking process.⁷⁵

Capacity building comes from both external partners, internal statisticians and research departments that can explain to policymakers how to use data and demonstrate its value in solving policy challenges in real time. This is most effective when linked to pressing issues like COVID or inflation, where the use of data and evidence can quickly drive more effective decision making. Collaborations are increasing trust between policymakers and researchers, so policymakers believe in the credibility and validity of the data.⁷⁶

Global Crises

The 2020's have seen a world experiencing turmoil and upheaval, and this has had complex consequences for the EIP ecosystem. Competition for resources to address urgent and simultaneous global crises including COVID-19, climate change, and the war in Ukraine, has made it much harder for EIP institutions to raise funding. COVID-19 especially has also led to a dramatic backsliding of good governance, democracy, and development progress in all social sectors.

Nonetheless, recent crises have increased policymaker demand for more timely and higher quality data to address uncertainty and respond to urgent citizen needs. Increased demand and uptake of data and evidence has also led to investment in data systems to improve efficiency in data access, albeit in limited sectors. This has been an important trend driving the demand side of the EIP ecosystem and can be built on going forward. In this section, we look more closely at the recent EIP dynamics emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of evidence and data in informing policy decisions.

"During the pandemic, we saw some of our greatest demand and interest in data come from Twitter where citizens and CSOs expressed their interest in using our COVID-related household surveys for their advocacy purposes."

– African government research institution

Policymakers have had to make rapid decisions with limited contextual information and have had to rely on available data and evidence to guide their actions. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of data sharing and collaboration, as well as the need for real-time data and modeling to inform policy decisions. During the COVID-19 crisis, policymakers have been using a variety of evidence, including medical studies and scientific research data, to inform their decisions. Many policymakers used information from scientific studies and research papers to inform their decisions on vaccine distribution, treatment protocols and

health guidelines.⁷⁷ However, just as in other regions and countries around the world, in some cases politics played a role in preventing policymakers in African countries from making data-informed decisions in response to the pandemic, driven by various factors:

- **Disregarding expert advice:** Some policymakers have disregarded expert advice from public health officials and scientists and have instead made decisions based on political considerations.
- **Misinterpretation of data:** Some policymakers have misinterpreted data or cherry-picked data to support their pre-existing beliefs or agenda, rather than using data to inform their decisions.

⁷⁴Carter, S., I. Dhaliwal, J. Katticaran, C. Macías, and C. Walsh. "Creating a Culture of Evidence Use: Lessons from J-PAL's Government Partnerships in Latin America." (2018).

⁷⁵Pan, Jiayi, Yongqi Zhong, Sarah Young, and Nynke MD Niezink. "Collaboration on evidence synthesis in Africa: a network study of growing research capacity." *Health Research Policy and Systems* 19 (2021): 1-18.; Taddese, Abeba. "Meeting Policymakers Where They Are: Evidence-to-Policy and Practice Partnership Models." Center for Global Development (2021).

⁷⁶Taddese, Abeba. "Meeting Policymakers Where They Are: Evidence-to-Policy and Practice Partnership Models." Center for Global Development (2021); PARIS21. 2021. "Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa." https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf.

⁷⁷UNECA, and GPSDD. 2021. "Data for a Resilient Africa Partnering to Meet the Challenges of COVID-19 and Build toward Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery Acknowledgements." <https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Covid-19-report-V4.pdf>.

- *Disinformation and misinformation:* Some policymakers have spread misinformation and disinformation about the pandemic, which led to confusion and mistrust of the data and evidence being presented.
- *Political polarization:* The pandemic occurred in the context of a highly polarized political environment, which led to some policymakers prioritizing their political agenda over public health and well-being.
- *Limited data availability:* In some countries, data collection and management have been limited, making it difficult for policymakers to make data-driven decisions.
- *Lack of transparency:* Some countries lack transparency in their data and information dissemination, making it difficult to create a clear picture of the situation and therefore to make informed decisions.
- *Lack of coordination:* In some cases, there has been a lack of coordination between different levels of government and between different sectors, which can make it difficult to use data effectively to inform policy decisions.

Data Usage in African COVID Response:

- *Public health data:* Policymakers have been using data on the number of confirmed cases, hospitalizations, and deaths to track the spread of the virus and make decisions about public health measures such as lockdowns, testing and contact tracing.
- *Epidemiological models:* Policymakers have been using epidemiological models to project the spread of the virus and the potential impact of different policy interventions. These models have been used to inform decisions about how to allocate resources and prioritize different public health measures.
- *Economic data:* Policymakers have been using data on the economic impact of the pandemic, such as data on job losses, GDP and other economic indicators, to make decisions about economic stimulus measures, unemployment benefits and other economic policies.
- *Public opinion data:* Policymakers have been using data on public opinion, such as survey data, to gauge public support for different policy measures and to assess how people are being affected by the pandemic.
- *International data:* Policymakers have been using data and best practices from other countries to inform their decisions and to learn from their experiences.

It is also important to note that there have been many efforts to improve evidence generation during the pandemic. For example, some African countries have established research networks and collaborations, and have used data and digital technologies to improve data collection and sharing. Additionally, some international organizations have provided funding and technical support to help African countries generate evidence and data on the pandemic.⁷⁸

The role of politics in preventing data-driven decision making during the pandemic is complex, and different factors have contributed to different contexts and at different times. However, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of using data and evidence to inform policy decisions and the dangers of disregarding expert advice and science.

“Recent crises in Senegal (Joola sinking, Covid, etc.) have made policymakers in Senegal more aware that public policies without data and evidence are just “emotional” and “gut” policies that are temporary and do not really solve the issues or problems.”

– Government Research Institution (West Africa)

Additionally, the pandemic has underscored the need for more resilient and flexible systems in data collection and analysis. It also revealed the need for greater collaboration between governments, organizations, and researchers to ensure that the right information is available to policymakers when it's needed the most.⁷⁹ Given the highly political nature of public health policies and their effect on everyday people's lives, citizens and civil society demand for data peaked during the pandemic as peoples sought data with which to advocate for themselves and answer public health questions.

⁷⁸Judson, Seth D., Judith Torimiro, David M. Pigott, Apollo Maima, Ahmed Mostafa, Ahmed Samy, Peter Rabinowitz, and Kevin Njabo. "COVID-19 data reporting systems in Africa reveal insights for future pandemics." *Epidemiology & Infection* 150 (2022).

⁷⁹Judson, Seth D., Judith Torimiro, David M. Pigott, Apollo Maima, Ahmed Mostafa, Ahmed Samy, Peter Rabinowitz, and Kevin Njabo. "COVID-19 data reporting systems in Africa reveal insights for future pandemics." *Epidemiology & Infection* 150 (2022).; Africa CDC. 2020. "Responding to COVID-19 in Africa: Using Data to Find a Balance." May 2020. https://africacdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PERC_Regional_Final.pdf.

The pandemic disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and marginalized communities. As a result, there has been increased demand for data on the impact of the pandemic on these groups from citizen and civil society organizations. Given the broad range of government responses to the pandemic and the range of government approaches to data governance, various doubts arose concerning the accuracy and reliability of COVID-related data in Africa, with citizen and civil society organizations questioning the data provided by government. While this undermined some of the accomplishments of African EIP actors and partners it paradoxically increased demand for independent data sources. Some African governments have used data from social media platforms to track public sentiment and attitudes towards COVID-19 and government response. For example, in Kenya, the government used data from social media platforms to track public sentiment towards the COVID-19 vaccine, which helped inform their vaccine communication strategy.⁸⁰

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of data governance in the context of new systems of monitoring citizens implemented by governments around the world. The need to track and trace the virus led to the collection of unprecedented amounts of personal data, such as location data and health information, often without proper consent or transparency. This raised concerns about privacy and data protection, as well as the potential misuse of data by governments. Therefore, it is crucial to have robust data governance frameworks in place to ensure that personal data is collected and used ethically and securely, with appropriate safeguards and oversight to protect individuals' rights and freedoms, otherwise, governments will engage in the backtracking of constitutional rights as a part of their responses to global crises.

Data and evidence for who, for what?

The use of so many different types of data and evidence by policymakers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is indicative of the complexity and breadth of the EIP space. One of the major research questions guiding this Landscape Scan report was, "What type of data and evidence do policymakers need and use most?" This is an important and natural question, but when we posed it to many EIP stakeholders, a common response was a counter question: "Data and evidence for who, and for what?" This is an especially important question in the context of this trend of increasing demand for data and evidence amongst policymakers. Demand from which policymakers, for what type of data and evidence?

The answer varies greatly by sector, policy issue area, level of government and African country. However, in interviews with policymakers, government research officials, and EIP stakeholders, some basic commonalities emerged. When looking for data and evidence to inform policy, and even as demand has increased, most African countries continue to look first to their own national statistics systems (NSS). Data shows that African governments are increasingly demanding even more data and evidence from their national statistical systems. However, investment in increased capacity for those systems has not matched increased demand.⁸¹ Increased demand has led in some cases to more investment in national statistics offices and public research institutions. Data shows that national statistical capacity across Africa has improved slightly over the last decade, with large variations by country, driven in part by pressure to report on the SDGs and Agenda 2063. However, national statistical systems remain underfunded and under capacitated in all African countries compared to other regions.⁸²

Increased demand has led to policymakers gradually relying more on non-governmental evidence suppliers and intermediaries in some countries, as governments recognize the importance of leveraging external data to supplement their own. In important social sectors such as agribusiness and education, governments are forming partnerships with private sector companies and research institutions that specialize in data collection and analysis. They are also engaging with NGOs and CSOs that work on data-related issues. These organizations

⁸⁰Muranda, Magdaline. 2022. "Social Media Helps Boost Vaccine Coverage in Kenya." [www.gavi.org](https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/social-media-helps-boost-vaccine-coverage-kenya). February 21, 2022.

⁸¹ Paris21 and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa. April 2021. Available at: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf.

⁸² The Statistical Capacity Index (SCI) measured by the World Bank shows an increase in the Africa continental average from 56 to 57.2 points from 2004 to 2019, and the number of fully funded National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDs) in Africa jumped from 4 in 2017 to 12 in 2020. See: Paris21 and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa. April 2021. Available at: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf. Another example is in Ghana the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation completed renovations in the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research to establish a High-Performance Computing Centre with the goal of increasing the governments' ability to analyze, model, and simulate big data to address developmental challenges. See: <https://mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/budget-statements/2020-Budget-Statement-and-Economic-Policy.pdf>

provide technical assistance, advocacy support, and capacity building to help governments build more robust and responsive data ecosystems that can better serve the needs of their citizens.

Much of the data collected and disseminated by NSS agencies comes in the form of aggregated administrative data, household surveys and census data. Few governments have the funding or expertise to conduct regular evaluations, so they are not often used. Increasingly, evaluations are funded by donors, and some African governments are starting to commission them directly. They are also beginning to utilize help desks, rapid response units and other synthesizers of existing evaluations and other research studies to inform policy, but this is not yet widespread.

These new forms of evidence production and synthesis came from a growing recognition amongst development agencies, researchers, and government officials that the traditional evaluations needed to be more flexible and adaptive to better reflect the complexity of the contexts in which these interventions are implemented. RCTs were still considered a valuable tool for evaluating the impact of interventions. However, the evidence community was exploring the value of other types of evaluations such as the mixed methods approach of combining qualitative research with quantitative instruments to produce evaluations that make the most of their comparative advantages.

These new methods provided policymakers with more specific and timely data to support them in policy implementation and reassessing whether certain interventions were worth maintaining or replicating. To expand their methodological approaches, further evaluative approaches have been brought to bear across the safe, such as A/B testing with multiple treatment arms, adaptive evaluation, and “surrogate” proxies to enhance the usability and relevance of experimental evidence for policy decisions.⁸³ These new methods coupled with technological advancements that allow for greater volumes and accessibility of data have enabled faster, lower-cost, and larger scaled evaluations.

Beyond their own national research units, governments work most closely with large development partners to both fund and supply data and evidence. The type of data and evidence, and the organizations supplying it vary greatly by sector and area. Some examples of the data that policymakers in African countries are using today include:

- *Demographic data*: Policymakers use demographic data, such as data on population size, age structure, and migration patterns, to inform policies related to population and development.
- *Economic data*: Policymakers use economic data, such as data on GDP, inflation, unemployment, and trade, to inform policies related to economic growth and development.
- *Health Data*: Policymakers use health data such as data on disease burden, health outcomes and health systems, to inform policies related to health and healthcare.
- *Education Data*: Policymakers use educational data, such as data on enrollment, graduation rates, and test scores, to inform policies related to education and skills development.
- *Environmental Data*: Policymakers use environmental data, such as data on temperature changes, rainfall patterns, and sea levels rise, to inform policies related to climate change and natural resource management.
- *Social Data*: Policymakers use social data, such as data on poverty, inequality, and crime, to inform policies related to social welfare and justice.
- *Geospatial Data*: Policymakers use geospatial data such as data on land use water resources and biodiversity, to inform policies related to natural resource management and sustainable development.
- *Big Data*: Policymakers are increasingly using big data, such as data from social media or mobile phones, to understand citizen needs and improve social services.

This list could go on. EIP has been traditionally strongest in Africa in the healthcare, finance, and economic planning sectors. However, demand for and use of data and evidence appears to be increasing in many countries in Africa, in many levels of government, in many different sectors, driven by the various factors discussed in this section and the barriers section below. It is important thus to consider what is stopping policymakers from using

⁸³ Kaufman, Julia, Glassman, Amanda, Levine, Ruth, and Janeen Madan Keller. "Breakthrough to Policy Use: Reinvigorating Impact Evaluation for Global Development." *Washington, DC: The Center for Global Development* (2022).

the increasingly wide variety of data and evidence available to them, that many of them increasingly want to use. We discuss this in the next section on barriers.

V. Barriers

Current challenges to progress
on EIP

BARRIERS

EIP as a tool

Funders play a key role in supporting actors and initiatives across the evidence ecosystem. Funders have recognized that evidence is key to designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating better policies and interventions. Thus, many funders approach the EIP field through a sector, policy, or intervention approach utilizing evidence as a tool in support of a different sector or issue-specific goal. Funders shared that many of their funding models have embedded systems for utilizing data and evidence, and in many cases, they are actively supporting activities to increase evidence usage whether that be through providing support to NSOs or funding impact evaluations. Despite this recognition and use of evidence in their projects, funders noted that many of their organizations did not have explicit overarching strategies expressing their support of evidence as a standalone ecosystem. Therefore, funding provided to implementing organizations is often focused either on the production or use of evidence to inform a specific sector or policy, with limited investments being made into general strengthening of evidence producers and intermediary institutions, nor into the culture, systems, processes, and policies that help institutionalize evidence across sectors. This makes it difficult to address cross-sectoral barriers to the regular use of data and evidence in policymaking, such as investment in government data systems, or long-term work toward instituting EIP norms or regulations in government.

Funders noted that they would be unlikely to invest more in the future to support the growth of the EIP ecosystem, or to strengthen evidence producers and intermediaries to promote evidence informed policy broadly. This reticence comes because it can be difficult to connect those types of investments to impact on people's well-being. Funders noted that they would prefer to prioritize investment in sector and issue-specific projects that are more clearly and easily linked to impact on people.

Additionally, funders expressed that they see greater benefit in taking sector and project-specific approaches because (1) they have a better understanding of the specific issues and challenges facing a particular sector and can tailor funding to address those issues; (2) they can improve accountability and results by focusing on specific outcomes and measuring progress in that set space; and (3) they can build expertise in their focus area to make more informed decisions on what they would like to fund.

The lack of flexible funding available to evidence producers and intermediaries working on EIP limits the long-term sustainability of these organizations. It makes it harder for them to improve organizational infrastructure, invest in staff training and development, maintain core functions or respond to emerging needs. It also limits their ability to respond to government requests in a flexible and opportunistic way.

Funders provide funding for specific efforts to improve the ability to use evidence in a particular sector:

Ford Foundation. From 2000 to 2016, the Ford Foundation invested \$56 million supporting 92 organizations working to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people in West Africa. The work included investments to independent researchers and research institutions to generate evidence on topics including FGM, HIV care, and gender-based violence in West Africa. The Foundation also focused on building partnerships and a coalition to ensure the dissemination and translation of evidence into accessible forms, community discussions, and political action.¹

Omidyar Network. Through their Responsible Technology focus area, the Omidyar Network is working to build a global technological ecosystem for everyone. Within this focus area, the Omidyar Network is working to “curb big tech’s harmful influence” and “reshape the data paradigm” by supporting entities in developing and enforcing data governance mechanisms, producing new evidence to inform the field, and building coalitions to create new global norms.²

¹ Ford Foundation. n.d. “Evaluating Ford’s Youth Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and Rights Work in West Africa.” Ford Foundation. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.fordfoundation.org/work/learning/program-evaluations/evaluating-ford-s-youth-sexuality-reproductive-health-and-rights-work-in-west-africa/>.

² Omidyar Network. n.d. “Responsible Technology.” Omidyar Network. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://omidyar.com/responsible-technology-2/>.

Beyond funders, many practitioners active within the EIP ecosystem, such as innovative data providers, data governance practitioners or good governance activists, use data or evidence as a tool in their work but do not

think of themselves as part of a coherent EIP field, which in turn limits opportunities for collaboration with adjacent actors. The lack of a common vision for EIP amongst actors across the ecosystem also limits the scale and breadth of progress toward EIP goals. Without a common vision, actors do not often collaborate or network across practice siloes to develop and scale effective approaches specific to EIP. For example, policymakers need both impact evaluations and innovative new data sources, but providers of those different types of data and evidence are not actively engaging with each other to overcome barriers such as political motivations, inefficient data systems, or lack of technical capacity that prevent policymakers from using various types of data and evidence regularly in their decision making. Similarly, both good governance activists and many evidence producers/intermediaries would like to address the political incentives that prevent policymakers from making evidence-informed decisions, but these actors do not often coordinate their work toward common EIP-specific goals.

These disjointed approaches to funding and conducting EIP-related activities have consequences for the larger EIP ecosystem that is already facing limited resources. EIP ecosystem actors consistently report difficulties in raising flexible funding and over-reliance on a few core funders (see findings from grantees in the EIP Strategy Evaluation Report). Governments also lack the resources they need to use evidence regularly. In Africa, 28 countries do not have the funds to fully support their National Strategies for Development Statistics.⁸⁴ NSOs were hit further during the COVID-19 pandemic with 59% of NSOs in Sub-Saharan Africa reporting decreased funding from donors, compared to the 29% of NSOs globally.⁸⁵

Intermediation of Data

Many EIP ecosystem actors are now focused on improving the uptake of data and evidence by policymakers through intermediation. Their work responds to several challenges inherent in evidence-informed policymaking:

- Recognition that producing evidence is not enough: Policymakers need to be able to access and use evidence in order to make effective decisions. Therefore, intermediation and knowledge brokering have become crucial in connecting policymakers with the evidence they need.
- Complexity of the policymaking process: The process of policymaking is often complex and multifaceted, involving multiple actors and stakeholders. Intermediation and knowledge brokering can help to navigate these complexities and bring together different perspectives and evidence to inform policy decisions.
- Need for tailored and actionable evidence: Policymakers often need evidence that is specific to their context and that can be used to inform immediate policy decisions. Intermediation and knowledge brokering can help to identify and disseminate evidence that is tailored to the needs of policymakers.
- Increased recognition of the importance of communication and engagement: Effective communication and engagement with policymakers and other stakeholders is essential for ensuring that evidence is used in policy decisions. Intermediation and knowledge brokering can help to facilitate these processes.

However, many stakeholders cited a continuing lack of intermediation as a key barrier to EIP progress in many African countries. Successful intermediation approaches are based on long-term, trusted relationships which are costly, time-consuming, and hard to scale. Intermediaries need to invest significant resources in building trust and fostering relationships. Scaling intermediation approaches can also be challenging because it requires replicating the same level of relationship building and trust across multiple contexts, which can be difficult to achieve. Moreover, intermediation approaches are often context-specific, meaning that what works in one setting may not work in another, requiring intermediaries to tailor their approach to each specific context.

The intermediation process begins before the data is produced by bringing together policymakers and researchers, so they can engage in dialogue about the most pressing problems and the research needed to assess them. Effective intermediation requires these stakeholders to share a common understanding of the problem at hand, the available evidence, and the policy options available. This shared understanding enables intermediaries to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between policymakers and knowledge producers, helping them to

⁸⁴PARIS21. 2021. "Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa." https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf.

⁸⁵ Hammer, Craig, Luis Gonzales Morales, Ivette-Maria Contreras-Gonzalez, and Philip Randolph Wollburg. 2021. "National Statistical Offices Still Face Disruptions and Challenges as They Adapt to a 'New Normal.'" [Blogs.worldbank.org](https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/national-statistical-offices-still-face-disruptions-and-challenges-they-adapt-new-normal). August 11, 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/national-statistical-offices-still-face-disruptions-and-challenges-they-adapt-new-normal>.

identify areas of agreement and potential solutions. It also allows intermediaries to bridge gaps in understanding between different stakeholders and translate technical research into actionable policy recommendations.

In addition to pairing up researchers and policymakers, universities, thinktanks, and research institutions have been piloting changes in incentives for researchers. Traditionally, researchers, particularly those at universities, are promoted based on several key factors including their research productivity and impact. Research productivity and impact are often the most heavily weighted factors in promotion decisions. This includes the number and quality of publications in peer-reviewed journals, the number of citations by others, and the level of recognition and impact of their research within their field.⁸⁶ One public research institution in East Africa recognized that there are limited professional development incentives for researchers to want their work to be used by policymakers, so the institution is considering a potential opportunity to integrate the use of research in policymaking as a measure to be included in considerations for promotion.

Political incentives

Political incentives often hinder the regular use of evidence in policymaking in many countries, even when policymakers have access to evidence, technical capacity to use it, and good relationships with evidence providers. Many stakeholders have cited this barrier in interviews, including government officials themselves.

Politicians are wary. They are thinking, who I can trust, who can I have a frank conversation with, who can explain the relevance of this data to me? Without someone to bridge the gap between politics and evidence production, politician suspicion grows as they are unsure and at times unable to navigate the realm of data and evidence.

-Think Tank (Global North)

This has led to policymakers seeking and using evidence to support their existing views or political positions, while ignoring data and evidence that counters these positions.⁸⁷

Trust-based relationships between evidence producers/intermediaries and governments can increase the use of data and evidence by policymakers by improving access and technical capacity and demonstrating the value of tailored data and evidence to solve policymaking challenges. However, even these trusted relationships are often unable to overcome political disincentives.

It is important to note that this challenge is not unique to African countries. Policymaking is a political process in most countries, and evidence can be easily ignored or manipulated for political gains. In East and West Africa, promoting good governance and empowering citizen advocates and the media to demand more transparency and accountability from their governments is seen as a potential solution to this issue. Stakeholders also described how evidence-informed debates in parliament and with opposition parties in some countries are contributing to improved governance and policy outcomes.

Government data systems

Improving the production, intermediation, and uptake of data along with its relevance, timeliness, and quality requires highly effective and capable data systems. Unfortunately, NSOs and data systems across the continent continue to require funding and upgrades to provide the necessary statistical capacity needed support domestic and international development goals, such as the SDGs.⁸⁸ The World Bank's Statistical Capacity Index, a composite index that measures the overall statistical capacity of a country, indicates that the average SCI score for African countries increased slightly between 2010 and 2018, however, many countries in Africa still score relatively low on the index compared to other regions.⁸⁹ Government officials in one country noted that many of their records are still kept in hard copy, and they do not have the technology to perform certain analyses. If this analysis is needed, the hard copy data would need to be sent to the urban NSO. With inefficient data systems, local policymakers and government officials are often disincentivized from using data in a routine manner.

⁸⁶ Andoh, Henry. "The Uptake of Doctoral Thesis Research in Ghana." PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2017. Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/188220813.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Gatune, J., Commodore, R., Darko, R., Atengble, K.O., Harris, D., Osei, D.R., Oteng-Abayie, F.E., Shah, N., Bainsan, A.K., Fenny, A., Osei, C., and Rosengren, A. (2021) The role of evidence in policymaking in Ghana: a political economy analysis, SEDI: Oxford.

⁸⁸ PARIS21. 2021. "Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa." https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf.

⁸⁹ World Bank. n.d. "Statistical Capacity Indicators | DataBank." [databank.worldbank.org. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/statistical-capacity-indicators](https://databank.worldbank.org/source/statistical-capacity-indicators).

It is also worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of countries to produce and disseminate high-quality statistics. With many NSOs being forced to close during the pandemic, countries that lacked the proper ICT infrastructure to work remotely struggled to have the workforce necessary to produce data.⁹⁰ To bring the NSOs and data systems to a point in which they are interoperable and efficient, large investments would need to be made by funders starting with investments into ICT and electrical infrastructure. Given the size of funding necessary to complete and overhaul of government systems, many funders choose to spend their limited resources in areas that they believe will have a more immediate and greater impact.

Technical capacity

Stakeholders noted that technical capacity is a major challenge for EIP, amongst both policymakers and government research department staff. Many policymakers lack the technical expertise to interpret and apply data and evidence to policymaking. Successful EIP interventions have focused on building capacity for both policymakers and government research departments, recognizing the challenge of maintaining capacity with potentially high turnover amongst policymakers themselves. Low capacity in government research departments and national statistical systems is an especially important barrier to EIP because most governments continue to rely largely on their own internal data and evidence to inform policy.

The need for improved investment in government research departments and national statistical systems continues to far outweigh the resources available to build it. Weak and inefficient data management systems in government require enormous, long-term investments to improve both the infrastructure and human resource capacity to manage the systems. The statistical communities in Africa struggle from not only inefficient data systems but also from a lack of a highly skilled workforce that can design studies and collect, interpret, and disseminate the data. Across Africa, highly skilled statisticians can be difficult to find, with many NSOs, particularly after COVID-19 remaining understaffed.⁹¹ To address the challenge of a lack of expertise, NSOs have partnered with universities, think tanks, and research institutions to provide training to their staff members. Multilaterals organizations such as the WHO and the IMF provide countries with technical assistance and training to help develop capacity to achieve compliance with international norms and standards. NSOs in Africa engage in these technical assistance and training opportunities more often than their peer institutions in other regions.⁹²

While these trainings are beneficial for NSO staff members, many gaps remain in both NSOs and amongst policymakers themselves, many of whom lack the technical capacity to apply data even when it has been intermediated for policy use. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) both offer training opportunities for African policymakers to improve their technical capacity. Policymakers are not the only individuals who benefit from capacity building. Recognizing the media plays a key role in keeping the public informed and serving as a venue for debate, journalists can also benefit from improved technical capacity. In 2015, PARIS21, AFRISTAT, GIZ, and STATEC joined forces to establish journalist-statistician dialogues in seven countries in Africa, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, São Tomé & Príncipe, Senegal, Burundi and Cameroon, with the aim of promotion collaboration between journalists, who use data, and statisticians, who communicate data.⁹³ An increase in technical capacity amongst the various evidence actors leads to increased uptake and usage of data. Much more is needed.

Policymaking Process

The complexity and length of the policymaking process makes it difficult to ensure that interventions at any one point in the process lead to improved wellbeing for people. Data and evidence play an important role in all stages of the policymaking process, from agenda setting to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. At each

⁹⁰ Hammer, Craig, Luis Gonzales Morales, Ivette-Maria Contreras-Gonzalez, and Philip Randolph Wollburg. 2021. "National Statistical Offices Still Face Disruptions and Challenges as They Adapt to a 'New Normal.'" *Blogs.worldbank.org*. August 11, 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/national-statistical-offices-still-face-disruptions-and-challenges-they-adapt-new-normal>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² PARIS21. 2021. "Bridging the Data-Policy Gap in Africa." https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Data-Policy%20Gap_Africa_FINAL_20210430.pdf.

of these stages, many decision-makers and complex influencing factors are involved. Many stakeholders noted challenges around heavy investment by EIP ecosystem actors in the early stages of the policymaking process, which can be negated by poor implementation in later stages. Stakeholders noted that much less focus and investment has been placed by EIP actors on improving policy implementation. Similarly, relationship building that influences just a few of the policy decision makers can be limited in its impact if other decision makers with control over the same policymaking process are not reached.

VI. Opportunities

Opportunities emerging in
response to EIP trends

OPPORTUNITIES

To bring more coherence to EIP as a field, there may be opportunities to promote more engagement across diverse EIP ecosystem actors led by the evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) community. The EIDM community is active, hosting various conferences and networking opportunities, with actors working toward common goals to improve the effectiveness of social and environmental programs through evidence use. This includes a strong focus on evidence-informed policymaking. However, EIDM networking events often focus on research institutions, development practitioners and policymakers, with less engagement of innovative data providers, data governance practitioners, or good governance advocates. Promoting events, platforms or programs that intentionally engage actors across these communities could drive knowledge exchange, partnerships, and new approaches to addressing EIP-specific challenges.

As part of this broader engagement, one of the most significant opportunities is in good governance and citizen advocacy. The generation and use of data and evidence by citizens, CSOs and the media to hold governments accountable is growing in many African countries, which is in turn incentivizing policymakers to use more data and evidence to inform decisions and demonstrate results. This creates space to elevate data and evidence as effective tools for advocacy, work to address the proliferation of misinformation in digital data and new media sources, and work with good governance funders and organizations to advance EIP goals. This is a significant opportunity cited by many stakeholders, that could address barriers to EIP related to political incentives.

More could also be done to align and leverage other sector- and issue-specific resources to advance EIP goals. Opportunities include:

- **Data for Development:** The momentum, widespread interest and funding for D4D and the digital economy could be leveraged to focus more intentionally on addressing policymaker needs and gaps in government data systems.
- **Data governance:** A number of donor agencies and private foundations are funding data governance initiatives, with growing interest in the space. However, data governance work addresses a wide range of issues, not all of which are relevant to EIP. There may be potential to collaborate with other funders to leverage these efforts toward more EIP-specific goals with a focus on addressing citizen mistrust in government access to and use of data, and a lack of harmonization across borders that prevents data sharing and could present barriers to the effective use of data for EIP.
- **Impact measurement and management:** At the organizational level, there may be opportunity to improve research institutions' understanding of their impact on people's wellbeing. This would improve their ability to prioritize investments in more impactful or effective work, and in turn enable them to raise more funding from sector and issue-specific development funders.
- **Co-financing:** Likewise, there exist opportunities to match sector or country-specific project funding for research institutions and other EIP ecosystem actors with general operating support to achieve both institutional growth and targeted, measurable impact through co-financed projects.

To scale evidence intermediation efforts, there may be opportunities to invest in replicating and scaling up successful relationship-driven models, and/or space to consider less costly, more easily scalable approaches. Models such as embedded learning units or relationship-based approach to working with parliaments could be expanded to other countries and government agencies. More support to organizations to document and disseminate lessons could encourage replication and scale, including perhaps analysis around how to reduce the cost and time intensity of these models. Other approaches could include consideration of the potential to scale successful models through regional policymaking bodies to achieve a broader impact that could cascade across countries. Existing sector networks active in policy advocacy, and policymaker peer networks also offer opportunities to advance evidence intermediation and close the evidence to policy gap at scale. Parliamentarians, ministries, and other government agencies also convene often with peers from other countries and regions in existing forums that could be leveraged consistently to build trusted relationships with EIP actors and bridge the evidence-policy gap at lower cost and greater scale.

There is a pressing need to invest more within governments, but doing so sustainably requires large-scale, long-term funding; there may be opportunities to address this need with catalytic interventions. Many stakeholders noted the need to invest more broadly in studying the evidence-related needs and priorities of policymakers, the need to increase the amount of EIP-tailored capacity building available to a broader range of policymakers and other government officials, the need to invest in improving national statistical systems at all levels, and the need to focus more on evidence-informed policy implementation to ensure impact on people's wellbeing. Without addressing these larger interlinking challenges, isolated investments to increase access or

capacity for governments can be effective in pockets but are limited in their scale, sustainability and long-term impact. Smaller-scale funders like the Hewlett Foundation could explore ways to catalyze the large amounts of funding needed in these areas. To improve technical EIP capacity for policymakers, catalytic investments could focus on integrating EIP approaches to public policy education (which some Hewlett grantees are already doing), and civil servant training and hiring practices, especially in countries where awareness and demand for EIP have improved. Catalytic investments could also pilot innovative approaches to improving national statistical systems and data infrastructure with the aim of scaling up successful models through funding from large donor agencies. Specific focus could be placed on improving national data systems to facilitate more effective monitoring and course corrections during policy implementation. Catalytic funders could also promote EIP interventions specific to the policy implementation stage. More knowledge sharing could also be facilitated focused on lessons around government decision-making needs and the policy implementation stage.

Conclusion

Since 2015, increased support from private foundations and multilateral and bilateral donors has empowered Africa-based research institutions by providing technical assistance, capacity building support, and funding, enabling these institutions to increase their capacity and influence. Additionally, partnerships between global and local institutions have boosted the influence of local players, and training programs have invested in African students as economists, researchers, and institutional leaders. Despite progress, many African research institutions remain disconnected from policymaking. However, intermediation efforts are growing in East and West Africa. There is a growing interest among evidence producers and intermediaries to engage in the political economy of EIP. Civil society and funders are advocating for the responsible use of data, and, recognizing the value of the digital economy, African governments are increasingly seeking expert advice on digital economy and digital rights issues. Although African governments continue to rely largely on their own data to inform policy decisions, they are shifting towards more engagement with non-governmental institutions and more diverse research methodologies.

Large volumes and more diverse types of data and evidence are available to inform policymaking, but widespread and consistent uptake remains limited by inefficient data systems, lack of technical capacity, and competing political priorities. Addressing these constraints across the region would require enormous investment, and scaled investment in EIP is limited by a lack of common goals amongst EIP funders and practitioners, and intense competition for funding to address many urgent global crises.

Crises are driving the use of evidence in some areas and reducing investment for EIP in others. COVID-19 and climate change have led to investment in fit for purpose data systems (real time health care data and contact tracing, early warning systems, etc.), that are improving lives by helping countries mitigate and adapt to crisis. Many African citizens under pressure from economic shocks and frustrated by shrinking civic space and corruption are also demanding more accountability through data and evidence – this is important to support. However, the competition for funding to address urgent social and environmental needs is limiting the amount of funding available for research and institutional growth that is not directly linked in the near term to solving a specific issue or sector challenge.

Going forward, EIP proponents could explore several ways to improve the sustainability and long-term impact of EIP interventions. There are opportunities to foster more collaboration across the evidence informed decision making (EIDM) community and actors working on good governance and data for development; to co-invest with sector and issue specific funders to ensure institutional growth for research organizations and other evidence producers and intermediaries; to catalyze more investment into governments to address barriers to sustainable, regular use of evidence in governments and improve policy implementation; and to study the long-term impact of these different approaches on people's wellbeing to enable EIP actors to select interventions that maximize impact for people. These opportunities and others can be explored further during the next phase of the strategy refresh.

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