

# EVALUATION OF THE HEWLETT FOUNDATION'S EVIDENCE INFORMED POLICYMAKING STRATEGY

An evaluation of Hewlett Foundation  
processes and EIP grantee progress  
from 2018-2022

**JUNE 2023**



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# Abbreviations

<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence
<b>ANSD</b>	National Agency of Statistics and Demography
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BCEAO</b>	Central Bank of West African States
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>DEIJ</b>	Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
<b>DGPPE</b>	General Direction of Planning and Economic Policies
<b>EASST</b>	East Africa Social Science Translation Collaborative
<b>EIP</b>	Evidence-informed-policymaking
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulation
<b>GEG</b>	Gender Equity and Governance
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic information system
<b>GOS</b>	General operating support
<b>GSS</b>	Ghana Statistical Service
<b>GRE</b>	Global Reproductive Equity
<b>ICT</b>	Information communication technology
<b>IG</b>	Inclusive governance
<b>IEU</b>	Institutionalizing evidence use
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INGO</b>	International non-governmental organization
<b>KNBS</b>	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
<b>LMICs</b>	Low- and middle-income countries
<b>MDAs</b>	Ministries, departments, or agencies
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>MNO</b>	Mobile network operator
<b>MP</b>	Member of parliament
<b>NDPC</b>	National Development Planning Commission
<b>NSO</b>	National statistics office
<b>OE</b>	Organizational effectiveness
<b>PO</b>	Program officer
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TOC</b>	Theory of change
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Scope and purpose of the evaluation

Dalberg Advisors is working with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to refresh the foundation's Evidence Informed Policymaking (EIP) strategy. As part of the strategy refresh process, Dalberg conducted an evaluation of contributions made toward target outcomes during the last strategy period from 2018-2022. The purpose of this evaluation is fundamentally to serve as a learning exercise that captures and builds on the experiences and lessons learned from the important work of grantees to further collective goals in the EIP space.

A landscape scan is being conducted in parallel to this evaluation to complement the findings from the review of grantees' contributions with trends from the broader EIP ecosystem. Together, the evaluation and the landscape scan will inform a 'look ahead' phase which will focus on developing the refreshed strategy.

## The EIP strategy

The Hewlett Foundation's **EIP strategy** was launched in 2015 and updated in 2018. The strategy's goal is that **governments in East and West Africa, at all levels, increasingly use evidence in all phases of the policymaking process – from agenda setting to implementation, monitoring, and course-correction – to inform decisions about social and economic policies.** The strategy set out to advance this goal by achieving a set of outcomes related to access, incentives, and capacity through three mutually re-enforcing impact pathways:

- **Specific policy and program changes.** This refers to evidence-informed changes in the formulation, design, implementation, monitoring, course-correction, or evaluation of a specific policy or program at any level of government. Examples include influencing the stated policy priorities of a ministry, improving specific program design, or informing a decision to end or alter a non-performing program.
- **Systemic changes in how policy decisions are made.** This refers to progress in institutionalizing the use of data and evidence in routine decision-making in any branch and at any level of government. Examples might include improvements in data access, establishing evidence requirements for budget allocation, or increasing individual incentives for evidence use through changes to performance management.
- **Contributions to building the EIP field.** EIP field building refers to a collection of actors loosely united around a common purpose and similar goals, that connect to share learnings, collaborate, demonstrate the importance of evidence use, and advocate for evidence to be available, relevant and used by governments in an ongoing way. Examples include connecting diverse actors to share experiences, publication of research about the practice of EIP, and cases that demonstrate the benefits of using evidence or risks of not using it.

In the last five years, the EIP strategy deployed over \$120 million<sup>1</sup> across three thematic focus areas that developed somewhat organically over time:

- **The Institutionalizing Evidence Use (IEU)** focus area aims to drive the regular and systematic use of data and evidence in policymaking decisions by governments in East and West Africa, with a focus on strengthening African think tank grantees and building stronger relationships between research institutions and governments.
- **The Impact Evaluations** focus area emerged with the aim to increase the use and relevance of impact evaluations in East and West Africa to help policymakers understand the effectiveness of public policy and programs. This consists of strengthening Africa-based universities and non-profits conducting impact evaluations, connecting them to global resources, and supporting them to adapt evaluation methodologies to the local context in both training programs and practice. Support for global research institutions conducting evaluations is also focused on adapting evaluations to the local context and responding directly to policymaker needs.
- **The Data Revolution** focus area emerged in response to the rise of data for development linked to monitoring progress toward the SDGs. This focus area supports suppliers of new and innovative sources of data, such as mobile-phone data, drone data and artificial intelligence, to work directly with

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<sup>1</sup> As of September 2022

governments to build technical capacity, establish frameworks, and demonstrate how innovative data can be leveraged to inform policymaking decisions. A **Data Governance sub-focus area** was developed as part of the Data Revolution focus area to promote the responsible and balanced use of data by governments while protecting data rights and privacy, again with a focus on supporting African organizations to develop data governance standards and engagement models relevant to local needs, in many cases working closely with their local and national governments.

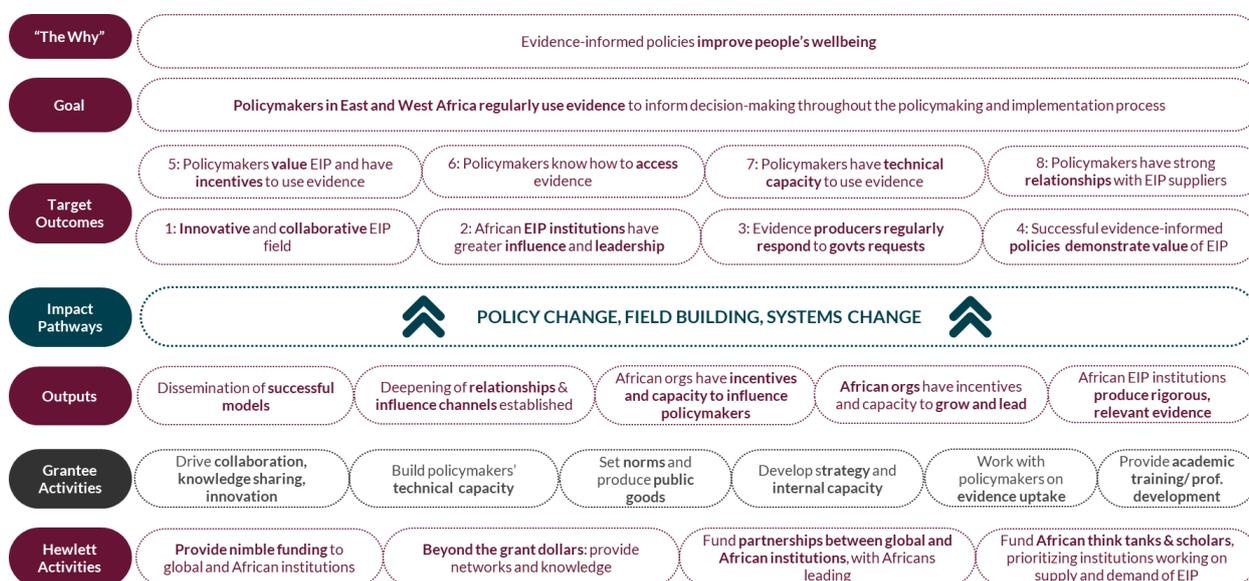
## What has the EIP portfolio accomplished?

### Evaluation Approach

The EIP strategy underlying the portfolio constructed over the past five years does not have a standard set of progress targets or indicators. Grantees have thus reported on contributions in a largely qualitative way. In the absence of quantifiable targets and indicators in the theory of change, it is difficult to evaluate portfolio contributions in a rigorous way that tracks goals set in 2018, especially as the portfolio has evolved over time. Given this history, the Dalberg team reconstructed theories of change to demonstrate the pathways by which EIP grantees have been achieving impact in practice. This enabled our team to better structure analysis of where contributions have been made and which approaches grantees have used to drive those contributions.

This evaluation approach focuses on learning within these limitations, recognizing that more rigorous methodologies cannot be applied in retrospect in the absence of clearly defined progress metrics at the start of grantmaking activities. Working within these limitations, this evaluation highlights key areas of contributions made and lessons learned based on summarized feedback from grantees through an online survey, focus groups and interviews, alongside feedback from government officials in selected countries in East and West Africa, and other external stakeholders. This evaluation thus assesses indicative direction of change rather than measuring quantifiable impact.

Figure 1: Reconstructed TOC: Overall EIP and Institutionalizing Evidence Use



### Grantee contributions

The evaluation assesses grantee contributions toward each of the eight outcomes in the reconstructed theories of change; contributions toward the goal of governments in East and West Africa systematically using evidence to improve social and economic policies over time; and contributions toward the long-term aspiration of improving people's well-being.

#### Contributions toward outcomes

- **Outcome 1 (Innovative and collaborative EIP field):** Grantees reported moderate contributions toward this outcome. Within smaller practice areas in the EIP ecosystem such as impact evaluations or data for

development, collaboration is strong. Grantees are engaging in growing networks, sharing knowledge, using global public goods, and conducting work through partnerships. However, grantees are far less often engaging across these siloed practice areas and reported a desire to convene more with other EIP grantees to learn and support mutual efforts. Grantees also noted that while many contributions have been made and lessons learned regarding partnerships between organizations based in Africa and those based in the Global North, more needs to be done to ensure equality, efficiency, and quality outputs in these partnerships.

- **Outcome 2 (African EIP institutions have greater influence and leadership):** Grantees reported strong contributions toward this outcome, driven by a broader localization trend and efforts by grantees based in Africa to build relationships with governments, and engage in international conferences and partnerships. Grantees, especially in the IEU, impact evaluation and data governance focus areas have taken on leadership roles and gained influence. In the data revolution focus area, most grantees are headquartered in the Global North.
- **Outcome 3 (Evidence producers regularly respond to government requests):** Grantees reported moderate to strong contributions to this outcome. Grantees from all focus areas-built relationships with governments and to better respond to policymaker needs, priorities and requests through a variety of models. In many cases, grantees reported that this approach led to increasing requests and commissioning of research from governments. In data governance, grantees reported increasing engagement with governments through discussion forums.
- **Outcome 4 (Successful policy models demonstrate the value of EIP):** Grantees reported more limited contributions on this outcome. Many grantees noted that focusing on building relationships with governments and responding opportunistically to their needs was more effective than focusing on individual policy changes. Within the context of these relationships, grantees noted that successful EIP projects and policy changes can encourage policymaker buy-in by demonstrating the value of the EIP approach. The demonstration effect of an individual EIP-driven policy changes from one agency or country to another was only noted in a few instances. More often, grantees reported that the value of EIP was demonstrated during a successful project for the policymakers and government officials involved in that project.
- **Outcome 5 (Policymakers value EIP and have incentives to use evidence):** Grantees reported moderate contributions to this outcome. Improving relationships and responsiveness to governments has demonstrated the value of EIP projects for policymakers engaging in those projects in all focus areas. Governments across Africa also recognize the value of the data revolution and are increasingly engaging with innovative new data sources and data governance discussions. However, some policymakers also note that they value traditional sources such as admin data over innovative new data sources. Political incentives also continue to prevent consistent use of data and evidence in many government agencies. Grantees reported that policymakers pick and choose when to engage with data and evidence based on political convenience and established agendas. More could be done to address these incentives.
- **Outcome 6 (Policymakers know how to access evidence):** Grantees reported strong contributions to this outcome in the IEU and impact evaluation focus areas, and moderate contributions in the data revolution and data governance area. IEU and impact evaluation grantees used relationship building, help desks, rapid response units, and embedded staff models to increase access to relevant data and evidence for policymakers. Data revolution grantees also built relationships, technical capacity, and improved access to innovative data sources for governments. However, the access challenge is greater for innovative data, and more work needs to be done to build the infrastructure, systems and technical capacity required to access innovative data sources. Data governance grantees reported increased engagement in their discussion forums and access to Africa-relevant governance norms and models, but also noted that this work was relatively nascent.
- **Outcome 7 (Policymakers have technical capacity to use evidence):** Grantees reported more limited contributions toward this outcome. Many grantees noted that capacity building has been effective when linked directly to a project driven by policymaker priorities, and in projects where the data and evidence presented is well tailored to the policy context. This work is improving both the technical capacity and incentives for some policymakers to use evidence. However, even in successful projects, grantees and stakeholders noted that technical capacity gains were often moderate, and sometimes limited to a few individuals, with many other policymakers in the same agency continuing to lack technical capacity. Technical capacity is especially a challenge related to innovative new data sources, and impact evaluations, compared to more traditional sources of data.

- **Outcome 8 (Policymakers have strong relationships with EIP suppliers):** Grantees reported strong contributions to this outcome. As noted in earlier outcomes, relationship building by grantees in all focus areas has been an effective approach to drive uptake and value for EIP amongst policymakers. Challenges reported here relate to the time consuming and costly nature of successful relationship building with governments. Grantees are typically doing this one agency, and sometimes a few individuals, at a time. This may limit the scale and sustainability of this approach.

### Contributions toward the goal: Policymakers regularly use evidence to inform decision-making

Much progress has been made on strengthening research institutions, increasing the leadership and influence of African EIP actors, improving relationships between evidence producers and policymakers, creating spaces for EIP dialogue, and improving the relevance of data and evidence to policy needs. This has increased the value that policymakers put on data and evidence and their incentives to use it. Relationship-building between evidence producers and policymakers has been a particularly important driver of contributions toward the goal in all focus areas.

However, grantees and stakeholders both report that capacity building efforts have improved individual capacity, but many policymakers still lack the technical capacity required to use data and evidence effectively. It will be helpful to dig deeper into what could be done to scale capacity building to institutional levels. In the absence of efficient national statistical and data systems, policymakers are also unable to routinely access data and evidence, even if they value it and want to use it. These challenges are preventing contributions toward the long-term goal of systematic, institutionalized, regular use of data and evidence to inform policymaking.

The cost of relationship building approaches may also limit the sustainability and scale of contributions toward the goal. Similarly, as noted by grantees and stakeholders, even where relationships are strong, political incentives can easily prevent sustainable progress toward the goal. More could be done to support the good governance and citizen advocacy work happening outside of the EIP portfolio that many stakeholders noted as an effective way to drive regular use of data and evidence in spite of political disincentives.

### Contributions toward improving people's well-being

Most grantees do not systematically track the impact of their work down to the level of improving people's well-being. This is understandable, impact measurement is expensive and time consuming, especially for grantees working in EIP where pathways to impact on people are usually long and indirect. However, this means that there is limited evidence available within the confines of this evaluation to understand how grantee contributions toward EIP outcomes have improved people's well-being.

Grantees have tracked and reported some anecdotal evidence from specific projects that have led to improved well-being as well as increased engagement between elected officials and citizens. However, within the scope of this evaluation, this is not enough evidence to systematically test assumptions in the theory of change, or to compare the effect of different grantee approaches on people's well-being.

Similarly, many grantees do not track whether policies that their work has contributed to are implemented well over time. Often, the time from policy formulation being informed by evidence, to the policy being implemented, to that implementation improving people's well-being can take many years and extend beyond the timeframe of a grantee project or grant period. This can be the case even for impact evaluations that focus on the implementation stage because they must track the impact of changes made as a result of the evaluation over time. This makes it difficult to systematically assess how policy implementation is affecting the long-term impact of grantee interventions on people's well-being.

Moreover, stakeholders also noted that weak national statistical systems are hindering consistent monitoring of policy implementation and effectiveness in most African countries. Without reliable access to basic, accurate, real-time data about public service implementation, policymakers cannot course correct or improve governance, which could limit the benefits to people's well-being in theory (for instance, investments in healthcare data management systems have shown how efficient systems can improve governance and save lives.) Evaluations and other research studies can to some degree address this issue by improving the design of major policies. However, stakeholders also noted that the amount of time and funding required for research studies often limits their use to inform day-to-day policy decisions. These dynamics may be limiting the long-term impact of the EIP strategy portfolio investments on people's well-being.

## Testing assumptions in the theory of change

Several key assumptions are included in the theory of change linking Hewlett practices and grantee activities to outcomes and the goal. These include the assumptions: that EIP leads to improved well-being; that evidence-informed policies will be well implemented; that access, capacity, incentives, and relationships are the four ingredients necessary for EIP to take place in governments; that strengthening non-governmental institutions can drive lasting change in governments; that field building, policy change and systems change are the most effective impact pathways; that impact evaluations and new data sets are the right types of data and evidence to promote; and that supporting a mix of global, regional and nationally focused grantees will lead to progress in East and West Africa. Contributions made by grantees and feedback from governments in East and West Africa provide insights to how these assumptions have held up in practice.

Most EIP grantees do not systematically track their contributions to determine whether a policy influenced by their work is implemented effectively, or whether that policy has led to an improvement in people's well-being. Without this evidence from grantees, it is not possible to test the assumptions that policies are well implemented and lead to improved wellbeing.

Many of the grantee contributions reported validate the assumption that access, technical capacity, incentives, and relationships are all required ingredients to make EIP happen. Grantees from all focus areas reported that developing long-term relationships with policymakers is an effective way to drive access, incentives, and capacity amongst policymakers, leading to more regular use of data and evidence in policymaking decisions in the government agencies where they work. Relationship-driven progress made by grantees has, in some cases, led to norm changes in government agencies, suggesting that lasting change in government systems through intervention by non-governmental organizations is possible but requires time and intensive support. Grantees also reported that political incentives can be a challenge that prevents policymakers from using data and evidence, even when relationships and access exist.

We spoke with government officials in East and West Africa (see appendix, section 8) who confirmed that long-term relationships with non-governmental EIP actors can help drive and normalize the regular use of data and evidence in governments. However, they explained that the scale and sustainability of this work is limited by inefficient national data systems that prevent consistent access to data and evidence for policymakers and by political incentives that may prevent the use of data and evidence even when access and relationships are present. Similarly, when technical capacity remains low across a government agency or weak national statistical systems prevent consistent access to data and evidence, this prevents regular use of data and evidence.

In terms of pathways, grantee contributions suggests that field building, which strengthens individual institutions, has led to systemic change in governments largely through the responsive, relationship driven approach. While individual policy wins can increase policymaker interest in EIP within the context of relationships and direct work with EIP proponents, they are less effective as a standalone demonstration effect across agencies or countries.

Strengthening Africa research institutions has driven contributions toward the goal through relationship building and increased responsiveness to policymaker needs and priorities. Similar approaches to make impact evaluations timelier and more responsive to governments have increased demand from policymakers, but many grantees also reported that policymakers value most having access to a variety of data and evidence options that can be tailored to their specific policy challenge in real-time. This suggests that a focus on promoting just one type of data or evidence is not the best way to reach the EIP goal. The data revolution portfolio includes a mix of different types of innovative data, but grantee reports suggest that it takes a long time to build interest, capacity, and systems in governments to effectively use innovative data. This is especially true because government capacity and systems to use even traditional sources of data remains weak. Innovative solutions also carry a higher risk of failure (in terms of government uptake) over a longer time horizon. Contributions by all grantees were also slowed by the pandemic, making it difficult to assess the full potential for uptake of innovative data solutions by governments.

Finally, many grantees reported the benefits of having a mix of global, regional, and nationally focused grantees working in East and West Africa. National grantees reported that they had benefited from partnerships with global grantees, along with best practices, methodologies, data sets, training, regulations, and norms set at the global level. Both national and regional grantees also reported valuing access to international forums to raise

their profile and attract funding. Regional grantees highlighted the importance of piloting innovation in one country and deploying it to others.

## Hewlett practices

We examined how Hewlett structures its grantmaking practices and non-grantmaking activities to understand how these practices are supporting grantee EIP contributions, and where improvements could be made.

**Overall, Hewlett's practices have strengthened grantee contributions, particularly through flexible and trust-based funding.** Flexible funding, long-term support models, and genuine thought partnership have empowered grantees to invest in organizational development and innovation, allowing them to opportunistically respond to policymaker requests and changing EIP trends. Flexible funding also contributes to institutional strength and sustainability. Some grantees have suggested that limited access to core funding support is one of their greatest challenges. Without it, they simply do not have the ability to plan and conduct operations sustainably, let alone to invest in innovation or pivot to seize new opportunities.

**Intentional support for organizations based in Africa and partnerships between global and regional institutions have significantly improved EIP capacity** on the continent. It has also enabled many Africa-based organizations to lead the way in developing responsive relationships with governments and applying global standards and public goods to local contexts.

**Grantees perceive Hewlett as a committed and valuable partner.** This is exemplified by the willingness to have open conversations with grantees about organizational challenges they face and solve them together, rather than focusing exclusively on surfacing successful impact stories. Grantees also expressed interest in receiving even more thought partnership from the Hewlett program officers. This could be done by actively sharing their expertise and views, providing space for ad-hoc open conversations, and helping grantees solve the challenges they face. **Convenings offer a good way to foster more connections across the field.** Interest in convenings emerged as a top finding from interviews with grantees. There is a strong interest in more formal and opportunistic connections among EIP organizations, within Africa and globally. Grantees see great value in convenings to break down sector silos and identify synergies with actors who share similar goals. **Several Hewlett Foundation practices could be improved to drive further contributions.** Many grantees reported a desire for Hewlett to do more to connect grantees, promote partnerships, and convene actors in the EIP ecosystem. Some grantees said they would appreciate additional technical capacity building support from Hewlett. This could be improved if done from a perspective of learning across focus areas within the EIP strategy and with other GEG strategies at the foundation.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### Scope and purpose of the evaluation

Dalberg Advisors is working with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to refresh the foundation's Evidence Informed Policymaking (EIP) strategy. As part of the strategy refresh process, Dalberg conducted an evaluation of contributions made toward target outcomes during the last strategy period from 2018-2022. The purpose of this evaluation is fundamentally to serve as a learning exercise that captures and builds on the experiences and lessons learned from the important work of grantees to further collective goals in the EIP space.

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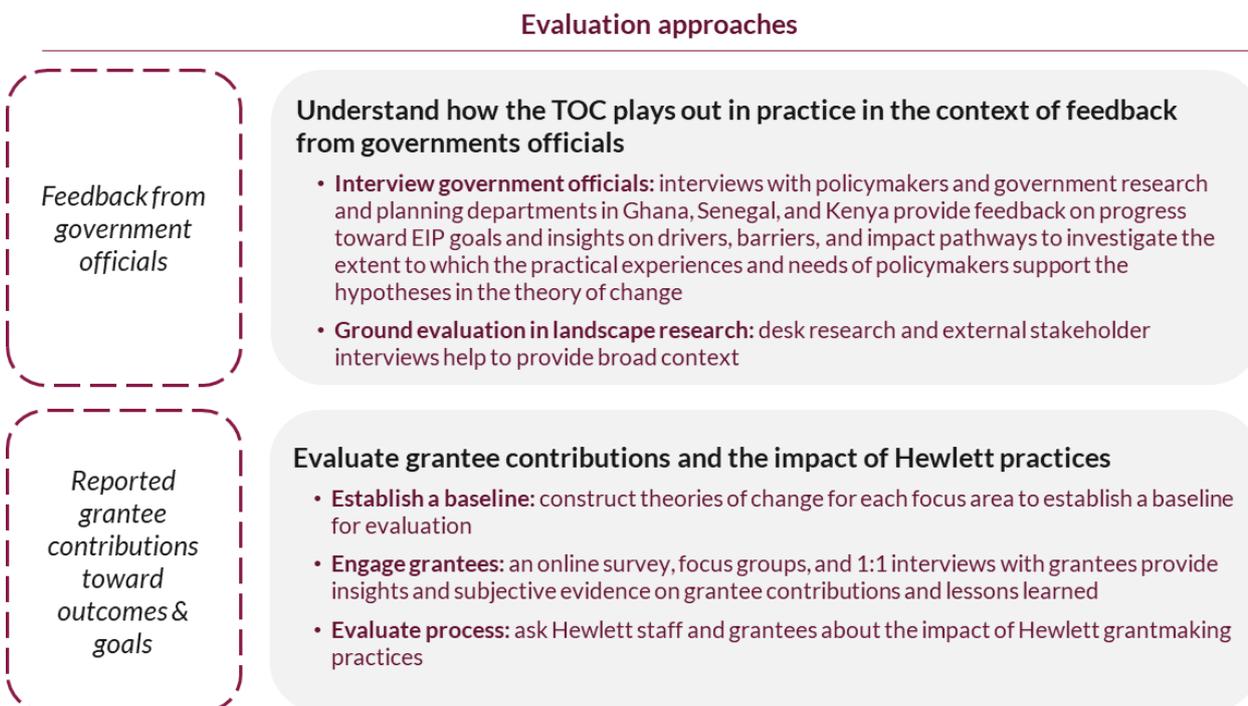
### Methodology

#### Approach

The evaluation methodology was designed to inform the EIP strategy refresh process. During the refresh, important choices will need to be made when reviewing each element of the strategy. We therefore structured the evaluation in line with four key strategy areas: problem and goal, target outcomes, grantmaking focus areas, and Hewlett practices. These strategy areas also reflect the major levels of a theory of change.

Data to inform the evaluation was then collected from both grantees and government officials, as shown in the graphic below. Starting with grantee activities and outputs, we spoke to grantees and their collaborators about their contributions and challenges. We then spoke to policymakers and government officials in several countries where many grantees work to gain insights on how well the assumptions that sit behind the theory of change are operating in practice (see appendix for full methodology on interviews with government officials).

Figure 2 Methodology



## Evaluation Activities

- The findings presented in this report are based on primary data collected by Dalberg Advisors over a period of three months, from late 2022 to early 2023. The sources of data collection included: **52 survey responses** received from 43 different grantee organizations out of 55 active grantee organizations in the EIP portfolio (as of September 2022)
- **5 grantee focus groups.** Focus groups were held around each focus and sub-focus area of the EIP strategy (institutionalizing evidence use, data revolution, data governance)<sup>2</sup> as well as citizen advocacy (while not an explicit focus area, this theme was explored given its direct relevance to influencing the increased use of evidence by policymakers)
- **24 1:1 interviews with grantees**, based on a representative sample of grantee organizations across size, focus area, and geographic base
- **20 1:1 interviews with evidence users** in Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal focused on government research departments, ministries of agriculture, ministries of finance and economic planning, parliament, and the executive branch. These countries were selected because they have a concentration of Hewlett EIP grantees with clear recognition that findings cannot be generalized to East and West Africa

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Lens

We approached the data collection process using DEIJ as a guiding principle. 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.

- 55% of grantees interviewed are women
- 62% of grantees interviewed are based in African countries (Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa); 77% in East Africa; 23% in West Africa

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

- Where are there opportunities to amplify joint impact for Hewlett's Gender Equity and Governance (GEG) program strategies (EIP, Inclusive Governance, Women's Economic Empowerment and Global Reproductive Equity)?
- To what extent and how has grantee work benefitted women or other underserved people?
- How has Hewlett incorporated DEIJ into grantmaking criteria and decisions?

## Limitations

The EIP strategy that underlies the portfolio developed over the past five years reflects a high-level theory of change established in 2018. However, this original theory of change did not have a standard set of progress targets or indicators. As a result, grantees have largely reported on contributions in a qualitative manner in line with their respective objectives. Given the lack of well-defined progress targets, it has been challenging to evaluate portfolio contributions rigorously and track the goals set in 2018, particularly as those goals evolved and emerged over time.

Given this history, the Dalberg team reconstructed theories of change to demonstrate the pathways by which EIP grantees have been achieving impact in practice. This enabled us to better structure our analysis of where contributions have been made and which approaches have been most effective in driving those contributions. See Section 3 for more details on the original and reconstructed theories of change.

Given these limitations, this evaluation approach focuses on learning and recognizes that more rigorous methodologies cannot be applied retrospectively in the absence of clearly defined progress metrics at the start of grantmaking activities. This evaluation highlights key areas of contributions made and lessons learned based on summarized feedback from grantees through an online survey, focus groups, and interviews, along with

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<sup>2</sup> For the impact evaluations focus area, the Dalberg team conducted 1:1 interviews with grantees instead of a focus group due to scheduling difficulties

feedback from external stakeholders. Therefore, this evaluation assesses the indicative direction of change rather than measuring quantifiable impact.

## III. THEORY OF CHANGE

### Evolution of EIP thinking at the Hewlett Foundation

In 2013, the Hewlett Board approved the EIP work following the merger of the Population and Global Development Programs. Several dynamics, including the growing trend towards African-led initiatives, the success of the transparency and accountability movement, and the demand for data to support commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), created a unique window of opportunity. Early grants of the EIP portfolio included existing grants supporting demographic analysis, policy research, and impact evaluation, such as the Think Tank Initiative, which provided flexible support to over 40 independent policy research organizations in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia to develop their institutional capacities in research quality, policy engagement, organizational performance, and collaboration with each other.

Over the next seven years, the EIP portfolio organically developed with a core focus on evidence use as much as evidence production. This was a notable shift for the impact evaluation focus area especially, which prior to 2014 was almost exclusively focused on core support for randomized control trials to generate bodies of evidence. From 2014 onward, the focus included more targeted support for engagement approaches geared toward decision-making by government agencies.

There was also a concerted push for more grantmaking to institutions working in their own geographic contexts. Along with a recognition that many Western research methodologies needed to be adapted to local contexts in African countries, there was a realization that researchers with deep contextual knowledge and networks were best positioned to develop the relationships necessary for sustained policy engagement. Finally, there was an emphasis on providing sustained, flexible support to institutions making significant contributions to EIP outcomes and learning, and to new initiatives that help to increase attention to the EIP agenda and foster connections across the field.

### Original theory of change (TOC)

In 2018, Hewlett formalized the EIP work by drafting a strategy grounded “both on the technical and moral imperatives of using the best available information to understand and address the needs of all people and improve their lives.” The overarching goal was **that governments in East and West Africa, at all levels, would increasingly use evidence in all phases of the policymaking process – from agenda setting to implementation, monitoring, and course-correction – to inform decisions about social and economic policies that have particular significance, relevance, and practical potential to improve people’s well-being.**

The strategy revolved around several key elements<sup>3</sup>:

- **Think tanks:** This focus area was initially dominated by the Think Tank Initiative, which supported African policy research institutions in generating policy-relevant evidence and engaging in ongoing policy processes. Hewlett later re-oriented its focus to target two specific outcomes. First, African policy research institutions contribute to institutionalized and ongoing use of evidence by governments through government capacity building for evidence use, fostering communities of scholars and policymakers to address priority policy questions, and cultivating national and regional communities of practice around EIP. Second, fortifying the think tank sector and elevating African expertise so that African scholars and institutions are valued and are credible contributors to policy debates in their countries and on the global stage.
- **Data:** The call for a “data revolution” (the increase in the volume of data available, new technologies that enable new statistical methods, and the growing expectation that traditional and new sources of data will be used to make government decisions) within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offered a good political opportunity to increase government attention to data use, building in part on the Hewlett Foundation’s longstanding investments in data generation and analysis of data quality by the demographic community. Hewlett targeted two major outcomes specifically. First, that governments integrate new and traditional sources of data into ongoing decision making. Second, non-

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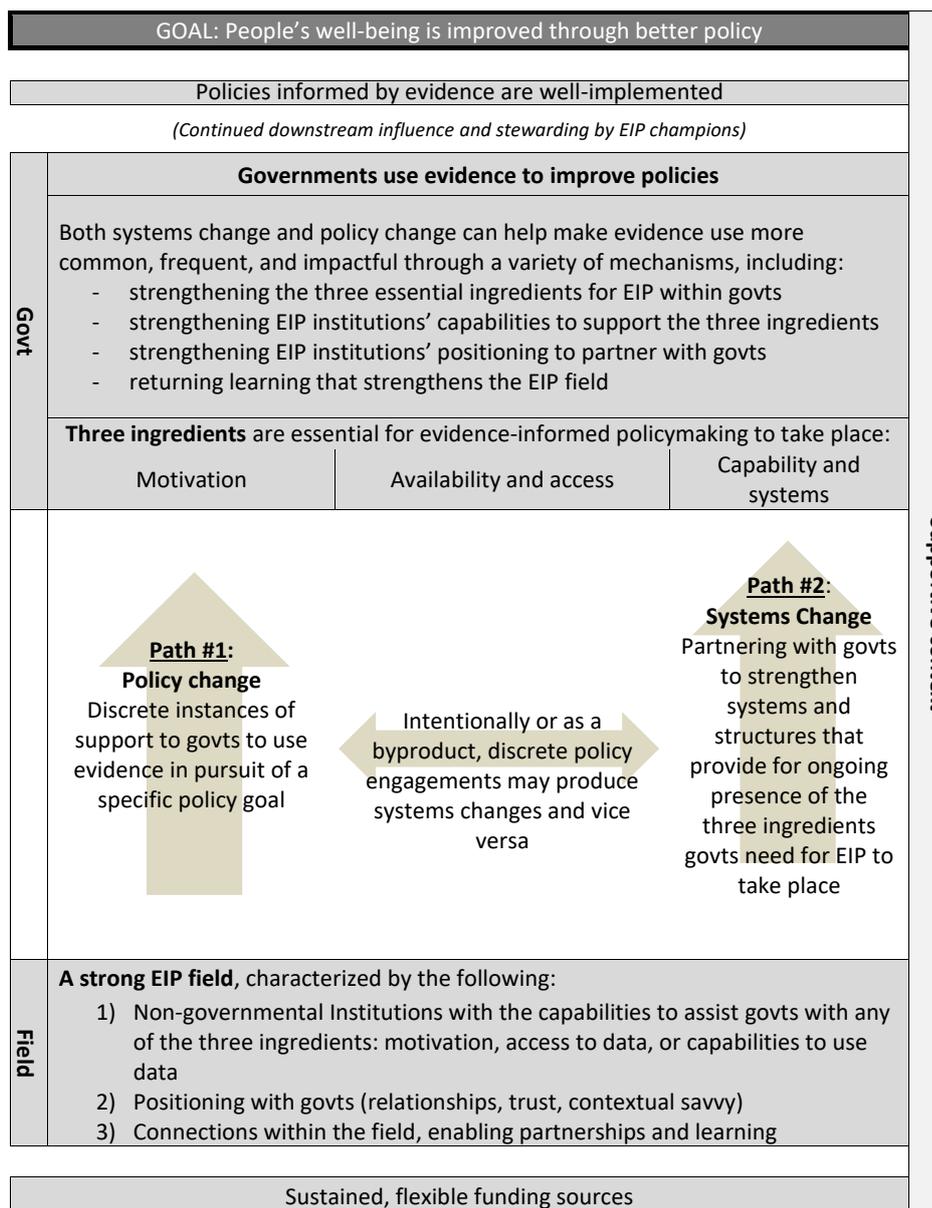
<sup>3</sup> Based on Hewlett’s EIP Strategy Summary documents

governmental data actors among governments, the private sector, civil society, and funders are better connected to collaborate and share learning, with a primary focus on data being used.

- **Impact evaluations:** Recognizing the importance of government decision-makers knowing the results of policies and programs, Hewlett has been a leader in funding grantees to conduct policy-oriented impact evaluations and systematic reviews, generating an important body of knowledge about the effects of policies and programs. Building on this foundation, Hewlett sought to increase the use and effectiveness of impact evaluations by contributing to three outcomes. First, impact evaluations and systematic reviews become more responsive and relevant to the needs of policymakers. Second, that more African researchers and African institutions lead impact evaluations and systematic reviews and facilitate their use. And third, that decision-makers in African governments increasingly use information from impact evaluations and systematic reviews.
- **Field building:** Hewlett's main contribution to the EIP field has been supporting anchor institutions that advance EIP goals and learning – both African institutions that will be an enduring part of changing how governments function and institutions based in the U.S. or Europe that work in partnership with actors in various African countries. In addition to strengthening anchor institutions, other field building approaches include deepening communication and coordination with likeminded funders, providing catalytic support to new initiatives that create connections across the field and foster learning and collaboration between actors, and funding research about the field.

This strategy centered Hewlett 's efforts on East and West Africa. Over time, the bulk of grantees' work clustered in a handful of countries: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Senegal, and to a lesser extent, Benin. This geographic concentration was opportunistic, as Hewlett offers geographic flexibility within East and West Africa to allow grantees to work where they can find the most traction and leverage funding from other sources.

**The strategy set out to advance its long-term goal of governments in East and West Africa increasingly using evidence in all phases of the policymaking process by achieving a set of target outcomes (access, incentives, capacity, relationships) through three mutually re-enforcing impact pathways (policy change, systems change, and field building).** The following paragraphs describe these target outcomes and impact pathways.



**Impact pathway 1:**  
Discreet policy change, a goal centered on driving more interest in EIP among policymakers by demonstrating the success of policies informed by data and evidence.

**Impact pathway 2:**  
System changes that enhance governments' capacity to apply evidence or build incentives for evidence use, ultimately making the use of evidence in policymaking more regular and routine.

**Impact pathway 3:**  
Creating a strong EIP field that raises the profile of evidence use, fosters connections and learning, attracts funding, and partners with governments to support access to, and the capacity and incentives to use, data and evidence in policymaking.

The strategy also focused on specific target outcomes, which were contingent on the assumption that there are four ingredients that must be present for EIP to take place within governments:

- **Access:** contextually relevant, timely, and decision-oriented evidence exists and is accessible to policymakers
- **Incentives:** policymakers are motivated to access and use evidence and data in their decision-making
- **Capacity:** policymakers have the capacity and systems to use evidence at all stages of the policy process, including implementation
- **Relationships:** policymakers and policymaking bodies have relationships that facilitate the relevance and use of evidence

## EIP focus areas

From the initial key elements of the 2018 strategy described above (think tanks, data, impact evaluations, field building), three thematic areas have crystalized and currently constitute the focus areas of the EIP strategy. They are institutionalizing evidence use (IEU), impact evaluations, data revolution, and data governance. The following paragraphs describe these focus areas.<sup>4</sup>

**IEU is a broad and cross-cutting focus area that aims to drive the regular use of data and evidence in policymaking decisions** by institutionalizing evidence use in government policymaking systems and processes. This focus area has strengthened Southern think tanks to inform national, regional, and global policymaking, and more broadly promote evidence use in their countries. EIP field building has been a major focus of the IEU focus area, including fostering partnerships between global and Africa-based EIP grantees. Of the IEU grants, 43% have gone to organizations based in the Global South, representing \$8.9 million, while 57% of IEU grants have gone to Global North-based organizations, accounting for \$19.6 million. Illustrative examples of IEU grantees include the [Center for Global Development \(CGD\)](#), [IDinsight](#), the [African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs \(ACEPA\)](#), and the [African Institute for Development Policy Research and Dialogue \(AFIDEP\)](#).

**The Impact Evaluations focus area supports the institutional growth and strengthening of global, regional, and national institutions that provide impact evaluations** with the aim to increase the use and usefulness of impact evaluations by governments in East and West Africa. It also supports capacity and relationship building by evaluation institutions with governments to promote uptake. Of the active impact evaluation grants, 38% have gone to organizations based in the Global South, representing \$9.6 million, compared to 62% of impact evaluations grants going to Global North-based organizations, accounting for \$17.9 million. Illustrative examples of impact evaluation grantees include the [International Initiative for Impact Evaluation \(3ie\)](#), the [Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis](#), the [Partnership for Economic Policy \(PEP\)](#), the [Economic and Social Research Foundation \(ESRF\)](#), and [J-PAL](#).

**The Data Revolution focus area aims to harness the data revolution for global development** by supporting the production of high-quality, policy relevant data connecting producers of new and innovative forms of data with governments in East and West Africa and developing capacity to use these data sources to inform policy decisions. Just 18% of data revolution grants have gone to organizations based in the Global South, representing just under \$1 million compared with 82% of grants going to Global North-based organizations and accounting for \$10.9 million. This focus area also contains a **data governance sub-focus area that complements data revolution efforts by helping governments in East and West Africa develop policy frameworks** that balance public good uses of data with data privacy and protection. It has focused on ensuring that African voices drive the development of data governance frameworks that are specific to African country contexts. In the data governance sub-focus area, 76% of grants have gone to organizations based in the Global South, representing \$4.4 million, compared to 24% of grants going to Global North-based organizations, representing \$3.4 million. Illustrative examples of data revolution grantees include [Flowminder](#), the [Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data \(GPSDD\)](#), and [Sunbird AI](#). Illustrative examples of data governance grantee include the [Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law \(CIPIT\)](#), [Open Institute](#), [Amnesty International Kenya](#), and the [Center for the Study of the Economies of Africa \(CSEA\)](#).

## Reconstructed theories of change

Given the organic evolution of the EIP strategy described in the previous paragraphs, the original TOC does not fully capture the up-to-date EIP strategy in practice. Considering this, the Dalberg team has reconstructed theories of change to articulate an updated understanding of the current or 'reconstructed' TOC for each of the focus areas. Dalberg has created a structured approach to understand where contributions have been made and which approaches have been most effective. This approach helps to interrogate the relevance of the TOC in today's world, test key assumptions that sit behind it, and consider the role of additional factors, like political incentives, that did not feature prominently in the initial TOC.

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<sup>4</sup> The grantee organizations listed in the following paragraphs are strictly illustrative to provide an idea of the range of organizations and activities in each focus area. This by no means reflects the results of the evaluation or has any bearing on the new EIP strategy.

The visuals below illustrate the ‘reconstructed’ TOCs for each focus area. The institutionalizing evidence use TOC is distinct but overarching, with the goal of embedding the regular use of data and evidence in policymaking. The impact evaluation and data revolution and governance TOCs align with the overarching IEU TOC at the target outcomes level (all three focus areas are in practice working toward the same target outcomes and goal), but they seek distinct outputs focused on promoting the regular use of specific types of data and evidence, such as impact evaluations and new data sets.

Figure 3 Focus area 1 reconstructed TOC: Overarching EIP and Institutionalizing Evidence Use

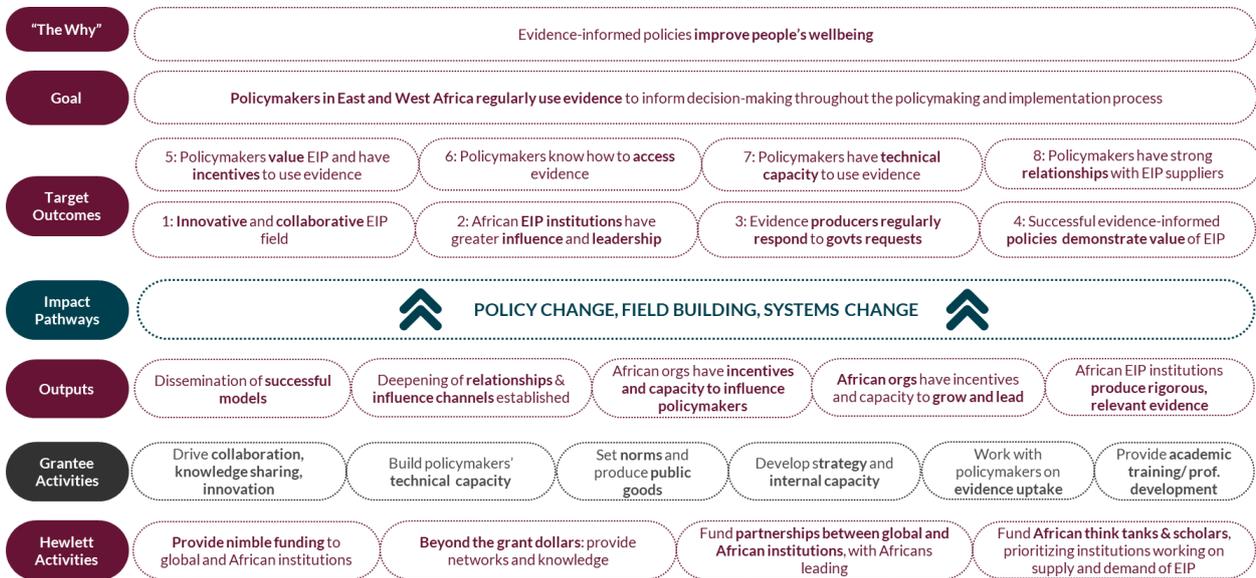


Figure 4 Focus area 2 reconstructed TOC: Impact Evaluations

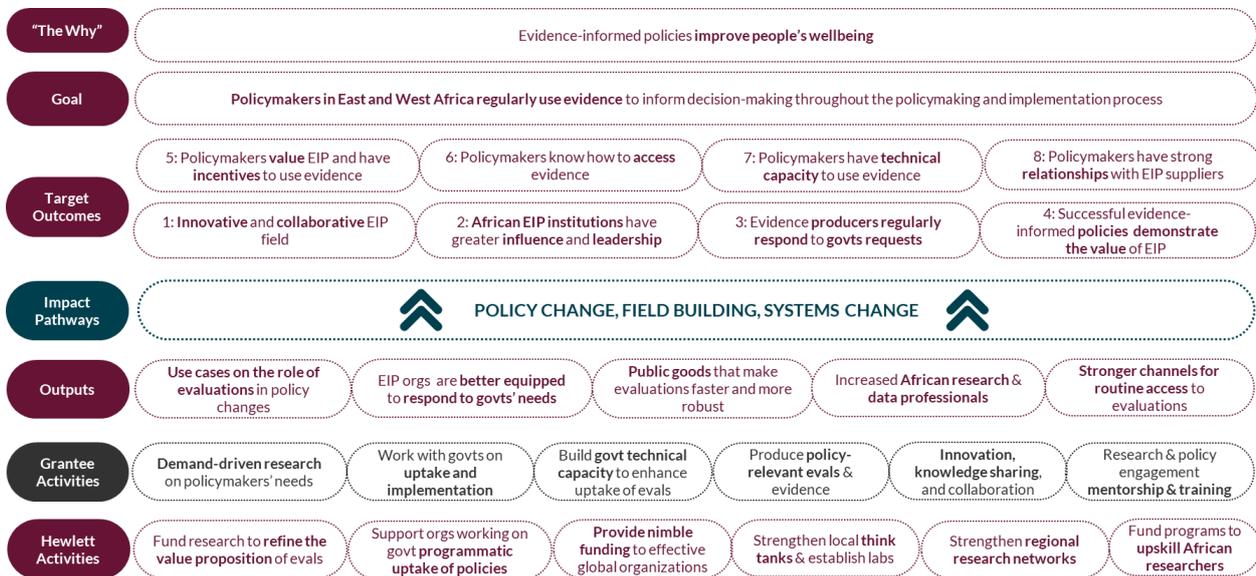
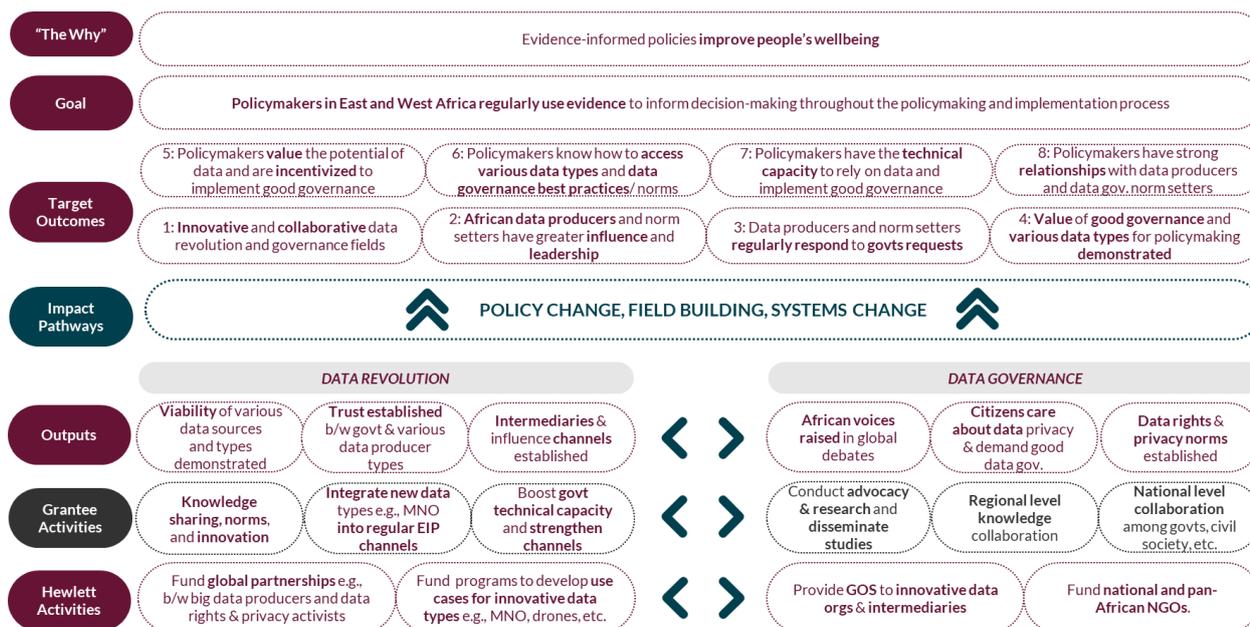


Figure 5 Focus area 3 reconstructed TOC: Data Revolution and Data Governance



## Key underlying assumptions tested

The reconstructed TOCs incorporate many of the same assumptions that underlie the original TOC, as well as more specific ones based on how the focus areas have been operating in practice. In this evaluation, we have tested several of these assumptions through progress tracking, learning, and implications:

- Systematic evidence use by policymakers leads to better policies and implementation that improve people's well-being
- Access, capacity, incentives, and relationships are the four ingredients that must all be present for EIP to take place within governments
- Strengthening non-governmental institutions can drive lasting EIP in policymaking systems
- Field building, policy change and systems change are the most effective impact pathways to achieve the target outcomes
- Systems changes are 'sticky' and endure political transitions so as to enable institutionalization
- Promoting successful evidence-informed policy changes can lead to routine EIP and replication (demonstration effect)
- Impact evaluations and innovative new data sets are the right types of data and evidence to drive contributions toward target outcomes and impact goals
- Supporting a mix of global, regional, and nationally focused grantees, and partnerships among them, will drive progress toward target outcomes in East and West Africa
- Empowering grantees, EIP institutions, and individual researchers based in Africa will accelerate contributions toward target outcomes and impact goals
- Investing in the production of public goods, norms and innovations at the global level will have an impact on EIP target outcomes in East and West Africa

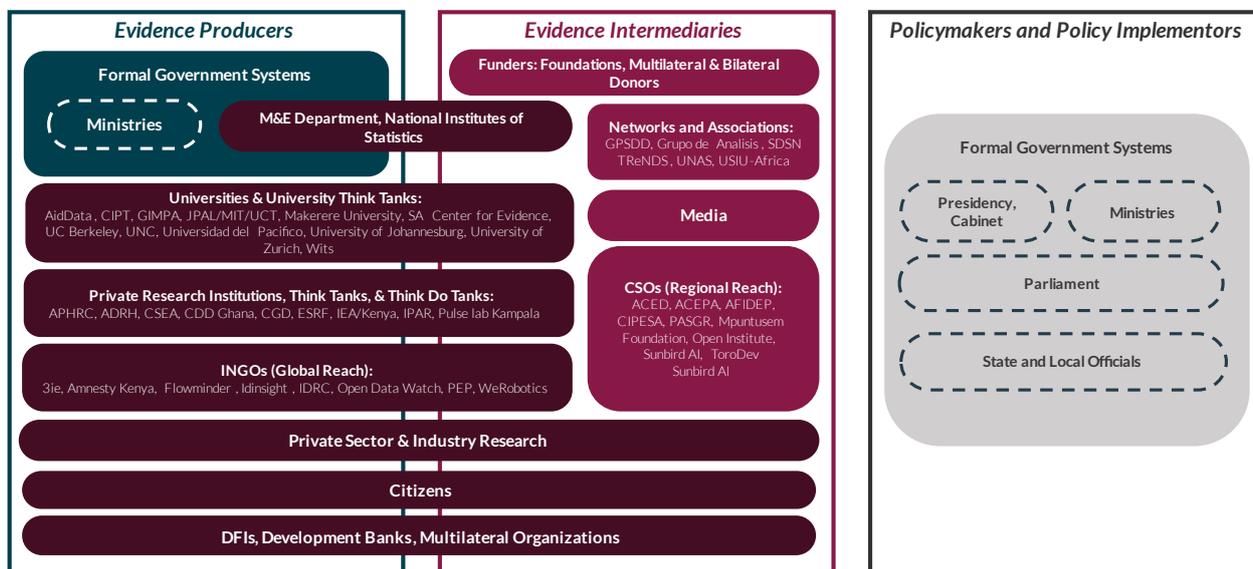
## Implications for the reconstructed theory of change

The reconstructed TOCs are crucial to the evaluation as they serve as a roadmap for assessing contributions towards the target outcomes. The core of the evaluation is a set of learning questions organized around each of the target outcomes in the reconstructed TOC. Examining where contributions have been made and which assumptions have held true or been proven false using the reconstructed TOCs will inform the creation of a new TOC for the refreshed strategy in Phase 2.

## IV. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

EIP grantees are drawn from across the evidence ecosystem, encompassing evidence producers, evidence intermediaries, and enabling environment actors. They work in various institutions, including universities, think-and-do tanks, INGOs, and CSOs. As depicted in the ecosystem map below, they form a diverse array of networks and associations.

Figure 6 Mapping of grantees in the evidence ecosystem



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

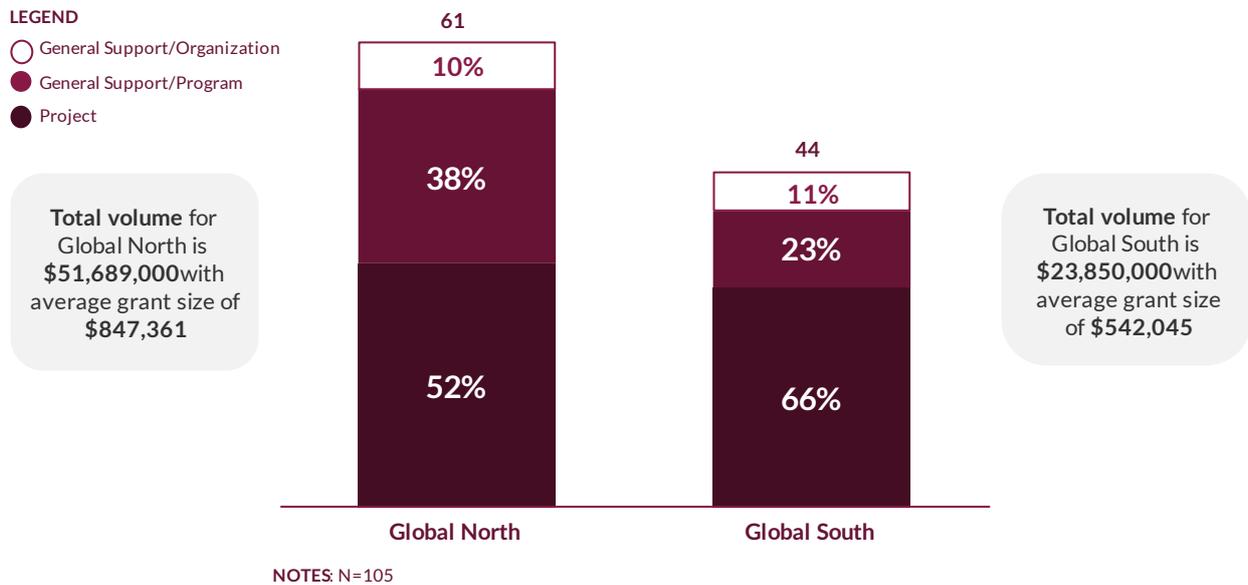
The following analysis focuses on active grants in the 2017-2022 period and was conducted in September 2022. However, the portfolio is subject to continual change as grants expire and new ones commence. As of September 2022, the EIP portfolio comprised 105 active grants across 55 different grantee organizations, with each focus area accounting for approximately one third of grants. Institutionalizing Evidence Use (IEU) has the largest share of grants at 35%, followed by Impact Evaluations (28%), and Data Revolution and Data Governance (21% and 16% respectively).

Despite the portfolio being roughly evenly split across the three focus areas, grant sizes vary significantly, ranging from a low of \$30,000 to a high of \$5 million, with a median size of \$500,000. The largest grantees in terms of grant size include 3ie, CGD, IDRC, GPSDD, IDinsight, and AidData. Together, these six grantees have received over \$30 million out of \$120 million allocated from 2017 to 2022. While the portfolio is roughly evenly split across the three focus areas, grants range from a low of \$30,000 to a high of \$5 million with a median size of \$500,000. The largest grantees in terms of grant size include 3ie, CGD, IDRC, GPSDD, IDinsight, and AidData. Cumulatively, over \$30 million out of \$120 million from 2017 to 2022 has been allocated across these six grantees. Grant duration averaged 25 months across all focus areas, ranging from an average low of 22 months in the data revolution focus area to an average high of 28 months in the impact evaluation focus area. Individual grant length overall ranged from 1 to 36 months.

While the majority of grantees direct their efforts regionally within East and West Africa and across the continent, others, including national organizations, focus on a single country, particularly Uganda and Kenya, followed by Ghana and Senegal. A few grantees work at the global level. The portfolio comprises a mix of grantees based in East and West Africa (roughly 60%) and the Global North (roughly 40%, including the United States, Sweden, Canada, and Switzerland). The portfolio includes a mix of grantees based in East and West Africa (roughly 60%) and in the Global North (roughly 40% -- including the United States, Sweden, Canada, and Switzerland). However, in resource terms, the proportions are flipped with roughly 40% of the grantmaking dollars going to those organizations based in Africa, and 60% to those based in the Global North. This is for a variety of historical reasons (e.g., longer-term anchor grantees based in Europe and the US), and structural

reasons (as part of its more recent push towards having more grantees based in Africa, initial grant sizes are often a bit smaller at first). Thus, it is likely this profile will shift more towards Africa in the coming years.

Figure 7 Count of grants by organization headquarter location and type of support

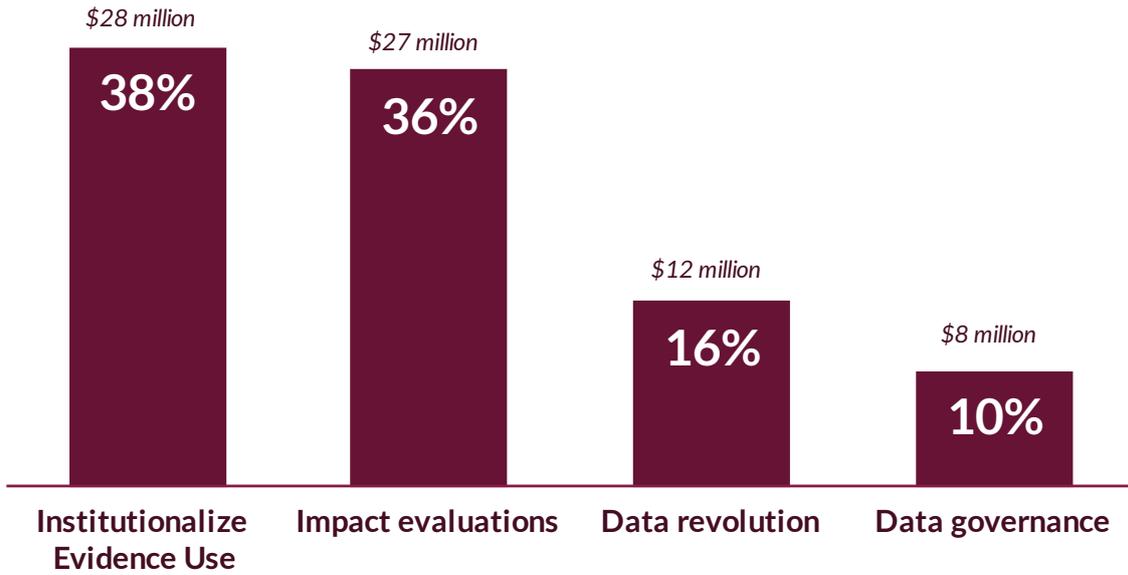


The Hewlett Foundation places a strong value on prioritizing the use of flexible funding grants such as general operating support grants (GOS) and general program grants, whenever possible. For some teams, close to 70% of grantmaking funds are in these most flexible mechanisms. However, for EIP, the figures are a bit lower than what is found on other teams within the foundation. Currently, flexible support represents only 42% of all active grants (which includes 31% for general program support and 11% for general organizational support (GOS)), while project grants, which are the most restrictive type of funding that Hewlett offers, account for 58% of all grants. The reason for this is two-fold: (1) as part of its push towards localization, the team has started making grants to a wider range of newer organizations, largely based in Africa, whereby the initial grantmaking often begins on a project grant basis for a variety of administrative and operational reasons; and (2) many EIP grantees are working on wider issues beyond just EIP, and thus, GOS and program support are not always the best grantmaking tools compared to the ring-fencing that a project grant provides. As relationships with these newer, more local grantees mature, it is likely that the EIP portfolio's percentages of flexible funding will become more in line with foundation averages.

Figure 8 Number of grants by focus area



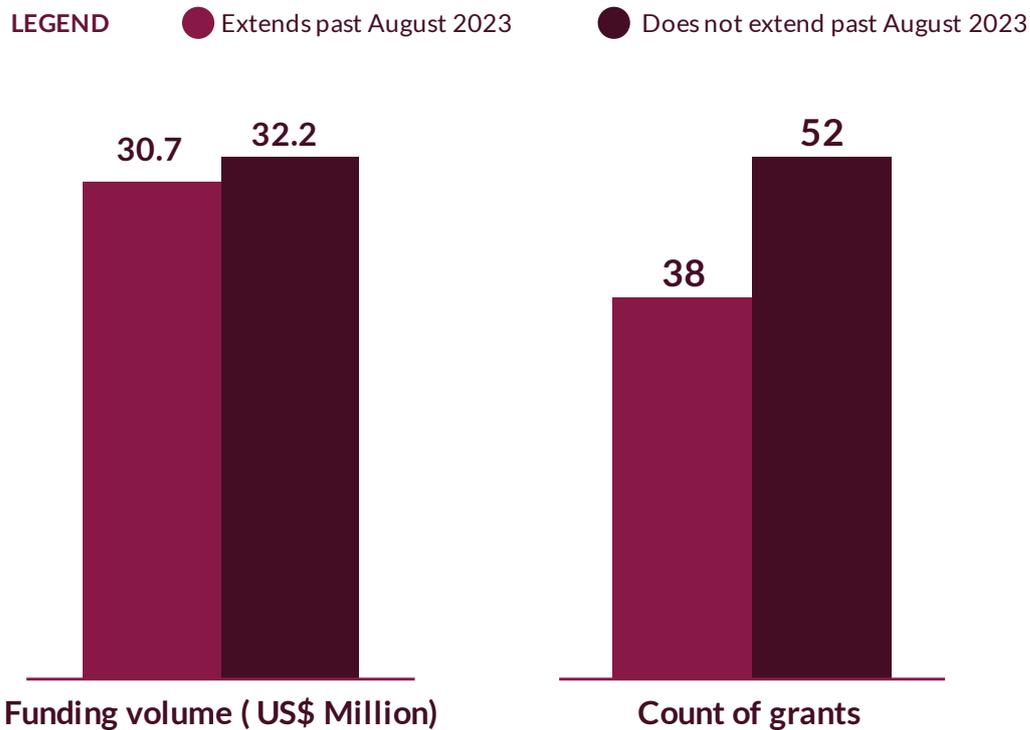
Figure 9 Volume of grant funding by focus area



NOTES: N=105

Just under half of active grants (42%) extend past August 2023, meaning that they will continue into the next strategy period. This represents about \$32 million in total funding.

Figure 10 Analysis of grants continuing past the end of the current strategy

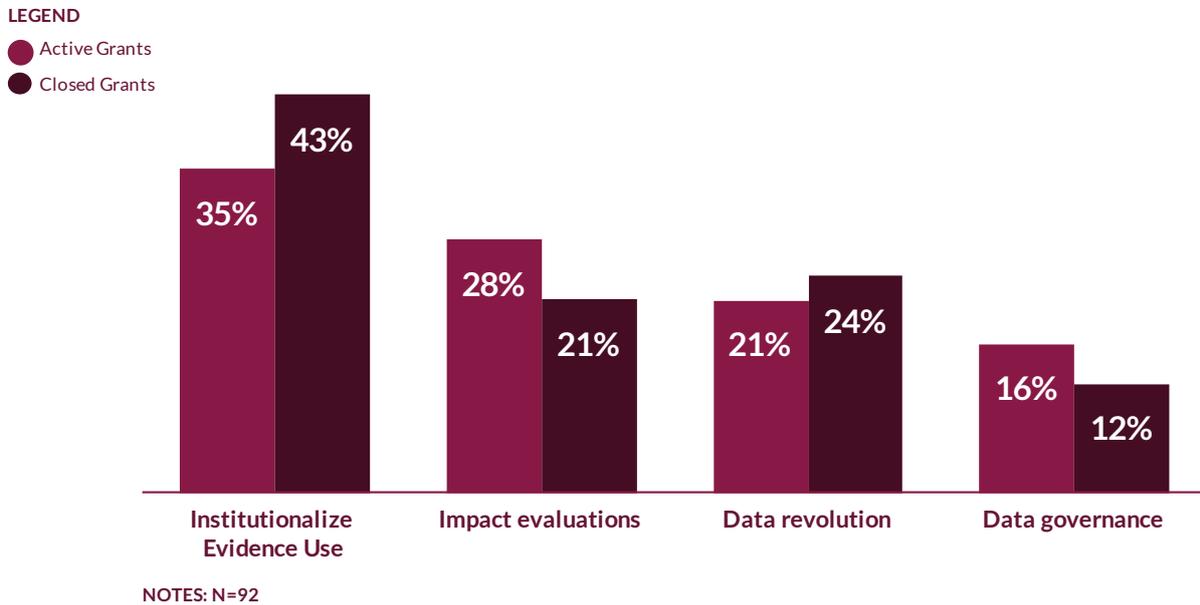


### Analysis of closed grants

The following analysis examines 92 grants across 52 different organizations during the time period 2018 to 2022 that were closed as of September 2022. However, it is worth noting that a total of 13 organizations are no longer active grantees, and their contributions are not factored into the evaluation of active grantees presented in the following sections.

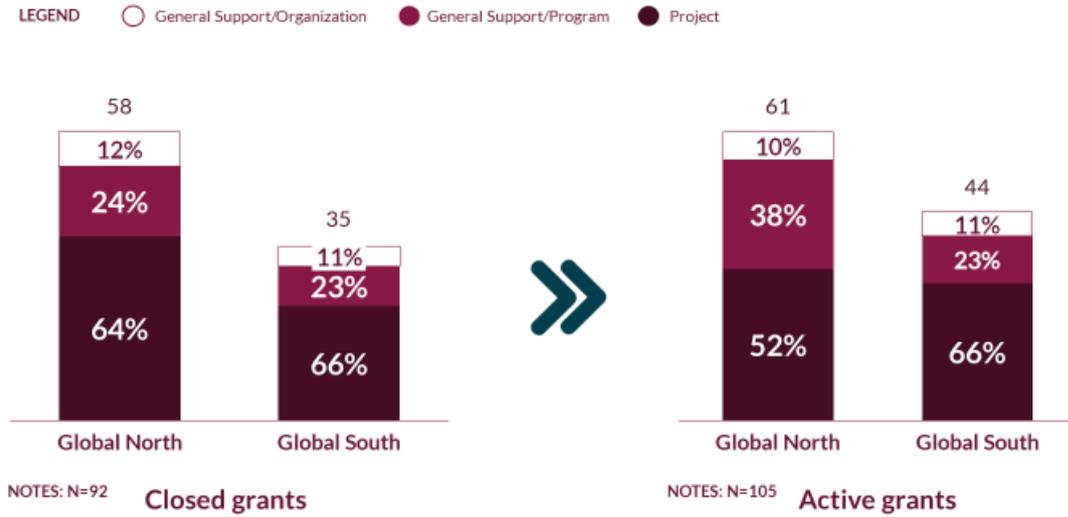
On average, grant sizes have increased from approximately \$480,000 for closed grants to about \$720,000 for active grants. The allocation of grants across the focus areas remains similar between active and closed grants, with a slight increase in the share of grants for impact evaluations and data governance (the newest area of focus in the strategy), and slight decreases in the shares of IEU and data revolution grants.

Figure 11 Number of grants by focus area, active and closed grants comparison



The proportion of grants awarded to Africa-based organizations has increased from 37% for closed grants to 42% for active grants. A comparison of closed grants and active grants also reveals a trend of increasing general support, but this is seen only for Global North-based grantees. For these grants, general support has increased from 36% for closed grants to 48% for active grants. Meanwhile, for Africa-based grantees, the allocation of support types The share of grants to Africa-based organizations has increased from 37% for closed grants to 42% for active grants. A comparison of closed grants and active grants also shows a trend of increasing general support; however, this is seen only for Global North-based grantees – for these grants, general support has increased from 36% for closed grants to 48% for active grants. While for Africa-based grantees, the allocation in type of support has not changed between closed and active grants, staying at 34% general support and 66% project specific. As noted above, this is largely for structural reasons (e.g., newer grantees, grantees not yet with an equivalency determination, etc.), and is likely to shift in the coming years as the team takes a stronger focus on localization and flexible funding goals. As noted above, this trend is largely due to structural reasons (e.g., newer grantees, grantees not yet with an equivalency determination, etc.), and is likely to shift in the coming years as the team prioritizes on localization and flexible funding goals.

Figure 12 Count of grants in the Global south and north by type of support



# V. GRANTEE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TOWARD OUTCOMES AND THE GOAL

## Current progress tracking framework

Since 2018, the Hewlett EIP team has been developing and refining implementation markers structured around each of the focus areas of the EIP strategy to assess progress related to staff activity, grantee activity, grantee capacity, and external changes aligned with the target outcomes and impact goals in the TOC. However, current data collection channels to assess contributions, including grantee impact reports, are not yet aligned with these implementation markers, and therefore, the Hewlett EIP team relies on regular check-ins with grantees to assess contributions qualitatively.

As a result, to date the nature of the impact reporting approach has been mainly narrative progress reporting. While some grantees have reported impact by tracking contributions against specific indicators, those indicators are specific to their individual projects and do not align to a standard set of common indicators in the EIP theory of change since these do not exist. This makes it impossible to track contributions towards target outcomes systematically and rigorously across all grantees in a common way.

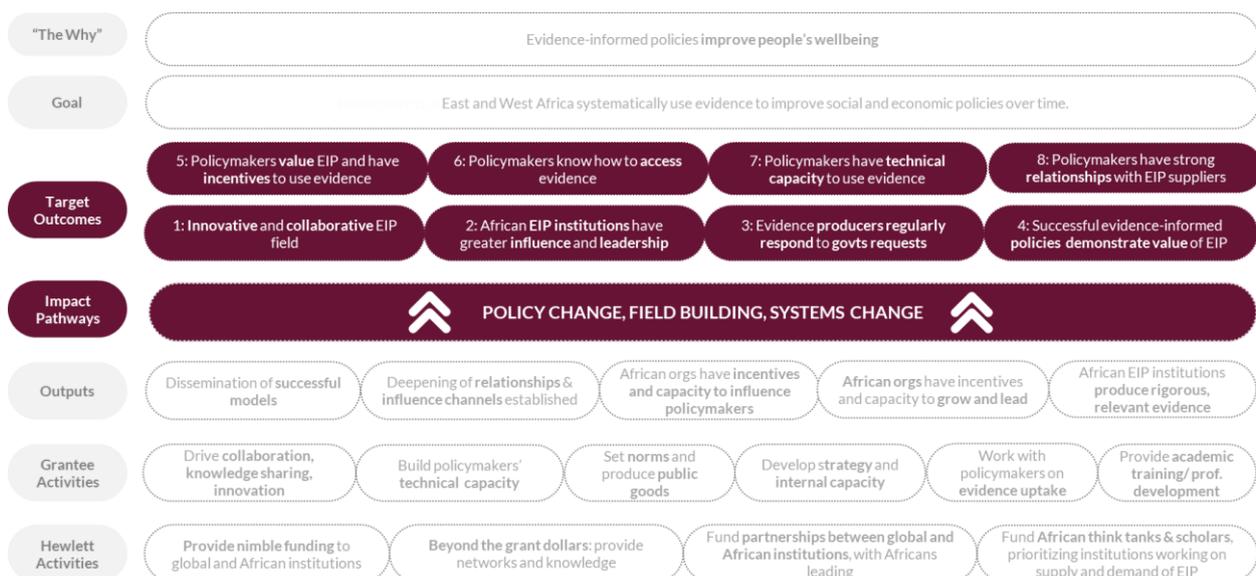
## Structure of this progress evaluation

Given this context, the evaluation focuses on learning, recognizing that rigorous evaluation methodologies cannot be applied in retrospect in the absence of a clearly defined theory of change with corresponding implementation markers from the start of grantee activities. The following sections thus assess indicative direction of change rather than measuring quantifiable impact. This progress evaluation follows the structure of the reconstructed theories of change by assessing the target outcomes individually across each focus area, and then explores how contributions toward the target outcomes contribute to the overall goal of policymakers regularly using evidence to inform decision-making in policymaking. Finally, the evaluation considers how these cumulative contributions ultimately inform long-term impact on people’s well-being.

## Contributions toward the outcomes

The theory of change sets out to strengthen evidence production and intermediation and demonstrate effective evidence-informed policy changes to achieve a set of target outcomes, including increased incentives, access, capacity, and relationships. These outcomes would ultimately lead to the goal of regular use of evidence in policymaking. This section will assess how contributions were made towards achieving the target outcomes.

Figure 13 Reconstructed theory of change | Overall EIP and Institutionalizing evidence use

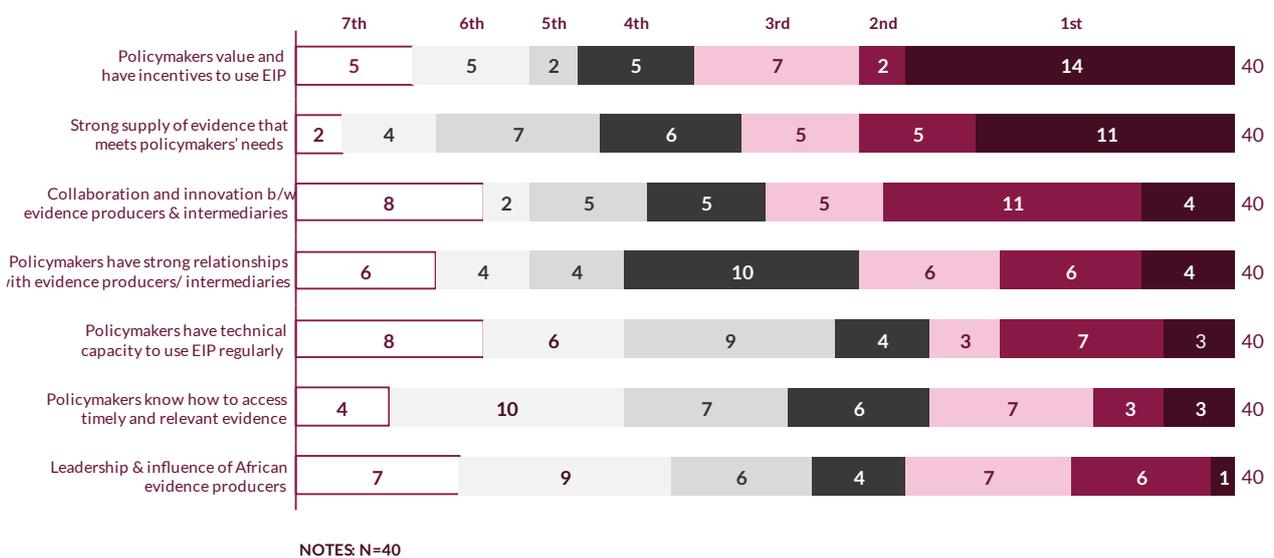


## Grantee views of their own contributions toward outcomes

In the online grantee survey, respondents were asked to rank the target outcomes in the reconstructed theories of change in terms of the importance of their contributions to each. According to the survey results, grantees report contributing the most to the target outcomes shown in the figure below.

The top ranked outcome is policymakers valuing and having incentives to use EIP, which reflects the impact of grantees' achievements on policymakers' views of evidence and its potential for effective policymaking. This is related to the second most top-ranked outcome: 'a supply of evidence that meet policymakers' needs', suggesting that policymakers' increased openness to evidence is being met by a growing supply of evidence that is relevant and actionable to policymakers. The third top-ranked outcome was the increase in collaboration between evidence producers and intermediaries, signaling the growing strength of the EIP ecosystem. The outcome ranked first the least by grantees was 'African EIP institutions have greater influence and leadership,' highlighting the need to continue to elevate more local voices and support EIP institutions on the continent to take a leading role.

Figure 14 Rankings of the target outcome that grantees contributed the most to



Source: Online grantee survey conducted by Dalberg Advisors

## Evaluation of contributions toward outcomes

The following paragraphs describe contributions made by grantees in each focus area toward the common target outcomes. This assessment of contributions is directional and is not meant to be rigorous given that it is based on self-reported qualitative data. The assessments are based on the following scheme:

-  : Limited contributions observed
-  : Moderate contributions observed
-  : Strong contributions observed
-  : Outcome achieved

### **Outcome 1: Innovative and collaborative EIP field**

Grantees reported moderate contributions toward achieving this outcome. Within smaller practice areas in the EIP ecosystem, such as impact evaluations or data for development, collaboration is strong. Grantees are engaging in growing networks, sharing knowledge, using global public goods, and conducting work through partnerships. However, grantees are far less likely to engage across these siloed practice areas, and they expressed a desire to convene more with other EIP grantees to learn and support mutual efforts. Grantees pointed out that although partnerships between organizations based in Africa and those in the Global North

have made significant progress and provided valuable lessons, there is still a need to ensure that these partnerships are characterized by equality, efficiency, and high-quality outcomes.

 **IEU:** Many grantees are actively collaborating with other EIP institutions, especially in countries where a high number of EIP institutions are active (e.g., Ghana and Kenya). Many grantees also expressed keen interest in collaborating, convening, and sharing lessons with other EIP grantees and organizations. More than three-quarters of the IEU grantees who responded to the grantee survey listed “new partnerships” as having enabled contributions toward their goals. However, collaboration amongst IEU grantees can be limited by competition for limited funding in some cases.

 **Impact evaluations:** Africa-based impact evaluation practitioners report drawing on standards and data sets produced by global actors to inform their own services and drive institutional growth. However, participation in impact evaluations in West Africa, especially francophone countries, has been relatively more limited due to multiple factors, including language barrier and relatively less external funding available for impact evaluations compared to East Africa. Networks of African evaluators, supported by global institutions, are important drivers of regional collaboration and leadership, and connections and endorsements are “immensely beneficial” to the work of African evaluators.

 **Data revolution and governance:** Data revolution grantees noted the value of partnerships (between EIP grantees, and between grantees and other stakeholders) to drive impact by bringing together skills such as evidence production, data product expertise, stakeholder engagement, and advocacy. They also expressed a desire to foster more of these partnerships and noted that more could be done to convene Hewlett grantees and other actors. In the data governance sub-focus area, progress has been made in the proliferation of African data governance actors that are leading in the space by establishing relationships and responding to government requests.

## **Outcome 2: African EIP institutions have greater influence and leadership**

Grantees reported strong contributions toward this outcome, driven by a broader localization trend and efforts by grantees based in Africa to build relationships with governments, engage in international conferences, and form partnerships. Grantees, especially in the IEU, impact evaluation and data governance focus areas have taken on leadership roles and gained influence. However, in the data revolution focus area, most grantees are headquartered in the Global North.

 **IEU:** Grantees based in Africa took on influential leadership roles by building relationships with governments and responding to policymaker requests for data and evidence. This has been supported by a broad trend toward localization and power shifting driven by both donors and a broad swath of advocates in Africa from civil society, research communities, and the private sector. Grantees that train African researchers reported large numbers of researchers trained, but the impact of this training on EIP outcomes is unknown. One challenge is that researchers need strong institutional “homes” after graduating. Stakeholders noted potential for African think tanks to offer researchers more direct and effective connections with government institutions, including advocacy channels to increase uptake of researchers’ findings for policy influencing and for African think tanks to work more closely with actors in media and other types of CSOs with strong experience in advocacy and uptake.

 **Impact evaluations:** There is growing donor interest and local advocacy to elevate more local voices. Evaluations are increasingly being conducted by local organizations, especially in East Africa. There is a growing pool of African impact evaluation institutions and experts, but this is still limited. Several Africa-based grantees are developing impact evaluation curriculum for local contexts and are interacting directly with governments to drive demand for EIP. They are elevating their profiles by hosting conferences to discuss how researchers can contribute to the integration of policy evaluation into policy design and by promoting successful models of government engagement.

 **Data revolution and governance:** In contrast to the data governance focus area, most data revolution grantees are headquartered in the Global North but are active either directly or through partnerships in East and West Africa. Most data governance grantees are based in the Global South, with several focusing their work primarily in a single country. These Africa-based data governance grantees made important achievements in

fostering discussion forums, bringing together diverse stakeholders that raised awareness and understanding of the importance of data governance issues for a strong digital economy to work. These forums also identified the most pressing data-related issues and challenges and discussed pathways for strengthening confidence in the digital economy in Africa and for raising the quality of research being produced.

### **Outcome 3: African evidence producers regularly respond to governments requests**

Grantees reported strong progress on this outcome. Grantees, from all focus areas, built relationships with governments to better respond to policymaker needs, priorities, and requests through a variety of models. In many cases, grantees reported that this approach led to increasing requests and commissioning of research from governments. In data governance, grantees reported increasing engagement with governments through discussion forums.

 **IEU:** Many examples cited by grantees, both Africa-based and based outside of Africa, demonstrated strong impact by establishing long-term partnerships and relationships with governments or by regularly responding to government requests for data through help desks and rapid evidence synthesis. Despite this, grantees recognize the limited sustainability of this approach, given how time consuming these requests can be for think tanks and the limited potential for policy influencing, as these requests are often made to validate a political decision that has already been made.

 **Impact evaluations:** Several grantees are now consistently responding to government requests, supported by increased capacity and a growing pool of African evaluation institutions. The value of the help desk approach is being demonstrated, as seen by the high demand from policymakers, but more could be done to contextualize this approach to local applications. A global grantee implementing the help desk approach in West Africa cited the need to pull evidence from adjacent sectors and other geographies to adequately respond to certain requests from West African governments. Building up the pool of available local impact evaluations in West Africa would help increase the effectiveness of the help desk approach over time.

 **Data revolution and governance:** Trusted relationships with policymakers and influence on policy decision making processes are being established through process mapping and participating in policymaker “data journeys” that are supported by collaborations amongst EIP grantees and other actors. One data governance grantee has received continued requests from the governments of Uganda and Ghana to enhance the enabling environment for the data ecosystem. In Uganda, this has included working on the national data strategy, and in Ghana, working on the development of data exchange solutions to unlock access to quality data. Such demand-driven approaches based on long-term relationship building can lead to more sustainable, safe use of data and evidence in policymaking over time, as policymakers value and are incentivized to implement data governance.

### **Outcome 4: Successful policy models demonstrate the value of EIP**

Grantees reported more limited progress on this outcome. Many grantees noted that focusing on building relationships with governments and responding opportunistically to their needs was more effective than focusing on individual policy changes. Within the context of these relationships, grantees noted that successful EIP projects and policy changes can encourage policymaker buy-in by demonstrating the value of the EIP approach. However, the demonstration effect of an individual EIP-driven policy change from one agency or country to another was only noted in a few instances. More often, grantees reported that the value of EIP was demonstrated during a successful project for the policymakers and government officials involved in that project.

 **IEU:** Overall, grantees reported several evidence-informed policy changes, but one-off policy changes have not often led to a sustainable culture change in governments toward more regular use of data and evidence. One-off policy changes can more easily lead to routine EIP by policymakers when they happen in combination with long-term relationship building or active diffusion of effective EIP approaches in government networks. Some grantees noted specifically that individual evidence-informed policy changes do not add up to systemic / institutionalized use of evidence. Others said that investments in flexible and opportunistic partnerships with governments were more impactful than focusing on specific policy changes.

 **Impact evaluations:** Many examples were reported of impact evaluations driving individual policy change, but this has not led to regular, systematic use of impact evaluations by policymakers. Demand remains intermittent and related to specific policy questions rather than a culture of evaluation use. Examples that

demonstrate the value of evaluations and data-driven policy design in such a widespread way that they start to shift norms are rare. This is partly because policy change can take a long time to materialize and tracking this impact is challenging given that it often happens after grantees' engagement with policymakers have ended.

**Data revolution and governance:** Data revolution grantees have demonstrated the viability of specific data types leading to improved public services. In Ghana, one grantee facilitated data sharing of call detail records for analysis by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), representing one of the first of its kind private-public partnerships in Africa. This made it possible to transform the production of official statistics through the secure analysis of anonymized and aggregated call detail records, leading to improved government responses to public emergencies. However, such examples of lasting institutional changes or policy models are not at scale. Data governance grantees also noted progress on establishing data governance regulation at the continental level (AU Data Policy Framework) that must now be consolidated, translated, and implemented at regional and national levels.

#### **Outcome 5: Policymakers value EIP and have incentives to use evidence**

Grantees reported moderate progress on this outcome. Improving relationships and responsiveness to governments has demonstrated the value of EIP projects for policymakers engaging in those projects in all focus areas. Governments across Africa also recognize the value of the data revolution and are increasingly engaging with innovative new data sources and in data governance discussions. Although, some policymakers also note that they prefer traditional sources such as admin data over innovative new data sources. Political incentives also continue to prevent consistent use of data and evidence in many government agencies. Grantees reported that policymakers pick and choose when to engage with data and evidence based on political convenience and established agendas, highlighting the need to address these incentives.

**IEU:** Grantees cited many examples of successfully demonstrating the value of data and evidence by building relationships and aligning the data and evidence to policymaker priorities. Grantees report shifting political incentives to use data and evidence through several approaches including co-creation, co-production, dialogue platforms, leveraging evidence champions, establishing regulatory incentives, and partnerships with civil society advocates. Value and incentives to use evidence remain limited to alignment with political agendas, policymaker interests, and global/regional norms and guidelines, suggesting that shifting political incentives (e.g., via advocacy) is required to drive uptake of a more inclusive mix of evidence.

**Impact evaluations:** Driven by increasingly strong relationships with evaluators and improved capacity of African evaluation institutions, government policymakers are increasingly seeing the value of impact evaluations and are demanding them when they have a question to answer. Grantees also noted how, in some cases, public scrutiny of major public service delivery programs has driven demand for impact evaluations to demonstrate results. However, examples like this are limited. Grantees report that in cases where policymakers feel like they already have the answers to a policy question (e.g., a tax rate they want to impose), it is very difficult to incentivize the use of impact evaluations.

**Data revolution:** Broadly, policymakers value innovative and new data sources (e.g., satellite data, citizen-generated data, mobile data, drones) to address specific policy challenges; national strategic plans increasingly recognize the potential of new technologies such as AI and machine learning in socio economic development. However, government officials are not always incentivized to use innovative data because they are harder to access, and channels are not yet set up to facilitate their regular use. Beyond innovative data sources and analysis techniques, policymakers also highly value the ability to access traditional data sources (e.g., administrative data) in real time, but their ability to do so has not increased greatly. The lack of available real-time data from the community level continues to be an important challenge.

**Data governance:** There is increasingly widespread recognition by governments of the importance of ensuring strong governance frameworks to regulate the digital economy, effectively engage with growing sectors such as fintech, and protect individual data privacy. Data governance grantees have directly contributed to this by raising awareness and engaging in advocacy through direct engagement with policymakers and highly visible continent-wide multistakeholder convenings. In addition to grantees' direct contributions, the growing incentives for policymakers have also been driven by a strong civil society voice in some countries (e.g., Senegal, Kenya) as well as the AU's Data Policy Framework, which is incentivizing adoption and implementation of the

framework at the national level. However, some grantees also reported that data governance issues are still not widely seen as a priority.

### **Outcome 6: Policymakers know how to access evidence**

Grantees reported strong contributions on this outcome in the IEU and impact evaluation focus areas and moderate contributions in the data revolution and data governance area. IEU and impact evaluation grantees used relationship building, help desks, rapid response units, and embedded staff models to increase access to relevant data and evidence for policymakers. Data revolution grantees also built relationships, technical capacity, and improved access to innovative data sources for governments. But the access challenge is greater for innovative data, and more work needs to be done to build the infrastructure, systems, and technical capacity required to access innovative data sources. Data governance grantees reported increased engagement in their discussion forums and access to Africa-relevant governance norms and models but also noted that this work was relatively nascent.

 **IEU:** Grantees noted that this has greatly improved in pockets by long-term relationship building between IEU grantee institutions and particular government entities; some grantees provide access to their own evidence, while others provide access to various data producers in the ecosystem. Help desks and rapid response units were seen as successful at improving policymakers' access to evidence in part because of the emphasis they place on providing timely evidence. They are also demand-driven, which ensures that the evidence provided answers specific questions that policymakers have.

 **Impact evaluations:** Grantees cited various approaches that have all contributed to increasing and facilitating regular access to impact evaluations: help desks, embedding staff, early and close engagement with policymakers, and enhancing government infrastructure and systems. However, while grantees have made strong contributions on increasing regular access, this has not been systemic and government-commissioned evaluations is still not a widely spread norm in any West or East African country. Contributions have been mostly isolated to specific government EIP champions and departments. Wide-scale access continues to be held back by limited funding available for impact evaluations and weak and under-funded government M&E systems, which contribute to the limited agency of policymakers to regularly access and commission evaluations. Donors are still the primary actors commissioning impact evaluations.

 **Data revolution and governance:** Data governance grantees have raised awareness around norms, standards, and best practices for data privacy, data justice, and effective regulation of the digital economy. They hold regular discussions bringing together stakeholders across Africa working in the digital economy space to evaluate data governance challenges and progress across Africa, and ultimately inform policymakers on the state of data governance across the continent. Other grantees facilitate government access to important data governance issues by creating bridges with civil society actors through convenings that help to identify key issues that are brought to members of parliament, regulators, and other government actors. Many policymakers are also reluctant to engage with innovative data sources because of access challenges. For example, establishing access to MNO data is a timely process requiring extensive negotiations between government entities and private mobile operators around regulatory and data protection. Another challenge inhibiting access that several grantees reported is that many policymakers still lack the efficient data systems required to access data and evidence consistently.

### **Outcome 7: Policymakers have technical capacity to use evidence**

Grantees reported more limited contributions toward this outcome. Many grantees noted that capacity building has been effective when linked directly to a project driven by policymaker priorities, and in projects where the data and evidence presented is well tailored to the policy context. This work is improving both the technical capacity and incentives for some policymakers to use evidence. However, even in successful projects, grantees and stakeholders noted that technical capacity gains were often moderate, and sometimes limited to a few individuals, with many other policymakers in the same agency continuing to lack technical capacity. Technical capacity is especially a challenge related to innovative new data sources, and impact evaluations, compared to more traditional sources of data.

 **IEU:** Capacity building of policymakers coupled with advocacy and training on developing policy briefs, as well as long-term engagement of parliaments in several East and West African countries, has resulted in a shift of incentives toward the consistent use of evidence. Several IEU grantees worked on engaging policymakers at an early stage, resulting in more engaged and committed policymakers towards supporting the institutionalization of EIP in decisions making around planning and programming. Grantees from other focus areas, such as impact evaluations, data revolution, and data governance, are building policymaker capacity to use specific types of data and evidence, there may be an opportunity to connect those efforts more deliberately to the areas where grantees in the IEU focus area are also building policymaker capacity to drive institutionalization.

 **Impact evaluations:** Capacity building is paying off in pockets based on grantee feedback. Capacity building is most effective when linked to impact evaluation project work that is directly relevant to policymaker needs, questions, or issues they are trying to solve, so that the value of data and evidence is demonstrated. Grantee feedback suggests growing understanding of different types of evaluations including when to use each, although some confusion still exists around evaluation types and terminologies (e.g., eval vs. M&E or eval vs. rapid synthesis or impact eval vs. impact assessment).

 **Data revolution and governance:** Data governance is still a nascent sub-focus area started less than two years ago. National level policymakers need much more capacity and incentives to translate newly established global, regional, and some national regulations into implementation and enforcement, although this varies across countries. In the data revolution focus area, capacity building linked to use of specific types of data has been successful in some cases. However, it is unclear yet how sticky general trainings on e.g., data science skills that could be applied across different types of data will be, and capacity is still widely lacking. Many grantees and stakeholders both report that many policymakers still lack the technical capacity required to use data and evidence effectively. Given the size and complexity of government policymaking systems, more investment in capacity building across a larger number of decision makers over time would be needed to shift entire government systems to the effective, regular, institutionalized use of a variety of data and evidence.

### **Outcome 8: Policymakers have strong relationships with EIP suppliers**

Grantees reported strong contributions to this outcome. As noted in earlier outcomes, relationship building by grantees in all focus areas has been an effective approach to drive uptake and value for EIP amongst policymakers. Challenges reported here relate to the time consuming and costly nature of successful relationship building with governments. Grantees are targeting one agency or a few individuals at a time, limiting the scale and sustainability of this approach.

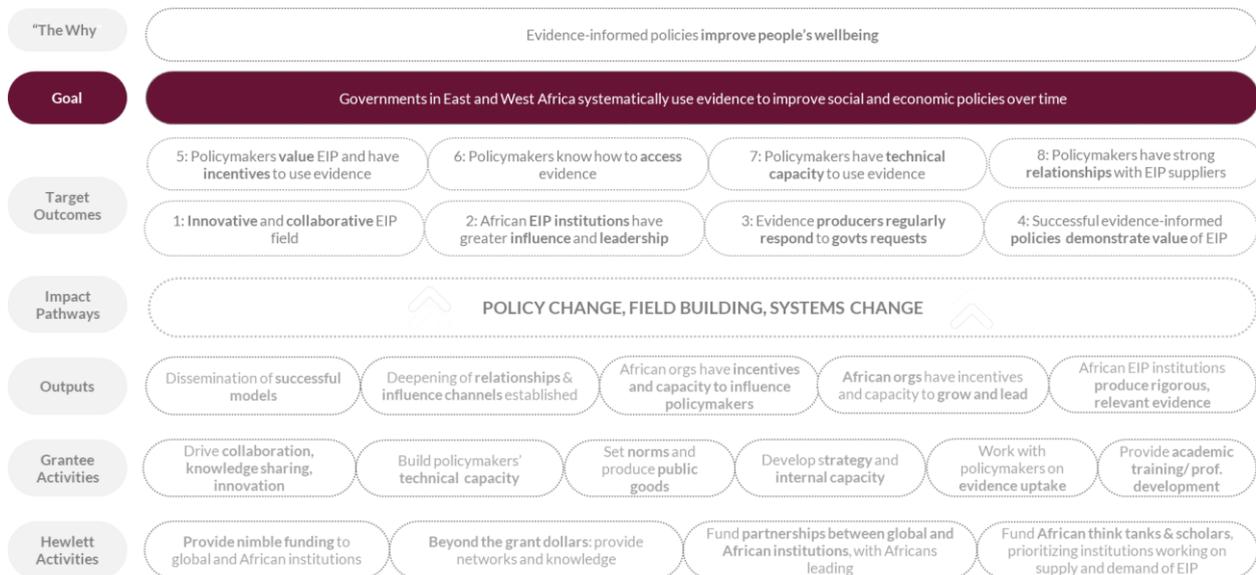
 **IEU:** Relationship building with policymakers has greatly improved in pockets by long-term relationship building between IEU grantee institutions and particular government entities. In those cases where there has been long-term relationship building, the impact has been deep and sustainable, but limited in scale because it is costly and time consuming to target specific areas in government in specific countries. This suggests considering cost effective ways to scale up this approach and investigating, such as doubling down on relationship building with multiple government entities in one country to accelerate EIP gains. For example, in Ghana there have been important gains in deepening the relationship between Parliament and the Ghana Statistical Service, but it is unclear how much this has snowballed to other areas of the government.

 **Impact evaluations:** All impact evaluation grantees are doing work directly with African governments. Strength of relationships varies by country and government agency – findings suggest that relationships can be built up one agency at a time through myriad engagement modes for example outreach, project work, embedding staff, and capacity building; this is expensive and time consuming, but grantees have reported strong contributions in pockets. In terms of approaches to incentivize greater engagement from government stakeholders, grantee examples suggest that focusing on flagship government programs can incentivize greater engagement from policymakers given the potential to generate political will for a given program through the evaluation results. Other impact evaluations grantees noted the importance of identifying and engaging senior evidence champions from the outset of a given project to ensure relevance and ownership of the evidence. Focusing on quick wins that demonstrate how data and evidence improve service delivery can also help to cultivate broader buy-in.

**Data revolution and governance:** In the data revolution focus area, most grantees are working through partnerships directly with governments, which has been an important success factor. The cluster of grantees in East Africa especially is building strong relationships with policymakers. Several grantees are regularly invited by government agencies to share their learnings.

## Contributions toward the goal of “policymakers systematically use evidence to improve social and economic policies over time”

Figure 15 Reconstructed theory of change | Overall EIP and Institutionalizing evidence use



As a reminder, the theory of change set out to strengthen evidence production and intermediation and demonstrate effective evidence-informed policy changes to achieve a set of target outcomes including increased incentives, access, capacity, and relationships, all of which would lead to the goal of regular use of evidence in policymaking. This section assesses how contributions toward the outcomes discussed in the previous section culminated to advance the goal.

Significant progress has been made upstream on strengthening research institutions, improving relationships between evidence producers and policymakers, creating spaces for EIP dialogue, and improving the relevance of data and evidence to policy needs. This has increased the value that policymakers put on data and evidence and their incentives to use it. However, challenges in advancing the outcomes around technical capacity and data systems are preventing contributions toward the goal. Grantees and stakeholders both report that many policymakers still lack the technical capacity required to use data and evidence effectively and lack the efficient data systems required to access data and evidence consistently. These barriers are preventing contributions toward the goal of systematic, institutionalized use of data and evidence to inform policymaking.

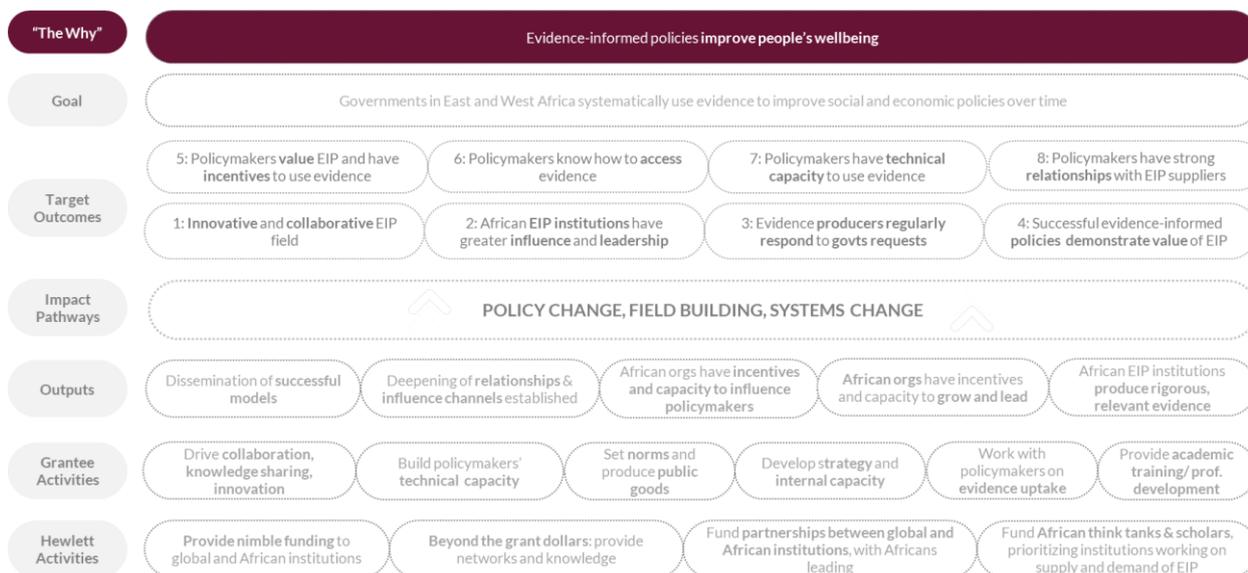
Given the size and complexity of government policymaking systems, more investment in capacity building across a larger number of decision makers over time would be needed to shift entire government systems to the effective, regular, institutionalized use of a variety of data and evidence. The enormity of this challenge often outweighs the good work done by many grantees that include technical capacity building activities in their work with governments. Grantee capacity building work has been effective when paired with long-term relationship building, the application in practice of specific types of data and evidence to relevant policy needs, and a balance of capacity building for both policymakers and technocrats working in national statistics offices (NSOs) and research units within government agencies.

Without effective systems to efficiently access, manage, and apply data and evidence, policymakers cannot consistently use data and evidence. This is a cross-cutting challenge but is a particularly important barrier to progress on the use of new and innovative sources of data, for which very few effective data management systems exist in governments. As demonstrated in the theory of change, a range of outcomes (access to quality, timely, relevant data and evidence, incentives, and technical capacity to use it, etc.) need to be in place to make

contributions toward the regular use of data and evidence by policymakers. Without coherence across the many diverse actors and communities engaged in activities relevant to EIP, knowledge exchange, partnerships, standards, and funding may remain siloed, making it difficult to work collaboratively and attract the resources needed to scale contributions toward common goals.

## Contributions toward improving people’s well-being

Figure 16 Reconstructed theory of change | Overall EIP and Institutionalizing evidence use



Government officials and other stakeholders noted the importance of national data systems to monitor whether policies are being implemented well or having a positive impact on people’s well-being. Without consistent access to basic, accurate, real-time data about public service implementation, policymakers cannot course correct or improve governance. Investments in health care data management systems for example have demonstrated how efficient systems can improve governance and save lives. Evaluations and other research studies can address this challenge to some extent where they are used to improve the design of major policies. But the amount of time and funding required for research studies limits their use to inform day-to-day policy decisions.

Most grantees also do not systematically track the downstream impact of their work, and so we have limited evidence to understand how contributions have been made (and what has driven or impeded them) toward the impact goals in the EIP theory of change. As shown in the reconstructed TOCs, in addition to policymaking informed by evidence, effective policy implementation with potential to improve lives is a long-term impact goal. However, we do not know whether EIP activities are systemically leading to policies being implemented well, or whether EIP interventions are leading to improved well-being for people in East and West Africa. As highlighted by several grantees, this is in part due to the difficulty of tracking implementation.

We have some anecdotal evidence (as shown in the previous section) from specific grantee projects that have led to improved well-being. However, this is not enough evidence to systematically test impact assumptions in the theory of change, or compare impact achieved by different grantee approaches. The lack of impact data is understandable. Impact measurement is expensive and time consuming, especially for grantees working in EIP where pathways to impact on people are usually long and indirect. However, more could be done to explore how EIP interventions are impacting people, with the goal of being able to make better strategic choices or course corrections to maximize EIP benefits for people.

These barriers are preventing contributions toward the long-term target outcome of systematic institutionalized use of data and evidence to inform policymaking.

## Impact on women and marginalized communities

### Grantee impact goals related to women and marginalized communities

While all grantees are sensitive to gender equity implications, several make implicit assumptions that their work will naturally benefit women through improved policies or citing (for example) that women and vulnerable groups are central to the SDGs, without articulating clear paths to impact in their work. Grantee understanding of impact on women is especially limited where their direct impact on people's well-being is not tracked or well understood.

### Grantee contributions toward impact for women and marginalized communities

In response to the grantee survey, grantees provided examples of how their work impacts women and underserved people. Grantees impact women and underserved people through numerous channels including implementing activities in spaces where women are disproportionately represented (e.g., food systems), providing training and mentorship to women researchers and scholars, piloting innovative methods such as satellite imagery to produce gender-disaggregated outcome measures at the local level, prioritizing women in recruitment, and raising awareness about overlooked issues that have an outsized impact on women such as the lack of inclusiveness in digitization.

Grantee impact on women and girls has been further supported by co-funding from multiple Hewlett strategies. Other strategies within the Gender Equity and Governance (GEG) program such as Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) do crossover funding with EIP grantees.

## Effective approaches and lessons learned cited by grantees

### Institutionalizing Evidence Use (IEU)

As noted above, many grantees reported that one of the most effective<sup>5</sup> approaches they used to institutionalize evidence use has been establishing long-term, close relationships between evidence producers/intermediaries and government ministries, departments, or agencies (MDAs).

- Grantees are implementing this approach in a variety of ways, with several common elements:
- Target specific government MDA's
- Support often takes the form of embedded staff or consistent external support
- Implementation is done through a connection between the MDA and one evidence producer, or with one intermediary partner who then connects the MDA to various other evidence producers
- Focus on building trusted relationships over many years
- A key success factor is aligning the focus of the partnership with government priorities ("work with the grain")
- May be focused on a specific line ministry or sector, but not linked to a specific policy or issue area; the approach is flexible and opportunistic, applying data to ongoing decision making as needed (grantees say this makes it harder to fund, but this is more impactful than more easily funded work on specific policies)
- Inclusion of practical capacity building can improve sustainability – learning by doing, e.g., introduction, training and application of a specific toolkit or framework, etc.

The impact that grantees are achieving through this approach also has common characteristics:

- **Type of impact:** This approach builds government capacity and has demonstrated the value of evidence use over time and led to government ownership of EIP practices, for example seen by increasing investment by governments into EIP.
- **Scope of impact:** Deep impact, limited breadth – expensive, focused on a single department, hard to scale up, limited by government capacity to host embedded staff and/or engage with external support.
- **Potential to scale:** Grantees report potential to replicate partnerships with a specific part of government across countries, or to replicate a successful model in various government agencies. IEU

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<sup>5</sup> Effectiveness is not strictly defined and reflects the number of grantees that cited the approach as being effective in their work

grantees' ability to grow and broaden their potential impact could be further enhanced by the recent regionalization process that they engaged in.

Beyond establishing long term and close relationships with MDAs, other effective approaches cited by grantees to institutionalize evidence use include dialogue platforms, regulatory frameworks, and rapid response desks.

### Dialogue platforms

Dialogue platforms create space to bring together evidence producers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to discuss policy challenges. This is a flexible and inclusive model that enables traction on specific policy issues. Establishing a consistent space / platform can allow the application of this model to various issues over time. In some cases, a consistent forum that demonstrates value to policymakers can become integral to government policymaking systems (e.g., post-budget workshop in Ghana has been happening annually for 10 years and is now an institutionalized part of the national budgeting process)

### Regulation and frameworks

Several grantees have had success with or are piloting support for government regulations or processes that require regular use of evidence in policymaking. This is hard to accomplish because it must build on other long-term work to establish relationships and trust with governments and demonstrate the value of evidence use. Findings suggest that where this can be accomplished, it can have a broad, long-term impact on institutionalizing EIP and can help make policymakers more open to other EIP interventions such as capacity building. Similarly, the introduction of evidence informed frameworks to guide policymaking can lead to long-term systemic change in government decision making.

### Rapid response desks

Setting up help desks and rapid response units can drive consistent use of evidence by policymakers by making evidence more accessible and relevant. Several grantees from the IEU and impact evaluation focus areas have demonstrated strong impact in this way over time. This approach likely has less impact on changing government policymaking systems, but over time consistent interaction with these evidence providers can contribute to making evidence use more of a norm in governments.

### Data systems

Only a few grantees have reported impact from work on government data systems and some optimism for scaling their impact through innovative pilots of data systems. This may reflect the difficulties in engaging with government data systems, despite the vast need to improve them to enable contributions toward EIP goals. Investment in more efficient data systems would enable governments to access and use data and evidence systematically. However, external investment in government data systems comes with many implementation and maintenance challenges that can limit effectiveness.

## Impact evaluations

Effective approaches cited by grantees to drive the progress described above in the impact evaluations focus area have focused on building strong relationships with policymakers to facilitate demand-driven projects. Grantees reported effective approaches to deepen relationships with policymakers and drive demand, both in the short-term and long-term:

#### Short-term effective approaches:

- Establish quick policy changes informed by evidence to demonstrate value of EIP
- Point to effective evidence-informed policy changes in other countries
- Identify evidence champions in governments
- Align evaluations with government agendas

#### Long-term effective approaches:

- Invest in government infrastructure and systems

- Implement help desks
- Embed technical staff
- Build capacity linked to projects

**Ineffective approaches:**

- Supplying evidence that is not needed
- Responding to requests without funding
- Supplying evaluations without government capacity building

Grantees highlighted **key success factors** for effective approaches for supplying impact evaluations and facilitating their uptake:

- **Timely:** requires readily available, capable teams that can respond to government requests with a new study or help desk approach
- **Funded:** effective suppliers have relationships with both governments AND funders (usually large bi/multilateral donors)
- **Relevant:** impact evaluations focus on policymaker priorities and needs, and answer critical policy questions

## Data revolution and governance

Effective approaches cited by grantees to drive progress in the data revolution focus area included multi-stakeholder engagements. Grantees highlighted the impact of combining multiple approaches listed below to address needs along the “data journey”.

**Needs identified via:**

- Data journeys
- Business process mapping

**Needs addressed via collaborations between:**

- Data producers and experts
- Stakeholder engagement partners
- Policymakers

**Data use facilitated by:**

- Awareness, co-creation, incentives for decision makers
- Enabling environment for experimentation
- Technocrat capacity building (e.g., data science skills)

Effective approaches cited by grantees to drive progress in the data governance focus area included sequencing. Grantees reported progress along a sequence of activities that build toward the end goal of behavior change by policymakers:

1. Establish global and regional standards
2. Establish national standards
3. Raise awareness and understanding
4. Build technical capacity
5. Government adoption of standards
6. Government implementation and enforcement of standards

# VI. TESTING ASSUMPTIONS IN THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The bulk of the progress evaluation in the previous section is based on self-reported contributions by grantees. This is useful in understanding what contributions individual grantees have made toward their own goals, and in the context of the outcomes in the reconstructed theories of change. This section builds on these findings to consider what they mean for the assumptions that sit behind the theory of change. We also explore feedback in this section from governments in East and West Africa to understand whether their experiences align with the assumptions in the theory of change.

Key assumptions considered in our analysis include:

Figure 17 Key assumptions to test in the reconstructed theories of change



## Implications for Theory of Change Assumptions

Insights from grantee progress and feedback from government officials demonstrate areas where assumptions in the reconstructed theories of change have held true, and areas where they have broken down. This section summarizes our findings for each of the main assumptions in the theory of change.

### 1. EIP leads to improved well-being

As described in this progress section, most EIP grantees do not systematically track progress to the level of whether a policy that has been influenced by their work has improved people’s wellbeing. Without this evidence from grantees, it is not possible to systematically test the assumption that policies influenced by the grantees lead to improved well-being for people. This assumption could potentially be tested through additional learning studies.

In Ghana, government officials shared anecdotal evidence that grantee activities led to improved well-being for citizens through improved public services in their districts. Furthermore, government officials in Ghana gave examples not specific to EIP grantees that indicated the value of EIP to improving public service delivery. One example included an evaluation conducted by a UN agency of the universal secondary education program, which led the government to allocate more funding per child to the program.

### 2. Evidence-informed policies are well implemented

Similar to impact on people’s well-being, most EIP grantees do not systematically track progress to the level of whether a policy that has been influenced by their work is well implemented. And thus, it is also not possible to test this assumption based on grantee reports.

Feedback from government officials does suggest that implementation is a major barrier to the translation of EIP outcomes to improved well-being for people. For example, even though the structure of the universal secondary education program in Ghana was updated based on an impact evaluation, stakeholders also noted that ineffective implementation of the program (i.e., too many children in classes and not enough teachers, resulting in poor learning outcomes) has limited its contribution to improved well-being.

Inefficient collection, storage and transfer of data from the local to national levels, as reported by officials in Kenya and Ghana, is also limiting the government's ability to monitor effective implementation or impact and course correct where needed. Government officials further report that the lack of funding and internal capacity for impact evaluations is limiting government understanding of policy implementation and impact. This both prevents course correction of policies where needed to improve social impact and limits our understanding of whether EIP investments are leading to improved well-being.

Lack of political incentives to implement policies well or to improve ineffective policies was also cited as a challenge in Ghana limiting the impact of policies on people's well-being. Feedback from local officials in Ghana suggests that more investment into local level policy implementation and monitoring could improve the impact of evidence-informed policies on well-being. This feedback suggests that without this type of investment, progress made toward EIP outcomes may not translate effectively to improved well-being for people.

### **3. Access, capacity, incentives and relationships are the four ingredients that must all be present for EIP to take place**

Much of the grantee progress reported validates this assumption that access, technical capacity, incentives and relationships are all required ingredients to make EIP happen. Many grantees from all focus areas reported that long-term relationships with policymakers are an effective way to drive access, incentives and capacity amongst policymakers that leads to more regular use of data and evidence in policymaking decisions in the government agencies where they work. The value of these relationships was reflected in feedback from government officials in Ghana.

Grantees also reported that political incentives are a challenge that can prevent policymakers from using data and evidence even where relationships and access exist. This observation was confirmed by government research department officials and other stakeholders. Officials and stakeholders in East and West Africa cited the important role of citizens and civil society to shift political incentives toward transparency and the use of evidence to inform policies. Similarly, when technical capacity remains low across a government agency or when weak national statistical systems prevent consistent access to data and evidence, grantees and government officials reported that this prevents regular use.

### **4. Strengthening non-governmental institutions can drive lasting change in governments**

Relationship-driven progress made by grantees has in some cases led to norm changes in government agencies, which suggests that lasting change in government systems through intervention by non-governmental organizations is possible but requires time and intensive support.

Feedback from officials in Senegal and Ghana suggest that this approach adds value but may need to build on an already strong or receptive EIP environment in government to be effective. In Senegal, grantee progress reports suggested that progress was dependent on the strength of engagement by the government agency, and stakeholders reported that some government agencies were leaders in driving EIP based on decades of investment in government capacity by large bilateral and multilateral donors and the government itself. In Ghana, many officials and stakeholders pointed to the leadership of GSS and passionate individuals within the government as creating an environment where non-governmental EIP institutions could flourish.

This may indicate a need to invest in non-governmental EIP institutions that operate where these conditions exist within the government. There may also be potential to improve coordination with major donors and government agencies to establish these conditions where they do not exist.

## **5. Field building, policy change and systems change are the most effective impact pathways to achieve the target outcomes.**

Grantee progress suggests that field building that strengthens individual institutions has led to systemic change in governments largely through a responsive, relationship-driven approach. Reports suggest that individual policy wins can increase policymaker interest in EIP within the context of relationships and direct work with EIP proponents, but less so as a standalone demonstration effect across agencies or countries.

Feedback from government officials suggests that field building in terms of strengthening non-governmental institutions contributed to outcomes in Ghana, but less so in Senegal where officials focused on the role of large bilateral donors. In Kenya, government officials and stakeholders suggested that the impact of field building was more diffuse than in Ghana, with some progress being made within the Kenya government while the enabling environment for EIP innovation in Kenya is driving progress through regional grantee activities in many other countries.

Systems change was an important outcome in Senegal and Ghana, which have both translated EIP norms to EIP laws. Officials and grantees reported various drivers for this, including long-term promotion of EIP by bilateral donor partners, EIP champions in government, and support from non-governmental organizations. This suggests that systems change may be more of a desired outcome than a pathway toward outcomes.

Individual evidence-informed policy changes were cited by government officials and grantees as an effective incentive for EIP mostly in the context of long-term relationship building. Where EIP intermediaries are conducting projects with a government agency, an EIP win is an important incentive for officials to continue to engage on the project and has led to increased government funding for those EIP projects. It was not reported whether this in turn led the same officials to then continue engaging in EIP over time after the end of the project. Government officials also talked about the value of learning from each other. For example, in Ghana, parliament officials learn from their peers in the parliament of Uganda, who are respected as leaders in EIP on the continent. Evidence-informed policy wins are therefore less effective as an independent demonstration effect, and more important in terms of peer learning and networking.

Beyond the three pathways noted in the current EIP strategy, citizen advocacy was cited by government officials in East and West Africa as an effective pathway to incentivize regular use of evidence by policymakers. This could be an important additional or alternative pathway to explore in the strategy refresh.

## **6. African think tanks, impact evaluations and the data revolution are the most effective focus areas for grantee activities to achieve target outcomes**

There has been a lot of discussion amongst EIP stakeholders about whether impact evaluations are the right kind of evidence to invest in for EIP. Stakeholders have raised questions around their cost, complexity, timeliness, relevance and uptake by governments. Findings from East and West African countries suggest that governments do value impact evaluations. Grantees report that approaches to make impact evaluations timelier and more responsive to governments have increased demand from policymakers. In Senegal, the government passed a law requiring more use of evaluations in government, and in Ghana government officials expressed a desire for more technical and financial capacity in government to conduct evaluations.

However, many grantees and government officials also reported that policymakers most value having access to a variety of data and evidence options that can be tailored to their specific policy challenge in real time, suggesting that a focus on promoting just one type of data or evidence is not the best way to reach the EIP goal.

The data revolution portfolio includes a mix of different types of innovative data, but grantee reports suggest that it takes a long time to build interest, capacity, and systems in governments to effectively use innovative data, especially because government capacity and systems to use even traditional sources of data remains weak. Innovative solutions also come with a higher risk of failure (in terms of government uptake) over that long time horizon. Progress by all grantees was also slowed by the pandemic, which makes it difficult to assess the full potential for uptake of innovative data solutions by governments. In Ghana, some policymakers questioned the relevance of data revolution investments compared to the greater need to improve access to administrative data. Another government official in Ghana expressed excitement about real time GSS data drawing international attention. More could be done to understand the comparative impact on the well-being of innovative data sources compared to improving access to regular administrative data in social sectors.

Strengthening African think tanks and other African research institutions has driven contributions toward the EIP goal through relationship building and increased responsiveness to policymaker needs and priorities. In Ghana there was some feedback about government mistrust for external think tanks. But effective relationship building by several grantees shows how Africa-based, non-governmental institutions that work hard over decades to develop a neutral, trusted reputation can drive lasting change in government.

### **7. A mix of global, regional, and nationally focused grantees is needed to achieve target outcomes in East and West Africa**

Many grantees reported the benefits of having a mix of global, regional and nationally focused grantees working in East and West Africa. National grantees reported that they had benefited from partnerships with global grantees along with best practices, methodologies, data sets, training, regulations and norms set at the global level. Both national and regional grantees also reported valuing access to international forums to raise their profile and attract funding. Regional grantees highlighted the importance of piloting innovation in one country and deploying it to others.

Government officials in East and West Africa cited bilateral and multilateral donors and development agencies as the most influential external drivers of EIP progress. This suggests the potential to convene across and leverage the work of these actors more intentionally to drive contributions toward the EIP goal.

## VII. HEWLETT PRACTICES

In addition to assessing grantee contributions toward outcomes and the goal, this evaluation set out to better understand how Hewlett's practices are enabling grantees to achieve progress.

### What do grantees like about Hewlett's processes? What would they change?

#### Strengths and comparative advantages

##### **Flexible funding terms empower grantees:**

Conversations, both with grantees and external stakeholders, highlighted wide recognition of Hewlett's leadership on trust-based philanthropy (addressing the power imbalance in the relationship between foundations and nonprofits). In these conversations, the share of flexible funding (general operating support) that Hewlett provides compared with other funders came out strongly as a unique value proposition. These observations reflect Hewlett's commitment to being grantee-led and empowering grantees with flexible, long-term funding.

##### **Grantees also appreciate non-financial support:**

Hewlett is perceived by all grantees as a committed partner. This is exemplified by the willingness to come alongside grantees to have open conversations about organizational challenges they face and solve them together, as opposed to focusing exclusively on surfacing successful impact stories. Grantees also expressed interest in having an even more thought partnership from the Hewlett program officers e.g., by actively sharing their expertise and views, providing space for ad-hoc open conversations and problem-solving questions that grantees face.

#### Opportunities for improvement

##### **Convenings:**

Interest in convenings emerged as a top finding from interviews with grantees. There is a strong interest in more formal and opportunistic connections among EIP organizations, within Africa and globally. Grantees see great value in convenings to break down sector silos and identify synergies with actors with similar goals. Convenings could take multiple formats, for example annual virtual sessions organized around specific themes, bringing together practitioners as well as large donors in the space, facilitating not only practitioner-connections but also generating funder interest.

##### **Length of funding terms:**

Some grantees suggested the need for longer individual grant terms and/or automatic grant extensions due to the long timelines to impact and demonstration of successful models (5-10 years) in the EIP space. However, there are several important challenges involved with automatic grant extensions and Hewlett's proposal process is already relatively lean and easy compared to that of most other funders. Important considerations include the need to commit beyond the lifecycle of strategies, potentially increasing grantee dependence on Hewlett funding, and less flexibility to learn and adjust in course of implementation.

##### **Other potential opportunities for exploration:**

- How could Hewlett support more regular dissemination of findings and learnings from projects after project close dates (e.g., through earmarked funding)?
- For grantees working on initiatives that are closely aligned with other Hewlett strategies or programs beyond the EIP strategy, how could Hewlett facilitate co-funding opportunities?
- Could Hewlett further simplify reporting requirements by adjusting them based on grant size?
- How has the structure of Hewlett funding and non-financial support enabled grantee progress?

Table 1 Summary of grantee feedback on non-financial support and funding mechanisms

Support mechanism	Feedback from grantees on how Hewlett support has enabled progress
<b>Convenings</b> (Non-financial support)	Grantee convenings were not conducted during the last strategy period. There is strong and widespread interest from grantees for Hewlett to facilitate convenings around various themes that grantees are working in to identify potential synergies among EIP actors.
<b>Thought Leadership</b> (Non-financial support)	Hewlett's thought leadership is valued highly by grantees as something that has enabled progress in their work, and there is interest in leveraging more of the POs expertise.
<b>General Operating Support (GOS) Grants</b> (Funding)	Grantees value GOS and use it to be responsive to new issues or ones that are under-funded and lack visibility, and to invest in 'ahead-of-the-market innovations.'
<b>Organizational Effectiveness (OE) Grants</b> (Funding)	OE grants strengthened grantees by enabling investment in organizational development, without the difficult decision of having to draw from GOS or other funds. Additionally, grantees felt encouraged openness with Hewlett about challenges.
<b>Project Grants</b> (Funding)	A downside of project grants that grantees cited is the higher management costs associated with multiple distinct project-grants. Several grantees also showed interest in seeing reporting requirements adjusted based on grant size.

## VIII. APPENDIX

### Testing assumptions in the theory of change

Section VI on testing assumptions in the theory of change includes insights from grantee progress as well as from government officials in East and West Africa. This appendix includes the detailed feedback from government officials that was collected in Ghana, Kenya and Senegal that informed our analysis.

Key assumptions considered in our analysis include:

Figure 18 Key assumptions to test in the reconstructed theories of change



### Policymaker perspectives

To evaluate the assumptions that sit behind the theory of change, we wanted to understand how the theory of change was working from the perspective of governments. Do the practical experiences, needs and views of policymakers and government officials in East and West African countries support the hypotheses in the theory of change? Where do assumptions break down? Are the theories of change missing important dynamics playing out on the ground?

To answer these questions, we spoke to policymakers and other government officials in three countries where many grantees work (Ghana, Senegal, and Kenya). For each country, the analysis below lays out:

- The history and current state of EIP in the country based on feedback from government officials
- Hewlett grantee contributions to EIP in the country in the context of government experiences
- Implications for assumptions in the reconstructed theories of change

This analysis is based on 20 one-to-one interviews conducted in person in late 2022 with policymakers and government research and planning departments in Ghana, Kenya and Senegal focused on government research departments, ministries of agriculture, ministries of finance and economic planning, parliament, and the executive branch.

#### Senegal

##### DEVELOPMENT OF THE EIP ECOSYSTEM

The government of Senegal has a long history of investment in data and evidence to inform policymaking, dating back to structural adjustment in the 1970s. Since then, the government has invested in building up its national statistical system, set up training institutes, built capacity in key government research departments, appointed economists/statisticians to key positions in policy formulation, and recently became the 4th African country to be member of the IMF Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS).

Interviews with various government officials made it clear that many individual policymakers throughout the government value the use of data and evidence to inform policymaking. Institutional culture in some government agencies also drives the use of data and evidence. The ministries of health and agriculture were cited as champions, alongside influential government research and planning departments themselves, the National Agency of Statistics and Demography (ANSD) and the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Cooperation (DGPPE).

Senegal recently passed a law that restructures and centralizes its planning process, requiring sign off by the national statistics agency on all public statistics, and giving more weight to policy evaluations, which will be used as evidence for future public policies.

Development partners such as the IMF, World Bank, MCC, AfDB, UNFPA, UNICEF, WEF, and BCEAO (subregional) were cited by government officials as major drivers of EIP in Senegal. They incentivize the use of data and evidence through their funding requirements, and fund access, production, and capacity building to facilitate evidence use. Government officials report that EIP continues to improve in Senegal, with various drivers including technology, CSO engagement, and COVID-19.

## CHALLENGES

Despite this significant progress on institutionalizing EIP throughout the government, major barriers remain in the lack of technical capacity and funding. Finance is needed to pay for capacity building, improve the supply of high-quality data, and support the expanded use of evaluations. Up to now, evaluations were not conducted frequently in Senegal due to the high cost and the technical expertise required. Technical capacity building is needed for both statisticians and economists in government research departments and policymakers as users of evidence.

## Ghana

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE EIP ECOSYSTEM

In many ways, Ghana is a bright spot for EIP in Africa. The Hewlett Foundation funds at least 10 organizations working on a variety of EIP projects in Ghana, from building EIP capacity in Parliament, to training the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) on data science and ranking the performance of city governments on public service provision.

In 2015, Ghana began investing in building out the capacity of its national statistics offices in response to the SDGs. At that time, GSS was able to report on about 50 indicators of the 200+ needed to track progress toward the SDGs. In some cases, the available data was not up to date and often disregarded because of irrelevance. Leaders in public office and civil society quickly realized that they needed help and began to focus on building external partnerships aimed at building trust across academia, civil society, and think tanks to leverage data from across those actors.

Much progress and a litany of “firsts” have been achieved since then. For the first time ever, GSS recently produced near real time data leveraging telecommunications data to inform government interventions, and for the first time that data produced by Ghana is being requested by international partners. The government is working with UNDP and GIZ on satellite imagery mapping in subnational government entities that has revealed illegal mining. Parliament is now collaborating closely and regularly with GSS, thanks to successful relationship building work done by Hewlett grantees.

There is even a law now in Ghana, as of 2016, that requires policy proposals to be backed by data and evidence. In our interviews with government researchers, ministry staff, parliamentarians, and local government officials, it was clear that data and evidence are valued and used regularly by many policymakers and technocrats at many levels of the Ghanaian government.

## CHALLENGES

Despite these bright spots, significant gaps and challenges remain in Ghana. Technical, human resource, and financial capacity challenges were noted by all of the government officials we spoke with in Ghana. In the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the staff aggregate monitoring data from across the country and feed it into national development plans, liaising with local and national government agencies and

ministries. But low salaries at NDPC drive high attrition, lack of funding prevents consistent engagement with policymakers which limits the influence of their research, and lack of funding and technical capacity limits the number and quality of evaluations NDPC can conduct, so evaluations are not widely used in the country.

Local government officials, tasked with collecting and providing administrative-level monitoring data, need data management software to handle the many requests they get. The data exists, and policymakers want it, but they can't supply it because of inefficient data collection and storage at the local level. They also need training in how to use data management systems, even for software they do have like Excel. And they need investment to improve interoperability across the diverse data management software being used by many different public service providers and government agencies. Despite all these challenges, Ghana's public officials are using innovative ways to incorporate data and evidence into decision making. They engage directly with local citizens to collect information about their needs, and in response they provide evidence of how government taxes and fees are being spent by sharing photos of government projects with citizens and reporting progress on local radio.

In the Ministry of Agriculture's research department, similar frustration was shared about the lack of financial and logistical capacity to collect all of the data that the ministry, NDPC and Parliament demand. With additional funding, the ministry could invest in logistical resources like staff and vehicles needed to collect data from rural areas. Right now, the ministry limits the number of crops and districts for which they collect data due to lack of funding for these inputs.

## Kenya

### GROWTH OF THE EIP ECOSYSTEM

Like in many more developed African countries, the majority of data and evidence used to inform policymaking in Kenya comes from the National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), other government research institutions and large donor partners. Sector-focused think tanks, both public and non-governmental, are also influential in Kenya. They provide specialized data and evidence to inform policy and programs, particularly in health care and agriculture, alongside other sectors.

The policymaking process in Kenya is quite complex. Kenya is a dynamic democracy with diffused centers of decision-making power, including a devolved system of governance that grants additional power to counties, alongside strong opposition parties, cyclical political instability, a powerful private sector, and vocal civil society. Kenya is also a regional hub for international donors and diplomats, and a digital economic hub for innovation, technology, venture capital and impact investment. Nairobi is a center for convening and knowledge exchange in many sectors.

These characteristics create a unique enabling environment for EIP. The country has invested in strong local universities and technical colleges that train researchers and economists. In this flourishing tech environment, many start-ups are piloting and scaling digital technologies to collect data through mobile phones to inform and improve development programming and policies. Market research firms abound, serving government, development agencies and the private sector with research focused on Kenya, East Africa, and the continent more broadly. Industry networks also commission market research and use it to advocate for improved social sector policies, both in Kenya and across Africa. Civil society and the media are equally vocal advocates influencing national and local policy on many issues, from human rights (including data governance and data privacy) to anti-corruption and public service programming. These and other actors have made Kenya an open government champion with investments over many years in transparency, participation, and accountability to improve governance at both national and subnational levels. Importantly, much of the research, training and data innovation happening in Kenya is being exported across the region.

At the national level, a variety of data and evidence is being supplied and used in many government agencies in Kenya. Parliament is reportedly the most consistent requestor of data from KNBS, to guide resource allocation and planning decisions. Citizens and CSOs also use KNBS data to back up policy advocacy efforts on Twitter, reflecting how mainstream and social media influence policymaking in Kenya. The government is also engaging slowly but consistently with private innovations like mobile data to inform policymaking. And government agencies are engaging consistently with the digital economy to improve regulation while supporting innovation.

## CHALLENGES

Despite being a hub of EIP activity and innovation, stakeholders reported similar barriers to progress as in other African countries.

Intermediation and technical capacity remain major challenges for EIP in Kenya. The EIP ecosystem is unbalanced, with heavy investment in the production of data and evidence especially in the health care and agriculture sectors, but limited capacity amongst policymakers to effectively use this evidence. Incentives also remain skewed for many researchers to focus on publishing in journals instead of influencing policy, driven in large part by competition for limited funding for research. Much more investment in effective intermediation, and training in intermediation approaches is needed.

As in many countries, data collection and transfer from the local to national level is a major challenge due to a lack of technical capacity and inefficient data management systems. This is further complicated in Kenya by devolution. Transferring data from counties to national line ministries is challenging, with data management and analysis capacity gaps on both sides limiting the effective use of data and evidence to inform policy decisions and implementation.

