



Evidence to Action

Accra, Ghana

2025

E2A 2025 Conference Report

CONFERENCE
THEME

Advancing Participatory Governance for Sustainable Development in Africa

14th - 18th
July 2025



University of
Ghana, Accra



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FOREWORD

Dear E2A 2025 Partners and Delegates:

On behalf of the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) and the International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED), we are honored to present the 2025 Evidence to Action (E2A) Conference Report.

From July 14-18, 2025, in Accra, Ghana, the 8th E2A Conference brought together policymakers, researchers, civil society, development partners, and communities in a vibrant exchange of knowledge, ideas, and solutions. Your active contributions and commitment transformed this convening into a landmark moment for advancing evidence-informed and locally driven development across Africa.

Guided by the theme *“Advancing Participatory Governance for Sustainable Development in Africa”*, the conference challenged us to reimagine governance by embracing inclusive, community-led models that put citizens at the heart of decision-making. Over five days, participants moved beyond dialogue to forge shared priorities and chart actionable solutions rooted in Africa’s realities. Among the bold commitments that emerged were:

- Deepening participatory governance and citizen-led accountability;
- Strengthening CSO financing through pooled, inclusive, and innovative models;
- Promoting equitable economic opportunities for rural communities;
- Applying ethical AI and agile data systems to strengthen local decision-making; and
- Reclaiming African ownership in policy design and implementation.

This report captures both the richness of the discussions and the collective resolve to transform evidence into meaningful action. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Local Government and the Hon. Minister for their invaluable leadership and support as co-hosts.

As we reflect on the milestones of E2A 2025, ISSER, ICED and partners remain committed to sustaining this momentum. Together, let us continue building an Africa where evidence shapes policies and drives sustainable development outcomes. We look forward to your continued engagement as we prepare for the 9th edition of E2A.

Thank You.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Evidence to Action (E2A) Conference, held July 14–18 at the University of Ghana, Accra, brought together policymakers, researchers, civil society, traditional leaders, and academics from across Africa and beyond. Co-organized by International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) and the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), it focused on advancing inclusive governance and evidence-based policymaking.

Sessions explored innovations, financial inclusion for smallholder farmers, women and youth participation, judicial reform, civil society sustainability, local governance, and the role of traditional leaders. Key discussions emphasized inclusion of marginalized groups, participatory and culturally relevant M&E, and education-particularly civic and early childhood-as critical for governance. Judicial independence, shrinking civic space, and youth-friendly, tech-enabled participation also featured prominently.

The conference underscored African-led research and community-driven solutions as vital to turning evidence into action.

512

Delegates from 30 different countries participated in the conference.

30

Presentations made by researchers and scholars across 12 breakout panel sessions.

12

Plenary sessions held in the main auditorium across 3 days, including presentations, roundtable discussions, and panel discussions.

4

Side Events held by ICED, ReFinD, Committee on Sustainable Assessment (COSA), and PACKS Africa



Right-to-Left: Prof. Peter Quartey, Hon. Ahmed Ibrahim, Dr. Namanga Ngongi, Prof. Michael Carter, and Emmanuel Anyimadu at the conference.

1. PRE-CONFERENCE-INNOVATING EVIDENCE: INSIGHTS FROM THE E2A 2025 SIDE EVENTS

The opening two days of E2A 2025 featured side events that convened diverse actors to explore innovative approaches to evidence generation and application.

ICED and Research and Evaluation Centre (REC) systematic reviews session introduced frameworks and tools (PICOS, Rayyan, Zotero), with a hands-on exercise, and launched a West Africa Community of Practice to strengthen localized evidence synthesis and policy uptake.

ReFinD's financial inclusion roundtable showcased how incentives like transport subsidies, security measures (e.g., CCTV), and digital tools can improve mobile money agent networks. Evidence from Ghana revealed enhanced outreach, transparency, and loan repayment, though liquidity and literacy gaps remain.

ICED and Committee on Sustainable Assessment (COSA) AI for Agricultural MEL Challenge applied participatory design thinking to create AI-enabled solutions. Teams developed innovations such as multilingual chatbots, NLP tools, and drone-powered dashboards, with a winning AI-powered MEL engine integrating remote sensing.

PACKS Africa's Evidence-Informed Decision-Making session stressed that abundant data alone

is insufficient without uptake. Using the “onion ring” model, participants called for people-centered knowledge systems, institutional reforms, and stronger accountability to embed evidence into governance.

These events demonstrated the need for context-driven, technology-enabled, and inclusive approaches to transforming evidence into actionable policy.

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At this time, when we are feeling ever more pressure to move faster, to do more with less, and to make sure we are not making long-term mistakes, we have to have data that backs that up. But we have to have data that's inclusive – what we call data democracy.

By

Liam Brody

Chief Executive Officer, Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA)



“

Political parties are the sure pathways for women get endorsed to vie for political positions and get appointed in various levels. Civil society activism during political seasons is important, but, engaging the political parties is necessary for promoting and supporting the participation of women.

By

Eunice Agbenyadzi

Head of Programmes, STAR-Ghana Foundation



Right-to-Left: Dr. David Ameyaw (ICED), Prof. Peter Quartey, Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, Dr. Namanga Ngongi, Prof. Michael Carter, Mr. Emmanuel Anyimadu, and other dignitaries follow proceedings at the conference.

2. MAIN CONFERENCE: INNOVATING FOR EQUITY: INSIGHTS FROM THE E2A 2025 CONFERENCE

2.1: Introduction

The three-day main conference of E2A 2025 brought together policymakers, academics, civil society, and traditional leaders to explore how evidence can advance participatory governance and sustainable development in Africa. In addition to plenary discussions and thematic presentations, exhibitions showcased innovations, knowledge products, and cultural artifacts, blending research with practice.

In his welcome, **Prof. Peter Quartey, Director of ISSER**, stressed that *“evidence must serve as the bridge between research and real policy solutions.”* **Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana**, aligned the gathering with the university’s mission to drive Africa’s development.

Dr. David S. Ameyaw, President and CEO of ICED, emphasized the need to *“empower marginalized voices and ensure no community is left behind.”* ICED Board Chair **Dr. Namanga Ngong’i** echoed the call for African-led, locally trusted research. **Mr. Liam Jesse Brody, CEO of COSA**, underlined that *“evidence without application is wasted potential,”* while **Mr. Percy Anaab Bukari, President of the Ghana Institute of Planning**, urged greater focus on inclusive planning.

Delivering the keynote, **Hon. Ahmed Ibrahim, Ghana’s Minister of Local Government, Chieftaincy & Religious Affairs**, called for participatory governance tools such as social audits and tasked the conference with producing a policy note for decision-makers. Speakers jointly urged the institutionalization of E2A as an annual platform for dialogue and accountability across Africa.

“

The #E2A2025 theme has come at critical moment in Africa’s developmental moment that calls for bold thinking, practical evidence and above all inclusive governance to advance sustainable development for all.

By

Hon. Ahmed Ibrahim
Minister for Local Governance, Chieftaincy, and
Religious Affairs



“

If you are producing evidence but you don’t have access to policymakers, then identify an institution or an individual who is a knowledge broker that has access to these people... Bring them on board before you begin the research... Let’s create a framework that they have input into.

By

Dr. Emily Ikhide
Research Fellow/Head, Gender and Inclusivity Unit, National Institute for
Legislative and Democratic Studies, National Assembly, Abuja



2.2: Key Themes & Recommendations

2.2.1: Financial Tools for Smallholder Farmers



The conference highlighted the power of bundled financial products—combining insurance, credit, and savings—to reduce vulnerability and boost productivity for farmers. Secure land tenure and legal reforms were emphasized as prerequisites for agricultural investment. Remote sensing and machine learning offer new targeting tools, but uptake depends on localization and farmer education.

Key Recommendations



Bundled products help farmers escape poverty traps.



Land tenure security is foundational for investment.



Tech tools must be localized and farmer-friendly.



Gender-responsive design ensures inclusion.

2.2.2: Youth and Women in Governance

Persistent barriers—high costs, entrenched norms, and weak civic education—limit the political participation of youth and women. The conference called for **affirmative action laws, quotas, and ICT investments** to create space for meaningful participation, not just tokenism. Civil society coalitions and mentorship were spotlighted as drivers of change.



Key Recommendations



Enforce quotas and support women candidates.



Digital inclusion expands access.

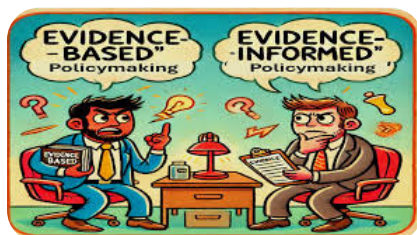


Cultural change campaigns are critical.



Coalitions and mentorship sustain progress.

2.2.3: Evidence-Based Policy Reform



High-quality research has little impact unless aligned with political realities. E2A underscored the need for co-created research with policymakers, better communication tools, and trusted intermediaries who bridge research and politics.

Key Recommendations

- ✓ Align research with political window.
- ✓ Co-create with policymakers for ownership.
- ✓ Use accessible communication (visuals, stories)
- ✓ Citizens must be treated as co-creators.

2.2.4: Democratic Institutions and Judiciary

The judiciary was reaffirmed as a cornerstone of democracy. Calls were made for stronger independence, transparency, and integrity, alongside regional peer learning and integration of intergenerational justice.



Key Recommendations

- ✓ Judiciary must remain transparent and independent.
- ✓ Embed intergenerational justice into rulings.
- ✓ Case backlogs and underfunding undermine trust.
- ✓ Regional networks accelerate reform.

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I call on all of us - African governments, regional institutions, and development partners to reaffirm their commitment to investing in credible evidence systems, independent research, and inclusive governance models. The cost of ignoring evidence is far greater than the investment required to generate and use it.

By

Dr. David Ameyaw

President & CEO,

International Centre for Evaluation & Development



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What forms of evidence do we need now? Not the technical papers, not the 270-page documents - who would read them? Evidence has to go in a very simple, digestible format. And that is what ICED and ISSER stand for, and I believe all of you also do.

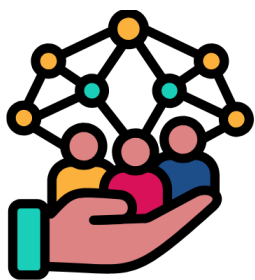
By

Prof. Peter Quartey

Director, ISSER



2.2.5: Civil Society Financing and Resilience



CSOs remain overly dependent on donor funds, often misaligned with local priorities. E2A called for a national CSO fund, innovative financing partnerships, and community-driven approaches to sustainability. Civil society was also recognized as crucial in countering authoritarianism and shrinking civic space.

Key Recommendations



Establish national CSO financing mechanism.



Grassroots coalitions build democratic resilience.



Reduce donor dependency; promote local ownership



Data-driven advocacy strengthens accountability.

2.2.6: Digital Innovation and Media

From AI tools like Amae3ai to participatory storytelling, digital solutions were showcased as enablers of accountability and transparency. However, adoption requires inclusivity, digital literacy, and ethical safeguards.



Key Recommendations



Civic tech must be rights-based and inclusive.



Digital literacy is key to equitable participation.



Media-academia-CSO collaboration boosts visibility.



Trust and ethics sustain innovation.

2.2.7: Education and Community Voices



Play-Based Learning (PBL) emerged as a promising approach for inclusive early childhood education, but cultural resistance and limited teacher training hinder implementation. Community agency remains central to shaping responsive education systems.

Key Recommendations

- ✓ PBL can improve engagement but needs cultural adaptation.
- ✓ Teacher training is a major gap.
- ✓ Community leadership drives inclusion.
- ✓ SEN support and accountability remain weak.

2.2.8: Traditional Leadership in Governance

Traditional leaders remain vital actors in local governance, particularly for accountability, education, and social welfare. Yet, unclear legal frameworks and weak decentralization limit their formal role.

Nana Ekua Edugyanmaa - A Queen Mother from Ghana during the E2A. She shared insights on the role of traditional leaders in strengthening good governance in Africa.



Key Recommendations

- ✓ Integrate chiefs into governance frameworks.
- ✓ Decentralization must be real, not symbolic.
- ✓ Traditional authority fosters social accountability.
- ✓ Document community-led initiatives to inform policy.

2.2.9: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)



E2A emphasized participatory, localized, and technology-driven M&E practices. Tools like evidence-gap maps and citizen forums showcased how inclusive evaluation can build transparency and responsiveness.

Key Recommendations

- ✓ Representation of marginalized groups is essential.
- ✓ M&E budgets should be integrated into program costs.
- ✓ Storytelling capacity improves evidence use.
- ✓ Localized evaluations strengthen accountability.

GALLERY

Explore the full E2A 2025 photo album [here](#).





A delegate contributing during a plenary session at the conference.

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