Reimagining the Evidence-Informed Policy and Decision-Making Ecosystem in Africa

Background

Across Africa, the demand for evidence to inform policies and decisions is growing rapidly. Yet the journey from knowledge to action remains fragmented, often driven by external agendas that overlook African priorities, innovations, and lived experiences. While African governments, institutions, and communities have developed rich practices for embedding evidence into decision-making, these successes remain insufficiently documented, shared, and scaled.

Recent initiatives such as African Evidence Networks (AEN's) Evidence 2025 in Cotonou and collaborative platforms like Southern Voice have demonstrated the growing momentum toward Africa-led knowledge generation and use. The E2A 2026 Conference seeks to complement and build upon these efforts by fostering deeper connections among these ecosystems linking evidence producers, data communities, policymakers, and practitioners to consolidate lessons, amplify African leadership, and sustain collective impact across the continent.

The International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) and the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), in conjunction with Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) and other partners, are organizing the **9th Evidence to Action Conference and Exhibition** at the ISSER auditorium, on the University of Ghana campus, from **June 22nd-26th, 2026**.

This conference will provide a continental platform to reflect, learn, and co-create. It will seek to create a platform for reflection and collective action. With Africa currently navigating urgent and complex challenges such as the post-COVID recovery, climate change adaptation, food security, and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), it is crucial to rethink and strengthen the evidence ecosystem. It is important to learn and understand what has worked, where it has worked, whom it has worked for, how it has worked, why it worked, and what processes sustained it, while also exploring what needs to change to reimagine a more inclusive and dynamic evidence-to-action ecosystem in Africa. It will reimagine an inclusive and transformative system for the future where Africa shifts from being a recipient of externally defined evidence paradigms to a global producer and shaper of evidence-informed policymaking. It is time to document African experiences, foster cross-learning, and build coalitions and networks that advance the use of evidence for equitable and transformative outcomes across the continent.

Goal

To drive an Africa-led transformation of the evidence-to-action ecosystem by strengthening the continent's capacity to generate and apply contextually grounded knowledge, positioning Africa as a global leader in evidence-informed policymaking and equitable, sustainable development.

Objectives

- **Reimagine the Evidence-to-Action Ecosystem**: Shape a system grounded in African contexts, priorities, and legitimacy.
- **Document and Learn from Practice:** Capture enablers, processes, and innovations including indigenous knowledge that sustained or constrained evidence use.
- **Clarify Ownership and Audience:** Address the needs of primary users such as policymakers, practitioners, funders, civil societies, and communities while ensuring African institutions drive the agenda.
- **Strengthen Collaboration:** Deepen partnerships among institutions, policymakers, funders, civil society, and communities.
- **Advance Systems-Level Transformation:** Inspire renewed confidence and commitment to Africa-led approaches that influence global evidence debates.

Thematic Priorities

- **Legitimacy & Ownership of Evidence:** Whose knowledge counts? How do we validate African-generated evidence, and institutionalize African leadership in the evidence ecosystem?
- **Evidence Uptake, Translation, and Use:** Innovations and pathways for turning evidence into policy, practice, investments, and community-driven action.
- **Systems Transformation for Evidence-Informed Governance:** Re-imagining the governance structures and incentives that shape evidence production and use.
- **Inclusivity & Equity:** Elevating the voices of youth, women, indigenous groups, and marginalized communities in evidence generation.
- **Collaboration & Partnerships:** Lessons from successful multi-actor initiatives that achieved policy change.
- **Learning from Failures and Adaptive Practice:** What has not worked in evidence-to-action, and why? How can Africa learn from missteps to avoid replication?
- **Technological Disruption and Opportunity:** How can the rapid advancement of technology—particularly artificial intelligence (AI), digital data systems, and analytics—be harnessed to transform evidence generation, interpretation, and use across sectors in Africa, while effectively addressing the ethical, access, and capacity challenges it presents?

Expected Outcomes

- **A Shared Roadmap:** A clear strategy for embedding Africa-led evidence ecosystems in policymaking processes.
- **Compendium of Practices:** A living resource documenting African successes and failures, including indigenous approaches.
- **Institutionalized Networks:** Establishment of durable platforms for South-South collaboration among African institutions that intentionally connect the data and evidence communities to promote synergy, innovation, and shared standards.
- **Joint Declaration:** A commitment by governments, funders, and institutions to inclusive and Africa-owned evidence-to-action practices at continental level, supported by robust, open, and interoperable data systems.
- **Policy Influence:** Specific commitments by national governments or regional bodies to adopt/adapt new approaches that leverage integrated data and evidence for more effective policy design and implementation.
- **Global Positioning:** Integration of African data and evidence contributions in global debates, amplifying Africa's leadership in advancing data-driven and evidence-informed policymaking.

Format and Participation

The three-day convening will bring together policymakers, research and academic institutions, civil society and grassroots actors, youth, women, and indigenous innovators, as well as regional and international partners and funders.

Conference Format

The conference will feature two days of pre-conference/side events followed by a three-day main conference and exhibition as described below:

Day 1: Opening plenary, keynote addresses, Africa's evidence landscape.

Day 2: Thematic panels, evidence fairs, co-creation labs, honest 'failures & lessons learned' sessions.

Day 3: High-level policy dialogues, adoption of Joint Declaration, roadmap launch, and closing.

Positioning & Sustainability

- A conference steering committee will provide strategic oversight ensuring continuity from preparation to post-conference implementation and accountability for agreed actions.
- Outputs will be embedded into existing African networks, platforms, and knowledge systems to guarantee continued relevance, access, and use beyond the event.
- A dedicated post-conference mechanism will be established to monitor adoption of recommendations, track policy influence, and maintain active collaboration among stakeholders.
- Strategic partnerships with funders and regional institutions will be established to support long-term institutionalization of Africa's evidence-to-action ecosystem.

Value Proposition for Funders

- Demonstrated measurable shifts in practice and policy adoption
- Strengthened African institutions as durable platforms for evidence generation, exchange, and use
- Elevation of African innovations in global forums
- Advancing equity and inclusiveness by centering marginalized voices
- Contributing to systemic change by redefining what counts as legitimate evidence globally

Collaboration & Next Steps

- Establishing a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee
- Mobilizing resources and partners
- Launching pre-conference consultations and evidence-gathering activities
- Designing mechanisms for post-conference monitoring and sustainability

Conference Organizing Committee

The E2A 2026 Conference is organized by the International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) in collaboration with partner organizations. The organizing committee is committed to delivering a high-impact event that advances governance effectiveness in Africa.

For further information, including details on abstract submissions, participation, registration fees, or hosting a pre-conference session/side event, please visit our website: www.iced-eval.org, or email us at: e2a@iced-eval.org and info@iced-eval.org.