

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KISUMU



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GOVERNOR, KISUMU COUNTY (KENYA)

AT

THE 9TH EVIDENCE TO ACTION (E2A)

CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION 2026

**The ISSER - Institute of Statistical, Social and
Economic Research**

1400HRS The University of Ghana, Legon Campus.

Friday, 26 June, 2026

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

**Distinguished scholars and researchers,
Policymakers and public servants,
Representatives of institutions at diverse levels,
Leaders of civil society and community organizations,
Development partners,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

As we conclude this 9th Evidence to Action Conference, let me express my gratitude to all participants who have travelled from across Africa and beyond to engage in this important conversation.

Africa's evidence ecosystem is entering a new phase of maturity, and it has been an honour to be part of discussions shaping that future.

Over the past few days, we have reflected deeply on what works, where it works, and for whom. More importantly, we have examined how to transform the systems that enable evidence to influence policy and practice. The most important question before us has been: **What must change, for Africa to build and sustain an Africa-led Evidence-to-Action ecosystem, capable of transformation and scaling?**

The discussions that went on here, have not just been technical exercises. They have been conversations **about power, ownership, democracy, and ultimately, Africa's future.**

Evidence is not simply about data. It is about whose reality is recognised, whose voice is heard, and whose experiences shape public action. For too long, our Mamaland Africa has been described through data generated elsewhere, interpreted by others, and often applied without sufficient regard for local realities. Our communities have supplied information but have rarely owned the knowledge derived from it.

That imbalance must change — not because Africa rejects global collaboration, but because no society can sustainably develop on borrowed understanding. A people must understand themselves, before they can transform themselves. So Africa must own its knowledge, before it can own its destiny.

The future of evidence-informed policymaking depends on African ownership of the knowledge ecosystem.

One lesson I have learned from public service is that development does not fail because societies lack plans.

Development often fails because institutions fail to learn. The gap between evidence and action is not a gap in information; it is a gap in institutions.

Today in most parts of this Continent, we already know much about what improves health, agriculture, education, climate adaptation and economic development. Our challenge is therefore not ignorance. The challenge is building institutions capable of learning, adapting and acting consistently over time.

That is why our focus must move beyond projects and towards systems. **Projects have beginnings and endings. Systems create continuity. Projects depend on individuals. Systems survive leadership transitions. Projects produce outputs. Systems produce transformation.**

If Africa is to become a truly evidence-informed continent, we must build institutions that generate, curate, communicate, demand and use evidence to improve citizens' lives.

I personally believe, that the next phase of Africa's evidence journey must rest on five pillars.

First, we must democratise knowledge. Evidence should not remain confined to conference halls, journals and technical reports.

It must reach farmers, traders, community health workers, young innovators and citizens wherever it is relevant. **An informed citizenry is the strongest foundation of accountable governance and sustainable development.**

Second, we must institutionalise evidence use in government. Evidence must become part of how our governments function at every level — from planning and budgeting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It should not depend on individual leaders but be embedded within institutions through stronger evidence units, integrated data systems, learning mechanisms and policy laboratories.

Third, we must elevate African knowledge systems. We must recognise that scientific evidence and indigenous knowledge are not competitors but partners. The wisdom of our communities raw as they are, should sit alongside the findings of our laboratories in shaping decisions.

Fourth, we must build an African knowledge pool. Challenges such as climate change, disease outbreaks, migration, food security, trade and technology transcend borders. Our knowledge systems must do the same.

We need stronger continental research networks, South-South partnerships, shared learning platforms, open-access repositories, and collaboration among governments, universities, civil society and the private sector. Just as Africa seeks economic integration, we should also pursue knowledge integration.

Fifth, we must harness technology responsibly. Artificial intelligence, big data, geospatial technologies and digital public infrastructure offer never had before opportunities, to strengthen evidence generation and decision-making. But technology is not neutral. Without ethical governance and inclusive access, it can deepen exclusion. Our goal must be technological justice. Ensuring that digital transformation strengthens both democracy and human dignity.

Ladies and gentlemen, throughout this conference, one phrase has stood out: **Evidence to Action**. These words carry a profound moral challenge. **Evidence without action is just information and action without evidence is speculation.** Progress occurs only when the two become inseparable or one.

The success of this conference will not be measured by presentations, papers or attendance. It will be measured by what changes when we return home.

Will governments make better decisions? Will budgets become more responsive? Will policies become more inclusive? Will institutions become more accountable? Will citizens become more empowered? Will development outcomes improve? Those are the questions history will ask.

We stand at a decisive moment. While we possess vast natural resources and growing digital capabilities, **our greatest resource is our intellect, creativity, ingenuity and resilience.** The world needs Africa not as a source of raw materials, markets or data, but as a source of ideas, innovation and solutions.

That is why the future we seek must be Africa-led and not Africa-assisted. Africa studied, but Africa-led. **The responsibility to define our priorities, generate our evidence, shape our policies and determine our future rests with us.**

As we leave here, I plead that we commit to six practical actions:

1. Strengthen country-owned evidence systems and financing mechanisms.
2. Institutionalise evidence use in planning, budgeting and public service delivery.
3. Invest in African research institutions, universities and think tanks.
4. Build permanent platforms linking researchers, policymakers and citizens.
5. Harness emerging technologies responsibly and inclusively, and,
6. Create a living African repository of lessons, innovations, successes and failures.

These are not aspirations; they are practical and achievable commitments.

From this Conference distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we have interpreted our reality, challenged our assumptions and imagined new possibilities. **The time has now come to act!**

Let this gathering be remembered as the moment Africa placed evidence at the centre of governance; the moment we chose institutional learning over fragmented experimentation; the moment we affirmed that knowledge generated by Africans must shape decisions affecting Africans; and the moment we moved decisively from evidence to action.

May we leave determined to build an Africa that not only consumes knowledge but produces it; one that not only receives ideas but generates them; not only responds to change but leads change.

Thank you very much. Asanteni Sana.