

## Concept Note

### Introduction

The idea of using evidence to inform policy reforms is not new. As far back as ancient Greece, Aristotle put forward the notion that different kinds of knowledge should inform rulemaking. This would ideally involve a combination of scientific knowledge, pragmatic knowledge and value-led knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Ehrenberg, 1999).<sup>1</sup> What is new and interesting in Africa, however, is the increasing emphasis that has been placed on the use of evidence to inform police development and implementation.

On 1 January 2016, the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an [historic UN Summit](#) — officially came into force (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>). Over the next fifteen years, with these universally applicable Goals, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Sustainable development (SD) means that “development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, sustainable development is the organizing principle for sustaining finite resources necessary to provide for the needs of future generations.

This definition implies the two cardinal principles of leadership – Responsibility and Accountability. All countries, regardless of stature have a responsibility and are accountable for the prosperity and sustainability of the planet. Responsibility is explained as the obligation to perform duties, tasks or roles using sound professional judgement and being answerable for the decisions made in doing this. Whereas, Accountability

is defined as being answerable for the decisions made in the course of one’s professional practice.

Countries must mobilize efforts and provide leadership in the generation, dissemination and utilization of evidence. In doing so, they will be to assess outcomes and impacts of development interventions and programs, capture the progress, success, and failures of its sustainable development interventions, inform all stakeholders for effective decision-making, strategic planning and risk management, provide accountability to its citizens and to contribute to the broader knowledge and learning in the field of sustainable development.

This transformational leadership is an essential precursor to any change initiative and thus calls for high-level responsibility and accountability from policy makers, development professionals, researchers, evaluators and other stakeholders – that is the willingness to be responsible and accountable for the well-being of the larger community by making decisions and developing policy and action that is based on clear and irrefutable evidence. Fundamentally, global leadership is embracing the new concept of responsibility and accountability in terms of evidence generation in support of policy making and development action.

All citizens have the responsibility to contribute to the development agenda. The modern world is a global village, a global household, a global economic unit of the global community and to develop policies and development actions, where all must demonstrate leadership, authority and accountability of evidence generation and its use thereof. African countries cannot be passive spectators and must take the initiative and responsibility to generate the evidence needed to actively track and monitor progress and attainment of the SDG Goals.

Evidence Generation, Dissemination and Use to Improve Policy Reforms and Sustainable Development Agenda is a two-pronged proposition. It is the responsibility of policy makers and development professionals to demand solid, rigorous and sound evidence while remaining accountable for decisions made and allocated resources. It is also the responsibility of researchers and evaluators to supply well documented and systematically reviewed evidence and be accountable to present research and evaluation results and findings in a timely, formatted and comprehensible manner for effective decision making that “meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

### Overall Goal

To identify and discuss accountability and responsibilities of stakeholders in the use of evidence to address developmental needs. Participants will explore how they can contribute to development and sustainability in their own roles.

### Our Approach

The Conference will offer an exciting forum for renowned research and evaluation professionals, and development practitioners from national, regional and international organisations of diverse disciplines who have used research and evaluation for effective and impactful policy making and action. It will also promote and ensure dialogue and exchange of experiences and chart a way forward for enhanced impact in research and evaluation. We aim primarily to provide a platform for African producers and users of evidence to interact, share experiences and plan for future work together.

1. The first two days will be set aside for pre-conference trainings and side

1 Ehrenberg, J (1999) Civil society: the critical history of an idea, New York and London: New York University Press. Flyvbjerg, B (2001) Making social science matter: why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again, Cambridge, UK: University Press.  
2 As defined in the Brundtland Report.

events. This will provide an opportunity for partners to build capacity in their respective fields.

2. The subsequent two days will be the main conference and comprise of the following:
  - Opening session
  - Plenary sessions by keynote speakers
  - Breakout sessions
  - An exhibition where organizations can show-case their projects and products
  - Networking and matchmaking events

## Conference Objectives

- To facilitate dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders on research and evaluation agenda and priority setting to influence policymaking and governance.
- To identify effective ways research and evaluation findings can be translated and utilized for evidence-based policy making, funding, and action.
- To highlight and share what has worked and what has not worked integrating and using cutting-edge research and evaluation results and findings for policy making and sustainable program development.
- To identify and discuss successful models that support responsibility and accountability in research and evaluation among stakeholders for action and impact
- To critical analysis and examine how policies and programs can continuously be infused with evidence to ensure they stay up to date and meet the needs of their recipients

## Central Themes

1. Communication
2. Innovation and Technology
3. Framework for Evidence Value Chain
4. Tools and Instruments for Evidence Based Generation and Use

## Sectors

The focus sectors are as follows:

1. Agriculture and Food Systems in sub-Saharan Africa
2. Climate Change and Environment
3. Agriculture Risk, Index Insurance and Risk Mitigation
4. Private Sector in Development
5. Impact of investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
6. Innovative Finance, Credit and Savings for Smallholders
7. Gender and Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems
8. Youth Employment
9. National and Local Governance and Accountability
10. Evidence Synthesis and Impact Evaluation for Policy Making
11. Knowledge Brokering and Knowledge Translation

## Participants

Conference participants will be drawn from a diverse range of stakeholders working in Africa who are involved in research and evaluation. They include:

- Relevant Government Ministries
- Farmer organizations
- Universities
- Development think tanks
- Civil Society
- Policy-makers and practitioners
- Research Organizations (National and International)
- Development agencies and partners
- Private Sector organizations
- Media

## Expected Outcomes

- Increased dialogue and communication amongst researchers, policy-makers, and development practitioners to driving research and evaluation agenda and priorities
- Increased awareness of demand-driven research and evaluation in the context of Africa
- Increased availability and accessibility of evaluation and research findings for policy making and program development
- Improved monitoring and evaluation of evidence-based policy reforms and program development
- Improved adoption of evaluation and research findings for policy and program development

## Conference Organizing Committee

The Conference is convened by the International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED), Institute for Statistics, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), and Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Assets and Market Access (AMA Innovation Lab) in conjunction with the Office of the President, Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation, Ghana, The Campbell Collaboration and Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative (ATAI).

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