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**CONCEPT
NOTE**

EVID⁴Dev
Evidence for Development
CONFERENCE
May 6-8, 2025
Nairobi



»»» Introduction



The 2022 progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shows that African countries have made some progress, but are off-track to meet the SDGs goals. Even though the SDGs aspire to leave no one behind, the report states that “without deliberate policies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, by 2030, at least 492 million people will be left in extreme poverty and at least 350 million people by 2050.” A 2022 progress report on the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 shows poor performance on two key development goals, namely, goal 1 on “a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development”, where the continent only realised 37% against its 2021 targets, and goal 3 on “an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law”, where the continent only achieved 42% against its 2021 targets.

Evidence, which includes scientific research and data and information emerging from government administrative systems, is critical in accelerating development progress including setting development agenda, informing policy and intervention choices and design, tracking and improving policy implementation, assessing impact, and ensuring no one is left behind. Yet, evidence-informed policymaking (EIP), or the systematic use of evidence in policymaking remains sub-optimal in many countries in Africa for many reasons.

The persisting inadequate domestic investments in science, technology, and innovation (STI) on the continent is a major barrier to EIP as it directly limits the availability of scientific research and technological tools and innovations needed for policy formulation and implementation. Arising from the inadequate investment is the challenge of weak research capacities and infrastructure that restrict rigorous research, data analysis, and innovations necessary for effective decision-making and implementation.

The many gaps and quality issues in data from governments’ administrative systems limit the availability of accurate and timely information for decision-making and implementation. Weak

monitoring and evaluation systems in the public sector in Africa further impede evidence-informed policymaking on the continent. These multifaceted challenges collectively undermine the utilisation of evidence in Africa’s development efforts, necessitating concerted efforts to address the systemic issues at play.

To contribute to increasing the use of evidence in Africa’s development efforts, the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) are partnering to introduce a biennial continental conference called the Evidence for Development (Evi4Dev) Conference. The purpose of the Evi4Dev Conference is to center STI and EIP in Africa’s development efforts in order to accelerate progress towards the realisation of the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This new platform embodies the mandates of the two institutions and builds on the institutions’ past and ongoing efforts to nurture and promote STI, which is the foundation for enabling a culture of evidence use.

The Evi4Dev Conference acknowledges the existence of other conferences or forums that promote research and evidence

use. The unique value that the Evi4Dev Conference brings is its regular convening of both government and non-government actors to collectively review progress and agree on urgent actions that governments and other actors will take to put data, evidence, and innovations at the centre of the continent’s Agenda 2063 implementation efforts. In addition, the Evi4Dev platform integrates follow-up mechanisms in between conferences to enable sustained action, engagement, and tracking of progress on actions agreed upon at previous conferences. The follow-up mechanisms will be identified before the first conference and discussed and agreed upon at the first conference.



Without deliberate policies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, by 2030, at least 492 million people will be left in extreme poverty and at least 350 million people by 2050



»»» AFIDEP and AUDA-NEPAD Collaboration

The mandate of the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) is to bridge the gaps between research, policy and practice in development efforts in Africa in order to contribute to the realisation of the SDGs and other development strategies by supporting the use of evidence in the formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes. To realise its mandate, AFIDEP implements two streams of work that seek to:

- Provide practical evidence to enable governments move from rhetoric and policy documents to action in addressing various sustainable development goals
- Strengthen institutional and individual capacity for demand and use of evidence, as well as promote interactions between researchers and policymakers.



AFIDEP's work has, since 2010 when it was established, been pushing the boundaries of how development actors think about evidence generation, translation and use, by putting policymakers at the centre of these efforts.

The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) is the technical arm of the African Union Commission (AUC) mandated to: provide knowledge-based advisory services and technical assistance to African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities to strengthen their capacity; act as the continent's technical interface on policy development recommendation and implementation with partners and stakeholders; undertake the full range of resource mobilisation; and, coordinate and execute priority regional and continental projects enshrined in Agenda 2063 with the aim of accelerating regional integration so as to achieve "The Africa We Want." In implementing this mandate, AUDA-NEPAD, has, among others, set up the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation (OSTI), which implements work in three pillars, namely:

- i. **Science and policy enablers**, which seeks to achieve three goals: contribute to the development and domestication of an AU strategy on STI towards socio-economic and inclusive growth of the continent; review and develop policies that would enhance implementation of STI related initiatives; and, create an enabling environment for evidence-based policy and encouraging STI programme development at the national, regional and continental level;
- ii. **Technology platforms**, which seeks to advance scientific and technological discoveries that address critical African challenges and promote economic growth such as gene drives, safety monitoring tools and genome editing;
- iii. **Energise Africa**, which seeks to strengthen innovation ecosystems for active youth participation in an agile private and public sector by strengthening existing and new innovation hubs for effective national innovation ecosystems towards enhanced youth participation, and developing youth responsive financial services systems to support innovations



»»» Evi4Dev Conference Goal, Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Goal

The Evi4Dev Conference provides a platform for sustained engagement of science, technology and innovation (STI) and evidence-informed policymaking (EIP) actors requisite for centring STI and EIP practice in Africa's development efforts.

The key STI and EIP actors targeted by the Evi4Dev Conference include policymakers in government agencies and government officials i.e parliamentarians, researchers (based in universities, research institutes and think tanks), policy implementers and practitioners, knowledge brokers, civil society, media, development partners, and private sector representatives.

The conference will be hosted as a hybrid forum with opportunities for both in-person and virtual participation of delegates.

Conference Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The main objective of the Evi4Dev Conference is to convene policymakers, STI and EIP experts, funders, and practitioners working in different development fields to deliberate the status of STI and EIP, identify and commit to critical actions needed in order to centre data, evidence, and innovations in Agenda 2063 implementation efforts. Specific objectives that the conference will seek to achieve include, to:

1. Generate and sustain commitment and actions needed by governments and other development actors to put data, evidence, and innovations at the centre of Agenda 2063 implementation efforts
2. Foster strategic relationships and interdisciplinary collaboration among government agencies and key stakeholders in the STI and EIP ecosystems
3. Nurture STI and EIP champions across different development sectors in Africa, including young and emerging STI and EIP leaders and champions
4. Build and share knowledge on experiences, lessons, and best practices what works in centering STI and EIP in development efforts in the different contexts of the continent

The expected outcomes of the conference include:

- Heightened commitments and actions by governments, funders, and other development actors to put STI and EIP at the center of Africa's development (including increased investments, improved programme performance, etc.)
- A strong STI and EIP communities of practice driving development progress in Africa

Conference focus, theme and sub-themes

The inaugural Evi4Dev Conference, to be held May 6-8, 2025, will focus on the role of STI and EIP in driving progress in three of the seven ambitions of the Agenda 2063's second decade, namely:



- > **Prosperity:** Every AU member states attains middle-income status
- > **People-driven:** African citizens are more empowered and more productive
- > **Democratic governance:** Public institutions are more responsive

Five development issues/areas will drive progress towards these three ambitions including; wealth creation, infrastructure (physical and digital infrastructure), food security, education, and health. Meaningful progress in these key development areas will be underpinned by a focus on good governance, equity and inclusion, as well as, integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

The conference will focus on generating commitment and actions needed by governments and other stakeholders to place data, evidence, and innovations at the centre of the continent's efforts to: create wealth, develop physical and digital infrastructure, enhance food production, transform education, and improve health. In each of these five areas, special attention will be on enabling good governance, equity and inclusion, as well as on climate-change proofing efforts.

The overarching theme of the first conference is "optimising the role of data, evidence, and innovations in Africa's efforts to create wealth, empower citizens, and foster responsive and inclusive governance". Given that the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2034 will have been launched in February 2025, this conference will provide a platform for governments and other stakeholders to deliberate the domestication of the strategy and commit to a plan for STISA 2034 domestication and progress tracking. This will be the main focus of the conference's third theme along with other key issues that STISA 2034 will be addressing including emerging technologies, STI data governance, and ethical considerations.

For more details, contact