Weak institutional and individual capacities coupled with poor governance and weak accountability structures and processes are among the major barriers to development progress in Africa. Our work in 2019 on population and sustainable development, directly contributed to several of the ICPD25 concerns development. AFIDEP’s education strategy will have as its overall purpose the promotion of use of evidence in education policymaking in Africa in order to develop the requisite critical technical skills.

By Elizabeth Kahurani
The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) is pleased to launch a new strategic plan for the period 2020-2024. In line with our purpose to have evidence used consistently to transform lives in Africa, the new road map for the institute outlines ways through which we aim to promote a shift from a culture of low evidence use in decision-making, to a setting where policy and programme actors actively seek and routinely use evidence. In doing so, the right investments can be made towards development that transforms the lives of all African people.

On the occasion of the launch our five-year Strategic Plan (2020-2024), known as Strategy 2024, AFIDEP Times (AT) talked to Nyovani Madise, who led the process to develop the new strategic plan.

AT: Briefly summarise the overall aim of Strategy 2024
NM: In Strategy 2024, we will build on our work between 2015-2019 by expanding our scope to promote the use of evidence not only in policymaking but going beyond to implementation of those policies, to the design, and evaluation of programmes also. We are also focusing our work on accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

AT: There are 17 SDGs. Do you intend to address all of them or you have specific focus areas?
NM: Through our analysis of the progress that Africa has made on the SDGs, we have identified the following as our five priority areas under Strategy 2024, where we feel Africa has made least progress and needs to change gears to accelerate progress:

1. Population dynamics and the demographic dividend;
2. Health and well-being;
3. Transformative education and skills development;
4. The environment and climate change; and
5. Governance and accountability.

AT: What difference do you anticipate the new strategy will make by the end of 2024
NM: For us, success will be when:

- We see increased political commitment to achieving the SDGs and addressing development challenges in at least 10 countries that we are working in;
- African governments allocate funding, technical and human resources to accelerate progress on the SDGs; and
- Evidence is used consistently in at least 10 countries when designing and implementing programmes for achieving the SDGs.
- 5 countries that we work in move from low income status to lower-middle income, and 5 from lower-middle to upper-middle income. Most importantly, we should see poverty levels and inequalities reduce in these countries.

AT: Briefly tell us the process that went into developing the new strategic plan
NM: It was a rigorous consultative process that started in 2018 involving Staff, Board of Directors, and partners. It was a process that involved intensive discussions, workshops, and consultations with key stakeholders across Africa.

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Tackling the threat of drug-resistant bacteria in Malawi and Uganda

By Claire Jansen

Imagine a world in which antibiotics rely on to treat diseases like tuberculosis, tuberculosis, and even common bacterial infections like urinary tract infections are no longer effective. This is already a reality for sepsis, a life-threatening condition that is estimated to cause more than 14 million deaths annually. Despite being a major killer and as an important marker of the quality of care of a health system, sepsis is still largely unknown to the general public and policymakers.

This is complicated by the fact that antibiotic use is not limited to humans. Antibiotics are also commonly used in livestock and other animals. Human and animal wastage then spills into the larger environment, making the issue of AMR not just within human health, in the African region as a whole or in Malawi.

The growing threat of drug-resistant bacteria is likely to affect many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) like Malawi more severely because of limited access to alternative antibiotics. Thus, developing and implementing effective policy to address AMR is critical and will require coordination between multiple sectors including the human health, animal health, agriculture, and livestock sectors.

As part of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM)-led Drivers of Resistance in Uganda and Malawi (DRUM) Consortium, AFIDEP is leading research on the AMR policy landscape in Malawi with the aim of better understanding the key stakeholders’ perceptions of barriers to collaborative multi-sectoral development and implementation of policy in line with the antimicrobial resistance strategy in Malawi.

As a first step, AFIDEP conducted interviews with policy makers and other key partners in Malawi to better understand the national-level AMR policy in Malawi. Findings from these interviews will help to identify gaps in the current national AMR policy, and from there we will be able to identify AMR policies that are being replicated across other IMPALA countries.

In the future, AFIDEP will work with policy makers and stakeholders at key institutions that are critical for some of the world’s most critical health issues.

AFIDEP’s Antimicrobial resistance study in Malawi

• While AMR policy is largely driven by the Ministry of Health sector, it is important to recognize the contribution of other clusters of policies.
• Efforts to increase awareness of AMR and the need for urgent action are needed to develop and implement effective AMR policy.
• Awareness efforts should not only be limited to health practitioners but also to the general public and policy makers.

IMPALA’s Project tackling Lung Health and TB in Africa

By Emma Henrie and Vincent Olano

According to the World health Organization (WHO), respiratory diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in the world. The WHO estimates that 2 billion people (or one in every three people) breathe polluted air, which kills approximately 1.6 million people every year. Of particular concern are children. Lung cancer is the deadliest cancer with 1.6 million deaths each year. Lower respiratory tract infections is a leading killer among children under 5 and is estimated to cause 4 million deaths each year. The list could go on.

Despite these stark realities, lung health remains neglected, especially in Africa where efforts have concentrated on improving the health status of children. In Africa, 90% of children aged under 5 and 50% of those aged 5-14 years with respiratory tract infection are estimated to be under-treated or untreated.

In 2014, AFIDEP joined the Malawi Ministry of Health, with 12 abstracts accepted, to develop Policy Briefs and for promoting evidence uptake and policy engagement under the PIIVeC programme.

To inform PIIVeC’s regional engagement strategy, AFIDEP conducted regional policy and diagnosis analysis and revealed that AMR is a problem that is spreading across Africa. Africa has no explicit integrated vector management strategy and is a frequent re-emergence and inefficiency in neglected vector control. A joint effort within the frameworks of the AfDB’s strategy and the regional health integration framework is a priority. The AfDB’s strategy and the regional health integration framework are the technical partners responsible for promoting evidence uptake and policy engagement under the PIIVeC programme.

AFIDEP is leading research on the antimicrobial resistance in Malawi and Uganda. The research is the technical partner responsible key stakeholders’ perceptions of barriers to collaborative multi-sectoral development and implementation of policy in line with the antimicrobial resistance strategy in Malawi. As a first step, AFIDEP conducted interviews with policy makers and other key partners in Malawi to better understand the national-level AMR policy in Malawi. Findings from these interviews will help to identify gaps in the current national AMR policy, and from there we will be able to identify AMR policies that are being replicated across other IMPALA countries.

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The impact of poverty on teen pregnancy and school dropout in Malawi

By Claire Jensen

“A lot of girls get pregnant because of lack of money. If a boy has money and he asks you to sleep with him, you cannot say no when you have no money to buy soap for washing your uniform with. That is why a lot of girls get pregnant and drop out of school.”—15-year-old focus group discussion in Form 1 from Dowa, Malawi.

Poverty is a major driver of teen pregnancy and school dropouts in Malawi. In an effort to explore drivers of these issues and possible solutions, the initiative hoped that Management will match funds raised for sustainability. The Fund’s priorities are to fund individuals or organizations providing practical interventions and evidence, and less reactive in its efforts to support the needy in society as part of the Institute’s social responsibility. Particularly, the Fund should have scheduled support to a cause during the year perhaps, quarterly, as opposed to pay assistance during the Christmas season only.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative

By Salim A. Mapila

Over the years, the Parliament of Malawi has been involved with several challenges that have resulted in the institution’s Pull-free mandate of legislation, oversight, and representation. One particular example is the insufficiency of parliamentarians to support the institution’s committee which are a key element in determining the quality of debates that occur in the chamber. The Parliament of Malawi has a total of twenty Parliamentary Committees appointed to address topical issues, gather evidence, and draw reasoned conclusions for consideration by parliamentarians when it comes to decision making. However, against these twenty Parliamentary Committees, the Parliament of Malawi only has a handful of five Researchers working in the Research Section to support the institution’s research and evidence needs. Such examples of interventions in technical personnel (and capacity) of parliamentary staff was seen as necessary to support the Malawi Parliamentarian Support Initiative (MPSI).


By Vincent Olomo

Teenage pregnancy trends have raised concern among stakeholders in Kenya. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), nearly 378,400 adolescent girls in Kenya aged 10 to 19 years became pregnant between July 2016 and June 2017 alone. Of those pregnant, 28,032 were aged between 10 and 14 years. All efforts were made to expand contraceptive method choices for young people aged 15–24 years. The specific objectives include:

- To increase the global evidence base on expanded method choice for youth
- To generate evidence on youth’s access to expanded method choice
- To inform policy shifts and programmatic actions in Kenya among others

These objectives will be achieved by

- Undertaking measurement, learning, and evaluation (MLE) alignment across BMGF investments focused on expanded method choice for youth. These objectives will be achieved by

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implemented by AFIDEP, supported by USAID/Malawi through a sub-award from Courtyard International (CP). The overall goal of the project is to improve the capacity and performance of the Parliament of Malawi in carrying out its functions. Specifically, the project seeks to strengthen support systems and resources required to institutionalise a culture of evidence-informed budget analysis, financial scrutiny and policy making, to strengthen technical knowledge and skills of parliamentary staff in budget analysis and financial scrutiny and evidence informed decision-making, and to provide informative and objective non-partisan budget analysis and research to support the legislative, oversight, and representative roles of Parliament. A flagship activity of MPSF was the placement of six Short-Term Technical Experts (STTEs) to enhance the technical capacity of the Parliament of Malawi in three key sections: the Research Section, Legal Section, and the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). During the eight months that the STTEs served in the PBO, they produced high quality budget analyses for the oversight and supported parliamentary committees (and individual parliamentarians) with their evidence requests. The work of the STTEs in the PBO received much acclaim from senior management in Parliament, prompting the institution to retain them as permanent staff. AFIDEP has thus far trained over 90 parliamentary staff in the processes of conducting legislative research, budget analysis, and bill drafting. Additionally, AFIDEP has developed three guidelines and manuals namely: i) Guidelines on Bill Drafting and Analysis, ii) Legislative Research Manual, and iii) Budget Analysis Manual. These three documents have been hailed by the Clerk of Parliament for their technical usefulness and strategic contribution to fulfilling the institution’s mandate.

Supporting African parliaments towards separation of powers

By Martin Phiri

Power, concentrated in a few hands, is dangerous. This old adage seems to be a very fitting justification for the question of the doctrine of separation of powers as it pertains to the Parliament of Malawi. The understanding of this principle is that government is made up of three separate arms (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary). This has been difficult to implement starting with the general elections that the Head of State, who heads the executive and is Chief Executive of the country, is above the Heads of the other two arms. Yet the framers of the doctrine had in mind a situation where irrespective of the level of influence in state affairs, the powers need to be checked, through a built-in system of checks and balances.

In order to achieve this, the parliament of Malawi and the judiciary need the requisite capacity granted through legal, financial and administrative avenues. The Malawi Parliament Enhancement Project (MPEP) was thus established in this regard. It has, as its outcomes, increased functionality of Malawi Parliament and increased operational efficiency of Malawi Parliament. These are aimed at building the capacity for parliament to play its rightful role in the governance of the country more effectively, without being subservient to another arm of government, it is aimed at creating awareness in the other arms of government to accord each other the space to operate without undue interference.

Under the first outcome, the paradigm since the general elections in May, and a disputed outcome, has not been very conducive for conducting most planned project activities. As such, the project has focused on preparatory works for hosting a conference on interdependence. In this regard, the project commissioned the production of a background paper and the building of consensus around the need for the conference as well as its hosting arrangements. A high-level meeting of technocrats was held, at which the need was agreed on and a mandate given to form a task force to oversee conference preparations. Another notable effort was meeting with political party Secretaries General, Whips and Publicity Secretaries to lobby them on the use of objective criteria for allocating MPs to Committees, as well as on the need to begin to give serious thought to political party financing. Indications are that a pie for the need to strengthen committees through consideration of the abilities of the MPs was headed. The other good news is that the Political Parties Act passed in 2018 has placed a significant burden for accountability for party finances on Secretaries General, even stipulating custodial sentences as penalties for non-compliance. This is also the need to reach out to the public with information on the work of Parliament, particularly the achievements of the 2019 parliament. In this regard, the project held a radio panel discussion on 3rd July 2019, with panelists ranging from former and serving MPs as well as some governance experts. As part of capacity building for those on media on parliamentary reporting, two workshops were held in April and August targeting 27 journalists from 12 media houses. The workshops sought to provide basic, to more advanced knowledge about parliament and encourage allround coverage of parliamentary business.

With regard to legal reforms, the notable things are the draft committee mandates, which have assisted to determine which committees to drop under the new parliament. Work has begun on the development of rules and guidelines for operationalising the Parliamentary Service Act. For this to be finalised, there is need for further consultations with parliamentary staff. The beauty of MPEP is that as much as we are building the capacity of parliament, every day is an opportunity to learn.

By Nuruadhe Ahassan, Timothy Chilchid and Hlalelela Mba

The IAC member Hon Peter Choo Aringo, former MP Kenya inducting new cohort of MPs to MPEP - Lilongwe Malawi

The International Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting in Lilongwe Malawi

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Promoting food safety through water, sanitation and hygiene

Even though fish landing sites and fish markets are considered priority areas of food safety in most of the country policies, the unique sanitation and hygiene needs of fishing communities are not prioritised in the policies.

List of Kenyan and Malawian mental health service providers:

Kenya:

Amani Counselling Center
website: https://www.sapa.co.ke/
Tel: +254724511709

Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors
website: https://www.kapc.co.ke/
Tel: +254723269812, +254732761142
SAFATA
email: https://www.amanicentre.org/
Tel: +254722628590, +254206026721/3

Malawi:

Harm Reduction Awareness Counselling and Testing
website: https://www.malawihrt.org/
Tel: +265999359555

Kenya:

email: info@amanicentre.org
website: https://www.kapc.or.ke/
Tel: +254724511709
Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors
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Tili Limodzi

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With regards to the target population, the study showed that policies in all the five countries target all segments of society and all manner of food products. Even though fish landing sites and fish markets are considered priority areas of food safety in most of the country policies, the unique sanitation and hygiene needs of fishing communities are not prioritised in the policies. In addition, food safety and quality standards in the fisheries sector are mainly enforced on fishing and fish products exported to European and other developed markets and not meant for local consumption.
Evidence Leaders in Africa: Leading the Push for Evidence Use in Decision-Making Spaces in East and West Africa

By Salim A. Mapila

Over the past years, Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM) and policy-driven research has gained traction in advancing development efforts globally, and more recently in Africa. The need to make the best use of available resources, combined with the progress in addressing some of the continent’s development challenges, has fuelled the growing demand to justify decision-makers at every level. It is thus not surprising to find initiatives like the Evidence Leaders in Africa (ELA) place emphasis on the need to expand leadership for the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation by African Governments. The ELA project, launched in 2019, is a two-year project jointly implemented by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and the African Academy of Sciences (AAS). As one of Africa’s leading institutions in the push for evidence use in decision-making, AFIDEP works with governments and other evidence actors to institutionalize a culture of EIDM across Africa. Likewise, AAS is a Pan-African organization working to transform lives through science, technology and innovation.

ELA seeks to empower distinguished AAS scholars to proactively engage governments to use science and innovation and champion the institutionalization of EIDM in East and West Africa. Accordingly, the project aims at achieving the following outcomes: (i) Increased number of academic leaders championing EIDM in Africa; (ii) Increased number of government agencies in East and West Africa taking specific actions to institutionalize EIDM; and (iii) Expanded evidence and space for EIDM learning in Africa.

Evidence in various forms – whether it is primary research, evidence mapping, or evidence synthesis products – needs to be properly used in order to be used by decision makers. As such, ELA has over the past year undertaken several activities to highlight this need and empower EIDM champions to respond to it appropriately. For instance, the project held a workshop in May 2019 on leadership development and knowledge sharing for AAS’s accomplished scholars to come up with pathways to institutionalize an EIDM culture in government agencies. The project has also established a Seed Grant for AAS fellows and grantees to implement initiatives that institutionalize EIDM in government agencies in their countries.

Going forward, ELA plans to hold a capacity development training in EIDM targeting early and mid-career researchers within the AAS networks in East and West Africa. In addition, the project shall also introduce an annual knowledge exchange grant to support three early career researchers from Uganda, Kenya, Haiti, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Malawi and Ethiopia who were selected to participate in the workshop. Through the collaboration with AFIDEP, the program received applications from Malawi for the first time this year. “The motivation behind the training is that, as much as research has implications for policy development, without proper communication between this research community and policy audiences, the significance of research findings may be lost. This training is designed to empower young researchers in the continent to effectively communicate their findings to the policy and programme decision-makers,” said Hleziwe Hara, one of the facilitators.

The overall program goals include: (i) the generation of leaders shaping EIDM targeting early and mid-career researchers within the AAS networks in Africa; (ii) Increased number of government agencies in East and West Africa taking specific actions to institutionalize EIDM; and (iii) Expanded evidence and space for EIDM learning in Africa.

Researchers’ active promotion of knowledge translation: Challenges and solutions

By Violet Mungura

The Developing Excellence in Learning, Training and Science (DELTAS) project is a Wellcome Trust-funded research capacity strengthening programme involving a network of 11 research consortia from across East, West and South Africa. AFIDEP is a partner on the project supporting the training of one PhD student by September 2020. The information from the PhD research will help the DELTAS research network to learn whether researchers are interested in and are actively communicating and disseminating their research recommendations to people and organisations that can make a difference in people’s lives.

Going forward, ELA plans to hold a capacity development training in EIDM targeting early and mid-career researchers within the AAS networks in East and West Africa. Additionally, the project shall also introduce an annual knowledge translation grant to support three early career researchers from Uganda, Kenya, Haiti, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Malawi and Ethiopia who were selected to participate in the workshop. Through the collaboration with AFIDEP, the program received applications from Malawi for the first time this year. “The motivation behind the training is that, as much as research has implications for policy development, without proper communication between this research community and policy audiences, the significance of research findings may be lost. This training is designed to empower young researchers in the continent to effectively communicate their findings to the policy and programme decision-makers,” said Hleziwe Hara, one of the facilitators.

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The yearlong fellowship programme, tailored for PhD students, seeks to train and empower the next generation of leaders shaping policy in their respective countries. The overall program goals include: (i) understanding the research-to-policy process, learning how to communicate research to policy audiences in a way that encourages action and to improve participants’ communication skills.

After a competitive application process, 12 early career researchers from Uganda, Kenya, Haiti, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Malawi and Ethiopia were selected to participate in the program. Through the collaboration with AFIDEP, the program received applications from Malawi for the first time this year. The motivation behind the training is that, as much as research has implications for policy development, without proper communication between this research community and policy audiences, the significance of research findings may be lost. This training is designed to empower young researchers in the continent to effectively communicate their findings to the policy and programme decision-makers.

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AFIDEP on the move to accelerate the promise of ICPD25

By Bernard Onyango

AFIDEP is on the move. Almost a generation since the watershed International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt in 1994, we find ourselves at the confluence of the just concluded ICPD25 Nairobi Summit in 1994, an ambitious agenda agreed on by 179 states to deliver inclusive, equitable and sustainable development with priorities that included promoting equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), empowerment of women and education of girls, among others.

Though we have made incredible gains, 25 years later, too many people are still being left behind, and too many nations have not been able to fully reap the demographic dividend (DD) because young people and other groups still lack agency, education and access to critical health services.

Our work in 2019 on population and sustainable development, directly contributed to several of the ICPD25 concerns. We made strides towards understanding and implementing work on strengthening institutional capacities for enabling evidence-based decision-making in government agencies. Designing creative projects that support other policy actors (including civil society, government, and the private sector) to utilise evidence to inform policy-making and improve the evidence base to achieve zero preventable deaths for the first time, we used our evidence for evidence gaps, we conducted a qualitative study on contraceptive method choice and use by youth in Namibia, Nigeria and Montserrado counties. The results of this study as well as the analysis from our learning agenda which we project to conclude by the end of the year will be a significant contribution towards meeting the ICPD25 objective to reach zero unmet need for family planning information and services, and universal availability of quality, affordable and safe modern contraceptives. The work will also support our continued efforts towards lowering teenage pregnancies in Africa.

We believe through our activities in 2019, AFIDEP has in its own little way made significant strides towards meeting the goals of the ICPD Plan of Action and the related 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda that barely has a decade to be fulfilled.

25% of the national budget. The proposed 2019-2020 budget present in September, has brought an additional budget increase to 116. Regardless of whether the education budget falls below or surpasses the 25 percent mark, it has always been insufficient due to the actual size of the Malawi economy. Yet, it is only by making education a national priority that the economy can grow in a meaningful and equitable way.

AFIDEP’s education strategy will have as its overall purpose the promotion of use of evidence in education policymaking in Africa. That is why in order to develop the requisite technical skills, AFIDEP will leverage its expertise in capacity strengthening, evidence synthesis and translation, technical assistance and engagement with policymakers and other key stakeholders to support the implementation of global, regional and national education goals. AFIDEP will also support monitoring and evaluation of progress in the implementation of the aligned goals.

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The “Demographic Dividend” concept; Widely used but Misunderstood

By Hleziwe Hara, Barnard Onyango, and Nwamaka Maduka

There are about 790 million people in Africa under the age of 25 years and this number is projected to increase to 1.26 billion by 2050. Like the rest of the world, Africa has been going from high birth and death rates, to low birth and death rates. In the majority of countries outside Africa, their population age-structures (or population pyramids) are experiencing or have already experienced a “youth bulge.” For the majority of African countries, the rate of fertility decline is slow, such that there is still very high young dependency ratio of around 78 per 100 working age people. The global average is 53 per 100 working age people. Simply put, most African countries’ population pyramids still have the triangle shape with a large base of young children. This is termed a “youthful” population, not to be confused with a youth bulge.

Why is this important? The youth bulge is associated with a phenomenon called the “demographic dividend,” which is a temporary economic boost that a “youthful” population, a number of things need to happen. Firstly, childhood mortality and morbidity has been going from very high to low levels, and the labor force. This means that during the period of the first demographic dividend, governments must promote a culture of savings and investment for financial security in older ages. Improve governance to attract investors, and countries must invest in mechanisms for higher labour productivity.

For countries to benefit from their youthful population, a number of suggestions to help African governments to understand the concept of the demographic dividend, AFIDEP’s analysis of the prospects of harnessing demographic dividends in the four East African countries showed that Rwanda, and possibly Kenya, if they continued with their fertility transition and in investments in youth’s education and skills development, may begin to reap a demographic dividend by 2050. Significantly, the demand for primary and secondary school places is expected to increase significantly as the population of young people continues to increase. Tanzania and Uganda can expect a timing of the demand for school places between 2015 and 2065.

Defining the “youth bulge”

- A “youth bulge” is a temporary demographic phenomenon which occurs when childhood mortality declines and fertility falls rapidly so that the previous cohort of births is larger than subsequent cohorts.
- As the large cohorts of births move into the working ages (15-64 years), we get a bulge in the population pyramid.

AFIDEP 2019 Communications Footprint

Popular keywords used on search engines

- 9 journal articles published
- 2 policy briefs
- 1 fact sheet
- 3 research briefs
- 1 research report

Annual report, Development Perspectives, Newsletter, B-annual updates

Success Factors/Enablers:

- Institutional leadership buy-in and support
- Communications budget and other resources
- Technical team of skilled and willing staff
- Tackled and Handbacking Communications team
- Media engagement: Journalist dinner in Malawi; Media training via MIEF, Direct contact with editors; journalist training in Kenya
There are very few studies which have looked at nutritional interventions for preventing or correcting stunting in under-five children living in slums and poor urban settings. The lack of full research shows that nutritional interventions which work in rural areas do not appear to be effective in urban poor settings. This was the conclusion of a systematic review by our staff reporter, Nyovani Madise, who wrote for three years searching for evidence in partnership with Loughborough University in the UK, Cochrane, and AYA Research Fund.

### National Symposium on Population Fund: Accelerating Malawi’s Promise

**By Nyovani Madise**

At least 1 billion people are living in urban areas. More than 60% of these are in low and middle-income nations and the residents of these slums are usually living with food insecurity and inadequate sanitation. A consequence of this is stunting, a status where children are short for their age. Stunting is associated with greater susceptibility to infection, cognitive and behavioral deficits, and lower adult work performance and earnings.

In 2008, a Lancet review series highlighted many studies with clear evidence of addressing the immediate causes of stunting such as diarrhea, intrauterine growth restriction, breastfeeding behaviors, and previous malnutrition. However, until the 2019 Cochrane review, nutritional interventions to improve infant and young children’s growth in urban informal settlements had not been comprehensively or systematically assessed.

The systematic review used the Cochrane Reviews’ methodology to select studies for inclusion in the review and to grade the quality of evidence. There were no eligible studies in Africa, all five available studies were conducted in Asia and Latin America. Only 15 out of more than 100 hundred studies were selected, covering 9,261 under-five children and 3,684 pregnant women. Of those, only three studies were graded as “moderate”. For the majority of the evidence, 75% of children included were less than 1 year old. The interventions included use of food supplements for infants, micronutrient supplementation for infants, and promotion of improved maternal nutrition. Less than half of the studies adapted the interventions to the urban poor context.

The findings of the systematic review were:

- None of the studies reviewed found any evidence that the interventions improved stunting among children.
- Only two studies showed that interventions targeting pregnant women have the potential to improve infant’s birth weight.
- Very few studies had been conducted on this topic in Africa, and none were of sufficiently rigorous methodology to be included in a Cochrane review.

The conclusion by the authors is that there is need for research on effective approaches to tackling malnutrition in urban slums. In addition, the authors emphasised that rural approaches cannot be easily transferred to urban contexts so there is need to rethink the way we address childhood stunting in the urban poor environment.

### Rapid Evidence Synthesis Training

The successful training demonstrates the importance and need for similar workshops to maximise individual and institutional capacities for knowledge translation.

**By Joyce Mbiti**

From 11-16 March 2019, AFIDEP’s technical staff came together in Lilongwe for rapid evidence synthesis training facilitated by the Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ARES) in Malawian University.

The goal of the training was to strengthen staff’s knowledge translation through learning a systematic way of developing rapid evidence syntheses. To ensure practical application of the skills acquired, staff were grouped to develop draft syntheses on key topics: (1) M&E for youth empowerment projects in Kenya, (2) improving functional status of elderly through exercise, and (3) health effects of sedentary behavior.

According to the evaluation report of the training, “staff gained a good understanding of knowledge translation but did fully understand the application of it”. This evaluation recommends more capacity building for technical staff who are directly involved in the project to fully understand the application of evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM) and different strategies in the knowledge translation framework. The workshop has revealed the need for more training to maximise individual and institutional capacities for knowledge translation.

**By Emma Heneine**

“Sitting is the new smoking”. Sedentary lifestyles appear to be a significant public health issue. As sedentary lifestyles appear to be increasingly widespread in many nations, this issue is likely to take on the characteristics of a chronic health condition. You might have heard people say, “sitting is the new smoking.”

This is one of the motivating factors behind organizing a Wakacyj Cardio workout session at a local gym in Nairobi, a time when all staff were engaged in a two-hour work-out session at the local gym. The staff did not only set aside time for physical activity but also to improve their team spirit and bond in a setting outside the office. In 2019, AFIDEP received membership to the gym as an employee benefit and has committed to using it as a means of promoting their health and well-being.

Not only does physical activity promote health and wellness, it also works as preventative medicine and increases productivity in the workplace. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, exercising regularly has many benefits and can help improve sleeping and lowering stress levels. It also helps with weight management and reduce chronic disease.

A number of studies have shown that exercise can boost mood and help to keep positive attitude, which can be attributed to the release of certain chemicals and feel good hormones. Exercise is also a way to help staying physically active cannot be ignored.

**Team building: Zumba**

Exercise is good, and the benefits of physical activity cannot be ignored.

**By Flora Elvira Okidia**

When you think of something that could boosten your spirit, you probably don’t think about your shoes. But according to many researchers, it’s one of the biggest sources of pleasure for your health. How you lose, let me explain.

In the 21st century, many employers lead sedentary lives, and they are not the only ones. This has a significant public health issue. Sedentary lifestyles appear to be increasing in many nations, and this issue is likely to take on the characteristics of a chronic health condition.

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By end of August 31st, the contracted income was $3,317,689, representing 85% underspending.

The full text is not visible in the image provided. It appears to include financial data and a list of people celebrating events such as weddings and births. There are also mentions of various news articles and events, including topics such as education, health, and international relations. The text is not formatted in a way that allows for a clear transcription, and the content is cut off at the edges of the image.
Events 2019

1. Kenya inaugural symposium for think tanks & government – AFIDEP moderated a session on demand for evidence at the different stages of the public policy process: 27 November, Nairobi, Kenya
2. Walk to commemorate Antibiotic Awareness Week - Bring awareness to the general public on the dangers of the misuse and overuse of antibiotics; 20 November, Lilongwe, Malawi
3. Press briefing event - To increase media knowledge on antibiotic resistance and its effects as a means of increasing public awareness; 18 November - at the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM), Lilongwe, Malawi
4. 8th African Population Conference (APC) - 18-22 November, Kampala, Uganda
5. International Conference Population and Development (ICPD) 25 Summit - 12-14 November, Nairobi, Kenya
6. Regional Policy Dialogue on ICPDS - African perspectives on emergent challenges for the population and development agenda; 11 November, Nairobi, Kenya
7. 23rd Research Dissemination Conference - Enablers of and barriers to the development and implementation of microbial resistance control policy in Malawi; Preliminary findings: 8 November, Malawi
8. KFW (Kreditanstalt Für Wiederaufbau) German Development Bank lunch-event - Africa’s Demographic challenge; AFIDEP on panel: 5 November, Berlin, Germany
9. 11th Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health - Keynote address; 9-11 November, Munyonyo-Uganda
10. National Symposium on Population and Development - AFIDEP facilitated the symposium in informing Malawi’s ICPD commitments and the national summit: 30 November, Lilongwe, Malawi
11. What Works, Global Summit (WWGS 2019) - 16-18 October, Mexico City, Mexico
12. CORE Group regional conference - Global health practitioners conference; 14-16 October, Nairobi, Kenya
13. Strengthening institutional Capacity for Government Use of Health Research (SHR-Res) meeting - An inception meeting by AFIDEP and pathways: 10-12 October, Nairobi, Kenya
14. EU/OECD Network meeting - Improves the health and economic status of Malawi by mainstreaming the use of evidence about health and policy - 22-25 October, Lilongwe, Malawi
15. 3rd International Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting - MPEF initiative: 23-24 September - Lilongwe, Malawi
16. 11th European Conference on Tropical Medicine and International Health - present research on how data might influence global malaria eradication; 16-20 September, Liverpool, UK
17. 3rd Mini-Impact event “What do we know about malaria in Africa?” - on ICPD; 11 September, Namibia
18. 16th International Inter-Ministerial Conference on Population and Development - ICPD and Donors South-South Cooperation for Harnessing Demographic Dividend for Achieving the ICPD Programme of Action (POA) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 20-22 September, Tunis, Tunisia
19. Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA) National Medical Conference - Media and the Challenges of Reporting Devolution: 3-4 September, Nairobi, Kenya
20. Launch of Hibiscus Eminent Speaker Series Achieving wealth creation for all aga in Masai: 21 August, Lusaka, Malawi
21. Launch of ICPD progress and impact on social economic development: 15 August, Lilongwe, Malawi
22. Journalist training workshop for the 2019 Malawi Parliament’s National Summit on Human Rights and the ICPD - Improving communication skills between the research community and policy audiences through effective communication; 5-6 August, Lilongwe, Malawi
23. National Symposium on Population and Development - AFIDEP facilitated the symposium in informing Malawi’s ICPD commitments and the national summit: 30 November, Lilongwe, Malawi
24. Launch of the (PC-EDM) second strategic plan: 9 August, Nairobi, Kenya
25. Annual Media Summit and training - Training on census reporting and the annual journalism gala awards: 7 August, Nairobi, Kenya
27. DELTAS Africa Scientific Conference - Annual meeting and launching the Evidence Led in Africa project: 15-17 July
28. World population Day - ICPDS: Accelerating the promise: 11 July, Malawi, Kenya
29. International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSPP) - 27-29 June, Michigan, United States
30. 5th Eastern Africa Reproductive Health Network Coordination meeting - Implementation of the EHNR Strategic Plan and the interface with the ICPDS agenda: 24-30 June, Nairobi, Kenya
31. Write-a-thon - Brainstorm and develop one key objective and an output for a one-year action plan for the "Step UP the Fight on Teenage Pregnancy" campaign: 24-25 June, Nairobi, Kenya
32. IMPALA Policy Communications workshop - Packaging Evidence and Monitoring and Evaluation for Policy Influence: 13-14 June, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
33. African Research Collaboration on Sepsis (ACORS) Initiative meeting - sepsis in Malawi, Gabon and Uganda and the need to highlight sepsis as a policy issue: 14-16 June, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
34. Orientation of newly elected Members of Parliament - Malawi Members of Parliament: 16 June, Lilongwe, Malawi
35. Evidence Leaders in Africa (ELA) workshop - Convened to increase capacity of scholars and scientists to drive evidence uptake in government decision making: 20-24 May, Nairobi, Kenya
36. Policy Dialogue on teenage pregnancy - FIDEP and UNFPA event on youth sexual and reproductive health and ending teenage pregnancy in Kenya: 16 May, Nairobi, Kenya
38. Population Association of America (PAA) 2019 Annual Meeting - AFIDEP, a co-sponsored poster presentation: One Size Fits All: A Typology of African Countries to Guide Investments for the Demographic Dividend: April 12, Austin, Texas
40. The 6th annual Devolution Conference 2019 – Reflecting on the devolution journeys and milestones achieved over the last five years in Kenya: 16 May, Nairobi, Kenya
41. The 6th Annual Devolution Conference 2019 – Reflecting on the devolution journeys and milestones achieved over the last five years in Kenya: 16 May, Nairobi, Kenya
42. Launching the Evidence Leaders in Africa project: 15-17 July, Malawi, Kenya
43. Addressing child marriage in Malawi - Learning event hosted by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare: 21 March 2019 - Malawi
44. Networks for Policy engagement workshop - Support the use of research in informing health policy & practice in low & middle-income countries and take stock of how the Wellcome Trust’s partnerships have been progressing: 25-27 February, Lusaka, Malawi
45. 25th Annual Meeting and training - National guidelines for evidence use for health sector: 25-25 February, Lusaka, Malawi
46. Afrilaw CIMAS Pre-Summit meeting - Mainstreaming gender in the African Charter: 20 February, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
47. Nursing education in Uganda workshop - AFIDEP took part in the workshop that aimed to build a common understanding of the current state of nursing education in Uganda: 29-31 January, Uganda
A year in review: Executive Directors’ Note

The progress we made in 2019 was possible through the exceptional dedication of AFIDEP staff members and the valuable strategic advice and direction from our Board.

By Eliya Zulu

2019 has been a great year at AFIDEP. We have seen expansion across the board, from our personnel, to our systems, to the impact of our work. We completed Development Strategy 2024, which will commence in 2020 when we will commemorate our 10th anniversary. AFIDEP is recognised as the Go-To research and policy institute striving to see an Africa where evidence is consistently used to transform lives, and the future looks bright.

2019 witnessed considerable growth in the scope of our programme work. The demographic dividend (DD) team secured two grants from the Government of Botswana and the Hewlett Foundation to support governments in Botswana and Kenya operationalise the DD framework. We expanded our work to increase senior and junior evidence informed decision-making champions through the Evidence Leaders in Africa project funded by the Hewlett Foundation and the USAID-funded partnership with the Population Reference Bureau. The WHO-funded project “Heightening Institutional Capacity for Government use of Health Research” in Kenya, Malawi and Uganda will reinforce our expertise in strengthening institutional culture and systems needed to ensure consistent use of evidence in Governments.

We expanded our partnership with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and we now have seven joint projects where we provide research uptake and policy engagement expertise on key health issues like lung health, Sepsis, antimicrobial resistance, vector control, and HIV/AIDS. Our work in the Malawi Parliament and through the Network of African Parliamentary Committees for Health has reinforced our stature in strengthening evidence-informed governance and accountability.

Our Communications work went a notch higher, producing quality publications, facilitating proactive engagement with policy makers and the media, and redesigning our website to be launched later this month.

We bolstered our expertise by hiring well-qualified and experienced staff, and we streamlined our human resource portfolio. We trained staff in rapid evidence synthesis and supported various individuals attend professional training courses. I look forward to seeing the value of these capacity development investments in the work done by staff.

Our finance and administration teams streamlined our policies and financial management systems, ensuring that the Institute provides a good working environment and is fully accountable to its funders.

AFIDEP staff made valuable contributions to policy formulation processes and academic conferences. We played key roles in preparing for and during the Nairobi ICPD25 summit, including facilitating the development of ICPD commitments for Malawi and social media campaigns. AFIDEP also led the scientific committees for the 8th African Population Conference, featuring in 12 sessions. Congratulations to Nyovani Madise for her election as the Vice President of the Union of African Population Studies.

The progress we made in 2019 was possible through the exceptional dedication of AFIDEP staff members and the valuable strategic advice and direction from our Board. I also thank our funders, partners and clients for supporting our dream to make evidence matter in transforming lives in Africa.

Editorial committee: Claire Jensen, Hleziwe Hara, Nyovani Madise, Victoria Kusamale, Victory Kamthunzi