

E-Toolkit for Parliaments in Africa: How to Source and Strengthen the Use of Evidence in Policy Making and Legislation



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Acronyms

APNODE	African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation
AFIDEP	African Institute for Development Policy
ACEPA	African Center for Parliamentary Affairs
CLEAR-AA	Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DRS	Department of Research Services
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIDM	Evidence-Informed Decision-Making
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
INASP	International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications
MDAs	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of Government
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPSI	Malawi Parliamentary Support Initiative (MPSI)
NES	National Evaluation System
NIMES	National integrated M&E strategy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PBOs	Parliamentary Budget Offices
PC-EIDM	Parliamentary Caucus on Evidence-Informed Oversight & Decision-Making
PRS	Parliamentary Research Service
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TSUE	Tools to Strengthen the Use of Evidence in Policies and Legislation in Africa
USAID	United States Agency For International Development

Introduction and Overview: The E-Toolkit

The Background

Welcome to TSUE's E-Toolkit for Parliaments in Africa: How to Source and Use Evidence in Policy Making and Legislation. This toolkit has been informed by the academic literature on evidence use in Africa and builds on a variety of sources including: regional organizational research, [evidence-informed policy making reading list](#), surveys and in-person interviews with Members of Parliament. In addition, real-world examples and tips were provided by practitioners in webinars organized by the TSUE project with strategic partners National Democratic Institute (NDI), African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE) and Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA). This includes, but is not limited to informative dialogue provided by Dr. Rose Oronje, the Director of Public Policy and Communications at [African Institute for Development Policy](#) (AFIDEP) Kenya and reviewing [Results for All](#).

This serves against the necessary backdrop of the growing recognition of the importance of evidence, from evaluations, in national decision-making and the crucial role of parliamentarians and their staff in ensuring that evidence-based approaches are used for strengthening oversight, budgeting resource appropriation, legislation, and policy making across all sectors. Parliamentarians and their staff need data and evidence to make decisions that effectively, equitably, and justly allocate resources and meet people's social and economic needs. However, they face major technical and political challenges related to the generation and the use of evidence to inform policies. This challenge is acute in Africa given the dearth of information and analysis about the conditions, problems, and solutions of social and economic development.

Parliaments in Africa lack the capacity to compile and use evidence in the design, oversight, and evaluation of legislation and policies on the critical economic and social issues facing various countries on the continent. In view of this, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its implementing partners (University of Rhode Island, USA and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana), under the "Assessment, Analysis and Development of Tools to Strengthen the use of Evidence in Policies and Legislation" project conducted desk research and a study to assess the current use of evidence by parliamentarians as well as their capacity to generate, access, and use evidence in their work.

Who is this toolkit for?

This Toolkit is designed to help MPs and their staff to generate and source for evidence to inform legislative and policy-making functions. The toolkit is intended to be a quick reference guide for MPs and their staff because as busy people who often do not have time to read documents that are bulky. The Toolkit provides easy and quick reference in their effort to apply evidence to their daily functions of legislation and policy-making.

How was this toolkit produced?

The Toolkit is derived from a comprehensive report of assessment evidence informed policy making in 10 African countries¹. The assessment was based on questionnaires that were administered MPs and staff across 10 countries in Africa. The assessment was preceded by an extensive literature review of evidence informed policy making.

¹Ibid.

Research protocols and data collection instruments of the study, through which this toolkit emerged, were submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana for approval. Fieldwork started on February 15, 2022, after IRB approval and was completed in May. To administer the face-to-face questionnaires, 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa were selected as sample countries. In each country, 10 MPs and five parliamentary staff were targeted as participants, bringing the total number of participants to 15 per country, and an overall total of 150 participants from the 10 countries. In addition, travel was conducted to Malawi, Nigeria and Ghana during which 12 MPs were interviewed to gain in-country insights and local context to ensure a wide range of perspectives and some level of objectivity and representation among participants; various factors were taken into consideration: political party affiliation,

gender, years of experience in Parliament, committee leadership, and leadership position in Parliament. The findings and recommendations from the study will be disseminated to several targeted stakeholders – Parliaments and their members, USAID and other interested actors working in the field of evidence-informed policy-making.

How is the toolkit structured?

The toolkit is divided into six parts. It is focused on what is evidence and why do we need it? Searching & sourcing for the evidence: linked to the legislative cycle; tips on developing an evidence search strategy & steps in conducting evidence; 10 strategies on what should African parliaments do to strengthen the culture towards evidence use and African countries putting practical tips into action.

I. Evidence-informed Policy Making

What is Evidence?

Evidence is a highly contested concept. Articulating the meaning of evidence in the context of evidence informed policy making and legislation is critical to understanding the current state of evidence use in African parliaments (INASP, 2016a; INASP, 2016b Shaxson and Datta, 2016). A common and acceptable definition of evidence for both users and producers of evidence is necessary and should be at the heart of any discourse on evidence informed policy making (Sutcliffe and Court 2005). Even though the evidence is portrayed as an a-political, neutral, and objective policy tool, it is neither neutral or uncontested (Nutley, 2003 as cited in Sutcliffe and Court 2005).

In a white paper issued in 1999, the UK Cabinet Office defined evidence as ‘expert knowledge; published research; existing research; stakeholder consultations; previous policy evaluations; the

Internet; outcomes from consultations; costings of policy options; output from economic and statistical modeling’ (Cabinet Office, 1999: 33). This interpretation of evidence was supported by Marston and Watts (2003) who provided a catalog of possible sources to include photographs, literary texts, official files, autobiographical material such as diaries and letters, newspaper files and ethnographic and particular observer accounts. Shaxson 2005 contended that evidence is therefore, wide and dynamic, and further defined evidence as any information that helps policymakers make decisions and get results that are concrete, manageable and achievable.” This view of Shaxson is shared by Oronje and Warira (2018), that what constitutes ‘evidence’ is a contentious issue. According to Newman, Fisher and Shaxson (2012) evidence is one of the many different factors that informs policy making alongside other factors such as political realities and public debates. This is attributed to the broader understanding of

Box I: Common phrases used by research respondents to define 'evidence'

- “Evidence is crucial in Parliamentary work”, Evidence is credible, systematic, methodological and objective information.”
- “Evidence means proof. When you have evidence in your possession, it allows you to make sound decisions. To me, evidence is required and should be available to lawmakers to aid in making national decisions and policies.”
- “Evidence simply present (sic) the facts required to make sound decisions. To me, evidence is required and should be available to lawmakers to aid in making national decisions and policies.”
- “Evidence stands for facts. Throughout the years, the legislature use (sic) evidence in making Policy and national decisions as a system to ensure that their decisions are sound and credible and would bring about development.”

‘evidence-informed policy,’ which moves away from a narrow focus on research and methodological rigor to a more inclusive understanding of the evidence that recognizes diverse forms of knowledge and information, such as citizen knowledge, practical experience, and administrative data (Jones et al., 2012 and Draman et al 2017).

Among Parliamentarians as with the academic community, there is no agreed definition of evidence. The TSUE project video interview conducted with a total of 12 MPs in Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria revealed that establishing a common understanding of what evidence means among African parliamentarians is an arduous task. Almost all respondents have a different understanding and interpretation of what evidence means even if they all underscored the use of facts/evidence to inform policies and legislation (See Box 1).

The TSUE study, therefore, adopts a working definition based on an appreciation of the varied definitions in the literature as well as perspectives from Parliamentarians. It approaches evidence as one of the many factors, occurring externally or internally, to inform policymaking and also takes into account the timing as well as the social and political context of the parliament.

Why do we Need Evidence to Inform Legislative and Policy-making?

[Evidence-informed policy-making](#) seeks to increase the role of data, robust research and insights into legislations and policy decisions. Drawing on robust evidence is very important to maximise impacts of policies. There is power in using evidence to inform decisions about development programs and parliaments have a constitutional obligation to represent the people by articulating the views of citizens in decision-making processes. In short, evidence-based decisions can better transform lives and communities. This brief resource on [the introduction to evidence-based policymaking](#) provides some basic understanding of the concept.

African governments spend a large share of their public funds on policies and programmes aimed to support socio-economic development. In addition, donors and the international community provide funding for humanitarian programs. It is paramount that these scarce funds achieve their maximum impact and are not wasted on policies and programs that fail in their development objectives. Being transparent about how and why such programs were chosen or bills being passed based on evidence, also enhances the public trust in decision-making processes and fosters public sector accountability.



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



PARLIAMENT OF KENYA

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE COMMISSION

“

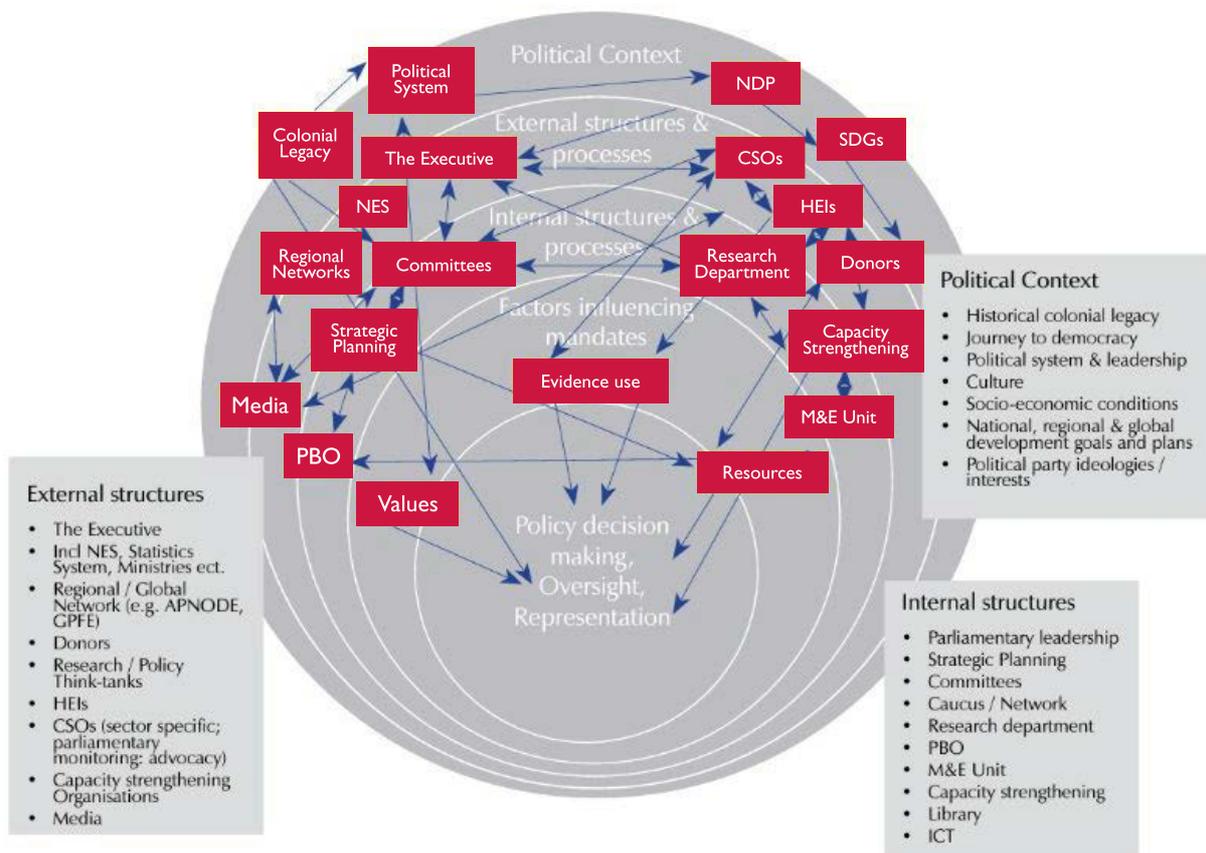
The biggest challenge is not necessarily accessing evidence but ensuring that members of parliament utilize the evidence because we have the technocrats, we have the technical know-how to be able to synthesize all these research and research materials into products that members can use.

- Ms. Sande Marale, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, the Parliament of Kenya

II. Searching and Sourcing for the Evidence

Linked to the Legislative Cycle

The first step is highlighting the many facets of evidence in the context of legislative and policy-making functions to have a clear understanding of the multiple forms and sources of evidence available to Parliamentarians to inform their work.



Source: *African Parliaments: Evidence systems for governance and development: Components of the system(s) of evidence used in parliaments*

In the context of the diagram above, evidence is generated across a variety of sources, including scientific or academic journals, books, conference proceedings, websites, and media reports. In light of this, the legislature requires different forms of evidence that are relevant, timely and accurate such as statistics, monitoring data, research, and the knowledge of citizens and experts.

Due to the different departments and offices in parliament that vary from country to country, it is important to build relationships with the various stakeholders and knowledge brokers within parliament to strengthen the linkages and communication channels between the internal and external sources of the evidence gathering process. This includes tapping into regional networks, donors, policy think tanks, media and civil society organizations. The interconnectedness of the various parliamentary offices will determine the frequency, suggestions and capacity of how evidence is used. In addition, determine the effectiveness of how intentional parliamentarians and staff identify their information needs and utilize independent sources to integrate evidence into their legislative work that promotes transparency and accountability.

Within parliaments, there are a number of information units from which evidence is sourced. These are described below.

INTERNAL STRUCTURES TO SOURCE EVIDENCE

- **Library:** These serve both MPs and parliamentary staff and respond to requests for information and assist users to find relevant evidence. There is a great variation in the extent to which parliamentary libraries have the resources to assist parliamentarians. In some settings the library advertises the availability of information on topics of interest and even takes the initiative to provide photocopies or clippings of newspapers, periodicals and other sources on topics of interest to members. In others, the library provides a wide range of products and services that include answers to reference inquiries; creation of and access to legislative databases; research reports; materials describing and comparing current legislation proposals and their status in the legislative process; policy analysis studies that identify alternative courses of action for the legislature and the consequences if adopted; for legislators and staff.
- **The Research department** (sometimes integrated within the library): This responds to research requests from individual MPs as well as committees.
- **Committees' department:** These staff provide direct support to parliamentary committees and as part of this, are often involved in research.
- **Hansard:** As the official parliamentary record of deliberations, the Hansard is often used by MPs for debates but also published publicly for transparency and accountability to citizens.
- **Public Affairs department:** In many African countries, this department is involved in conducting public consultations and gathering citizen evidence.
- **Caucus/Network:** Given the central place of information in the work of parliament, a Kenyan MP, Hon. Susan Musyoka, in August 2015, spearheaded the formation of a caucus of MPs to champion the prioritization and use of evidence in the Kenyan parliament.

Evidence here refers to data and information from government reports/publications, “databases, and institutions, as well as scientific research.”

- **Specialized evidence units such as Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) provide support mainly in the area of budget analysis for Parliaments.**

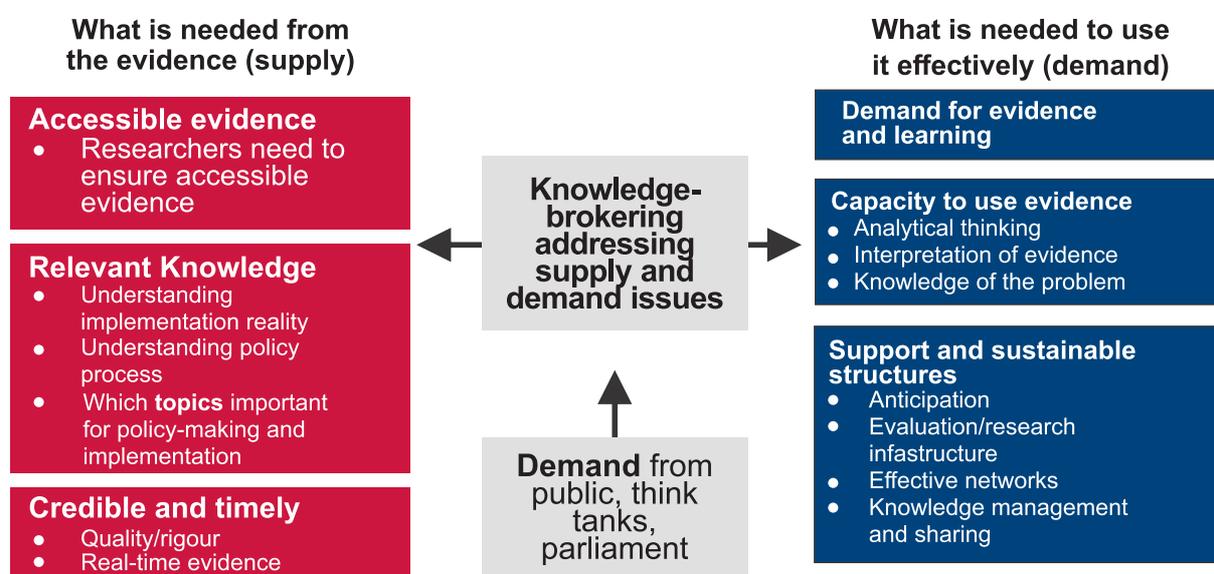
- **ICT:** This often plays a key role in storing, referencing and sharing information in digital formats. This is of relevance as many parliaments begin to strive towards having electronic systems - the use of iPads for MPs, social media and paperless information request and delivery systems.

In addition to the internal sources, there are external structures for searching for evidence. These range from evaluation and administrative reports, investigative committee and citizen reports to opinion polls. The TSUE study revealed that majority of parliamentarians indicated that evidence from both within Parliament and virtual/online are most useful. The opportunities for Parliament to draw in evidence from external structures have increased considerably in recent years. Parliamentarians can also access other external reports via online databases (see Annex). External evidence is now an established feature of the scrutiny of government policy, administration, and legislation, which include the following:

- **The National Evaluation System (NES), Statistics Systems (three African countries that have NES are Uganda, Benin and South Africa.)**
- **Regional / Global Network (e.g., APNODE, CLEAR, ACEPA)**
- **Research (Policy Think-tanks)**
- **Higher Education Institutions**
- **Civil Society Organizations (sector specific; parliamentary monitoring; advocacy)**
- **Capacity strengthening Organizations**
- **Multimedia platforms (TV, radio, print)**

III. Tips on Developing an Evidence Search Strategy and Steps in Searching Evidence

Members of Parliament are often required to make time sensitive decisions. On such occasions knowledge needs to be accessible and relevant to be useful. Quite often, “organizational knowledge” and evidence is contained in lengthy reports and case studies that are rarely accessed. This is where the internal structures for evidence can be put into the practice of synthesizing data into compelling stories that help MPs understand and connect with the different layers and aspects of evidence.



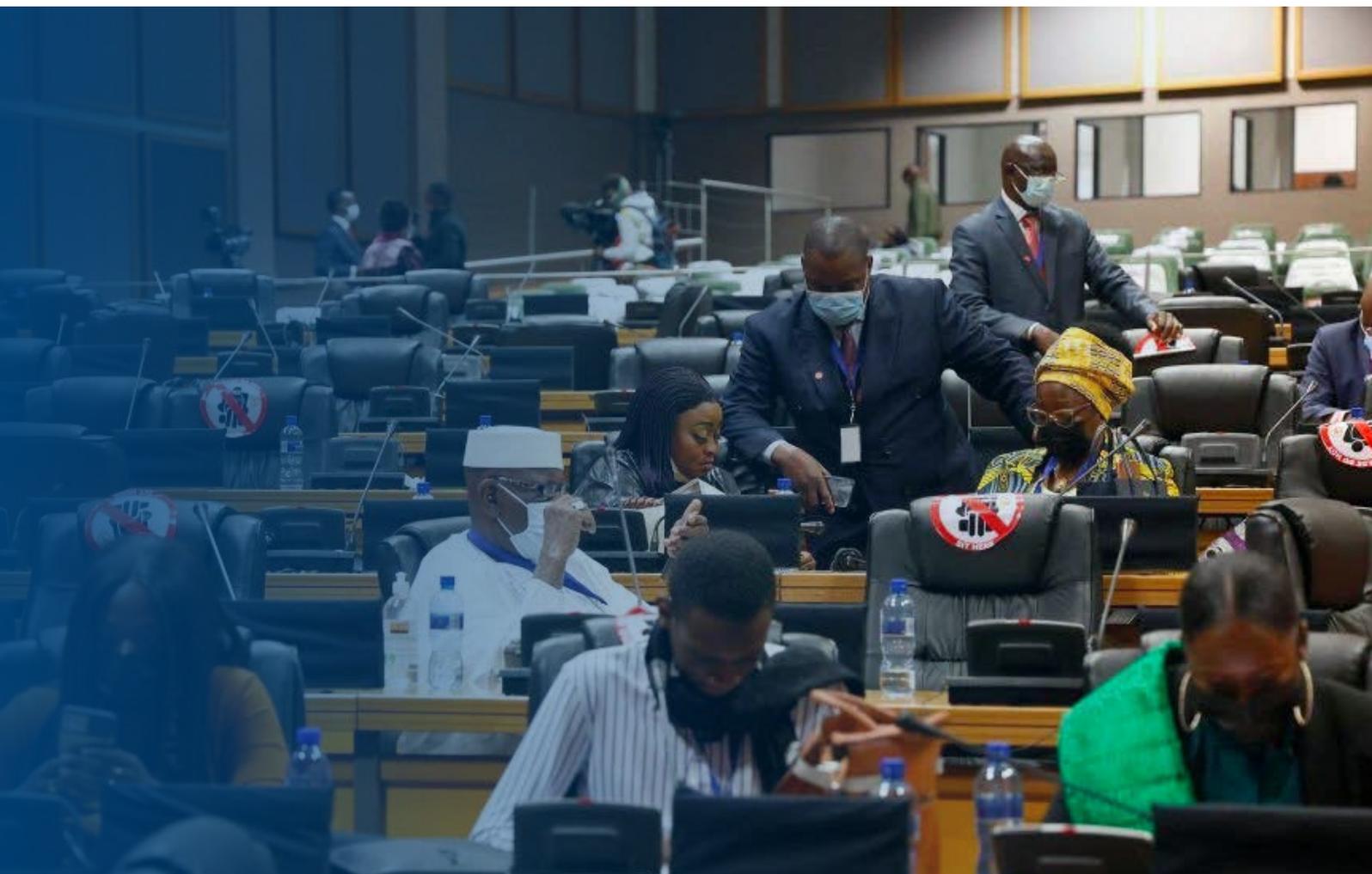
Source: Outlines how to ensure the evidence gathering process is diverse and balanced by Ian Goldman.

When parliaments are faced with quick decisions that need to be made, key best practices include:

- Embracing modern technology to move from traditional practices of utilizing libraries as knowledge management repositories of information to digitizing knowledge assets for searchability and easy accessibility.
- Utilizing a wide range of multimedia products from video, audio recordings, photos and written publications. This offers the opportunity to present immediate insights in real time and observations in contrast to the scientific or technical evidence that takes time to digest.

- Deepen the culture of evidence use and shift the nature of oversight from compliance and control to accountability for results and developmental impact. The collaboration between generators of both external and internal evidence within parliament will strengthen the authenticity, the role of balance and integrity of the multiple sources of evidence that are brought before a parliamentary committee.
- Using internal mechanisms such as PBOs and legislative research departments to authenticate evidence can also minimize the politics and power struggles that can overshadow how it is used. It is important for MPs or staff to have a search strategy.
- Developing a good search strategy that will enable MPs or their staff to find the information they need, quickly and efficiently. Developing a search strategy is an iterative process that can be built up from a series of test searches and discussions of the results of those searches among peers and colleagues.

[This evidence-based toolkit](#) prepared by INASP is an example of a resource that can help you build a search strategy. Based on the search strategy, Parliamentary support staff or MPs need to familiarize him or herself with the topic of interest and launch a search into different sources or networks to get the information. As highlighted earlier, such sources and network could internal channels (e.g. library), academic experts (e.g. a professor), information experts (e.g. librarians) or other technical experts.



IV. Evidence Use for Greater Development Outcomes

The work of parliaments including scrutinizing budgets, draft policies and laws, and representing the interests of their constituents are dependent on access to quality information. To shift the culture of parliament to use quality evidence requires a degree of collaboration between different information support systems in African parliaments and the factors that shape their work. Ultimately, it is essential to receive support from leadership in executive branches of government to champion and strengthen institutional capacity to meet these needs. Parliamentarians also have a role to play in developing their own capacities, adapting to modern technologies through peer learning and training to ensure sustainability. We outlined eight key best practices on how evidence champions and leadership of Parliaments can shift the culture toward institutionalizing evidence use in parliaments across Africa.

1 Parliamentary committees are in the best position to establish a form of cultural, political and structural awareness of what it means to be an evidence champion — To ensure the use of evidence in policy making requires investing in the development of individual evidence champions. This requires parliaments to establish open forums of communication to understand the profile of parliamentarians and research assistants and to discuss the barriers and challenges that inhibit evidence use. Also, to clarify performance expectations and intended outcomes of policies, is a good starting point. A critical component of this institutional strengthening should include a stakeholder mapping to identify roles and responsibilities of key actors, identify evidence producers, and support them in dissemination.

2 Conduct a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis — This can help to diagnose the gaps in knowledge, awareness, and capacity that can influence how parliamentary committee members need to understand the policy process and assumptions around what it takes to find, understand, and use evidence. It is also important to understand the rationale by opposing or non-responsive parliamentarians to refine advocacy messaging and policy tasks.

The diagram below shows how Members of Parliament or Research Assistants can create and put an actionable SWOT Analysis into practice.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	STRENGTHS <i>How can we leverage our strengths?</i>	WEAKNESS <i>How can we mitigate our weaknesses?</i>
External	OPPORTUNITIES <i>How do we exploit the opportunities available to us?</i>	THREATS <i>How can we dissolve the threats we face?</i>

Fig. 1: SWOT Analysis

3 Capacity development for Evidence Informed Decision Making (EIDM) — The SWOT analysis findings and results provide a solid foundation to design and implement capacity development approaches that have a systemic focus, specific to local context and put parliament at the center of this effort to strengthen institutional capacity for evidence use and sustainability. This includes the internal (PBO, Monitoring &

Evaluation (M&E) Unit, research department, ICT) and external structures (The Executive, Media, Donors, Civil Society Organizations and Think Tanks) of the systems of evidence used in parliament. Policymakers who are confident in their ability to find, appraise, and synthesize evidence, and who understand the complexities of the policymaking process, are more likely to use evidence in their decision making process. Investment in training courses, peer-to-peer learning events such as dedicated research weeks or regional initiatives held by African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE), CLEAR-AA, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), AFIDEP can raise awareness about the value of using evidence and change assumptions that using evidence is too intimidating or complex.



Strengthening these structures over time requires investments so it is not a one off activity supported by a donor... putting in budgets is required every year to ensure... sustainability that enables parliamentarians to use evidence on a day-to-day basis.”

- Dr. Rose Oronje, Director of Public Policy and Communications at AFIDEP Kenya

- 4 Demystifying the use of evidence to increase the value of using evidence** — In developing economies there are different forms and ways of using evidence. The academic community and Members of Parliament define “evidence” differently and there is an overall lack of common understanding. The whole idea about using evidence to drive policy is to ensure credibility and legitimacy. This requires a need to

demystify evidence and make statistics and analysis interesting and accessible to people.



In Nigeria, There is one fantastic organization here called Budget. Additionally, one of the things they've been able to do to demystify, for example, the budget is to use infographics that actually break down the information in a way that ordinary people can understand and analyze. And by doing so, they've actually gotten a lot more citizens engaged in the national budgeting processes and actually asking questions and demanding accountability.”

- Dapo Oyewole Director, Legislative Mentorship Initiative (LMI)/Special Adviser on International & Interparliamentary Affairs to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nigeria.

- 5 Parliaments institutionalize EIDM to develop effective evidence champions** — Include EIDM in the induction of new MPs and nurture strong role models who demonstrate the importance of using evidence through their actions to inspire others and help to change behavior patterns. This includes increasing the representation of women and youth in parliamentary staff to support innovation, leverage digital technologies, utilize multimedia as an engagement and learning tool that can positively influence other public officials' assumptions and attitudes toward evidence use.



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“When COVID came in, new ways had to be innovated because we didn't want to spread the pandemic itself. Parliament began moving away from production of hard copies in terms of documents and now they can produce a soft copy and send it to your email. For example, when you want to do research and engagement with the communities on particular bills. Then you have enough time to engage with the communities, to engage with relevant stakeholders, and even to do some quick surveys and research on that particular issue before you come to parliament. At constituency level, the innovation itself, the digital innovation. It is becoming a little bit popular because, just at the touch of the button, I'm able to communicate with a particular kind of group.”

- Honorable Ephraim Abel Kayembe (DPP), Malawi Parliament, Dowa West Constituency, in the Central part of Malawi.

6 Parliaments invest in innovation and the use of modern technology

— The global impact of COVID-19 has affected the way organizations and parliaments in Africa operate. Embracing modern technology has become an essential skill set for parliaments to provide a range of evidence in a responsive and interactive way. This includes the use of social media and radio programs to connect with public audiences. These efforts are quite often being funded by donors, but it is essential for parliaments to establish ownership and drive capacity building interventions. In Ghana, the country's Vice President, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, has made it one of his priorities to ensure that Ghana leads the world when it comes to technology and not to follow.

Credit - Kevin Eze



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One of the things that we'll be looking at is to build on the successes, that parliament should be able to use technology and parliamentarians are able to access the resources from parliament. I think with this new activity, and even other donors are supporting parliament, that it should have its own TV station and radio station so that people are able to listen and to hear the parliamentary debate, even when they're at home, they don't have to go there. So COVID has really taught us to adjust.

- Andrew Mpesi, Former USAID Malawi Governance Specialist

7 Create a storytelling narrative with evidence that ignites behavior change

— Moving from a compliance and monitoring mindset to sharing compelling stories that connect outcomes when we do not use evidence can be a way to shift attitudes and behavior toward evidence use. Make responsible allocation and spending of limited government resources about doing right by citizens — achieving healthier populations, delivering quality education for all, transforming agriculture and accelerating leadership and financial empowerment for women.

8 Parliaments to develop effective capacity building linkages and relationships

— Whether formal or informal, peer learning interactions can help MPs learn from other parliaments to strengthen technical skills and shift attitudes and assumptions by exposing them to new ideas on openness and transparency. As an example the African Center for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) hosted in August 2022, a three day [Data Fair](#) working in collaboration with the Statistical Service in Ghana to discuss with

Credit - Enoch Phiri, USAID Malawi



“

“I have been in parliament since 2014 and went into parliament as an independent member of parliament. I started with my political party, but in the process I was kicked out because I was a female member of parliament and wouldn't have enough to support myself during the campaign. And also being a person coming from a poor family, a family which is not well known to the community, they thought, maybe it might take them a lot of resources to campaign for me. So I stood on an independent ticket. With support from the constituents, I made it to parliament. This is my second time continuously!”

- Honorable Esther Jolobala (UDF), Malawi Parliament

MPs best practices on how to shift the culture of consistently using accurate and reliable data to make informed decisions. This innovative exhibition provided a knowledge sharing platform for MPs and their staff to engage and connect with each other to share information, lessons learned, and experiences. ACEPA is also leading a Data for Accountability project with the support of the Hewlett Packard Foundation to help Parliaments to improve quality of life in Ghana through evidence, using data to oversee progress towards SDGs. It is the first capacity building initiative to focus on introducing data for SDG monitoring to any sub-committees in Parliament, and has strong Parliamentary support, with both minority and majority buy-in.

Credit - Enoch Phiri, USAID Malawi

9 Incentives and reward desired behavior — Different strategies can be used to motivate policymakers to use evidence in decision making, ranging from financial performance incentives to less resource-intensive award and recognition programs. This year, the annual [EVIDENCE 2022](#) event series, celebrated ten years since the establishment of the [Africa Evidence Network \(AEN\)](#), provides the opportunity for collaboration to enhance mutual learning and the development of new ideas about supporting evidence-informed decision-making. With a global and pan-African membership of over 3,000, this past September AEN hosted a three-day event and the interaction among AEN members helped to improve understanding of the role of different kinds of evidence in contextualizing and shaping policy. This shared learning experience resulted in some AEN institutional members, for instance, the South African Ministry of Environment, developing institutional frameworks to model how the different types of evidence - M&E evidence, research, administrative evidence, and stakeholder consultations- can be seamlessly and sustainably generated, synthesized and routinely used in decision making. Such frameworks are particularly critical in overarching issues like Covid-19 and climate change, where synthesis of implementation evidence in adaptation and mitigation requires robust, multi-sectoral approaches. AEN also includes an evidence champion awards program and story of change contest for parliaments across Africa to compete to showcase how African parliaments are making great strides in strengthening the use of research evidence in decision-making. Overall, providing financial performance incentives to networks and annual events like AEN will only increase the participation of Parliaments and maximize shared learning in carrying forward the EIDM agenda.

10 Strengthening knowledge-brokering and sharing roles in parliament — The sharing of information requires a relationship and, potentially, a partnership between knowledge brokers in parliament and the executive. Specifically, parliamentary structures such as the Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) and PBOs need to be linked with M&E units in the presidency, ministries, departments and agencies and research institutions that can provide research and evaluation evidence and knowledge (Goldman and Pabari 2020a). Each individual and each organizational unit must have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities assigned for capturing, storing, and sharing knowledge, and the appropriate skill mix for knowledge-sharing functions must be developed. The emphasis must be on developing an in-house culture in which knowledge capturing and sharing is a part of all activities.

V. Parliaments Across Africa With Strong Evidence-Based Systems: African Countries Putting Practical Tips into Action

Over the past 10 years, there have been best practices across select African countries that other African nations can learn from in their efforts to strengthen evidence-based decision making. This toolkit has provided 10 key tips and strategies on how to shift the culture toward evidence use in parliaments to becoming a cultural norm. This section provides examples of countries that are putting these key tips into action. These are; Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Benin.



KENYA

The Parliament of Kenya has achieved key milestones in the areas of prioritizing knowledge brokering and sharing, creating a culture of evidence champions, promoting effective linkages and relationships as well as implemented capacity development approaches to strengthen evidence use and sustainability in the following

- In 2015, Hon. (Dr) Susan Musyoka founded in Kenya, a Parliamentary Caucus on Evidence-Informed Oversight and Decision-Making (PC-EIDM) – “the first of its kind.” The caucus was supported by the Speaker of the National Assembly, which is an indication of political will to create a pool of evidence champions among parliamentarians and institutionalize evidence use in decision-making within parliament.
 - In the area of capacity development for EIDM, Kenya set up a robust legislative research department fully equipped to provide evidence best used for their members and a Parliamentary Budget Office.
 - According to a diagnostic study carried out by CLEAR-AA on the status of NES in Kenya (Khumalo, 2019), the introduction of the national integrated M&E strategy (NIMES) significantly improved the role of M&E in policy formulation and implementation.
- The M&E Directorate in the Ministry of Finance and Planning is responsible for the NIMES as well as Kenya’s Vision 2030 and its national economic recovery strategy.
- Other examples of innovative sources of evidence include the rapid results initiative (RRI), which is focused on monitoring project performance, an electronic national integrated M&E system (E-NIMES) and an electronic county integrated M&E system (E-CIMES), which facilitate real-time information sharing on project implementation.
 - Kenya has an active National Bureau of Statistics and well-established universities and research institutes such as the African Population Health Research Center, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis and the African Institute for Development Policy.

- These institutes play a key role in evidence generation, promote research synthesis, and are directly involved in training and support for EBPM. There is also a range of international research institutions based in Nairobi.
- To promote effective linkages and relationships, there is vibrant collaboration between legislative research departments and public policy think tanks. As an example, AFIDEP is one such player that collaborates with Kenya's parliament, particularly in the area of health.
- The caucus continues to benefit from relationships with various organizations and has achieved various milestones that include the development of a new strategic plan (2019-2024). In addition, it has implemented advocacy activities through policy cafes to deliberate on key policy issues. As an example, in 2017, the caucus hosted a policy cafe to explore how Kenya can achieve Universal Health Coverage and the outcomes of this cafe were insights and contributions relating to provision of the emergency services in the Health Act 2017.
- In the area of knowledge brokering and sharing the caucus has hosted many sensitization workshops to create awareness on the value of EIDM in legislative decision-making and oversight among fellow parliamentarians. As an example, in 2019, M&E capacity-strengthening workshops were held with the Africa Gender and Development Evaluations Network and partners on expanding democratic spaces for more inclusive and equitable governance. This led to an increase in demand for disaggregated data, gender and equity budget analysis among parliamentarians.

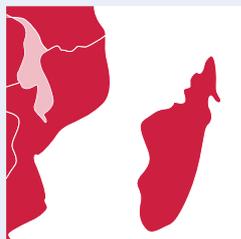


UGANDA

The Parliament of Uganda key milestones are in the areas of building knowledge and awareness utilizing innovation and modern technology to synthesize information as well as promote effective linkages that connect with public audiences in the following areas:

- Gender equity within the legislature has been one of the flagship milestones of the Ugandan parliament, which created a narrative that humanizes behavior change. Most parliamentary committees have either a male chairperson or female vice chairperson and vice versa. As a result, there is gender sensitivity and awareness of the need for equity in all decision making.
- In the area of establishing relationships with development partners, engaging with external stakeholders that include Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Uganda's parliament has notable achievements, specifically in the areas of capacity building and closing the financing gap.
- A key innovation in the Ugandan parliament is that political parties represented in parliament are offered financial support by the government. These funds have been used to generate evidence to inform the alternative policies proposed by the opposition.
- The parliament of Uganda has been successful in using modern technology to promote effective linkages to connect with public audiences in particular youth populations, which constitute 75% of the population. As an example, The Parliamentary Commission launched a mobile application, Bungeni, which is aimed at increasing access and public participation of youth in parliamentary business through Bill tracking, an online petitioning system, and live streaming of the proceedings.

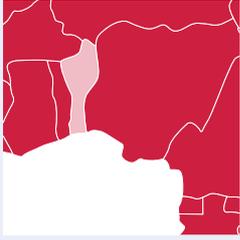
- Social media platforms are used by the Speaker and Deputy Speaker as a primary tool for parliament to directly engage with the public. In addition to establishing parliamentary television and radio stations that contribute positively to the use of evidence.
- The ICT department made a conscious decision to increase popularity with an end goal to create a paperless parliament.
- In addition, computer tablets are used for Committee reports and other materials for debate are loaded for members to enable them to access and use information at their convenience. As a result, there is a general perception that evidence has been popularized and mentioned during debates and meetings.
- In the area of knowledge sharing, creating new linkages to improve engagement with grass roots populations, the Parliamentary Commission has initiated a process of translating key parliamentary publications into local languages including material on the role of MPs and the processing of a Bill.



MALAWI

The Parliament of Malawi has established effective linkages and relationships to drive capacity building interventions with strong support from donors and regional initiatives in the development community in the following areas:

- In 2018, donor funding from USAID/Malawi and regional partners such as AFIDEP supported the Malawi Parliamentary Support Initiative (MPSI), a targeted intervention to build on existing skills and technical knowledge of parliamentary staff, bolster the oversight, legislative and representative capabilities of the Malawian Parliament in relation to budget analysis, financial scrutiny and policymaking.
- Members of Parliament, parliamentary leadership, parliamentary technical staff, civil society organizations and academia are amongst those targeted by MPSI.
- AFIDEP developed guidelines and manuals based on lessons learnt from past similar interventions in regional parliaments and applied local context to tailor these findings to the specific and nuanced needs of the Parliament of Malawi.
- AFIDEP ensured that these guidelines and manuals were widely disseminated, integrated into training as well as serve as effective tools for on-boarding new members and employees. The findings of this approach were successful due to AFIDEP establishing buy-in from all levels of leadership in parliament.
- The USAID/Malawi Mission is one of the few that has a robust Democracy and Governance portfolio with a focal point that is responsible for parliamentary activities and programs.



BENIN

The Parliament of Benin has invested in developing internal cultural, political and structural dynamics by conducting needs assessments to establish a strong ecosystem of evidence use in the following ways:

- Since 2012, Benin is one of the three pioneer countries that has established government-led national NES and all national departments have M&E units of a significant size.
- Political will was the key driver for the structure for championing M & E, which was established either in the Presidency or Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), thus making it easier to oversee sectoral ministries. This provided high-level leadership/champions, both at a technical (head of department) and a political (minister) level, championing M & E systems within their respective organizations and governments.
- The Parliaments in Uganda and Benin have both created coordination structures to support evaluation systems. In Benin it is the National Council for Evaluation. They also have much higher levels of involvement of civil society in M & E systems, with civil society and donors represented on M & E coordination structures.
- Benin is a member of the Twende Mbele (meaning Going Forward Together) - "a peer learning partnership of African governments and regional organizations interested in using M & E to strengthen government performance and accountability." This showcases a commitment to developing an in-house culture in which knowledge capturing and sharing is a cultural norm and part of all parliamentary activities.

The TSUE findings reveal that even with the most progressive parliaments across Africa with hallmark success stories, it takes time and intentional effort to change the evidence culture in parliament. It requires introducing and supporting initiatives that promote and facilitate MPs to champion a knowledge-driven change management process to use evidence in parliament's work and in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of Government/ Sectoral Focal Points (MDAs) through their oversight role. This includes building coalitions, coordinating with research institutes and national statistics bureaus.

Secondly, sensitizing MPs on the need for questioning around the evidence-based policies brought to parliament for debate and passing; ensuring committee discussions and reports are informed by sound evidence, demanding for evidence from the research and other evidence structures. The global COVID-19 pandemic made it evident that governments need to be in a position to respond more effectively to global challenges and investing in technology is needed to provide a range of evidence in a responsive way. Incentives and consistent peer-learning training with MPs, and parliamentary staff sharing examples of best practices, will shift the culture toward evidence use in parliaments to becoming a sustainable norm that strengthens good governance across Africa.

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APPENDIX A

Sample databases for accessing online resources for evidence use

- i. Africa Capacity Building Foundation: a globally recognised knowledge hub on capacity development in Africa. The publications in its virtual library are free to download. <http://elibrary.acbfact.org>
- ii. Africa Portal Library: an online library collection of over 4,000 books, journals, and digital documents related to African policy issues. The entire repository is open access. www.africaportal.org/library
- iii. African Bibliographic Databases: collection of Africana social science titles, presented in one easily accessible location on the internet. www.africabib.org
- iv. African Economic Outlook is a collaborative project between the African Development Bank, the OECD Development Centre and the United Nations Development Programme. The website provides comprehensive and comparable data and analysis of 54 African economies. www.africaneconomicoutlook.org
- v. African Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development is an open access journal that publishes articles dealing with agricultural economics with special focus on people living in rural areas. www.internationalscholarsjournals.org/journal/ijaerd
- vi. African Journals Online the world's largest online collection of African Published, open access peer-reviewed scholarly journals www.ajol.info/index.php/index/browse/alpha/index
- vii. AGORA: Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture, run by FAO. More than 3000 journals in agriculture and related biological, environmental and social sciences. www.fao.org/agora
- viii. ARDI Research for Development & Innovation Innovation 17 publishers provide access to around 20,000 journals, books, and reference works for 117 developing countries and territories. www.wipo.int/ardi
- ix. British Library of Development Studies Europe's largest library on development studies with an extensive e-library including open access resources. <http://blds.ids.ac.uk/blds-collection/e-library>
- x. [CINAHL](http://www.cinahl.org) Access to nursing and allied health journals, books, legal cases, research instruments, standards of practice, and clinical trials.
- xi. Connecting Africa a gateway to African research information and materials produced worldwide. It provides access to 54731 publications from 92 repositories. www.connecting-africa.net

xii. Directory of Open Access Journals online directory that indexes and provides access to quality open access, peer-reviewed journals. www.doaj.org

xiii. Eldis provides free access to relevant, up-to-date and diverse research on international development issues. Content from over 7, 500 development partners. Useful 'Research Guides' to key topics as well as links to related literature. www.eldis.org

xiv. [Essential Evidence Plus](#) Comprehensive clinical decision support system developed as a point-of-care tool for physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Integrated with The Cochrane Library.

xv. Evidence on Demand is an international development information hub, providing access to quality assured resources relating to climate & environment, infrastructure and livelihoods.

xvi. HINARI Access to Research in Health, set up by WHO together with major publishers, one of the world's largest collections of biomedical and health literature. Up to 13,000 journals (in 30 different languages), up to 29,000 e-books, and up to 70 other information resources are now available to health institutions in more than 100 countries. www.who.int/hinari

xvii. International Journal of MCH and AIDS is a US-based open access journal that focuses on the intersections between MCH and HIV/AIDS around the world, specifically in low and middle-income

countries. www.mchandaids.org/?page_id=1323#Articles

xviii. JSTOR African Access Initiative provides free access to the entire archive for any African institution (including government). It has about 2000 journals across 50 disciplines. <http://about.jstor.org/libraries/african-access-initiative>
xix. OARE Research in Environment up to 5710 peer reviewed journals and 1119 online books, and other information resources. www.unep.org/oare

xx. OMICS International is a scientific organization that drives the progress of research through open access journals www.omicsonline.org/agri-food-aquaand-vet-journals.php

xxi. Open Access Journals Search Engine (OAJSE) allows you to search for open access journals in a range of disciplines www.oajse.com

xxii. Open Science Directory has about 13,000 scientific journals. Aims to enhance the access of open access/special access collections by creating direct links to the journals. www.opensciencedirectory.net

xxiii. PLOS (Public Library of Science) is a non-profit publisher and advocacy organization founded to accelerate progress in science and medicine by leading a transformation in research communication. www.plos.org/publications

xxiv. [PubMed](#) : The primary database for biomedical and health sciences abstracts, including MEDLINE, with links to Shimberg Library full-text articles.

xxv. Research4Life is a partnership of the WHO, FAO, UNEP, WIPO, Cornell and Yale Universities and the International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers. African government offices are eligible for free registration. Research4Life consists of the following organizations: SAE International cover all areas relevant to ground vehicle and aerospace engineering technology
www.store.sae.org/saejournals

xxvi. ScienceDirect journals, articles, books and other open access content
www.sciencedirect.com • Scopus the largest abstract and citation database of peer reviewed literature. It has smart tools, so that you can track, analyze and visualize research. You or your institution need to sign up to this database to get access.
www.scopus.com

xxvii. Social Science Research Network
Almost 60,000 social science articles, with 40,000 available to download. Includes focused networks in specific disciplines including politics and economics.
www.ssrn.com

xxviii. Springer Open | 60+ peer-reviewed fully open access journals across all areas of science ranging from very specialized titles to SpringerPlus, an interdisciplinary open access journal that covers all disciplines.
www.springeropen.com/about/open-access

xxix. [Web of Science \[formerly Web of Knowledge\]](http://www.webofscience.com)

xxx. Wiley Open Access publishes peer reviewed journals across a wide range of disciplines
www.wileyopenaccess.com/view/journals.html