

BUILD - Promoting sustainable development through a cross-sectoral approach

AFIDEP *News* is the African Institute for Development Policy's newsletter, published to provide our stakeholders with updates of AFIDEP's programmes and highlight emerging policy issues in population dynamics and demographic dividend; health and wellbeing; transformative education and skills development; environment and climate change; and governance and accountability.

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Chris Kaudzu (lead), Ann Waithaka, Elizabeth Kahurani, Victory Kamthunzi, Lomuthando Nthakomwa, Chimwemwe Mlombwa, Edel Sakwa

CONTRIBUTORS:

Rose Oronje Ph.D., Nurudeen Alhassan Ph.D., Brenda Mungai Ph.D, Victory Kamthunzi, Ann Waithaka, Tamandani Msyamboza, Chimwemwe Mlobwa, Lomuthando Nthakomwa, Cyandra Carvalho, Mohammed Duba, and Chris Kaudzu

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DESIGN and LAYOUT:

Chris Kaudzu

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AFIDEP to lead global USAID program to strengthen cross-sectoral benefits of family planning

By Victory Kamthunzi and Chimwemwe Mlombwa

The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) has been selected to lead work on a new global USAID project aimed at strengthening the cross-sectoral benefits of family planning.

The new project known as BUILD (Building Capacity for Integrated Family Planning and Reproductive Health and Population, Environment and Development Action) has been awarded to AFIDEP and partners: Leadership for Environment and Development Southern and Eastern Africa (LEAD SEA), Path Foundation Philippines Inc (PFPI), Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), and Family Health International 360 (FHI360); have been awarded a five-year cooperative agreement with a period of performance from 13 April 2021 to 12 April 2026 by USAID.

The BUILD project has two main objectives:

1. Strengthening individual and institutional capacity in advocacy, policy communications and negotiations;
2. Increasing commitment for cross-sectoral approaches to integrated population, health, environment, climate change, resilience, food security, livelihoods and security programs.

According to Dr Eliya Zulu, the Executive Director of AFIDEP and leader of the BUILD programme, AFIDEP is honoured to be entrusted with spearheading this global program that will go a long way in making the case for why family planning is a vital development investment. He further stated that, “it will practically assist stakeholders and decision-makers in various sectors, particularly those working on environment, climate change, food security, biodiversity, and conservation to integrate population and family planning innovations in their policies and programmes.”

Professor Nyovani Madise, who is the co-leader of the BUILD Programme said, “BUILD will enable us to support countries on their paths towards sustainable development. Promoting a cross-sectoral approach to helping decision-makers and communities to act on challenges at the nexus between population, the environment, and development will be a major focus of the new programme.”

BUILD will play an important role in ensuring decision-makers understand the cross-sectoral benefits of voluntary family planning and in turn, implement policies and programs to help meet the demand for family planning and other development sector outcomes.



We need to fix how research is accessed for development

By Tom Drake, Rose Oronje and Jon Harle

Published externally by the *Centre for Global Development*

Research findings are most impactful when considered a global public good, accessible by anyone, and, for publicly funded research, there is no reason why this should not be the case. The current research publishing system—dominated by a number of large for-profit publishers—is expensive and ineffective at its main goal: disseminating the findings of research to all who need them. While the myriad problems of research publishing in high-income countries are often overcome by simply paying up, this option may not be available to many in low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The COVID-19 pandemic—as Ebola before it—encouraged many publishers to open up collections for immediate access through their emergency response initiatives. While some commended this move, others point out what it reveals: how much vital and often publicly funded research is protected behind paywalls, with access a temporary gift. In this blog we outline why affordable, open access to research is a critical issue for global development and call for development funders and researchers to:

- Support Plan S—an open access publishing initiative supported by a coalition of research agencies and funders—and ensure the perspectives of stakeholders in LMICs are heard in plans for reform.

- Choose to publish on progressive open access platforms.
- Seek opportunities to support access to evidence (and to publish) for researchers and research users in LMICs.

The problem with research publishing

Imagine running a magazine where you don't need to pay for the content of the articles being written or much of the editing process. Instead, the people writing the articles (and conducting the laborious work behind them) pay you for the privilege. This is the business model in commercial research publishing, where researchers conduct research, write it up, typically provide free peer-review and often unpaid editing of the journals. Some publishers then offer seven figure annual subscriptions for the work to be read, or charge thousands of pounds to authors (and their funders) to remove the paywall and make the article “open access.”

Since the 1950s research publishing has grown from small beans to a multibillion-dollar oligopoly, a transition spearheaded by the infamous Robert Maxwell. Market failures abound. For example, there is a disconnect between who's placing the order (the researcher) and who's paying the bill (the funder), so the opportunity cost is not felt by those making choices about where to

publish or whether to pay for subscriptions. A prestige economy and the importance of publishing to academic careers drives both high prices and unpaid labour.

These market failures have made research publishing extraordinarily profitable—at least for a few large corporations. In 2019 Elsevier made £2.6 billion in revenue with a very enviable £982 million (37 percent) profit. Most of this comes from online journal subscriptions. As the Guardian has previously pointed out, the research publishing industry is similar in size to the global recorded music or film industry but with profit shares far greater.

In the UK, leading universities spend an average of £4 million a year on journal subscriptions. In 2019, the University of California cancelled its subscription to Elsevier, saving an estimated \$11 million a year, which, remarkably, was just 25 percent of their annual expenditure on journal subscriptions. These outsized profits are a huge cost to research funders (including development funders) and ultimately to society.

Reform in research publishing is about ensuring research findings are openly and widely accessible but also must address the market distortions that cost the research sector so much—and not just the additional expense of publication, but the opportunity cost of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, that can be counted in missed opportunities for new technologies, treatments, and better public policy.

Open access is a development issue

Research underpins effective progress in global development through better evidence-informed policies and programmes and innovation-fuelled economic growth. Yet the current systems for sharing research findings is dysfunctional and particularly disadvantages LMICs.

Research paywalls are a major problem for potential evidence users. The International Decision Support Initiative (iDSI), a network in which CGD is a partner and acts as secretariat, works with governments in LMICs to facilitate the use of evidence in health policy-making. However, about 70 percent of published research is locked behind a paywall (similar for global health) preventing LMIC government officials from easily accessing it. Similarly, the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) encounters this challenge on a day-to-day basis in its work with African governments to support sustained use of evidence in decision-making. In some cases, AFIDEP has been requested by government agencies to support their subscription to journals so that trained staff can have access to research. This is not unique to LMICs: officials at the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office also struggle to access evidence, despite paying hundreds of thousands of pounds a year to access selected journals. Civil society organisations face very similar challenges.

Both research paywalls and article processing charges are a major problem for researchers in LMICs. The subscription fees for journal access are often prohibitively expensive for LMIC research institutions, and author fees—in place of a charge to readers—are beyond the reach of many. What this means for LMIC researchers without international funding is underscored by an analysis of the equivalent number of days work required to pay a \$1,600 publication charge: typically 7 days for an Australian researcher,

13 days for a UK academic or 3 months for a researcher in Nigeria. Simply flipping from pay to read to pay to publish is not a solution for those who cannot pay.

Pressure for change

Open access has been championed for some time and with some, but only partial, progress. Recently, a group of funders known as cOAlition S launched an ambitious initiative to accelerate the shift. From 1 January this year, Plan S requires that any research funded by the group must be made publicly available. Publishers must also clearly show their workings behind the prices they charge with the aim of showing how much things actually cost and what the mark up is for brand and prestige.

It's ambitious and disruptive, and offers an opportunity for real change, but Southern voices have been largely missing and their needs neglected as a result. In the UK, government funders have assembled evidence through a series reviews and consultations with LMIC stakeholders and are currently developing new open access policy. Still, there is a risk that small, non-profit journals and researchers in the South without access to international funding will struggle—yet they're vital parts of research ecosystems.

Low- and middle-income countries are forging a different path

In a recent survey of African science ministries, achieving sectoral reform through open science policies was considered the highest priority intervention. Ethiopia's efforts to ensure the country's research outputs are openly accessible are a notable achievement, and the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) (the sole African signatory to Plan S) has launched a low-cost publishing platform, AAS Open. While this is an important and high-quality new space, it's only available to AAS-funded researchers and is built on the F1000 platform so is not a model available to most Southern organisations.

But there are more affordable options—more readily sustained from public and institutional funding, and academy-owned, that don't depend on commercial platforms, and that better serve Southern research. Many initiatives have emerged from the South, based on entirely different business models (e.g., African Journals Online or Sri Lanka Journals Online).

The Directory of Open Access Journals aggregates almost 16,000 journals from across the world. More than 11,500 don't charge a publication fee, and journals published in the South account for 30-40 percent of titles. And, sensitive to the charge that their journals don't match the quality standards of those in the North, many Southern editors have invested huge efforts in improving their quality standards.

It's not just peer-reviewed journals. Latin America has pioneered industry-disrupting platforms to share research and Africa is following. These initiatives look very different to the familiar platforms of well-known publishing houses, without large teams and large marketing budgets but that's largely the point: they're pioneering new models and disrupting the established systems. The development community would do well to recognise and value these innovative alternatives—especially where they have emerged from Southern research communities and are designed to meet Southern research and public needs.

Recommendations

Effective research systems in LMICs are essential for sustainable development, and radical reform of research publishing is greatly needed. In global development, open access is too often seen as a niche issue when the current system undermines local knowledge generation and innovation, holds back evidence-informed public policy, and puts the brakes on economic growth. With attention focused by COVID-19, UNESCO, WHO and UNHCR last year called for an even greater transition to an open science system. There is no one quick fix—the challenges are complex and interdependent. But below we offer recommendations below for how to support change.

For funders

- Work together to shift the system. Support Plan S and ensure the perspectives of stakeholders in LMICs are heard in plans for reform.
- Invest in alternative publishing platforms, including those led by Southern institutions; don't just keep paying up for expensive open access fees.

- Don't rely on fee waivers to be there for researchers without strong funding. Consider approaches to facilitating access to evidence and to publish for researchers in LMICs as a foundational development initiative.

For researchers

- Choose where to publish. Established researchers in top institutions are secure and can lead the way. For Southern researchers its riskier to take a different path.
- Discuss this in your research partnerships: publish open access, but also think about how you can support Southern systems in the process. Support authors to deposit their work in open access repositories.
- Support moves to cancel journal subscriptions if publishers are not actively adjusting models and invest the money saved in alternative models and infrastructure.



Photo: National Cancer Institute/unsplash



AFIDEP launches new platform to optimise Africa's voice on transformative health technologies

By Mohammed Duba

A FIDEP has launched the Health Tech Platform, which is an African driven advocacy platform that will facilitate informed, objective, inclusive and balanced discussions on the design, development and use of transformative technologies to address key health challenges in sub-Saharan Africa.

The African Union's development road map -Agenda 2063- recognises the critical role of technology as a catalyst for growth on the continent. Emerging transformative technologies such as genetically modified mosquitoes, drones and artificial intelligence have high potential to change the trajectory of disease and general well-being if they are successfully developed and effectively deployed. But, do they stand a chance?

"A number of factors undermine efforts to develop and promote use of transformative technologies," says Dr Rose Oronje who is Director of Public Policy and Communication at AFIDEP and leading the Health Tech Platform. "These include minimal participation and engagement by scientists on the continent, lack of knowledge or limited understanding of these emerging technologies among members of the public, policy-makers and other stakeholders, and lack of accessible platforms to engage with developers of the transformative technologies."

These challenges are made worse by lack of clear policies and regulatory frameworks needed to guide the development of the technologies, and a host of ethical, social and cultural concerns.

The Health Tech Platform will ensure that Africans are meaningfully involved in driving conversations about the need for and effectiveness of transformative tools and technologies for tackling the continent's health challenges. The initiative will use multi-pronged

advocacy approaches and tools to engage a wide range of stakeholders including policy-makers, scientists, academics, ethicists, gender experts, media/journalists, and civil society actors.

"The platform will expand the spaces where Africans can have open and transparent conversations on the need for transformative technologies, and the safety and ethical questions they have relating to these technologies," says Dr Oronje.

Dr Eliya Zulu, Executive Director of AFIDEP, sees a lot of possibilities in these technologies to address the high disease burden in Africa. "Longstanding diseases like Malaria exert a huge health and socio-economic burden on families across the continent. Efforts to eradicate them should explore widespread use of transformative technologies that have potential to transform disease trajectory or enable services to reach isolated geographical areas." Dr Zulu adds that "African governments should prioritise efforts that address the gaps in current regulatory frameworks to facilitate development of the emerging transformative technologies and enable widespread use of those proven to be safe and effective."

The three-year project is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Health Technologies Platform initiative will leverage on AFIDEP's continental expertise to convene and influence policy discourses using evidence.

AFIDEP will implement the project in partnership with relevant organisations in selected countries and at regional level. The initiative seeks to realise a stronger African voice and leadership, as well as increased policy commitment and action on transformative health technologies.



Photo: Sate Al Abbasi/ Flickr

Local evidence to inform the distribution of bed nets: Game-changer to Malaria prevention in Malawi

By Nurudeen Alhassan, Ph.D.

Malawi is among the top 15 countries with a high burden of Malaria worldwide. Every year, nearly 4 million people in Malawi are diagnosed with the disease, and 6,500 deaths due to Malaria are recorded.

The use of insecticide-treated net (ITNs) otherwise known as bed nets is a major part of the strategy to control and prevent malaria transmission in the country. Bed nets work to prevent malaria transmission by protecting humans that sleep under them from mosquito bites. Bed nets are also treated with insecticides named pyrethroid that kill mosquitoes that come into contact with them.

Despite the demonstrable effectiveness of bed nets in reducing malaria transmission, there is evidence that many of the mosquito species responsible for malaria transmission in Malawi have become resistant to pyrethroid. This means that standard bed nets treated with pyrethroid have become less effective in killing those mosquito species.

Recognising the resistance of various mosquito species to pyrethroid and the potential of such resistance to roll back gains made in the fight against Malaria, government in collaboration with other stakeholders has started distributing bed nets treated with insecticides that are capable of killing pyrethroid-resistant mosquito species.

Bed nets treated with Interceptor G2 (IG2) are part of the new nets distributed in some parts of Malawi. IG2 treated bed nets combine pyrethroid with another insecticide called chlorfenapyr. While there is evidence that IG2 bed nets are better at killing pyrethroid-resistant mosquitoes compared to standard bed nets, there is no known

locally generated evidence in Malawi on the efficacy of IG2 nets on *An. funestus*, the main mosquito species responsible for malaria transmission in Southern Malawi.

To fill this knowledge gap, and more importantly to inform the distribution of effective bed nets to Malawians, Dr Elizabeth Bandason who is based at the Malaria Alert of the College of Medicine is undertaking a study to test the efficacy of IG2 nets against pyrethroid-resistant *An. funestus*. Dr Bandason's study is supported through the Partnership for Increasing the Impact of Vector Control (PIIVeC), a project funded by the UK Global Challenges Research Fund and led by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM).

This research is expected to provide evidence to inform the distribution of efficacious bed nets in Malawi as this is crucial in the fight against Malaria. AFIDEP as the policy partner on this project will continue to update and engage policymakers and stakeholders with evidence from this study and other related studies to bring about the desired changes.



4 million People/Year are diagnosed with malaria (Malawi)

6,500 deaths/Year



Photo: Wael Muhammad/Flickr

World Malaria Day 2021: Does gene technology offer potential to wipe out malaria?

By Rose Oronje, Ph.D.

Malaria kills more than 650,000 people each year; the majority of those deaths occurring on the African continent. In 2019, 229 million people were infected. That's about 3 percent of all humans on Earth, every year. Worse off, 409,000 people died of malaria. Over the past two decades, great progress has been made in the Malaria fight, saving more than 7 million lives and preventing over 1 billion malaria cases.

Each year, World Malaria Day (April 25) commemorates the global fight toward zero Malaria deaths and mobilizes action to combat the disease. The persisting high numbers of Malaria deaths and illnesses mean that the current tools will not get us to zero Malaria. For this reason, experts have continued to explore new tools for Malaria elimination. The gene drive technology is one of the tools being explored for Malaria elimination in Africa.

The technology, developed in the past decade, enables precise editing of the genes of living organisms. For Malaria, the technology could be applied to modify the genes of Malaria-causing mosquitoes (the Anopheles) to either reduce their survival or deactivate genes that enable them to carry the Malaria parasite. If successfully applied, scientists believe that gene drive mosquitoes could significantly accelerate the path to Malaria elimination, or zero Malaria.

In 2017, the African Union recognized the potential of the gene drive technology in controlling and eliminating Malaria on the continent, and committed to invest in the development and regulation of the technology. This commitment is being implemented by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA/NEPAD), which is currently spearheading efforts to build capacity and support countries to establish the necessary regulatory framework for guiding the research to test the gene drive technology for elimination of Malaria on the continent.

Currently, researchers are working in Burkina Faso, Mali and Uganda, to prepare the stage for the testing of gene drive mosquitoes for the control and elimination of Malaria on the

continent. As such, the technology is still a long way from being moved from the laboratory to real life. The ongoing research will, among others, test whether gene drive mosquitoes can control and eliminate Malaria, and whether they are safe for humans and for the environment.

While the ongoing research on use of gene drives for the control and elimination of Malaria is raising many ethical and safety questions, the stakes of doing nothing are high. Africa accounts for 94% of all Malaria deaths and illnesses in the world. And so, Africa is the place where this technology needs to be tested because if it is tested elsewhere, we will never know if indeed it can control or eliminate Malaria on the continent.

There is urgent need for Africans to engage with the ongoing research on the use of gene drives for the elimination of Malaria on the continent. They need to understand the technology, the benefits it could bring if proven to work, and voice their concerns so that these can be addressed and also inform the ongoing research.

The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) has recently launched the Health Tech Platform to enable Africans to be meaningfully involved in driving balanced and objective discussions about transformative health technologies, such as gene drive mosquitoes for the elimination of Malaria.

Through multiple activities, the Platform will connect the public/communities, civil society, researchers and government officials to deliberate on key health technologies to ensure that the development of these technologies responds to their needs and contexts.

As the World marks this year's Malaria Day with the theme "Zero Malaria – Draw the line against Malaria", more and more Africans who bear the brunt of the disease need to understand and be part of the ongoing efforts to develop new tools that have potential to eliminate Malaria.

IT'S TIME → END TB!

On 26 September 2018, I was honoured, as an IMPALA Ph.D. student hosted at AFIDEP, to be part of the first-ever high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on TB in New York. The theme of the meeting was “United to End Tuberculosis: An Urgent Global Response to a Global Epidemic.” The aim was to accelerate efforts in ending TB and to reach all affected people with prevention and care.

The UN High Level Meeting (UNHLM) on TB was the fifth time the UN had called for a high-level meeting devoted to a health issue. Previously, it had special sessions on HIV/AIDS, Non-communicable Diseases, Ebola and Antimicrobial Resistance. In attendance were heads of state, UN leadership and other global leaders; technical agencies and academia; private sector and philanthropic foundations; civil society and other relevant partners.

The UNHLM marked a tremendous step forward in the fight against TB with global commitments for treatment, prevention and funding for TB. High burden countries like Kenya had representation by their Ministers of Health and Heads of State. The President of Kenya, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta took the stand to make a commitment that by 2022 Kenya will have increased efforts to diagnose and successfully treat TB.

The targets were:

- Finding and successfully treating 585,100 people with drug sensitive TB, including 68,800 children,
- Diagnose and treat 6,644 people on drug resistant TB and to put 722,160 eligible persons on TB preventive therapy.

UNHLM TB global commitments:

- Diagnose and treat 40 million people with TB by 2022 including 3.5 million children and 1.5 million people with drug-resistant TB
- Reach 30 million people with TB preventive treatment by 2022
- Mobilise sufficient and sustainable financing to reach \$13 billion a year to support efforts to end TB

The clock is ticking! Reflections on the UN High Level Meeting on TB two years on

By Brenda Mungai, Ph.D.

- Invest in TB research to reach at least USD 2 billion a year for better science, better tools and better delivery.

Kenya has indeed made strides in identifying more people with TB. In addition, the Division of TB, Leprosy and Lung Health in 2020 launched the Latent TB Infection treatment guidelines which is a step in the uptake of preventive therapy.

Will Kenya reach the 2022 UNHLM targets?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on identifying persons with TB and health systems in general. This is likely to delay achieving the targets Kenya set, as is the case globally.

However, COVID-19 also teaches us in the TB world that global and country multi- sectoral engagement in combating an infectious disease is possible. That great strides like development of effective vaccines in a short turnaround time is possible when adequate funding is available. That TB, which has been one of the world's top infectious killer needs political commitment, adequate funding and global focus to end it.

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A total of 1.5 million people died from TB in 2020 (including 214 000 people with HIV). Worldwide, TB is the 13th leading cause of death and the second leading infectious killer after COVID-19 (above HIV/AIDS). ([World Health Organisation](#))

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Enhancing capacity for policy engagement and evidence uptake

By Victory Kamthunzi and Hleziwe Hara

With an increase in global health initiatives and the intensification in funding for health programmes, there is a keen interest for researchers to take up their think tank role in championing the uptake of research by decision-makers. Additionally, funders - governments, industry, and philanthropic organisations – and the public want to see the impact of investments in research to justify continued funding of research. Increased collaboration between researchers, policymakers and practitioners is one of the key strategies towards increasing the uptake of research into health policy and program development.

Researchers can play an important role promoting use of evidence for decision-making but majority lack the skills required to champion research uptake. To respond to this gap, AFIDEP runs a capacity building program on knowledge translation for Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM). EIDM is defined as a process in which high-quality evidence from research, local data, and professional experiences is synthesised, disseminated, and applied to decision-making in policy and practice.

Effective use of strategic communication tools to represent research programmes or institutions to policy-makers and the media

Through the Enhance DELTAS programme, AFIDEP conducted a series of week-long workshops on policy engagement and evidence uptake between October 2020 and February 2021. The workshops targeted Ph.D. and Post-Doctoral early career researchers and consortium leaders or senior researchers responsible for leading research uptake.

Packaging and communicating key findings through the channels of information that health officials and policy-makers use and trust helps to maximise the impact of research on policy and practice. In determining and customising the workshop curriculum, information derived from completed needs assessment questionnaires administered to participants were used to develop tailor-made interactive training materials.

The survey results pointed out a gap, in that majority of the early career researchers had not participated in any prior workshop on policy engagement and that their respective institutions lacked



Photo: Lagos Techie/unsplash

a policy engagement strategy. Participants indicated packaging and dissemination of research for different policy audiences as key areas they wanted training in. Specifically, one participant said, “I want to make my research understood by policy-makers,” while another highlighted the importance of “the practicalities of the policy-making process including how to effectively maximise impact across diverse policy and decision-makers.”

The importance of EIDM for better health policies and programmes

According to a study on the barriers to the uptake of evidence, obstacles to the uptake of research by decision-makers include lack of use, lack of awareness, lack of familiarity, lack of usefulness, lack of motivation, and external barriers. The workshops, dubbed “ENHD 101: Policy Engagement and Evidence Uptake for Early Career Researchers and ENHD 102: Enhancing Institutional Capacity for Policy Engagement and Evidence Uptake”, provided participants with strategies to remedying these obstacles.

One participant recommended, “the need for research institutions to be supported in training ‘communicators’ who can help bridge the gap with policy-makers and that the engagement should be formalised in such a way that we know this is something that happens annually or biennially.”



Testimonial Videos: Click on the Picture



Interactive virtual sessions

The workshops started with a review of the policy-making process, an introduction to the principles of EIDM, and the global landscape for health policy-making. This was followed by discussions on how to create enabling cultures for policy engagement with research institutions and universities. Participants were trained on the practical aspects of developing a policy engagement and communications strategy as well as the practical aspects of implementing a communications strategy. Under ENHD 102, the session facilitated a joint workshop between the senior research leaders and policy-makers from Ministry of Health and other Ministries.

Subsequent webinars followed based on topical demand by participants, namely: Developing Effective Communications and Engagement Strategies; and How to effectively use Social Media. Furthermore, six participants enrolled in a six-months mentorship programme that sought to support the participants to develop policy engagement materials.

[Enhance DELTAS](#) is a programme led by AFIDEP and funded by the Wellcome Trust. It seeks to provide research uptake and policy engagement support to awardees of the Developing Excellence in Leadership, Training and Science (DELTAS) Africa initiative, led by the African Academy of Sciences.

Kenya: Tapping into local philanthropy could scale-up efforts towards sustainable development

By Ann Waithaka

Charitable giving has a long history in Kenya and the wider African continent. With Africa making remarkable strides in development over the decades, enthusiasm and philanthropic contributions have tremendously increased. There has also been increased awareness about the importance and impact of philanthropy.

On 7 April 2021, Dr Rose Oronje, Director of Public Policy and Communication at AFIDEP was a panelist at an inaugural virtual conference, discussing local philanthropy, the environment it operates, and the opportunities and challenges in creating an optimal policy and legal environment for growing corporate giving in Kenya.

The objective of the conference was to officially launch the Impact Philanthropy Africa, a forum of self-funded corporate and private charitable foundations working in Kenya. The entity, which had convened the conference, aims to build a culture of corporate social investment (CSI) and influence policy through advocacy and thought leadership.

Themed, *'Building Back Better: Growing Philanthropy through Corporate Social Investing (CSI) in Kenya'*, the conference brought together Impact Philanthropy Africa members, invited prospective members, select partners from government, private sector and development and media.

Contributing to discussions on *'Creating an enabling environment to incentivize more Corporate Social Investing (CSI) in Kenya'*, Dr Oronje shared findings of a political and economy situational analysis of Kenya's philanthropic landscape. The study commissioned by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) to generate evidence needed to inform its strategic engagement efforts in Africa.

Fast emerging local philanthropy in Kenya

The political and economic situational analysis of Kenya's philanthropic landscape revealed a strong giving spirit in Kenya at family, community and national levels. Although pre-dominantly informal, the strong culture of generosity has come in handy to compliment the government's lacking capacity to meet social needs of many Kenyans. Philanthropy in Kenya has also made its mark in meeting local and common initiatives particularly those addressing basic needs.



The country boasts of modern philanthropic infrastructure driven by emergent digital platforms for mobilising local resources; a vibrant and growing corporate philanthropy; growing number of high net-worth individuals; and the existence of many Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that provide opportunity for community-level mobilization and reach.

The government, local foundations, CSOs and networks such as the Kenya Diaspora Alliance and the East Africa Philanthropy Network, media, and global donors are key stakeholders in Kenya's philanthropy sector. Examples of well-known foundations include the Equity Foundation, Safaricom Foundation, Kenya Community Development Foundation, Chandaria Foundation, KenGen Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation, Lions Club, Rotary Club, and Kenya Commercial Bank Foundation.

Despite the growth and promise of philanthropy in Kenya, the sector faces various challenges that undermine efforts to mobilise and use donated resources for social impact. Dr Oronje notes that, "one of the challenges hindering local philanthropic growth in Kenya is high levels of corruption thus undermining public trust in giving."

Other challenges include low levels of institutionalisation of local philanthropy; an inhibitive legal and policy environment; and weak civil society infrastructure needed to promote social accountability in philanthropy.



Photo: Anne Spratt/Unsplash

Collaborative philanthropy and enabling policy environment key to sector success

In Kenya just like many countries in Africa, societal challenges such as poverty, diseases and unemployment persist. Governments and stakeholders are recognising collaboration and cross-sector partnerships as a vital component in their approach to address these challenges. This extends to the philanthropic sector.

A sense of shared goal in philanthropy can generate more enthusiasm about what can be achieved. The basis of collaboration in philanthropy is that pooling resources, knowledge and expertise can grow the number of investments, and enhance realisation of real and sustainable outcomes. Collaboration between stakeholders – government, CSOs, private sector, external funders and local philanthropic counterparts is also key to maximising philanthropic impact.

Strengthening the local culture of giving in Kenya requires an enabling environment. A strong support ecosystem for philanthropy promotes giving, builds trust, facilitates collaboration and professionalises the field. The enabling environment that underpins the work of philanthropy comprises various components including but not limited to tax incentives, independent civic space, funding mechanisms, transparency and accountability.

As part of scaling local philanthropy in Kenya, Dr Oranje calls for strategic policy reforms for the country to build back better.

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Governments and stakeholders are recognising collaboration and cross-sector partnerships as a vital component in their approach to address challenges.

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Stronger Together



Creating wealth through maize and groundnuts in Malawi

By Cyandra Carvalho and Chimwemwe Mlombwa

The Ministry of Trade in Malawi recently announced a temporary lifting of a long-standing ban on maize exports between March and June 2021 due to a sizeable maize surplus built up over the past two years

There are many opportunities to diversify into other crops but Malawi has been very slow to diversify. As Malawi shifts to extend their agricultural exports to reduce the country's heavy reliance on tobacco there are other factors to be considered; a key factor is ensuring that there are policy solutions to support this transition. If approached strategically, improved production and commercialisation of other crops would help Malawi attain a critical objective of the 2063 agenda, 'Generating inclusive wealth for all in Malawi'.

A cost-benefit analysis by the Malawi Priorities Project a research-based collaborative project implemented by the National Planning Commission, the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and the Copenhagen Consensus Center, shows that lifting the maize export ban permanently would have lasting economic and social benefits. The analysis recommends that the recent steps towards removing the maize export ban should be made permanent.

The study found that removing the ban will increase maize prices paid by neighbouring countries, benefiting all Malawian maize farmers.

Consumers will face higher maize prices too, but as 60 percent of those who consume maize also produce it, and the farmers' annual gains are MK 61 billion (\$ 74,797,224) higher than the consumers' losses, this reform has all the markings to leave everyone better off.

While the maize export ban is usually rationalised in terms of food security, the analysis found that it is likely to make Malawi more food secure overall by incentivising maize production, reducing price volatility and boosting incomes substantially.

By improving quality-control standards and regulations for groundnuts to export them, farmer incomes could be increased by 6.3 billion kwacha annually, yielding a return 20% higher than the investment needed to train farmers and build the necessary institutional capacity.



Photo: Christophe Maertens/unsplash



Photo: Vladislav Nikonov/unsplash

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

2021



Celebrating women scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19

By Tamandani Msyamboza and Lomuthando Nthakomwa

Every February 11th since 2016, women and girls in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) realm have been recognised and celebrated globally. Dubbed the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, this day highlights the critical role women and girls play in various scientific fields while encouraging greater participation of women and girls in STEM.

Globally, there is a stark under-representation of women and girls in STEM fields, with less than 30% in research; yet half of the world's population. The commemoration of a day targeted at female scientists and potential scientists presents an opportunity to promote full equal access and participation in science for women and girls.

In 2021, the International Day of Women and Girls in Science was themed "Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19". A fitting theme as the pandemic has shown the important role women are playing in the fight against COVID-19 around the world, as women make up 70% of health and social service workers. These include midwives, nurses, and community health workers who are at the forefront, combatting and working to contain the pandemic.

While some efforts have been made in the recent past to promote gender equality in science, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic could reverse the limited progress that has been made. As the outbreak exacerbates existing inequalities for women and girls across every sphere – ranging from health and the economy to security and social protection.

As AFIDEP, we are strong proponents of equal representation in science. We believe that no one should be left behind in science. The institute has more than 60% of female representation, who actively contribute to the generation and translation of evidence that informs many national policies and pertinent sectors of the economy such as health.

We understand the many hats women wear and are proud to provide a work environment that allows them to work with flexibility while being productive. We marked this year's International Day of Women and Girls in Science by interviewing and documenting different sentiments and views on women in science from our many female scientists working in Malawi, who were working from home due to the pandemic. This is what one of them had to share:

"I am proud to work for an organisation that is invested in science and evidence-based solutions. I feel lucky that not only am I a woman in science but I'm also surrounded by brilliant women in science everyday where I work. Working for AFIDEP, I've been able to provide input into policy research on drug resistance and tuberculosis, and advance knowledge in the importance of behaviour change communication for malaria control...As a mother to a girl, educating the next generation of female global leaders is something I'm particularly keen on. I would like to see more girls and women participate in STEM, and empowering diversity in science. This International Day of Women and Girls in Science, I celebrate women in the forefront of the fight against COVID-19, and advocate for more participation of girls and women in science," said Dr Tumaini Malenga.

Other women in science had this to say:

- [Tumaini Malenga, Ph.D.](#) - Research and Policy Analyst
- [Maame Peterson, Ph.D.](#) - Research and Policy Analyst
- [Hleziwe Hara](#) - Research and Policy Associate
- [Violet Murunga](#) - Senior Research and Policy Associate
- [Jessie Mphande](#) - Research Assistant



Photo: World Bank/Flicker

International Women's Day: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world

By Chris Kaudzu and Tamandani Msyamboza

On 8 March, the world observes International Women's Day. This year's theme was dubbed 'Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World.'

To mark the occasion, AFIDEP's Executive Director Dr Eliya Zulu released a statement in which he referred to the impeccable contributions that women and girls make to the well-being of families, communities, at the workplace and in national development efforts across Africa and throughout the world.

He said " we are proud to be supporting this year's International Women's Day and recognising that women stand at the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, as health care workers, care-givers, innovators, community organisers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic."

He further stated that, "the world cannot expect to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, when women and girls who constitute nearly half of the global population; are not fully empowered to be the best they can be and play their rightful role in development."

In his statement, he highlighted that woman must have equal opportunities and access as men to education and skills development, getting salaried employment, career progression, equal pay and in building and leading their own businesses. "Women and girls must be assured of the universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as rights. They should be protected from associated ailments and from sexual and gender-based violence and abuse. he added"

While we each have a role to play in calling out inequality, upholding women's rights and leveraging their full potential in leadership and creating an equal and inclusive tomorrow, we need to be intentional with the responses and measures that we put forward in restructuring the future. Women and girls must be

integrated in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in all spheres and at all stages of pandemic response and recovery. We should all choose to collectively challenge and call out gender bias and inequality as individuals and organisations.

Dr Zulu said that women must have equal opportunities in leadership, in the workplace, in politics and in communities; so the world can shift towards recovery stage in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our work at AFIDEP strives to put evidence at the centre of public sector efforts to address the critical socioeconomic, cultural and programmatic bottlenecks that millions of African girls and women face as they struggle to shift from barely surviving to thriving. Overall, 63 percent of our staff at AFIDEP are women.

Internally AFIDEP is committed to walking-the-talk on gender equality throughout its governance structures. "Four of our board members at AFIDEP are women and three out of five of our senior management team members are women."

AFIDEP would not be where it is today without the strategic leadership qualities and gender-grounded development perspectives, first class technical expertise and the deep commitment to work that women typically bring to the workplace.

Dr Zulu concluded his statement by recognising the inspiring and industrious women at AFIDEP and throughout Africa and the world. Women are at the forefront in challenging the patriarchal status quo and demonstrating that achieving gender equality in all aspects of life and all organisations is the only win-win path to attaining socioeconomic transformation envisaged in the African Union Agenda 2063; as well as the long-term national development visions that all African governments have.



Photo: Chris Kaudzu/AFIDEP

Working with Technical Working Groups to strengthen the EIDM capacity at the Kenya Ministry of Health

By Carol Mukiira and Ann Waithaka

In December 2020, AFIDEP through the Heightening Institutional Capacity for Government Use of Health Research (HIGH Res) project supported a 5-day training that aimed to strengthen the skills of research focal persons within the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) at the Kenya Ministry of Health.

The training, which attracted 17 technical staff representing TWGs and various secretariats nominated as Research Focal Points, was conducted by the Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES). To support the practical application of the skills learned, the training was followed by a 6 months mentorship period.

The 5-day training and mentorship programme are part of efforts by the HIGH-Res project to address the challenge of weak institutional capacity for enabling evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) in Kenya's health sector. HIGH-Res is a collaborative programme that aims to strengthen institutional capacity for the use of health research in policy and programme decisions in Kenya, Malawi and Uganda. In Kenya, the HIGH-Res team is made up of the Ministry of Health (MoH) in collaboration with the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and led by AFIDEP.

The projects efforts and objectives are against the backdrop of the important role evidence plays in enhancing policy, programme and practice decisions that ultimately improve development. Additionally, weak individual and institutional capacity within government agencies is one of the major hindrances to sustained use or consideration of research and other evidence in decision-making.

At the Kenya MoH, HIGH-Res has prioritised on strengthening the capacity of TWGs as an initiative that can harness their full potential in promoting evidence use in decision-making processes. TWGs play an important role in identifying and making recommendations on technical issues relating to policy, programming, and service provision in the MoH and health sector. They are also strategic platforms that facilitate interaction between MoH staff and researchers from various institutions in the country.

As key decision-making structures for the health sector, TWGs provide a great opportunity for nurturing and strengthening an EIDM culture within Kenya's health sector. Despite their huge potential in enabling EIDM within Kenya's MoH, TWGs lack reliable mechanisms for accessing research, and for reviewing and synthesizing research to inform the decisions they make.

A context analysis study conducted as part of the HIGH-Res project to assess the functionality of TWGs within MoH in utilising research and evidence in their discussions and recommendations, showed that a key challenge faced by TWGs in performing their mandate, is weak capacities to use research (i.e. assess quality of research, analyze data, review and synthesize existing research).

As a means to drive efforts to strengthen the capacity of TWGs, HIGH-Res is working with the MoH's Division of Research and Innovation to formally designate technical staff as Knowledge Focal Points in TWGs. The Knowledge Focal Points are required to identify research and evidence needs of TWGs that they support and provide existing research and other evidence (through searching, appraising, and synthesizing existing evidence on the issues of concern to the TWG). Together with the TWGs, they are also to identify and link relevant researchers and research institutions working on areas of interest to the TWG.

In delivering their responsibilities, the focal points will work closely with the MoH Research division which has a mandate of coordinating all health research at MoH. To better carry out their roles, the research focal points require knowledge and skills in EIDM such as acquiring, assessing, and adapting evidence to policy concerns.

The HIGH-Res programme is funded by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHP SR) and Wellcome Trust for three years from August 2019 to July 2022.

NEW STAFF



Michael Chipeta, Ph.D

Research and Policy Analyst



Andrew Gachanja

IT Intern



Doreen Otera, Ph.D

Senior Research and Policy Analyst



Chimwemwe Mlombwa

Communications Intern



Enerst Tambo, Ph.D

Senior Research and Policy Analyst



Gift Muhota

Finance Intern



Mohammed Duba

Communications Officer (Anglophone)



Chikondi Kadongola

Research and Policy Associate - Intern



Sahra Mohamed

Research and Policy Associate

ENGAGEMENTS

- **Policy Engagement and Evidence Uptake for Early Career Researchers** (25 January - 29 January 2021)

The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) together with the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) staff conducted two training workshops for 40 fellows for DELTAS Africa project. These were PhD and post-doctoral early career researchers as well as consortium leaders or senior researchers who are responsible for leading research uptake. The training workshops, ENHD 101: Policy Engagement and Evidence Uptake for Early Career Researchers and ENHD 102: Enhancing Institutional Capacity for Policy Engagement and Evidence Uptake emphasised skills of individuals to maximise research uptake and policy engagement.
- **High-Res Project Annual Review and Planning Meeting** (26 January - 28 January 2021)

The Heightening Institutional Capacity for Government Use of Health Research (HIGH-Res) project brought together various partners under the HIGH-Res East Africa Consortium to design, implement and evaluate innovative and politically responsive interventions to strengthen institutional capacity for use of health research in policy-making in Kenya, Malawi and Uganda. The project implementation for HiGH-Res for year two is focused on building on the progress realised in year one, and tackling the challenges experienced in order to progress towards the project's intermediate outcomes.
- **High-Res Project Rapid Evidence Synthesis Training for Research Focal Persons** (1 February - 5 February 2021)

The Heightening Institutional Capacity for Government Use of Health Research (HIGH-Res) project is a ministry-led initiative implemented by a consortium of partners in Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi. HIGH-Res constitutes multiple innovative and multi-faceted interventions that seek to strengthen institutional and individual policymakers' capacity and institutionalise a culture of evidence-informed decision and policy making (EIDM and EIPM). The workshop was supported by the HIGH-Res project, which is funded by the Alliance for Health Systems and Policy Research at the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Wellcome Trust.
- **ENHD 102: Enhancing Institutional Capacity for Policy Engagement and Evidence Update** (8 February - 11 February 2021)

Effective policy engagement strategies require some understanding of the policymaking processes and the incentives and disincentives of Evidence-informed Decision making (EIDM) in the public sector. Overall, this interactive workshop focused on leadership in policy engagement and research uptake. Through the development of institutional strategies and the follow-on mentorship and support, we contributed to sustainable practices in policy engagement and research uptake.
- **Research for Health Technical Working Group (R4H TWG) Inaugural Meeting** (18 February 2021)

The Research for Health Technical Working Group (R4H TWG) is a technical and logistic partnership forum for health research sub-sector in the country. The purpose of this TWG is to coordinate MoH Research for health stakeholders with the primary goal to improve the availability and use of health research evidence for policy and decision making.

Recently, the Ministry of Health updated the R4H TWG terms of reference and membership to be in tandem with the changing dynamics of the health sector; the establishment of the National Health Research Committee as per the Health ACT 2017 and to reflect the growing interest in knowledge management in Health.
- **Global Demography Forum** (24 March 2021)

The Global Demography Forum brings together leading researchers from Asia, Africa, Europe and the USA to present research results on the diverse topics. The forum is part of a three day event dubbed 'Berlin Demography Days' that offers a platform for intense dialogue among scientific experts, policy makers, business leaders and representatives of international organisations and civil society. AFIDEP's Executive Director, Dr Eliya Zulu was speaker at the Forum where he provided insights on family and fertility. Specifically, his session focused on the social and economic impact of fertility change in Africa.
- **Demographic Transition in Africa: Learning Session** (20 April & 27 April 2021)

The live session was part of a two-part course exploring the impact of the demographic transition across Africa on the UK government. The course brought experts from the field [population dynamics] to explore the drivers, impacts and opportunities of demographic change across Sub-Saharan Africa. Participants discussed the impact of demographic change in the region including its drivers, the development opportunities and challenges of young and rapidly growing populations, and the practical approaches of applying a demographic lens to policy and programming across Her Majesty's Government (HMG), including the history and sensitivity of discourse on demographics.
- **Enhance DELTAS: Developing Effective Communications and Engagement Strategies** (29 April 2021)

Effective policy engagement strategies require some understanding of the policymaking processes and the incentives and disincentives of Evidence-informed Decision making (EIDM) in the public sector. This webinar is a part of the Enhancing Research Uptake and Policy Engagement in the DELTAS Programme (Enhance DELTAS). Through the development of institutional strategies and the follow-on mentorship and support, we will contribute to sustainable practices in policy engagement and research uptake.

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles:

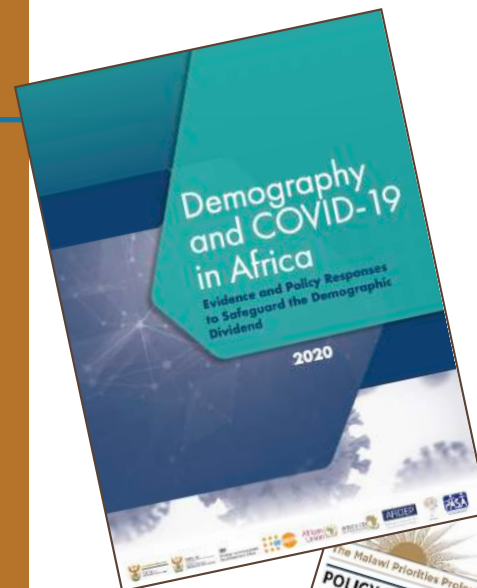
1. Ethics in global research: Creating a toolkit to support integrity and ethical action throughout the research journey
2. Systematic Review of Pooling Sputum as an Efficient Method for Xpert MTB/RIF Tuberculosis Testing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Institutional Publications:

1. Newsletter July-December 2020
2. Webinar Series Report: Demography and COVID-19 in Africa – Findings and Recommendations on Evidence and Policy Responses to Safeguard the Demographic Dividend

Policy Briefs:

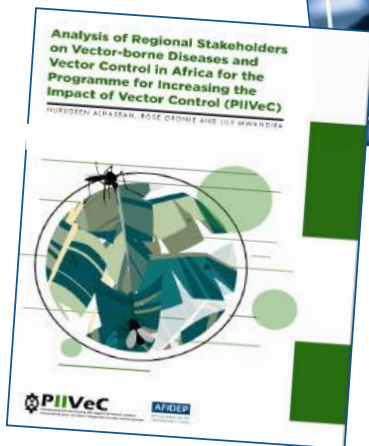
1. Cost-benefit analysis of increasing contraceptive use through post-partum counseling and free, improved access to contraception in Malawi
2. Cost-benefit analysis of improving neonatal and maternal health outcomes in Malawi
3. The costs and benefits of interventions related to COMEX reforms in Malawi
4. Cost-benefit analysis of interventions to reduce the incidence of stunting in Malawi
5. Cost-benefit analysis of stimulating farmer uptake of irrigation in Malawi
6. Cost-benefit analysis of providing HIV prevention and treatment services to female sex workers in Malawi



PUBLICATIONS

Reports:

1. Analysis of regional stakeholders on vector-borne diseases and vector control in Africa for the programme for increasing the impact of vector control (PIIVeC) - Technical Report
2. The costs and benefits of commodity exchange (COMEX) reform in Malawi – Technical Report
3. Cost-benefit analysis of expanding HIV prevention and treatment services to female sex workers in Malawi - technical report
4. Cost-benefit analysis of improving neonatal and maternal health outcomes in Malawi - Technical Report
5. Cost-benefit analysis of increasing contraceptive use through post-partum counseling and free, improved access to contraception in Malawi - Technical Report
6. Cost-benefit analysis of interventions to reduce the prevalence of stunting in Malawi - Technical Report
7. Cost-benefit analysis of interventions to encourage agricultural exports in Malawi – Technical Reports
8. Cost-benefit analysis of stimulating farmer uptake of irrigation in Malawi – Technical Report
9. Annual Report 2020



Professor Nyovani Madise appointed on the Special Civil Service Comprehensive Review Taskforce by Vice President of Malawi

By Tamandani Msyamboza

AFIDEP's Director of Development Policy and Head of Malawi office, Professor Nyovani Madise has been appointed by the Vice President of the Republic of Malawi Rt. Hon. Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima to be part of a 14-member task force to comprehensively review the three Government systems Allowances, Procurement and Employment Contracts. The special task force was formed following the directive by His Excellency Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi.

The task force will be chaired by the Vice President who is also the Minister responsible for Economic Planning and Development and Public Sector Reforms. The task force will be supported by a team of technocrats within the civil service from the Office of the President and the Cabinet, Public Sector Reforms Department, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance. All recommendations generated by the task force will be submitted to His Excellency the President.

Professor Nyovani Madise, a woman of many firsts, makes history again. She will join force with other appointed leaders and experts, six women and seven men, who will carry out their duties over a period of 90 days in restructuring the civil service.



Photo: AFIDEP

Prior to this appointment in Malawi by the Vice President, Professor Nyovani Madise was appointed by the UN Secretary General as one of 15 eminent global scientists to draft the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR).

The AFIDEP family is proud to work with a trailblazer and an inspiring woman who is at the forefront of championing change at a national and global level. Her work on scientific advisory committees as well as advising many governments in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Europe through evidence use is transforming lives.

AFIDEP is a pan-African research and policy institute established to institutionalise a culture of consistent use of evidence and provides evidence and technical assistance to African governments to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Malawi Office:

Petroda Glasshouse, Area 14 – Plot Number 14/191,
P.o. Box 31024, Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Phone: +265 995 495 143
Email: info@afidep.org

Kenya Office:

6th Floor (Block A), Westcom Point Building,
Mahiga Mairu Avenue, Off Waiyaki Way, Westlands
P.o. Box 14688-00800, Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: +254 20 203 9510 | +254 716 002 059