

Why population matters in development

AFIDEP's Vision for Africa in our "Strategy 2024"

Africa's demographic transition, AFIDEP's education imperative

ICPD25: Accelerating the promise



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AFIDEP joins African policymakers at regional forum to inform national actions and commitments ahead of the Nairobi Summit on ICPD 25

EVANS CHUMO

Members of Parliament (MPs) who serve on parliamentary committees of health from 22 countries across Africa, and other stakeholders in family planning, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) on the continent convened in Munyonyo, Uganda between 30-31 October 2019 for the 11th Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health (NEAPACOH) meeting.

The theme for this year's forum, "Building the capacity of African policymakers for enhanced implementation of ICPD Programme of Action and improved reproductive health outcomes: Challenges and Opportunities," was timely. From 12-14 November 2019, the Governments of Kenya and Denmark, and UNFPA will co-convene the ICPD25¹ Summit to mobilise political will and financial commitments urgently needed to accelerate and fully implement the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action.

AFIDEP was represented at this year's meeting by Dr. Rose Oronje, Director of Public Policy & Communications, and Dr. Bernard Onyango, Senior Knowledge Translation Scientist. On the first day of the meeting, Dr. Oronje gave a presentation on the nexus between teen pregnancies and Africa's development, noting that ending teen pregnancies would simultaneously lower Africa's rates of maternal death and disability from complications during pregnancy and childbirth, reduce unsafe

abortions; lower dropout of girls from school, and increase their contribution to sustainable development efforts.

She decried the high prevalence of teen pregnancies in many African countries, with Niger and Nigeria registering among countries with the highest rates of teenagers who have begun childbearing at 40.4 and 31.5 percent respectively. Data from the World Health Organisation shows that one out of seven maternal deaths globally occurs in Nigeria, the second-highest number of maternal deaths outside of India. She further highlighted the negative influence of the contentions around teen sexuality due to long-held beliefs and values, and ineffective interventions being implemented despite the availability of evidence on what works and what does not, in curbing teenage pregnancies.

Dr. Oronje challenged MPs present to contribute to ending the rising teen pregnancy problem, by among other actions, advocating for the understanding and support for teen sexuality programmes, including comprehensive sexuality education in schools and supporting laws, policies and programmes that enable more girls to stay in school. The 2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey reported that girls with secondary and higher education are three times less likely to have begun childbearing compared to girls without education.

Dr. Bernard Onyango spoke at an afternoon session on the first day at the NEAPACOH meeting, where he gave a presentation titled:

Harnessing the AU's Demographic Dividend agenda for accelerated implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) and achieving the SDGs at country level – Issues for policy prioritisation and agenda-setting. He highlighted the specific actions that African countries can prioritise in striving to meet the national, regional and global commitments of the ICPD Programme of Action. He urged the MPs present, to among other efforts, legislate where necessary, and to use existing laws and policies in fulfilling the promises of the ICPD PoA; build coalitions; and advocate for a data revolution for evidence-informed decision-making.

On their part, some of the participants cast doubts on the ability of African countries to actually harness the demographic dividend. In particular, they expressed concern that African countries have made many commitments to advance population and development but failed to implement them and therefore the forthcoming ICPD25 commitments could end up the same way. Tackling gaps in governance was identified as a major pathway to the objective of harnessing the demographic dividend.

Held annually, the NEAPACOH meeting is convened by the Partners in Population and Development – Africa Regional Office (PPD-ARO) in partnership with various stakeholders including AFIDEP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

National Symposium on Population and Development: Malawi makes her Commitments to "Accelerate the Promise"

LIBBY DUCKETT AND VICTORY KAMTHUNZI

The Government of Malawi rose to the global challenge and submitted a series of ambitious targets ahead of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Nairobi in November 2019. AFIDEP facilitated a successful National Symposium on Population and Development on 30th October 2019 in Lilongwe, Malawi, to highlight areas of interest in discussing the content for the Malawi National Commitments.

Prof. Nyovani Madise, AFIDEP Director of Research and Development Policy and Head of the Malawi office, presented on the 'Status of ICPD Programme of Action in Malawi' where she noted that though the country had done well in the adoption of contraceptive use, there is still room for improvement. According to the Malawi DHS (demographic and health survey) 2015/2016, 58% of Malawian women were using modern methods of contraception in 2016 up from 7% in 1992, whereas only 32% of unmarried adolescents aged 15-19 years were using modern methods of contraception in 2016 up from 17% in 2000.

In recommending areas where stakeholders need to intensify efforts to 'accelerate Malawi's promise', she cited improved maternal health, reduction in child marriages, reduction in early childbearing and quality education as vital elements. "Primary education is not enough for meaningful empowerment of girls and women," she said.

As AFIDEP we synthesised the evidence available on Malawian population dynamics and brought to the forefront the areas that were behind, the "unfinished agenda". AFIDEP's influence is apparent in many key Commitments, specifically in these four commitments:

- Reduce Maternal Mortality by 75% (from 439 to 110).
- Provide 12 years of free education to every child, necessitating a rise in rates of secondary school enrolment to 100% from the current level of 18%.
- Eliminate marriage under age 18.
- Provide youth-friendly SRH services and reduce the unmet contraceptive need for unmarried young people to below 11% (from 52%)

The event was attended by government, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other development partners and stakeholders.

The overall Malawi National commitments:

- Malawi commits to continue to lower the maternal mortality ratio to 110 per 100,000 live births by 2030.
- Malawi commits to include 30% representation of youth in decision making bodies.
- Malawi commits to providing 12 years of free quality education for every child.
- Malawi will end child marriage by 2030.
- Malawi commits to ensuring all humanitarian responses incorporate sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Malawi commits to ensure 100% of the service points delivering sexual and reproductive health and rights services are youth friendly.
- Malawi commits to full digitalization of population data collection systems by 2030.
- Malawi commits to reduce unmet need for all women to below 11% by 2030

¹ICPD25: 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, where 179 governments adopted a landmark Programme of Action which set out to empower and invest in women and girls and affirmed the principle of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. This outlook shifted the emphasis of population policies away from slowing population growth to improving the lives of individuals, particularly women. From 12-14 November, the governments of Kenya and Denmark and the UNFPA co-convened the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, a high-level conference to mobilise the political will and financial commitments from governments that adopted the landmark Programme of Action.

ICPD25 discussion on data availability and use for sub-national level development



AFIDEP's Senior Knowledge Translation Scientist, Dr. Bernard Onyango (center) at the ICPD25 Nairobi Summit



From the right: AFIDEP's Executive Director, Dr. Eliya Zulu with Inkosi (Chief) Theresa Kachindamoto - known for her action in dissolving child marriages in Malawi and advocating for education for both girls and boys; and the Director of the Malawi National Planning Commission (NPC), Thomas Munthali at the ICPD25 Nairobi Summit

One of the things that the first International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 envisaged was that countries would put in place structures and mechanisms to enable data on population inform policies and programmes at the sub-national level. Further, the need to have development data at the local level has been amplified by the sustainable development goals as an important means through which resource allocation can be directed to reduce inequalities within countries.

However, there are challenges and obstacles to countries realising this action and much of it has to do with unavailability of data at the sub-national level and inability to conduct small area estimations using available population data at the national level.

To take stock of efforts by countries to have and use sub-national data, the ICPD25 Nairobi Summit had a dedicated session on the use of data for development planning at the sub-national levels.

Dr. Bernard Onyango, Senior Knowledge Translation Scientist at AFIDEP moderated this session that had the following panelists: Mr. Saitoti Torome, Permanent Secretary, State Department of National Treasury and Planning in Kenya; Mr. Charles Banda, Director, Department of Population Development in the Ministry of National Development Planning in Zambia; and Professor Alfred Agwanda, Associate Professor at the Population Studies and Research Institute at the University of Nairobi, Kenya.

Mr. Saitoti Torome said that among key challenges is that it is difficult to get some datasets at the lowest levels, compounded by the fact that data is periodical and expensive to collect. He

however noted that in addition to the national census conducted every ten years, there are other complimentary data collection surveys such as the comprehensive household budget surveys that help to determine poverty levels. These surveys have helped to inform development of an equalisation fund that is given to marginalised regions to implement specific projects to do with health, water provision, and other areas that the communities identify as areas of need.

Mr. Torome pointed out that since Kenya embarked on a devolved system of governance in 2010, effort has been made to align the data collected with the 47 counties and their development plan. "We used to have statistical abstracts at the national level but now these are also available at the county level and are important in helping the private sector make investment decisions," he said.

Dr. Agwanda said one approach to addressing the lack of data at the lowest administrative levels was to institute administrative data such as the health surveys at the sub-national level. And even more important to determine data that is already available and have at hand data scientists who can analyse it to "show interactions between people and the government." Having data systems and the capacity to analyse and interpret is the only way to move away from "opinion-based policy making and move towards evidence-based policy making," he said. As part of skills building, he emphasised the need for citizens to be empowered to know, access and use data. "We cannot keep data as a secret. It is owned by the citizens. The first fundamental principle is to provide them with access," he said. He further underscored the need to use data to anticipate the future and take necessary steps to mitigate challenges rather than waiting to react to the problems when they happen.

Mr. Charles Banda presented a case study of Zambia, where they conducted a sub-national analysis using a multi-dimensional approach with three indicators: Standard of living, Education and Health. This multi-dimensional poverty index was one way they overcame the challenge of data sources limitation as it offers multiple variables. The analysis has helped determine which counties are most deprived, which ones are most affected by issues to do with child marriage, school dropouts, low employment rates, among others. "The analysis gives a clear picture of counties most affected and informs where interventions are needed to reduce inequalities," said Mr. Banda.

Central to the discussions that ensued was the importance of internal funding for data collection exercises. This funding needs to be generated between the government, the private sector and other stakeholders. It was noted that the private sector are important players as they need the data to determine their markets. Linked to this is the capacity for countries to harness technology to collect, analyse and make data easily accessible within a short period of time.

An important recommendation was that in addition to deciding resource allocation based on population size and needs at the local levels, there was need to go further and determine level of need based on age structure and sex. Different ages and sexes have different needs. "The needs of an 18-year-old are not the same as those of a 3-year-old." It was noted that even though the formulas do not consider structure, Kenya is probably among the first country in the region to include intersex as a type of gender during the 2019 national population census. It however remains to be seen how the data collected will inform interventions for this particular group.

AFIDEP's Dr. Bernard Onyango, Senior Knowledge Translation Scientist at ICPD25 moderating a session on the use of data for development planning at sub-national levels



Why population matters for development: The 8th African Population Conference

About 1000 participants who attended the 8th African Population Conference organised by the Union for African Population Studies under the auspices of the Government of Uganda in Entebbe, Uganda on November 18-22 2019 adopted the “Entebbe Declaration” that called on African governments to mainstream population issues in their policies and development plans.

In reading the declaration, Prof. Nyovani Madise, AFIDEP Director of Research and Development Policy and Head of the Malawi office, who chaired the conference scientific committee and is the new Vice President of the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS), noted that “African governments’ commitment to the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Agenda 2030 constitutes a right step towards realising development, but commitment alone will not be enough if concrete steps are not taken to work towards the attainment of these goals.”

According to the conference statement, the continent’s high population growth is at 2.5 percent per annum, and is projected to reach 2.5 billion (about 26% of the world’s total population) in 2050. With the majority of the current population lacking access to basic services, it could get worse, not to mention the strain on the environment and natural resources if sustainable interventions are not made to address the situation.

Although trends have improved over the years, the number of children and mothers that continue to die from infant and maternal preventable and treatable causes is still a source of concern. For instance, “In 2018, 1 in 13 children in sub-Saharan Africa died before their fifth birthday– this is 15 times higher than the risk a child faces in Europe, where just 1 in 196 children aged less than 5 die,” says the World Health Organisation.

Africa cannot make big leaps in development if these and other prevailing population challenges are not addressed.

The Entebbe declaration called on governments to ensure population issues were incorporated in long-term and medium-term plans, strengthen data collection institutions and processes such as the census and other administrative surveys, and invest in research for use as evidence in informing development priorities.

There is also a huge opportunity for governments to harness the potential of Africa’s youthful population for a demographic dividend by making the right investments in “quality education, employable skill and sustainable livelihoods through entrepreneurial and job creations.”

Cognizant of the need for a multi-stakeholder approach, the call to action was extended to other players. The civil society organisations, the media and the private sector were urged to



AFIDEP’s Executive Director, Dr. Eliya Zulu (far left) and Director, Public Policy & Communications, Dr. Rose Oronje (3rd from the left) on a panel at the 8th African Population Conference (APC).

“to play their roles in Africa’s development, in programming, financing, as well as holding governments to account.” The researchers challenged themselves to pursue innovative and excellent research, mentor early career researchers and play an active role in having the evidence they produce inform government policy and planning.

The theme of the 8th African Population Conference (APC) was Harnessing Africa’s Population Dynamics for Sustainable Development: 25 Years after Cairo and Beyond. The conference happened a week after the 25th International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) where world leaders took stock of progress governments have



AFIDEP’s Research and Policy Associate, Claire Jensen facilitating a workshop on evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) at the 8th African Population Conference (APC).

made since the first ICPD held in Cairo, Egypt in 1994. ICPD25 was a good precursor and provided momentum for deliberations at the 8th APC.

In addition to being part of the conference scientific committee, AFIDEP facilitated and or actively participated in 17 sessions at the conference.

The APC is held every four years and is convened by UAPS, a body whose membership is comprised of demographers and other researchers working on population issues in Africa.



AFIDEP’s Director of Development Policy & Head of Malawi office, Prof. Madise (far left) stands before conference delegates as the newly elected Vice President of the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS) at the 8th African Population Conference (APC).



VICTORY KAMTHUNZI

Antimicrobial Resistance: A GLOBAL, ONE HEALTH CONCERN

In June 2016, the United Nations General Assembly convened a high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) where Dr. Margaret Chan, the then-director general of the World Health Organisation (WHO) paralleled AMR to a slow-motion tsunami.

What is AMR?

According to the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) factsheet on AMR:

“When the medicines known as antibiotics no longer kill the microbes they have been developed to cure, this is known as antimicrobial resistance or AMR. AMR is a threat today, and has the potential to become the biggest threat to human health in the next 50 years, with fewer and fewer effective antibiotics available to treat infections.”

The threat of AMR is well documented and recognised by experts across the board. In spite of this, not much is understood on how it occurs; how microbes evolve to develop resistance; how human use of antibiotics and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices contribute to AMR transmission; how AMR affects the cost of healthcare; and how AMR policy is developed and implemented. At the centre of the spread of the AMR-bacteria is the relationship between humans, animals and the environment.

AMR in low- and middle-income countries

A 2018 WHO report on surveillance of antibiotic consumption suggests that low- and middle-income countries are inordinately more likely to be severely affected due to overstretched health systems and poor access to alternative antibiotic regimes. Consequently, AMR has a negative impact on human health, food security and national economy. As such, urgent action is required across multiple sectors.

In an interview Dr. Joseph Nkhoma, Malawi Veterinary Association chairperson at the Department of Livestock and Animal Health in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development said:

“We see a lot of antibiotics being used in poultry farming in the country (Malawi) and poultry is a very important source of protein and livelihood for people. So we are seeing a lot of diseases that are coming in and we are failing to control them because of antibiotic resistance. We are also seeing a lot of resistance building up in dairy and other animals and that is threatening food security. Of importance is the fact that when we pump these antibiotics in animals and we contaminate them, they end up in the food chain. One thing we need to remember is that an antibiotic that is used in animals, is basically the same as one used in people. So resistance in animals means resistance in people. Underuse and abuse in animals leads to resistance in people as well and so this is raising a lot of concern.”

As AMR-bacteria can spread across humans, animals and the environment, increased discourse, collaboration and innovation between stakeholders such as government, industry (e.g. agriculture and animal health), civil society organisations and researchers remains the most feasible method to address the AMR issue.

A One Health Approach

In 2018, AFIDEP became a part of the Drivers of Resistance in Uganda and Malawi (DRUM) consortium, a project that brings together a group of researchers seeking to understand more about the spread of AMR between humans, animals, and the wider environment in rural and urban parts of Malawi and Uganda.

The project is using the One Health approach to develop agent-based models that will enable the prediction of how transmission pathways can be interrupted to design interventions to reduce AMR spread.

The WHO describes One Health as “an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes.”

AMR is a global threat and a One Health issue. The ‘One Health’ approach means that we better understand the linkages between human behaviour, environmental degradation and antibacterial usage in animals which leads to transmission of AMR. This collaborative effort is critical to stopping drug-resistance and preserving the future of antibiotics.



Antibiotic Awareness Week 2019: A press briefing and education event at the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) to bolster media knowledge and reporting on antibiotic resistance.



Antibiotic Awareness Week 2019: The ‘Big Walk’ through Lilongwe City, Malawi to commemorate AMR Week. The aim of the Walk was to bring awareness to the general public on the dangers of the misuse and overuse of antibiotics.

18 to 24 November 2019 was World Health Organisation (WHO)’s Antibiotic Awareness Week and Malawi’s Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP), a DRUM consortium partner, together with key stakeholders, including AFIDEP, held varying events in Lilongwe, Malawi in a bid to increase awareness of antibiotic resistance.

ANN WAITHAKA

Nurturing a culture of evidence-based reporting in the media: AFIDEP partners with the Media Council of Kenya

The media plays an invaluable role in promoting good governance and driving development in Africa. By covering stories, events and investigating issues that directly or indirectly affect the everyday lives of ordinary people, the media creates public awareness, influences behaviour, shapes public policy and opinion, and acts as a watchdog. AFIDEP appreciates the media's contribution towards development efforts in Africa by creating healthy debates on various development issues of concern, and are keen to have such content and discussions informed by credible evidence.

AFIDEP collaborated with the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), during the Annual Media Summit, a signature event of the MCK, in collaboration with various partners.

Taking place between 7-9 August 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, the Media Summit brought together journalists, diplomats, governance experts, and academicians to discuss and share experiences under the theme: 'Media, accountability and good governance'. The 8th edition of the Annual Media Summit kicked off with a one-day pre-media training for selected journalists from across the country, and culminated into the Annual Journalism Excellence Awards (AJEA) Gala Dinner, which recognised and awarded journalistic excellence.

Supporting evidence-based reporting on Kenya's 2019 Census

AFIDEP's Dr. Rose Oronje and Dr Bernard Onyango facilitated training sessions during the pre-summit training, which focused on giving support and ideas to journalists on reporting on

the August 2019 Census in Kenya. Highlighting the key areas journalists can focus on during the national census exercise; Dr. Onyango spoke to the need for journalists to report on the census beyond the count. He urged journalists to refrain from focusing on the political angle of the numbers and rather draw the public to the importance of the census and how it will contribute to the country's development.

The national population census is a necessary development tool because it provides a basis for adequate policy and programmatic planning. In-depth information will be

generated from the census, which may reveal aspects such as population structure, fertility trends, education attainment, employment rate, housing conditions, and migration trends, among others. This information will help to inform public policy amendments as well as make projections for future development needs.

Notably, the 2019 census is the first census to be carried out under Kenya's 2010 Constitution and its devolved system of government. County governments are set to benefit from the data collected, which can be used, for instance, to inform the county integrated development plans.



Dr. Bernard Onyango facilitating a session during the journalist pre-summit training, his session particularly focused on giving support and ideas to journalists on reporting on the August Census in Kenya.



Why use evidence in journalistic reporting?

In her presentation, Dr. Oronje said, "We [AFIDEP] appreciate the way the media is currently using data in their stories. The stories have been transformed by use of data and research." She urged journalists to take advantage of academic research as sources in their reporting, drawing attention to how research findings can create powerful news stories relevant to their audiences.

The use of evidence as a basis for journalistic reporting not only enhances the accuracy and objectivity of a news story, but it also helps journalists to address issues in a more informed and impactful way. Dr. Oronje noted that increased use of research and data would further strengthen the media's role in development.

When it comes to reporting on science and

research, serious concerns have been voiced regarding the current practices and capacities of journalists. Journalists often have difficulties reporting on science and research due to the technicality of content while researchers do not trust journalists to report accurately. Yet, the media is a strategic conduit that can link the public, researchers and policymakers. Researchers can use the media to advance their findings to the top of the policymakers' agendas and on the other hand, the media can engage the public in awareness, policy development and implementation.

Engaging and working with the media, is one of the many actions that AFIDEP has taken to enhance understanding of science and research by the public, policymakers and the media itself. We endeavour to inculcate a culture of evidence-based reporting in addition to improving the way journalists write and present

their information.

Evidence-based journalism calls for journalists to collect, assess and combine adequate and credible information on a given issue, ensuring that their sources are reliable and that the information is factual. It also extends to journalists being objective in their reporting as well as incorporating 'the so what question' which interrogates the impact or lack-of, of a news story.

As AFIDEP continues to work with journalists in Kenya and across Africa, we envision a media fraternity that can demonstrate value, is responsive, transparent, more accountable, and engages better with the society they serve, with the overall goal of improving lives.

Improving governance in Africa: It's the media's role to oversight Parliament



“In its own right, the media is the public’s watchdog, providing information to the public of how the government (including the Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary) are delivering their duties to the public and expending public resources.”

Many experts agree that poor governance remains a major issue undermining development efforts in sub-Saharan Africa. In any country, parliament is a central institution for enabling good governance given its functions of oversight over the Executive, budget appropriation and tracking, law-making, and representation. To play these functions effectively, parliament needs other actors, key among them is the media.

In its own right, the media is the public’s watchdog, providing information to the public of how the government (including the Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary) are delivering their duties to the public and expending public resources. Parliament needs the media to inform the public on how it is conducting its functions. It also needs the media to facilitate public participation in parliament’s functions.

AFIDEP is supporting the Parliament of Malawi to address the issues that undermine its performance. This work is funded by Norway’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Malawi.

As part of this work, we are working with parliament and media in Malawi to improve the quality of media coverage of parliamentary affairs. Specifically, this work is focused on improving the relations between parliament and the media to enable sustained exchange and sharing of information, and to develop the capacity of parliamentary reporters to ensure an improved understanding of Parliament, its language, procedures and traditions, and its central role in tackling poverty by enabling good governance.

Parliamentary journalists eager to develop an in-depth knowledge of parliament and its work

We have been interacting with 25 journalists from different media houses in Malawi who cover parliament through capacity development workshops since March 2019. The initial workshop focused on building journalists’ knowledge in the language of parliament, the Standing Orders that guide parliament procedures, the bill processing stages, and the central role of parliament in enabling democratic governance.

While generally, the journalists had an average understanding of parliament and its procedures and traditions, many have found the sessions deeply enriching their understanding of parliament. “The discussions on the Standing Orders from the first workshop made me decide to read the Standing Orders in order to have a deeper understanding. And this is helping me do better stories now. For instance, I just did a story on the nomination of the leader of opposition in the new parliament, and I was able to do this story and provide context because of my improved understanding of the Standing Orders,” said Mr. John-Paul Kayuni, one of the journalists participating in these

workshops.

The focus on enhancing understanding of the central role of parliament in a country’s development efforts and improving governance has been critical to ensuring that journalists provide context to the stories they write on parliament. In sharing her experiences covering the Kenyan parliament at one of the workshops, Ms Roselyne Obala said: “you cannot give context to what you do not understand.” It’s therefore critical that parliamentary reporters develop an in-depth knowledge of parliament, and the Constitution and laws, if they are to improve the quality of coverage.

Mr. Trust Ofesi, one of the Malawi journalists, said that “before these training sessions, I have been covering parliament activities like events, without linking them to the role of parliament. But with the understanding that I now have on the role of parliament in good governance, I am now starting to ensure that I link my stories on parliament to development issues.”

Another journalist, Ms. Brenda Twea, said “I’ve done a story that questioned MPs’ focus on giving handouts to constituents and buying coffins for funerals in their constituencies, which is not their role. I wrote this story because of the discussions we had in the first workshop on the roles of MPs.”

But whose role is it to ensure that journalists have the capacity they need to effectively report on parliament?

Many of the journalists get allocated to cover parliament without any prior training or knowledge on parliament. This is the case with most of the journalists we have been interacting with under this work. Both parliament and media need to invest in developing the capacity of journalists dedicated to covering parliament. Ms. Obala, the journalist from Kenya, noted that the Kenya Parliamentary Journalists’ Association has been instrumental in engaging parliament strategically to support capacity development for journalists on parliamentary affairs, but also in raising funds from development partners to train journalists who report on parliament.

Media and parliament need a platform for enabling sustained engagement and improved relations

Some of the challenges that hinder journalists from providing quality coverage of parliamentary issues are weak relations with the Parliament’s leadership. For instance, the journalists we have been interacting with in Malawi have decried the fact that some committee chairs in parliament block them from attending committee meetings which should be open to the public. They also said that it’s so hard for them to get an audience with the Speaker of Parliament to discuss these challenges.

While the journalists and Malawi Parliament’s Public Relations office have created a Press Gallery Committee to provide a platform for



journalists to engage Parliament's leadership, this committee has been relatively inactive and therefore not playing this role. Partly is because most committee members are no longer actively covering parliament.

The Kenyan journalist noted that faced these similar challenges several years ago, and the decision to form the Kenya Parliamentary Journalists Association was made to address this challenge. The association has a Constitution and is formally registered, and it has the Speaker of parliament as its patron. The association facilitates quarterly meetings between journalists who cover parliament and the leadership of parliament to, among others, discuss and resolve challenges.

Form these conversations, Malawi journalists have committed to reviving and strengthening the Press Gallery Committee so that it can provide the platform for sustained engagement with parliament's leadership.

A media centre was also noted as critical, but currently missing in the Malawi parliament. A media centre would provide a working space in Parliament for journalists, making it easy for them to prepare and file stories from Parliament. This is an area where the parliament of Malawi would benefit from support from development partners focused on improving governance in the country.

Media owes it to the public, which elects parliamentarians, to oversight parliament

While parliament has an oversight role over the Executive and the Judiciary, there is no institution charged with overseeing parliament. As the public's watchdog, the media, therefore, have a role to oversight parliament. To play this role, journalists must not only have a deep understanding of parliamentary affairs but also be critical and analytical in the way they

cover parliament. Much of political decisions are not made in formal meetings of plenary or committees; rather these decisions are made "behind the scenes" or "under the table". As such, journalists need to develop and nurture sources of information among politicians and parliamentary staff to understand the decisions that committees and MPs make in parliament. These sources are invaluable in providing information on the machinations that often inform public policy decisions. Investigative journalism skills also come in handy.

Discussing this issue, journalists noted the challenges they face is nurturing information sources in parliament, and still ensuring "arms-length" relationships to maintain objective and balanced coverage. Some lamented about information sources who eventually become friends, making it hard for them to do stories that uncover wrong-doings by these sources. Others talked about sharing such stories with other journalists or media houses to cover such stories in efforts not to affect the information sources. Others argued that the best way is to be clear to the information sources that the role of media is to inform the public, and not to keep secrets of political leaders.

Another challenge that undermines media's role in overseeing parliament is the fact that media owners are often political leaders or business men/women with close relations with political leaders. Journalists noted many instances where stories are not published because of the interests of the media owners. Also, the reliance of media on advertisements from government often results in some media stories being "killed" in efforts to sustain income coming from government advertisements.

One of the 25 journalists from different media houses in Malawi who cover parliament discusses some of the issues and challenges journalists face in nurturing information sources in parliament during a capacity development workshop

SEPSIS IS A POLICY ISSUE: RESHAPING STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SEPSIS IN AFRICA

Sepsis is the second biggest cause of death in the world and the leading cause of preventable death. Globally, there are an estimated 30 million cases of sepsis each year, with over 7 million ending in death. Of these deaths, at least 2 million are estimated to occur in Africa. Despite being a major killer, sepsis remains largely unknown by the general public and health care workers, and is under-prioritised by policy-makers. Experts in Africa identify three inter-related problems in confronting sepsis on the continent.

Defining Sepsis

First is the need for a standardised definition for sepsis. There are many different definitions of sepsis, even among doctors and experts, and this makes it difficult for most people to fully understand and engage in sepsis-related issues. Consequently, there is limited to no population awareness of it. Even amongst medical practitioners, there is only a presumptive diagnosis of sepsis and no point-of-care tests. As a result, practitioners put less emphasis on sepsis and instead look at other diseases associated with it. Subsequently leading to the second issue of lack of data availability due to the syndromic (and not objective) diagnosis of sepsis.

Funding for Sepsis

This is compounded by the fact that there is no public budget or private funding for sepsis research in Africa, so it is generally not prioritised. This vicious circle is completed by there being no resources for sepsis-related training or treatment.

Public Awareness

The third problem that exists in tackling sepsis is the lack of population awareness. The mere fact that no word exists for sepsis in vernacular

languages presents a challenge in spreading awareness. Consequently, there is absence of discussion in communities about sepsis, which would aid in both bringing cognizance to the issue at community level and also in creating dialogue nationally that could potentially build sufficient traction for government intervention. There appears to be a lack of urgency from the medical profession in addressing sepsis at a policy level, with the general attitude being that sepsis is "small fish" secondary to "real" underlying problems associated with sepsis, such as malaria, TB or HIV.

Knowledge Brokering

Based on this, researchers have embarked on the policy-influencing objective of generating more knowledge to recognise sepsis as a priority disease and put it on the agenda. Specifically, they are converging the problem with policy and politics by engaging with eight stakeholder groups, namely: Civil Society Organisations, Ministry of Health, Central Hospitals, Media, International funders, Research and training institutions, Research ethics committees, and Regulatory bodies.

These stakeholders are being engaged in four low-cost knowledge brokering approaches:

1. Informing and translating: This policy learning process targets civil society, media, international funders, MoH, training institutions and regulatory bodies. Various evidence products developed through sepsis research are being disseminated to these stakeholders. For example, the sepsis fact sheet is being disseminated in appropriate re-formats to civil society and media, whereas the sepsis policy brief are being disseminated to MoH and international funders, and curriculum change recommendations to medical teachers and regulatory bodies.

2. Linking: This coalition building process involves linking sepsis experts to target individuals at MoH, civil society organisations, central hospitals, media, international funders, training institutions, Institutional Review Board's (IRB) and regulatory bodies. These sepsis researchers are presenting their findings to these stakeholders through online sepsis discussion groups and meetings. These presentations are in the form of blogs, newspaper articles, webinars, audio-visual media and interviews.

3. Matchmaking: This attention-focusing process is bringing together MOH, ethics committees, international funders, media health workers and researchers. MOH and health workers are communicating to international funders and media on the knowledge gaps to accurately diagnose and report sepsis. These international funders speak to researchers and ethics committees on the gaps in sepsis evidence, and the need to audit patient records to generate the knowledge and evidence on sepsis needed by the health workers and MOH.

4. Capacity strengthening: This activity will train MoH staff on evidence informed decision making (EIDM). A curriculum developed by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and their partners will be used, and the training delivery will use sepsis as a case study.

With sepsis having human and financial costs, these approaches will bring sepsis on the policy agenda, where it needs to be. Re-shaping the perception of sepsis among key stakeholders and making it a policy issue is vital to reducing cases in Africa, and the world at large.

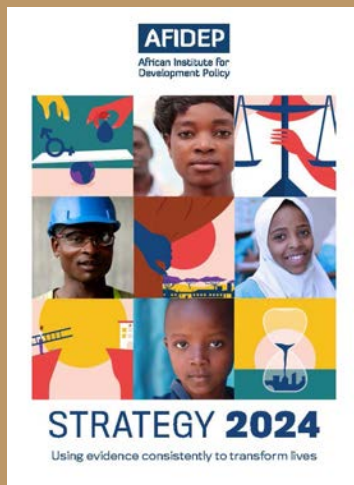
Nyovani Madise Interview: AFIDEP's Vision for Africa in our 'Strategy 2024'



NYOVANI MADISE, PH.D

Director of Development Policy & Head of Malawi office of the African Institute for Development Policy

Her work focuses on global health issues particularly untangling the influence of social and economic factors on health in low-income countries.



STRATEGY 2024

AFIDEP strategic plan 2020 - 2024

Strategy

2024

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

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

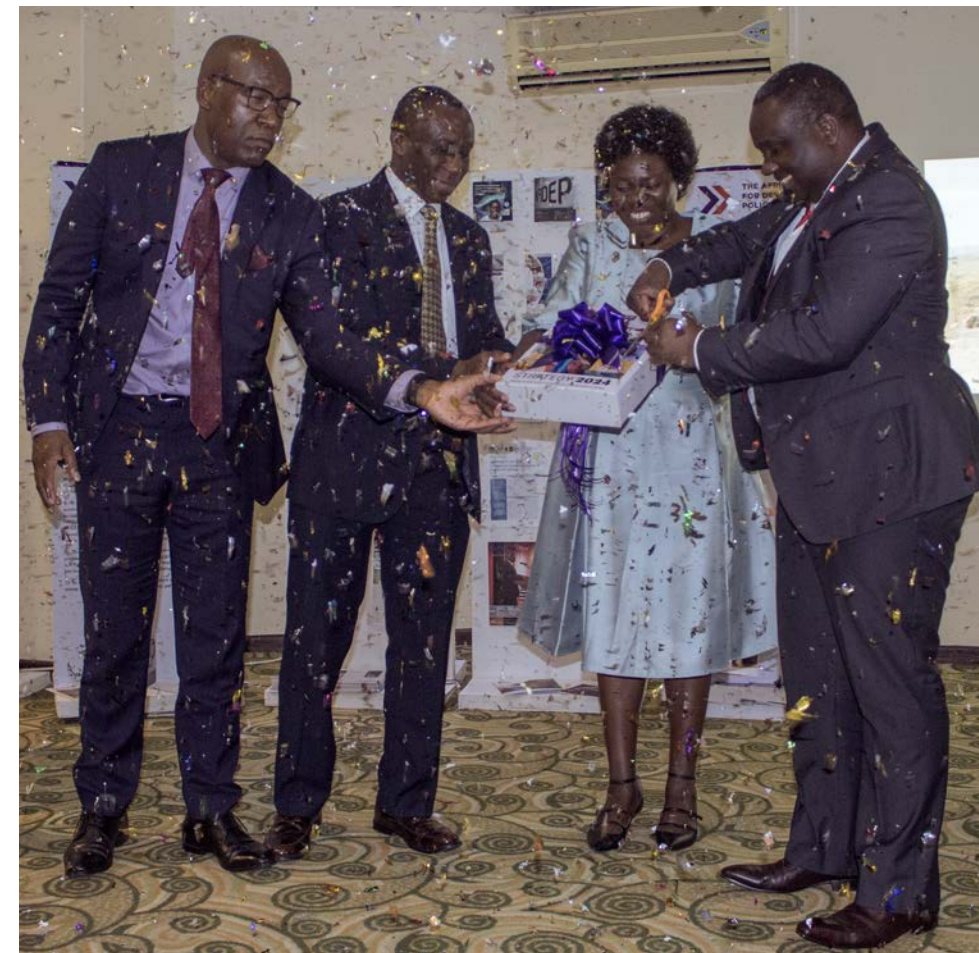
What is the overall aim of Strategy 2024?

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

There are 17 SDGs. Do you intend to address all of them or you have specific focus areas?

Through our analysis of the progress that Africa has made on the SDGs, we have identified the following as our five priority areas under

AFIDEP's 'Strategy 2024' was launched in Malawi on 06 December 2019. The First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Malawi, Hon. Madalitso Kazombo (right) launched the strategy. AFIDEP Executive Director, Dr. Eliya Zulu (left), AFIDEP Board Chair, Prof. Francis Dodoo (second left) and AFIDEP Director of Development Policy and Head of Malawi office, Prof. Nyovani Madise (second right) participated in the launch. The event was graced by the AFIDEP Board of Directors, staff, policymakers, and development partners.



Strategy 2024, where we feel Africa has made least progress and needs to change gears to accelerate progress:

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

We want gender to feature in all of the work that we do, so it will be a cross-cutting theme across all of our programmes. What this means is that we will place greater emphasis on understanding how to accelerate gender equality, how to address barriers for female participation in all spheres of life, and how to improve health and economic outcomes for girls, boys, men, and women.

What difference do you anticipate the new strategy will make by the end of 2024?

For us, success will be when:

1. We see Increased political commitment to achieving the SDGs and addressing development challenges in at least 10 countries that we are working in;
2. African governments allocate funding, technical and human resources to accelerate progress on the SDGs;

and

3. Evidence is used consistently in at least 10 countries when designing and implementing programmes for achieving the SDGs.
4. 5 countries that we work in move from low income status to lower-middle income, and 5 from lower-middle to upper-middle income. Most importantly, we should see poverty levels and inequalities reduce in these countries.

What was the process in developing the new strategic plan?

It was a rigorous consultative process that started in 2018 involving Staff, Board of Directors, partners, funders and other key collaborators. We conducted self and external assessments of our past performance, we looked at what is happening to the development landscape and funding availability, and set our ambitions for the direction that we want Africa to take.

We believe that our focus on institutionalising a culture of Evidence Informed Decision Making (EIDM) is timely and critical to transforming Africa's development prospects. As we approach the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs and the ten-year mark for the African Union Agenda 2063, we anticipate that there will be increased demand for evidence from policymakers and development actors, to support decision-making and performance monitoring on these roadmaps.

NEW STAFF



Berly Awuor
Administrative Assistant

Provides administrative and logistical support to AFIDEP, Nairobi office.



Hannah Mwaniki
Research Assistant

Supports AFIDEP's research and knowledge translation team on the International Multidisciplinary Programme to Address Lung Health and TB in Africa (IMPALA) project.



Lekereni Mbewe
Research and Policy Associate

Supports transformative education and skills development, gender and governance focus programmes.



Levi Kalitsilo
Research and Policy Associate

Supports knowledge translation team and develops policy engagement strategies for the health focus programmes.



Nina Umunna
Research Intern

Supports AFIDEP's research and knowledge translation team.



Ronald Manjomo
Research and Policy Associate

Supports governance and health focus programmes and also provides overall monitoring and evaluation support.

NEW PUBLICATIONS



AFIDEP Strategic Plan 2020-2024

The new road map for the institute outlines ways through which we aim to promote a shift in culture to where policy and programme actors actively seek and routinely use evidence.



AFIDEP News

AFIDEP'S newsletter published twice a year to provide our stakeholders with updates on programmes and highlight emerging policy issues.



AFIDEP Times

A special edition newspaper designed to provide high level impact focused on programme and institutional updates and highlights.



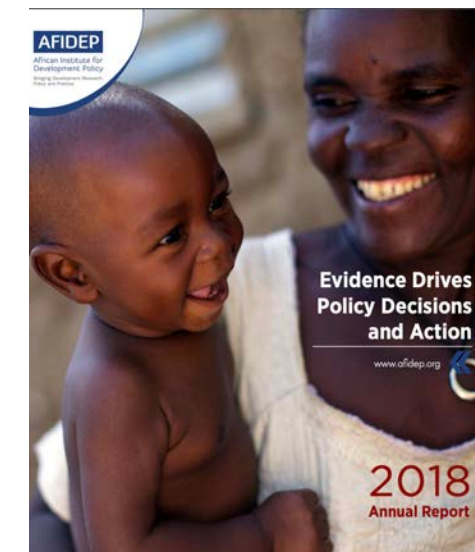
Antimicrobial resistance: A Global, One Health Concern

Drivers of resistance in Uganda and Malawi (DRUM) consortium factsheet on AMR as a One Health issue.



African Development Perspective

In this issue we refocus researchers, decision-makers, and practitioners on the role of evidence in addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Africa.



AFIDEP 2018 Annual Report

Our 2018 Annual Report shares what was phenomenal in building AFIDEP as a lead organisation in institutionalising a culture of evidence-informed policy formulation and implementation in Africa.

Journals: "Strengthening capacity to use research evidence in health sector policy-making: experience from Kenya and Malawi". Rose N. Oronje, Violet I. Murunga and Eliya M. Zulu. <https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12961-019-0511-5>

In the media: Between July-December 2019 the Institute had 67 media appearances world wide, including on the BBC, DW News, The Nation Malawi, Le Monde, World Economic Forum, The Conversation, the Daily Nation Kenya and others. See: www.afidep.org/afidep-in-the-media/



STEVE SHARRA

Africa's demographic transition, AFIDEP's education imperative

No country can meaningfully benefit from a demographic transition to lower fertility if its youth are largely uneducated, unskilled, and under-employed. Investing in these aspects will provide the necessary push to transform the continent and achieve the vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own competent citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena." That vision is at the core of the continental blueprint widely known as Agenda 2063.

A 2016 report from the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) observed that the "single biggest challenge to ownership of Africa's development agenda and management of its key development programs" was rooted in critical technical skills. The continent was facing serious shortages of critical technical skills and professionals needed to drive key initiatives. There was little evidence that governments were making critical technical skills a part of national development strategies, the ACBF report stated.

In order to overcome this challenge, the report recommended improving capacity in the continent's training institutions, and overhauling training and education systems. The report further recommended formation of consortia of top universities, research institutes and think tanks to drive the critical technical skills agenda. A demographic country case study helps put into context the education imperatives facing the continent in the drive towards Agenda 2063.

Numbers from Malawi's most recent population census, conducted in 2018, show 78 percent of the Malawian population being categorized as children and youth. Many of these youths are not in school. Four out of five young Malawians of secondary school age, 14-17, are out of school. Only 37 percent of the students who passed the 2019 primary school leaving exam were selected to various public secondary schools, leaving out 63 percent. Of the country's 3.7 million young people aged 15-24, less than 50,000 are attending tertiary education, representing about 1.4 percent.

In view of the above education context on the continent, AFIDEP's education and skills development focus area seeks to expand its work to support countries in using robust evidence for education policymaking and the design and implementation of interventions. By leveraging our expertise in capacity strengthening, evidence synthesis and translation, data and policy analysis, and scenario modelling to engage policymakers and other key stakeholders to support the alignment of global, regional and national education goals, we are also able to support the monitoring and evaluation of progress in the achievement of the SDGs Goal 4 and the African Union's Agenda 2063 continental strategy on education.

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