



## STORIES OF CHANGE: SPOTLIGHT ON KALEB MWENDWA

# FROM DISCONNECTED RESEARCH TO PRACTICE IMPACT: THE TRANSFORMATIVE TRAINING JOURNEY TO ENHANCE EQUITABLE AND EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICYMAKING

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Kaleb Mwendwa, a university lecturer and researcher, at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) has recently experienced a significant shift in his approach to integrating research into policy and practice, thanks to evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) and equity training. The turning point came with the EIDM and Equity training in April 2024 administered by the African Institute for Policy Development (AFIDEP) and Makerere University School of Women and Gender Studies, which provided Kaleb with new skills to better incorporate evidence-informed and equity in policymaking and practice.

This training addresses the inadequate capacity of researchers and decision-makers to find and use equity-centered evidence in policymaking and practice systematically. Before this training, the research findings often remained disconnected from policy and practice applications, with little influence at the institutional level, in curriculum development or departmental programs. Kaleb observes that, *“The evidence synthesis and communication for policy and practice are still very much at the individual level where it’s at the convenience of an individual to just infuse their materials into their teaching curriculum. Beyond that, there’s no, let’s say, institutional demand [for EIDM] to do that”*.

The African Research and Impact Network (ARIN) is part of the Alliance for Evidence and Equity in Policy-making in Africa (AEEPA) established by the African Institute for Policy Development (AFIDEP).

Through ARIN, Africa LEEPS has access to over 200 researchers and policymakers with national focal points in 36 African countries.

The Alliance aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- Strengthen institutional and individual EIP technical capacity at local and national levels to enhance decision-making in policy and programs with initial priority to reproductive health and clean energy
- Integrate gender equity in EIP processes at program and institutional levels with initial priority given to reproductive health and clean energy
- Nurture EIP networking and learning within countries and across the region
- Stimulate improvements in reproductive health and clean energy programmatic interventions in Kenya and Nigeria

The training focused on structured evidence collection and equity, equipping Kaleb and his team with the knowledge and translation skills to better define and communicate the problems they sought to address while proposing evidence-based solutions. By enhancing their ability to integrate and present evidence more strategically, the training empowered them not only to craft stronger project proposals but also to influence policy more effectively. This approach ensured that evidence was used to shape decision-making processes, extending beyond donor engagement to drive meaningful policy change at institutional and systemic levels. Kaleb also shared these insights with colleagues, further extending the training's impact. He conducted a session in June 2024 at his work (shortly after receiving the EIDM and Equity training), where he shared his knowledge on integrating evidence into policymaking processes with his colleagues. This session was well received and demonstrated how the training had not only changed his approach but also benefited his colleagues and the broader research community.



Looking ahead, Kaleb plans to adapt his teaching and research methods to include structured evidence synthesis and translation approaches. He envisions launching short courses at the university focused on evidence-informed decision-making for postgraduate students. 'This initiative aims to better equip students to connect their research with policy and practice, addressing a common gap where students struggle to link their findings to policy & practice' he says. Additionally, Kaleb is leading a new project called the Mathematics Instructional Practices Improvement Project, which aims to enhance mathematics education by understanding where students need support and modifying instructional practices to address learning needs. This project incorporates the principles of gender equity and inclusivity that Kaleb learned from the EIDM and Equity training. Gender considerations are integrated into every aspect of the project and ensure a balanced representation in selecting schools, teachers, and students, forming professional learning communities and school leader forums, and data collection and analysis. This project, funded by IDRC through the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge Exchange, officially started in July 2024. It further demonstrates the profound impact of the EIDM and Equity training on his approach to research, teaching, and policy influence.