


# Africa Centre for Evidence

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

Africa  
Centre for  
Evidence





"We rededicate  
ourselves to the  
enduring Pan  
African vision of  
an integrated,  
prosperous and  
peaceful Africa,  
driven by its  
own citizens and  
representing a  
dynamic force in the  
international arena."

- African Union's Agenda 2063



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## Our director's message

In these shifting sands of a changing landscape, it is essential for a research centre to constantly reflect on its performance and assess its progress.

When I engage in this process, I see a team that has been working towards the same goal of reducing poverty and inequality for many years; in some cases, for over 20 years. Since 2017, we've been working together under the banner of the Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE). I am humbled and proud of all that we have achieved under that banner.

In 2021, our focus was on emphasising the central role that decision-makers play in the evidence-use ecosystem in Africa. The ACE name has become synonymous with valuing people, producing excellent work, and innovating through whatever challenges are thrown our way.

In 2021, the world continued to operate in the new normal of the COVID-19 pandemic; ACE meanwhile continued to support its team members to help them thrive. Our collective highlights are shared in the following section, but if I had to share my personal highlight, it would be to watch the people I've worked with over many years thrive and become recognised for their inherent talents and hard work. Whether it was winning international awards, being invited to high-level international policy meetings, or successfully hosting a barrier-smashing virtual event, our team spent 2021 aching it, or as we like to say: ACEing it. And that is the highlight I'm proudest of.

After sharing the highlights from 2021, this report shifts to sharing who was part of the ACE team in 2021, before moving on to describing all our work from throughout 2021. We then capture the public profile we enjoyed in 2021, outline who funded our activities during the year, and conclude with our list of outputs.

I hope you enjoy reading about our activities from 2021 as much as I have enjoyed leading the team that delivered them. I hope you are inspired – as I am – by ACE, our work, and our dedication to reducing poverty and inequality through the use of evidence in decision-making. And may our dedication inspire you to try ACEing it in the year ahead.

**Prof Ruth Stewart**  
ACE Director





In 2021 we contributed to the use of evidence to tackle SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

# Our 2021 in review: highlights from the year

The uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic continued in 2021, as many countries undertook to rollout their national vaccination policies.

This uncertainty meant that many of the Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE) staff were still unable to come into the office and so continued working remotely for much of 2021. The achievements of ACE staff in 2021 speak to our continued collective dedication to working towards the reduction of poverty and inequality in Africa through the use of evidence in decision-making. Our highlights from 2021 include the following (in no particular order).

1

We piloted our short learning programme (SLP) from August called 'Practices of Evidence-Informed Decision-Making' with a mixture of 13 researchers, professionals/practitioners from the private and non-governmental organisations, and government department colleagues as students.

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2

ACE welcomed 121 evidence practitioners within Africa to four virtual gatherings of an Africa Evidence Network working group to progress the [manifesto on capacity development for evidence-informed decision-making in Africa](#). Since the launch of this manifesto, our team members also launched the Evidence Capacities webinar and blog series.

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3

We gained four new PhD students from across Africa in 2021, and ACE supervisors were proud to see two PhD students complete their doctoral studies and one Masters' student graduate during 2021.

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4

Closer to home, we worked to support the national Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in their public launch of their Evidence Management Guide, used to steer policy-makers through the process of drawing on evidence when making decisions. This built on the work our teams contributed to in 2020, an appendix in the National Development Plan Framework which shows how evidence synthesis can be applied as a practical tool when policy-makers take decisions informed by evidence.

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5

ACE celebrated two milestones within our team. The first: ACE director Professor Ruth Stewart was inaugurated as a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa in recognition of her immense contribution to the science of evidence-informed decision-making. Secondly, ACE research specialist Promise Nduku was co-awarded the Campbell Collaboration's [Farah Jamal Award](#) on 7 December 2021.

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6

We are proud to say that in 2021, researchers at ACE were successful in winning 11 grants with a total value of R12,7million.



7

We published a total of 30 papers in academic journals including Lancet and Nature, with additional papers currently under peer review with Nature and Science.

8

By the end of 2021, all of ACE's team members had completed a course in project management.

9

In her role as board member for the [Collaboration for Environmental Evidence](#), Professor Stewart participated in the [United Nation's Conference of the Parties 26 \(COP 26\)](#) as an observer.

10

ACE staff were involved in high-level academic and policy conferences: Mr Promise Nduku, Dr Laurenz Langer, and Professor Ruth Stewart all participated in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Evidence to Policy Summit where they engaged with fellow global evidence-to-policy experts about '[connecting insights from the evidence-support ecosystem to make progress towards WHO's Triple Billion Targets](#)' and '[institutionalizing evidence-informed decision-making for effective health policy](#)' respectively. We also produced a blog series capturing the history of ACE over the last five years.

11

We confirmed 13 new Memoranda of Understanding in 2021 (four in South Africa, six else-where in Africa, and three beyond Africa). We also participated in global evidence partnerships such as the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems ([PEERSS](#)) and the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making ([COVID-END](#)), working also to support the [Global Commission on Evidence to address Societal Challenges](#).

12

We hosted an incredible [Africa Evidence Week 2021](#) which drew over six million organic impressions on Twitter over a five-day period.

# Our work

In 2021, we had a total of 20 active projects (new and ongoing projects).

Some of these projects were funded externally and others were funded internally, and all were distributed between the four areas of ACE's work. These four areas of work and how they interact are all central to how ACE works towards achieving its mission of contributing to the reduction of poverty and inequality in Africa through the use of evidence for decisions. We refer to these four areas of work as our portfolios. Our four portfolios are: the art and science of using evidence, evidence capacities, evidence communities, and evidence synthesis. Each portfolio manages its projects distinctly with the benefit of the support, guidance and collaboration of other portfolios as and when necessary.

## THE ART AND SCIENCE OF USING EVIDENCE PORTFOLIO

The objective of art and science of using evidence portfolio is to research and review different elements of how best to support evidence-use in decision-making. These elements include the practical experiences and tacit knowledge of people from across Africa; the research evidence about what interventions work for supporting evidence-use, how, and why; and the contexts in which evidence-informed decision-making takes place. This portfolio also includes oversight of the monitoring and evaluating our own activities to ensure ACE's work is itself evidence-informed (see the section entitled 'Building ACE' for more on this system). During 2021, this portfolio undertook three funded projects. This portfolio also spearheads the writing up of ACE's work into academic articles.

### Contributing to delivery of the Africa regional scientific hub for vaccines



#### NDP CHAPTER 7: Positioning South Africa in the world

**LED BY:** Ruth Stewart,

**TEAM:** Beryl Leach & Laurenz Langer

**DATES:** October 2021 – September 2022

**FUNDED BY:** Wellcome Trust via Vaccines for Africa, University of Cape Town

ACE is partnering with the Vaccines for Africa Team at the University of Cape Town which has secured a five-year grant from the Wellcome Trust to provide a regional scientific hub for vaccines decision-making in Africa. ACE is providing a range of evidence contributions since 2021 to help set up the new hub for delivery to national immunisation technical advisory groups across the continent.



## Strengthening the Use of Evidence for Development Impact (SEDI)



### NDP CHAPTER 12: Building safer communities

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer & Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Beryl Leach, Carina van Rooyen, Hazel Zaranyika

**DATES:** April 2020 to June 2021

**FUNDED BY:** Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, administrated via Oxford Policy Management

The Strengthening the Use of Evidence for Development Impact (SEDI) is a Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office-funded programme. It works to increase the use of evidence by policy-makers in Uganda, Ghana, and Pakistan to contribute to more efficient and effective decision-making by partner governments. Part of the work that ACE undertook in 2021 in this project included conducting a rapid review, followed up with in-depth interviews about mentoring programmes in Africa to support evidence-informed decision-making. **A learning brief was designed, which explored mentoring** as a tool to enhance capacities for evidence-use in Africa by looking at the design features of mentoring interventions and the contextual facilitators and barriers for their implementation.

## History of ACE and our contribution to EIDM in South Africa and across the continent



### NDP CHAPTER 12: Building safer communities

**LED BY:** Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Aziza Modise, Natalie Tannous

**DATES:** March 2020 – December 2021

**FUNDED BY:** University of Johannesburg's University Research Council

The ACE team worked to document the history of our work to support evidence-informed decision-making in South Africa and across the continent. During 2021, we disseminated the findings of this research project as a multi-part blog series, published on the ACE website.

## EVIDENCE CAPACITIES PORTFOLIO

In 2021, there were four projects housed within ACE's evidence capacities portfolio. This is also the portfolio that manages and supports all of ACE's postgraduate supervision (see the section entitled 'Postgraduate students' for our list of students in 2021) and ACE's own internal staff professional development. The aim of the evidence capacities portfolio is to enhance the capacities of evidence ecosystems (sectoral, national, regional, and Africa-wide) to promote Africa's transformational development. The capacities for evidence production, evidence-use, and knowledge brokering are enhanced at several levels: individual, organisational, institutional, and systemic. Building capacities of individuals is mainly through training, mentorship, internships, offering accredited qualifications, and postgraduate supervision. In 2021, we focussed in particular on evidence capacities across Africa as described in more detail within our evidence communities portfolio.

## Development and piloting of our short learning programme on Practices of Evidence-Informed Decision-Making



### NDP AS A WHOLE

**LED BY:** Carina van Rooyen

**TEAM:** Metoh Azunui, Aziza Modise, Hazel Zaranyika

**DATES:** 2019 – December 2021

**FUNDED BY:** Africa Centre for Evidence

Once UJ approved our application for a short learning programme (SLP) on Practices of Evidence-Informed Decision-Making, we continued with our process to co-develop the content of the SLP with ACE staff. During the first half of the year, we held weekly online workshops for this, and then ran a pilot of our course in the second half of 2021. Thirteen participants from four African countries – from government (national and provincial), research including academia, and practitioners including consultants – completed the course at the end of November. Unique features of our SLP include that it takes a systems lens to evidence-use for decisions, and it is structured around the ACE portfolio of work. It incorporates the art and science of evidence-use, the importance of synthesised evidence, the crucial role of relationships in the evidence ecosystem, and the emphasis on enhanced evidence capacities that span individual, organisational and systems levels. The SLP takes a social learning approach – learning and making meaning together – and the course is delivered online through both synchronous and asynchronous engagements. Lastly, the course is aimed at a mixture of researchers, professionals/practitioners from the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and government department colleagues, from across sectors (including health, environment, education, housing, etc.).



#### NDP CHAPTER 10: PROMOTING HEALTH

**LED BY:** Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Andile Madonsela, Carina van Rooyen

**DATES:** October 2021 – July 2022

**FUNDED BY:** Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI)

This online self-paced course was developed – with the Centre for Evidence and Implementation – as part of the capacity support provided by the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) to grantees conducting research on the prevention of violence against women and violence against children in low- and middle-income countries. The course aims to enable and promote the uptake, use, and impact of such research. It departs from conventional research uptake courses in foregrounding the evidence ecosystem and finding your place in it.

#### Capacities support to the Gauteng Department of Agricultural and Rural Development (GDARD)



#### NDP CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

**LED BY:** Carina van Rooyen

**DATES:** January 2021 – ongoing

**FUNDED BY:** Africa Centre for Evidence

Based on a memorandum of agreement to support each institution's environmental research-related activities, the evidence capacities portfolio at ACE provided advice and support in three areas of the department's work: the hosting of the Gauteng Environmental Research Register, support in executing the annual Gauteng Environmental Research Symposium, and conducting searches for their review to develop a manual on sustainable drainage systems in Gauteng.

# EVIDENCE COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

At ACE, relationships are and have always been central to effective evidence-informed decision-making. We emphasise the centrality of relationships with an entire portfolio dedicated to nurturing the relationships within communities to grow the evidence ecosystem in Africa and South Africa. ACE also works within these communities to advocate for Africa's stature in the global evidence-informed decision-making ecosystem. In 2021, ACE contributed to nurturing two communities, each with their own projects and activities, and convened Africa Evidence Week 2021.

## Providing the secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network



### NDP CHAPTER 7: POSITIONING SOUTH AFRICA IN THE WORLD

**LED BY:** Siziwe Ngcwabe, Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Metoh Azunui, Charity Chisoro, Laurenz Langer, Precious Motha, Likhwa Ncube, Carina van Rooyen

**DATES:** Ongoing

**FUNDED BY:** William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

As the secretariat for the Africa Evidence Network (AEN), ACE fosters collaborations among those engaged in or supporting evidence-informed decision-making; increases knowledge and understanding of evidence-informed decision-making; shares capacities across the evidence-informed decision-making ecosystem; and protects the Network's own organisational excellence as a sustainable member-driven organisation. In addition to the regular advocacy activities of the Network, team members at ACE also undertook a [qualitative and quantitative study of the Network's membership](#) to understand its composition. Another major area of work undertaken by the ACE team as the secretariat to the Africa Evidence Network was to host the biennial [Africa Evidence Week 2021](#). A core area of focus for the AEN in 2021 was enhancing evidence capacities. As such, work done within this theme included developing a manifesto on capacity development in Africa, coordinating a webinar series focused on evidence capacities, laying the groundwork for the formation of a community of practice on evidence capacities, and developing a database on organisations involved in capacity development for evidence-use in Africa.

## Convening Africa Evidence Week 2021



### NDP CHAPTER 7: POSITIONING SOUTH AFRICA IN THE WORLD

**LED BY:** Siziwe Ngcwabe

**TEAM:** Charity Chisoro, Likhwa Ncube, Kekeletso Makau, Precious Motha, Natalie Tannous with over 500 global contributors

**DATES:** September 2021

**FUNDED BY:** The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Canadian International Development Research Canada (IDRC)

The Africa Evidence Network secretariat in partnership with collaborators from across the world hosted the second biennial Africa Evidence Week. The Week was designed as a virtual celebration based on the Network's social media platforms. Network members were invited to participate in this weeklong event which took place from 13-17 September 2021. The secretariat coordinated the Week by promoting the content of participating organisations on its communication platforms. The Africa Evidence Week programme included online webinars, Twitter conversations, live-streamed events, blog posts, and videos. This virtual celebration of evidence-use in Africa – especially by decision-makers – generated over six million organic impressions on Twitter in the five days that the event was live. With participation by 531 contributors across the global evidence-informed decision-making ecosystem, the Week progressed the ACE team towards achieving the Network's goals of fostering collaborations in and showcasing Africa's contribution to the global evidence ecosystem.

## South African centre of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE Joburg)



### NDP CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

**LED BY:** Carina van Rooyen, Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Laurenz Langer, Promise Nduku, Metoh Azunui, Tanya Mdlalose

**DATES:** Ongoing

**FUNDED BY:** Africa Centre for Evidence

ACE hosts the South Africa centre of the international Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE), fondly known as CEE Joburg. CEE is a community of stakeholders working towards a sustainable global environment and the conservation of biodiversity. As a team, CEE Joburg contributes to this goal by offering support to environmental scientists, managers, and practitioners who wish to undertake or use evidence synthesis products. During 2021, the activities executed as part of CEE Joburg included the completion of the South African environmental evidence map and a rapid review of the impact of COVID-19 on air pollution from the transport sector (see details of these syntheses under the evidence synthesis portfolio). We also co-produced an evidence base about the implementation of climate change mitigation in South Africa with Mapula Tshangela, ACE research associate and Director of Climate Change, Mitigation Sector Plan Implementation in the national government Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE). We hosted a panel discussion as part of the CEE webinar series on evidence co-production and use in environmental policy processes in Africa with Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga, head of the United Nations Environment Office in South Africa, as the co-chair.

## EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS PORTFOLIO

The evidence synthesis team at ACE undertakes and supports rigorous and relevant evidence syntheses that are responsive to the needs and contexts of African decision-makers. ACE's team members in the evidence synthesis portfolio also develop and refine technologies for evidence synthesis production suitable to African contexts. In 2021, the evidence synthesis team delivered eight synthesis projects.

### Coding support to global goods international development reviews



### NDP CHAPTER 5: TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer, Nkululeko Tshabalala

**TEAM:** Andile Madonsela, Shona Putuka, Promise Nduku

**DATES:** Ongoing

**FUNDED BY:** International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

This initiative is a long-standing collaboration between the ACE and 3ie synthesis teams to co-produce systematic reviews, evidence maps, and rapid responses. In 2021, our team worked on evidence syntheses including gender in fragile contexts and food security.



The art and science of using evidence—an evidence map, synthesis, and evidence-informed guidelines for supporting the use of evidence in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs)



## NDP CHAPTER 13: BUILDING A CAPABLE STATE

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer

**TEAM:** Andile Madonsela, Promise Nduku, Nkululeko Tshabalala, Shona Putuka

**DATES:** Ongoing

**FUNDED BY:** United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office via Oxford Policy Management as part of the Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL) programme

This research project worked to identify what works in supporting evidence-informed policy-making in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and to develop evidence-informed guidelines for strengthening evidence-use in LMICs.

## Green Climate Fund & International Fund for Agricultural Development



## NDP CHAPTER 5: TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer, Carina van Rooyen

**TEAM:** Promise Nduku

**DATES:** September 2021 – July 2022

**FUNDED BY:** Green Climate Fund & International Fund for Agricultural Development

The aim of the review is to examine which behavioural science interventions are effective in promoting environmental and development outcomes by individuals, households, communities and companies, and how effective efforts have been to date. This is achieved through systematically mapping and synthesis of the evidence-base on behavioural science interventions within environmental and developmental fields in LMICs.

## World Economic Forum Strategic Intelligence Platform contribution for South Africa



### NDP CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer, Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Promise Nduku, Siziwe Ngcwabe, Carina van Rooyen

**DATES:** January 2021 – ongoing

This project entailed the development of a South Africa Country Transformation Map for the World Economic Forum's Strategic Intelligence Platform. We conducted rapid evidence briefs on the 7 priority topics of the current administration.

## Participation in the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-Making (COVID-END)



### NDP CHAPTER 7: POSITIONING SOUTH AFRICA IN THE WORLD

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer, Promise Nduku, Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** ACE is working alongside over 50 partners from around the world

**DATES:** June 2020 – December 2021

**FUNDED BY:** Africa Centre for Evidence

COVID-END is a time-limited network that brings together more than 50 of the world's leading evidence-synthesis, technology-assessment, and guideline-development groups around the world. It covers the full spectrum of the pandemic response: from public-health measures and clinical management to health-system arrangements and economic and social responses. It also covers the full spectrum of contexts where the pandemic response is playing out, including low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Ruth Stewart and Laurenz Langer have each played leadership roles within this consortium by co-chairing key working groups within COVID-END.

## South African environmental evidence map



### NDP CHAPTER 5: TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer, Promise Nduku, Carina van Rooyen

**TEAM:** Contributions from across ACE staff

**DATES:** January 2019 – November 2021

**FUNDED BY:** Africa Centre for Evidence

Working together, the CEE Joburg and the ACE evidence synthesis teams developed an evidence base as the foundation for a responsive evidence synthesis service to the South African national government Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment (DFFE).

## ACE-3ie-GESI Evidence Synthesis Response



### NDP CHAPTER 13: BUILDING A CAPABLE STATE

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer

**DATES:** April 2020 – ongoing

In partnership with the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and the Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative (GESI), ACE launched an Evidence Synthesis Response to the COVID-19 crisis that focused on providing easy access to rigorous and timely syntheses to inform non-clinical COVID-19 responses in low- and middle-income countries in the short- and medium-term.

## The impact of COVID-19 on emissions from the transport sector in low- and middle-income countries: A rapid review of the evidence



### NDP CHAPTER 13: BUILDING A CAPABLE STATE

**LED BY:** Promise Nduku and Carina van Rooyen

**DATES:** July to November 2021

**FUNDED BY:** Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

As part of a research project between ACE and the University of Johannesburg Process, Energy and Environmental Technology Station, this rapid review looked at the impact of COVID-19 – mainly through lockdown measures – on air pollutant emissions/concentrations from the transport sector (mainly from road transport) in low- and middle-income countries.

## National Strategic Plan on gender-based violence and femicide: an evidence map



### NDP CHAPTER 10: PROMOTING HEALTH

**LED BY:** Andile Madonsela

**TEAM:** Laurenz Langer, Shona Putuka

**DATES:** October 2021-March 2022

**FUNDED BY:** Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems (PEERSS)

The Africa Centre for Evidence partnered with the Department of Planning, monitoring and evaluation to produce an evidence map based on the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide (NSP-GBVF). This evidence map is pillar 6 of the NSP; pillar 6 aims to strengthen the information and research base to address systemic challenges in order to facilitate effective strategic solutions and evidence-based responses for GBVF in South Africa. The map has research and monitoring documents with interventions that are directed at mitigating violence against women, children, and LGBTQIA+ persons.

## CROSS-PORTFOLIO PROJECTS

ACE partners internally with our colleagues to deliver some projects to ensure that we remain responsive to the unique needs present in the African evidence-use ecosystem. In 2021, a great example of this kind of work was ACE's participation in the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems (PEERSS). Read more about the details of this project below.

Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems - PEERSS (formerly Rapid and Responsive Evidence Partnership (RREP))



### NDP CHAPTER 13: BUILDING A CAPABLE STATE

**LED BY:** Laurenz Langer, Ruth Stewart

**TEAM:** Andile Madonsela, Promise Nduku, Shona Putuka, Siziwe Ngcwabe, Carina van Rooyen, Linda Morailane

**DATES:** November 2018 – December 2022

**FUNDED BY:** International Development Research Centre and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Building on their existing commitments to advance the timely and effective use of evidence in policy and decision-making, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have jointly increased their support to the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems. This partnership facilitates the use of evidence by policy-makers and stakeholders to clarify priority development problems and causes, frame options to address them, and identify implementation considerations in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia. At ACE, various projects have been supported under the purview of this larger programme of work, including the development of the South African environmental evidence base and the support offered to the Department for Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation for their COVID-19 response.

# Our people

The teams within the ACE benefit from a diversity of expertise and academic backgrounds.

The ACE team works as a single group to advance to the shared goal and collective dedication to making a difference to poverty and inequality through the use of evidence. The team members that carry out ACE's daily work activities are supported by an extended network of people. These people include distinguished visiting professors, a committed advisory group, hard-working postgraduate students, dedicated research associates, and energetic interns. Each person that makes up this extended network of support shares ACE's mission. Each is one of our people.

## TEAM MEMBERS IN 2021



**Metoh Azunui**  
Evidence capacities  
Evidence communities



**Charity Chisoro**  
Evidence communities



**Shafiequah Hutton**  
Operations



**Laurenz Langer**  
Art and science of using  
evidence; Evidence  
capacities; Evidence  
communities; Evidence  
synthesis



**Andile Madonsela**  
Evidence synthesis



**Kekeletso Makau**  
Operations



**Tanya Mdlalose**  
Evidence synthesis



**Aziza Modise**  
Art and science of using  
evidence; Evidence  
capacities



**Likeledi Morailane**  
Art and science of using  
evidence; Operations



**Precious Motha**  
Evidence communities;  
Operations



**Elton Mpinyuri**  
Operations



**Likhwa Ncube**  
Evidence communities





**Sithabile Ndlovu**  
Operations



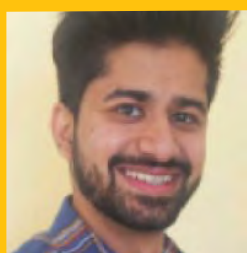
**Promise Nduku**  
Evidence synthesis



**Siziwe Ngcwabe**  
Evidence communities



**Shona Putuka**  
Evidence synthesis



**Zafeer Ravat**  
Evidence synthesis



**Lorna Singh**  
Operations



**Ruth Stewart**  
Art and science of using  
evidence; Evidence  
capacities; Evidence  
communities; Operations



**Natalie Tannous**  
Operations



**Nkululeko Tshabalala**  
Evidence synthesis



**Carina van Rooyen**  
Art and science of using  
evidence; Evidence  
capacities; Evidence  
communities; Evidence  
synthesis



**Hazel Zaranyika**  
Evidence capacities

## TESTIMONIES FROM SOME OF OUR PARTNERS IN SUPPORTING EVIDENCE USE IN AFRICA

We work in close collaboration with our partners from across Africa to deliver our work. Without them, ACE could not produce the work it does to support the reduction of poverty and inequality in Africa. These partners are experts in their respective contexts, be they different countries, sectors, or functions. The ACE team is fortunate to benefit from relationships with teams in these contexts that share our commitment that using evidence to make decisions can contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality in Africa.



### Rhona Mijumbi-Deve

**Co-Director at the Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis, Uganda (ACRES)**



"There is so much to learn and to do about and for evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM), that it is almost impossible to do it alone whether as an individual or institution, because EIDM has so many contributory angles that make it complete or comprehensive. I do not know of a single organisation that does everything there is for EIDM, which makes partnerships necessary in this work if one wants to go far. I have learned that when an individual or team or institution stops focusing on how great their own performance is and opens up to partner with others, it not only says a lot about their own confidence, they are probably headed towards excellence, both of which (confidence and excellence) are absolutely necessary in the trade of EIDM."

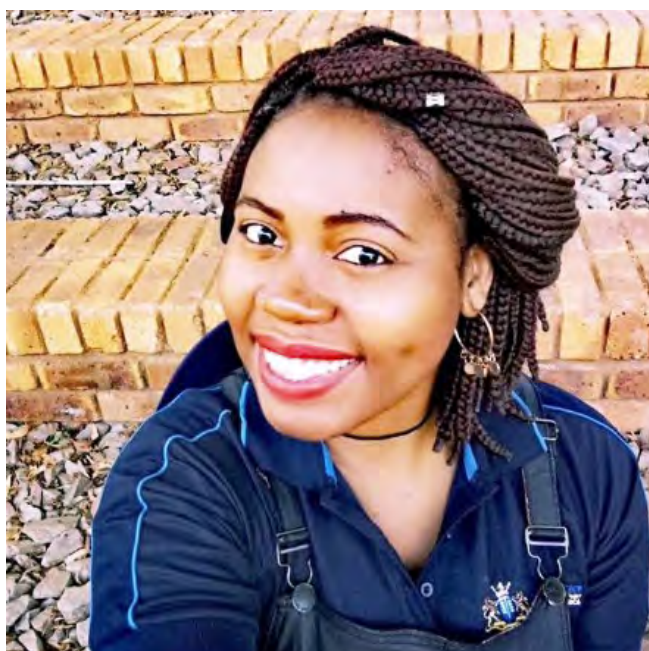


### Kirchuffs Atengble

**Executive Director for PACKS Africa**



"Evidence-informed decision-making as a field of practice cannot survive without partnerships. This is because the very people ultimately responsible for public policy decisions are not the same that produce the needed evidence that informs their choices. Likewise, those who produce the needed evidence are not responsible for policy decisions. This creates a need for working together. Without partnerships, not a single activity to support evidence-informed decision-making will succeed. But as practitioners, we need to grow our own competencies to position us adequately in this change agenda we are into. No single entity can lay claim to moving policy processes from symbolic use of evidence, for instance, to embedded use."



## Neggie Bakwunye

**Environmental Research Specialist at the  
Gauteng Department of Agriculture and  
Rural Development, South Africa**



“Evidence-informed decision-making advocates the use of tried and tested systematic steps that are followed in achieving desired results. As such, having different individuals and or institutions coming together and working on a common project or assignment ensures that more than one approach to getting to the desired outcome can be applied. The Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development’s partnership with ACE on a rapid review on the impact of COVID-19 on the transportation sector not only yielded the benefits of having a pool of expertise working systematically towards a common goal but it was also a learning curve that provided benefits such as capacity-sharing...as knowledge was transferred...between the team[s] – the Africa Centre for Evidence as methods experts and the government officials with expertise in the implementation of policies.”





## DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSORS AND PROFESSORS OF PRACTICE



### Professor Sandy Oliver

**Professor Sandy Oliver** is a distinguished visiting professor at the Africa Centre for Evidence based at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg.

She is Director of the Social Science Research Unit, and Deputy Director of the EPPI- Centre (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre), at University College London (UCL) Institute of Education, London. For thirty years, her interests have focused on the interaction between researchers and people making decisions in their professional and personal lives. With this in mind she has been developing methods to collate knowledge from whole bodies of research – systematic reviews – not just single studies. Most recently this has been in the area of international health systems and development where she has conducted systematic reviews and built up a programme of support for research teams conducting reviews elsewhere. She is a member of the Board of the Campbell Collaboration, a Cochrane editor with their Consumers and Communication Review Group, and a member of the Centre for Excellence in Development Impact and Learning. She has been working with the UK Department for International Development, the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research at the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the Research, Evidence and Development Initiative (READ-It) to strengthen capacity in systematic reviewing in low- and middle-income countries..



### Professor John Lavis

**Professor John Lavis** is a distinguished visiting professor at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg.

He holds the Canada Research Chair in Evidence-Informed Health Systems. He is the Director of the McMaster Health Forum | Forum+, Co-Lead of Rapid-Improvement Support and Exchange (RISE), Co-Director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy, and Professor in the Department of Health Evidence and Impact at McMaster University. John supports policymakers and stakeholders to harness research evidence, citizen values and stakeholder insights to strengthen health and social systems and get the right programs, services and products to the people who need them. He holds an MD from Queen's University, an MSc from the London School of Economics, and a PhD from Harvard University. He is committed to helping policymakers and stakeholders to: 1) learn how to make decisions based on the best available research evidence; 2) find evidence through the McMaster Health Forum's own products and the best available sources of pre-appraised, synthesised research evidence (including the Forum's Health Systems Evidence, and Social Systems Evidence, and the Forum-supported and citizen-targeted McMaster Optimal Aging Portal); 3) spark action through stakeholder dialogues, citizen panels and more; 4) embed supports for evidence-informed decision-making, by institutionalising promising and proven approaches; and 5) evaluate innovations in supporting evidence-informed decision-making.



## Professor Beryl Leach

**Professor Beryl Leach** is a Global Excellence and Stature (GES) Professor of Practice at the University of Johannesburg.

As a GES professor, she provides research and innovative leadership that supports UJ's Fourth Industrial Revolution agenda. As an ACE senior advisor, she contributes to the delivery of ACE's work, with a focus on advancing research and innovative practices to improve evidence informed decision-making. She contributes 30 years of experience regionally and globally to support expanding ACE's reach, impact, and institutional development. She has provided advice to the Vaccines for Africa initiative at UCT in the development of a new regional programme. She was the global technical lead for monitoring, learning and adaptation, and gender and equity in the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office-funded programme 'Strengthening the use of Evidence for Development Impact in Ghana, Pakistan and Uganda'. She has a MSc in international public health (distinction) from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.







## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The ACE advisory committee was formed in 2017.

The members of the group were invited with a conscious awareness of reflecting different ACE stakeholders. As such, the group consists of members from outside of Africa, from wider Africa, from South Africa, and from within the University of Johannesburg. The members come from various sectors including academia, government, and civil society. The ACE advisory committee provides our senior management team with advice and guidance on the strategic direction of the centre, as well as on the design and implementation of ACE portfolios' work. Adapting our operations to the travel limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that we hosted a virtual meeting with our advisory committee members in 2021. The group is chaired by Professor Liz Gunner.

**HARSHA DAYAL**, South African National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa

**SHANIL HARICHARAN**, Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, South Africa

**JOHN LAVIS**, McMaster University, Canada

**RHONA MIJUMBI-DEVE**, Makerere University, Uganda

**KAMMILA NAIDOO**, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

**SANDY OLIVER**, University College London, United Kingdom

**JOSEPHINE WATERA**, Parliament of Uganda, Uganda

**TARYN YOUNG**, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

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## RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

At ACE, we believe in breaking down silos within research.

Driven by this belief, we aim to nurture eclectic working relationships with researchers, civil servants, and private sector practitioners from all over the world. We do not limit ourselves to any specific sector or type of researcher, recognising that in the nexus of different areas and focuses lies the potential for effective real-world evidence-informed decision-making. ACE hosted ten research associates in 2021; their names, roles, and organisations are below.

**MAPULA TSHANGELA**, National Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, South Africa

**NEAL HADDAWAY**, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden

**KIRUBEN NAICKER**, National Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries, South Africa

**JAN MAGORO**, South African Presidency, South Africa

**KIRCHUFFS ATENGBLE**, Centre for Knowledge Management and Research (PACKS Africa), Ghana

**PATRICK OKWEN**, Effective Basic Services Africa (eBASE Africa), Cameroon

**RHONA MIJUMBI**, the Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES), Makerere University, Uganda

**LINDA ETALE**, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Nairobi, Kenya

**MIKEY ROSATO**, Women and Children First, London, United Kingdom



## POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

The ACE team works hard to support all the postgraduates we welcome to our family. Apart from engaged supervision, the ACE team under the evidence capacities portfolio provides postgraduate support through monthly online meetings, sharing resources on MS Teams, and online writing sessions.

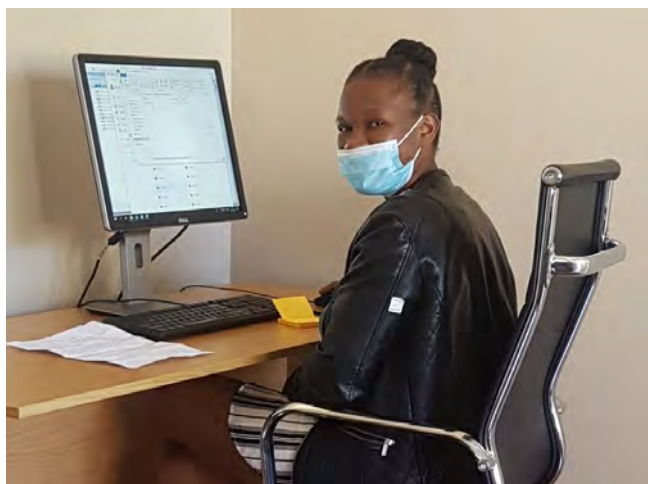
We are proud of our postgraduate students for making such good progress with their studies in 2021 despite the challenges of the pandemic. This included two PhD students who completed their doctoral studies in 2021 and one Masters' student who graduated in 2021. We also are honoured to have enrolled a further four PhD candidates in 2021.

## MASTERS CANDIDATE

**Nollen Mdhlovu**, supervised by Laurenz Langer, MA Development Studies. The use of evidence by senior decision-makers in the South African Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

## INTERNS

Still unable to welcome our usual cohort of McMaster University interns in 2021, we were pleased to continue with our operations intern, Sthabile Ndlovu. Welcomed as an intern in 2020, Sthabile joined the ACE team from Damelin where she obtained a diploma in human resources. In 2021, Sthabile contributed to the operations portfolio as an office assistant. She also offered ad hoc support to portfolios such as synthesis or communications as opportunities arose.



## DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

**Metoh Azuini**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen and Laurenz Langer, PhD Development Studies. Implementation of climate change mitigation projects by local government: Learnings for the City of Johannesburg.

**Charity Chisoro**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, PhD Development Studies. Communities of practice as a tool to enhance capacities for evidence use in Africa.

**Harsha Dayal**, supervised by Ruth Stewart, PhD Development Studies. Advancing knowledge brokering through coproduction for enhanced state capacity.

**Zeenat Ishmail**, supervised by Laurenz Langer, PhD Development Studies. Data governance for use in public sector: A data governance model to leverage data use at sub-national level.

**Luvuyo Jalisa**, supervised by Laurenz Langer and Carina van Rooyen, PhD Development Studies. Understanding interventions that work in achieving developmental water management in South Africa, using systematic reviewing and interviews.

**Sophia Marks**, supervised by Ruth Stewart, PhD Sociology at the Institute of Education, Department for Social Sciences, University College London. 'A raw experience': Biographical disruption in a group of women living with HIV/AIDS in Jos, Nigeria: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.

**Ronald Munatsi**, supervised by Ruth Stewart, PhD Development Studies. An evaluation of the rapid evidence synthesis platform to inform health systems and health policy decisions in Zimbabwe.

**Loselo Segwe**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, PhD Development Studies. Evidence-informed policy processes of the National Development Plan in the NorthWest Province: 2014-2019 (on pre-proposal registration).

**Liya Woldemichael**, supervised by Ruth Stewart, PhD Development Studies. Evidence-informed policy-making in Ethiopia: Current status and future directions.

**Hazel Zaranyika**, supervised by Carina van Rooyen, PhD Development Studies. Exploring online mentoring as a tool to enhance capacity-sharing to support evidence-informed decision-making in Africa.

# Our interactions

ACE maintained an active and engaged presence on public platforms in 2021.

We used different ways of reaching our various audiences. In addition to our team members attending events, some members of our team also enjoyed a few media appearances in 2021 and we maintained our active engagement across all our social media platforms. Below, you will find information about each of these engagement mechanisms.

## EVENTS

As the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns across the globe continued, many events took place in virtual space. Moving into the virtual world afforded members of the ACE team to participate in a whopping 62 virtual gatherings. Whether they were conferences, webinars, high-level meetings, or online workshops, ACE continued to discuss, advise, share, and learn throughout the year. All the events the ACE team have participated in are organised into different categories based on the objective of attending these different gatherings.

## ACE DISCUSSES

This section captures the various webinars that ACE team members participated in as presenters, chairs or facilitators.

- **JANUARY:** Presented 'Reflections on diffusion of innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services' at the Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL) 'Innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services in the time of COVID' webinar.
- **JANUARY:** Presented 'The living hub of COVID-19 knowledge hubs' at the Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL) 'Innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services in the time of COVID' webinar.
- **JANUARY:** Facilitated the Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL)'s webinar entitled 'Innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services in the time of COVID'.
- **JANUARY:** Presented 'Evidence synthesis communities in low-income and middle-income countries and the COVID-19 response' at the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-Making webinar entitled 'An Introduction to COVID-END'.
- **FEBRUARY:** Presented 'Evidence co-production and use in environmental policy processes in Africa' at the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence webinar series.
- **FEBRUARY:** Presented 'Africa Centre for Evidence: COVID-END profile' at COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-Making 'An introduction to COVID-END'.
- **FEBRUARY:** Hosted 'Critical digital pedagogy of care: COVID-19 and beyond' workshop for the University of Johannesburg's Academic Preparation Programme.
- **MARCH:** Presented 'Evidence-informed policy-making analytical framework' at the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa's 'Reflecting on learnings around evidence-use'.
- **MARCH:** Presented 'COVID-END inventory: an in-depth analysis of evidence syntheses addressing decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic response' at COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-Making.
- **MARCH:** Presented keynote address 'How policy, implementation, evidence, and politics come together to improve the future of millions of South Africans' at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation 'The 2021 Evidence and Implementation Summit' (EIS2021).
- **MARCH:** Presented 'Co-production of an evidence base on/for implementation of climate change mitigation in South Africa' at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation 'The 2021 Evidence and Implementation Summit' (EIS2021).
- **MARCH:** Presented 'The art and science of using evidence in Africa: An evidence map of what we know about evidence-use' at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation 'The 2021 Evidence and Implementation Summit' (EIS2021).
- **MARCH:** Presented 'The living hub of COVID-19 knowledge hubs' at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation 'The 2021 Evidence and Implementation Summit' (EIS2021).
- **MARCH:** Presented 'Gender Knowledge Hub (GKH)' at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation 'The 2021 Evidence and Implementation Summit' (EIS2021).



- **MARCH-APRIL:** Hosted four brainstorming workshops for Africa Evidence Network members on cross-cutting themes related to the Manifesto on evidence-informed decision-making capacity development in Africa.
- **APRIL:** Presented 'Tackling COVID-19 Misinformation shared via WhatsApp' at COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-Making 'An Introduction to COVID-END'.
- **MAY:** Participated in The Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf), in partnership with the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) 'What to do to reduce poverty and inequality?'
- **MAY:** Presented 'Exploring partnerships for evidence with academic institutions' at the World Vision International 'World Vision SAR Integrated Programs Forum'.
- **JUNE:** Facilitated 'Tips to engage policy-makers online' for the Strengthening Evidence use for Development Impact Learning Forum.
- **AUGUST:** Presented 'An integrated model for increasing the use of evidence by decision-makers for improved development' at the 'Academic Journal Club Discussion' of the University of Pretoria's Department of Health and the Southern African Health Technology Assessment Society.
- **AUGUST:** Presented 'Taking stock and moving forward' at the Institute for Security Studies' 'Evidence-Based Policing South Africa' mini conference.
- **SEPTEMBER:** Organised 'Capacity development for evidence-use in Africa: An orientation' 'Designing for equity in evidence-informed decision-making capacity development in Africa: experience sharing from Cameroon' for the Africa Evidence Network's Evidence Capacities webinar series.
- **SEPTEMBER:** Presented 'Co-production of an evidence base on/for implementation of climate change mitigation in South Africa' at the sixth Annual Biodiversity Research and Evidence Indaba, hosted by the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.
- **OCTOBER:** Presented 'Getting Started + Systematic reviews and evidence mapping: Why are we mapping, anyway?' at the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association Hackathon.
- **OCTOBER:** Presented the keynote 'Evidence-informed decision-making, drawing lessons from health to non-health sectors: insights from South Africa' at the Campbell Collaboration and Global Development Network 'Evidence for Development: What Works Global Summit 2021'.
- **OCTOBER:** Presented 'Evidence maps and rapid response services as effective mechanisms for the systematic use of evidence to inform government decision-making' at the Campbell Collaboration and Global Development Network's 'Evidence for Development: What Works Global Summit 2021'.
- **OCTOBER:** Presented 'Assessing measures of evidence-informed decision-making and implementation' at the Campbell Collaboration and Global Development Network's 'Evidence for Development: What Works Global Summit 2021'.
- **OCTOBER:** Acted as programme director for and presented 'A rapid review of the impact of COVID-19 on air pollution from the transport sector' at the Environmental Research Symposium of the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- **OCTOBER:** Presented 'Evidence Mapping Tool: DPME and UJ-ACE collaboration' at the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation.
- **NOVEMBER:** Presented 'Insights to strengthen collaborative research networks: how the Africa Evidence Network is supporting evidence-use in Africa' at the EVIPNet Brazil 'Innovation Week 2021'.
- **NOVEMBER:** Moderated and acted as respondent for 'Connecting insights from the evidence-support ecosystem to make progress towards WHO's Triple Billion Targets' at the World Health Organisation's 'WHO Global Evidence 2 Policy Summit'.
- **NOVEMBER:** Organised 'Capacity development aimed at system-level change in/for evidence-use' for the Africa Evidence Network's Evidence Capacities webinar series.
- **NOVEMBER:** Presented 'Reducing vulnerability through the increased use of evidence in decision-making' at the Southern African Development Community Secretariat Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Workshop.

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## ACE ADVISES

ACE advises through continued board membership in 2021 on various boards and bodies.

Individual ACE staff members have served on the following:

- The Board of the DECIDE Health Decision Hub
- The World Health Organization (WHO) editorial board on developing a WHO Guidance on strengthening the use of evidence in decision-making

- The WHO editorial board on development of a user-friendly tool to support the institutionalization of evidence informed policy-making
- The Board of Evidence Synthesis International
- The Board of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence
- The editorial board of the Journal of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence
- The Collaboration for Environmental Evidence Database of Evidence Reviews (CEEDER) review college
- The Board of the Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning
- The National Research Foundation's (NRF) task team on Research Impact in 2021, including planning and preparing for the NRF's conference on the 'Impact of Science' held in June 2021
- The University of Johannesburg's Academy of Distinguished Teachers
- The University of Johannesburg's Humanities Internationalisation working group

## ACE NETWORKS

In this section, you'll find a list of conferences and launches that ACE team members participated in as either attendees or presenters.

- **FEBRUARY:** Presented 'Misinformation in the time of COVID' at the University of Johannesburg Library's webinar entitled 'Truth or Conspiracy? Navigating the Internet during a Pandemic'.
- **MARCH:** Presented at the RREP 'RREP Quarterly Learning session: Embedding Evidence Use', 'Institutionalisation of evidence-use in South Africa: Collaborative reflection'
- **APRIL:** Presented at the RREP Monthly Meeting, 'Rapid & Responsive Evidence Partnership (RREP) also known as PEERSS', 'Embedding evidence in decision-making inside and outside of government'
- **APRIL:** Africa Centre for Evidence in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg Library 'Decolonizing 'evidence for development' with Ubuntu'
  - Presented, 'Decolonizing 'evidence for development' with Ubuntu'
  - Presented, 'Decolonizing 'evidence for development' with Ubuntu' Communities across African continent"
  - Presented, 'Decolonizing 'evidence for development' with Ubuntu: Capacities across the African continent'
- **MAY:** Presented at the University of Johannesburg Library 'Improving the Impact, Visibility and Citation rate of your Research', 'Navigating Research Funding: helping you get started'

- **MAY:** Hosted and presented at the Africa Centre for Evidence and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluations (DPME) in collaboration with University of Johannesburg Library 'Societal impact using evidence in policy: Launching the evidence management guide for SEIAS', 'Societal impact using evidence in policy: SEIAS Evidence Management Guide'
- **JUNE:** Attended the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems (PEERSS) "Rapid response evidence during a pandemic: Achievements, challenges, and disappointments"
- **SEPTEMBER:** Participated at the PACKS Africa '5 years of evidence partnerships: a reflection on contributions to institutionalisation of evidence use'
- **SEPTEMBER:** Africa Evidence Network hosted the Africa Evidence Network's biennial event, Africa Evidence Week 2021. Africa Evidence Week 2021 was a week-long virtual celebration of African evidence-informed decision-making excellence showcasing and promoting the state of evidence-informed decision-making on the continent, specifically highlighting the involvement of Africa's decision-makers. A wide range of Africa Evidence Network member organisations and individuals were actively involved as participants, sharing blog posts, Twitter chats, reports, online events, stories, and any other digital content that:
  - Highlights where African decision-makers are spearheading or engaging with evidence-use efforts
  - Showcases the diversity of the African evidence ecosystem,
  - Promotes African evidence-informed decision-making innovation
  - Illustrates and promote cases where decision-makers have used or supported the institutionalisation of evidence
  - Advocates for emerging evidence organisations' and evidence champions' stories
  - Builds collaborations with other AEN members.
- **SEPTEMBER:** Presented at the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems (PEERSS) 'PEERSS monthly meeting' Reflections: Africa Evidence Week 2021.
- **NOVEMBER:** Observer to the COP26 proceedings and acted as a discussant for the UJ vice chancellor Prof Tshilidzi Marwala at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Library and Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE) 'Reflections on COP26: The Impact on Africa'
- **NOVEMBER:** Speaker at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Library and Elsevier 'South Africa Research Leaders Forum', 'On Research towards SDGs – the role of higher education'



## ACE LEARNS

Here, you can find information about some of the various training events that ACE team members participated in to enhance their own capacities.

- **JANUARY:** International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP) online course on 'Facilitating events and courses in an online world'.
- **MARCH:** Times Higher Education Southern Africa Impact Forum on 'Reimagining universities for transdisciplinary knowledge co-creation'.
- **MARCH:** UJ Teaching and Learning Master Class on 'Teaching and learning in disruptive spaces'.
- **MARCH:** Knowledge Management for Development (KM4DEV) online discussion on technology options for a community of practice, with a focus on Africa.
- **MAY:** Gina Wisker workshop on 'Supervising, coaching and mentoring postgraduate students'.
- **JUNE:** UJ Teaching and Learning Master Class on 'Engaging students in the online environment'.
- **JUNE:** Contributed to the Africa Centre for Evidence and Women and Children First 'SHARED LEARNING WEBINAR | Women & Children First UK'.
- **AUGUST:** Participated in the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation's 'Knowledge Sharing Webinar: trust in government'.
- **AUGUST:** UJ Teaching and Learning Mater Class on 'Assessment during remote learning: Lessons learnt and tips for the future'.
- **AUGUST/SEPTEMBER:** Presentation on Conference Paper at the Department of Politics and International Relations (Faculty of Humanities), University of Johannesburg 'Good governance, participatory democracy, and social justice: Civil society as an agent of change and innovation in Africa, 'Evidence-use, civil society and strengthening governance in Africa'.
- **OCTOBER:** Participated at the Deloitte and Zoom 'The New Office: Navigating the Realities of Hybrid Work'.
- **OCTOBER:** Flow Office Wisdom 'Building Connection in the Virtual World'

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

To communicate about our work, ACE uses social media extensively.

The ACE communications team maintains public appearances on three different social media platforms for different projects found at ACE: Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. On Twitter, our team manages profiles for the Africa Evidence Network (@Africa\_Evidence), the South African centre for the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (@CEEJoburg), and of course, the Africa Centre for Evidence (@ACE\_UJ). The team manages an ACE and AEN LinkedIn profile, while only the AEN is present on YouTube. The cumulative social media analytics for each account on each platform are reported below (as of 31 December 2021). Significant to note, all of ACE's social media engagement metrics are organic; ACE does not undertake paid content on any social media platform. ACE also contributed to publishing online articles with The Conversation in 2021; you will find these citations in the 'Popular writing' section of this report.

53,068

WEBSITE VIEWS AND

19,500

UNIQUE VISITORS ACROSS

[www.africacentreforevidence.org](http://www.africacentreforevidence.org)

(13,134 website views & 6,174 unique visitors)

[www.africaevidencenetwork.org](http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org)

(39,934 page views & 13,326 unique visitors)

10,291

TWITTER FOLLOWERS ACROSS

@ACE\_UJ (2,412)

@Africa\_Evidence (7,071)

@CEEJoburg (808)

896

LINKEDIN VIEWS AND

998

FOLLOWERS ACROSS

Africa Centre for Evidence (312 views, 189 followers)

Africa Evidence Network (584 views, 801 followers)

1,059

YOUTUBE VIEWS ON

Africa Evidence Network channel

# Our funding

Without our funders, we would not be able to achieve what we do.

ACE believes in being transparent about the amount of funding we receive and from whom we receive it each year. This illuminates who we partner with and the nature of any paid partnerships we have. Below, you will find the cumulative amounts of funding we won in 2021 reflecting the amount awarded by each of our eight 2021 funders. The reporting of the rand and foreign currency values of ACE's funding were calculated according to the exchange rate available via a Google search at the time of writing this annual report. Differences between reported and actual amounts are unintentional. This section reports the grants awarded to ACE during the year 2021 and does not reflect the value of grants that were awarded in earlier years and which were completed during 2021.



## Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

### UNITED KINGDOM'S FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, administered by Oxford Policy Management, funded ACE through two projects in 2021 to the total value of R1,362,446 (66,415 GBP) as part of the Centre for Excellence in Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL) programme and the Strengthening Evidence Use for Development Impact (SEDI) project.



## International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

### INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR IMPACT EVALUATION (3IE)

In 2021, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) funded ACE for consultancy work to the total value of R538,324 (35,763 USD).



## IDRC · CRDI

International Development Research Centre  
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



WILLIAM + FLORA

## Hewlett Foundation

### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE AND THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

The International Development Research Centre funded ACE to the value of R1,208,700 (58,920 CAD) to support the Partnership for Equity and Evidence in Responsive Social Systems (formerly the Rapid & Responsive Evidence Partnership).



GREEN  
CLIMATE  
FUND



IFAD

### GREEN CLIMATE FUND AND THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, the Green Climate Fund and the International Fund for Agricultural Development funded ACE on a consultancy basis to develop an evidence review on behavioural change. The total value of the funding awarded was R2,235,000 (149,000 USD).



#### **THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (GDARD)**

The Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD) awarded ACE R100,000 (6,618 USD) for a research project to explore the impact of COVID-19 on emissions from the transport sector in low- and middle-income countries.



#### **THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION**

In 2021, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation continued to fund ACE under a three-year long grant to run the Africa Evidence Network. The total value of the entire grant is R14,250,000 (one million USD).



UNIVERSITY  
OF  
JOHANNESBURG

#### **UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG**

The University of Johannesburg continued its support to ACE in the granting of R630,000 (41,697 USD) in funds to run the Centre. These funds were provided through the University's Research Council.



# Our outputs

In this section, you will read a description of our monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system that ACE launched in 2021. You will also find in this section lists of the various outputs produced in 2021 by ACE team members and research associates.

## BUILDING ACE'S MEL SYSTEM

In its efforts to support evidence-use in decision-making, ACE bases its own decisions about how it can go about achieving impact on the evidence we collect, analyse, and learn from in our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system. With encouragement from Professor Beryl Leach we have been working to strengthen our project management and MEL system for some time. In 2021, this system was designed, piloted, refined, and launched.

Every project and area of work at ACE is aligned in some way along a theory of change that allows ACE as a whole to achieve its ultimate objective of making an impact to reducing poverty and inequality through the use of evidence. The leadership for this area of work sits within the art and science of using evidence portfolio at ACE. The MEL system was led by Professor Ruth Stewart and designed and implemented by Linda Morailane.

Our first step in developing this system was to refine our theory of change and identify our goals at all levels, from outputs to short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes, and ultimately our desired impact. We then identified indicators for each and every level. Within our MEL system, ACE now collects evidence for each indicator enabling us to demonstrate whether or not we are progressing towards our goals.

Each portfolio has a distinct but inter-related outcome that its teams are working toward achieving. We have monthly evaluation meetings where we reflect together on our progress. We also reflect quarterly on what we are learning from our data, and agree on necessary adjustments to work plans, goals, and even to the MEL system itself. Based on the patterns and trajectories we observe, we course correct the activities of ACE as a centre as is necessary to ensure we are striving as an entire organisation to reach out ultimate impact: contributing to the reduction of poverty and inequality through the use of evidence for decisions.

## ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Below we list the academic publications published by our core ACE team members and by our associates in 2021.

Al Sabahi S, Wilson MG, Lavis JN, El-Jardali F & Moat K. 2021. Examining and contextualizing approaches to establish policy support organizations—A mixed method study. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*. Available: <https://doi.org/10.34172/IJHPM.2021.86>

Al Sabahi S, Wilson MG, Lavis JN, El-Jardali F & Moat K. 2021. Insights from system leaders about operationalising a knowledge translation department in the Oman Ministry of Health. *Evidence & Policy*.

Bakhshi H, Brekon J & Puttick R. 2021. Understanding R&D in the arts, humanities and social sciences. *The British Academy*, 9, pp 115-145.

Berrang-Ford L, Sietsma AJ, Callaghan M, Minx JC, Scheelbeek P, Haddaway NR, Haines A, Belesova K & Dangour AD. 2021. Mapping global research on climate and health using machine learning (a systematic evidence map). *Wellcome Open Research*, 6:7. Available: <https://doi.org/10.12688/wellcomeopenres.16415.1>

Berrang-Ford L, Sietsma AJ, Callaghan M, Minx JC, Scheelbeek PF, Haddaway NR, Haines A & Dangour AD. 2021. Systematic mapping of global research on climate and health: a machine learning review. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 5(8), pp.e514-e525.

Bullock HL, Lavis JN, Wilson MG, Mulvale G & Miatello A. 2021. Understanding the implementation of evidence-informed policies and practices from a policy perspective: a critical interpretive synthesis. *Implementation Science*, 16:18. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-021-01082-7>

Florez ID, Amer YS, McCaul M, Lavis JN & Brouwers M. 2021. Guidelines developed under pressure. The case of the COVID-19 low-quality "rapid" guidelines and potential solutions. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*.

Gusenbauer M & Haddaway NR. 2021. What every researcher should know about searching – clarified concepts, search advice, and an agenda to improve finding in academia. *Res Syn Meth*, 12:136–147. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1457>

Haddaway NR, Gray CT & Grainger M. 2021. Novel tools and methods for designing and wrangling multifunctional, machine-readable evidence synthesis databases. *Environmental Evidence*, 10:1, pp.1-12.

- Iannizzi C, Akl EA, Kahale LA, Dorando E, Aminat AM, Barker JM, McKenzie JE, Haddaway NR, Piechotta V & Skoetz N. 2021. Methods and guidance on conducting, reporting, publishing and appraising living systematic reviews: a scoping review protocol. *F1000Research*, 10:802.
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## RESEARCH REPORTS

Nduku P, van Rooyen C. 2021. *The impact of COVID-19 on emissions from the transport sector in low- and middle-income countries: A rapid review*. Produced for the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Johannesburg: ACE.

Van Rooyen C, Zaranyika H, Mdlalose T, Azunui M, Langer L. 2021. *Mentoring as a tool to enhance capacities for evidence use in Africa*. SEDI Learning Brief 6. Oxford: Strengthening Evidence Use for Development Impact.

## PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS

### January

Langer, L (2021) Reflections on diffusion of innovations in Responsive Evidence Synthesis Services, 20 January, CEDIL Webinar on Innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services in the time of COVID, online.

Nduku, P & Mansila C (2021) The living hub of COVID-19 knowledge hubs, 20 January, CEDIL Webinar on Innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services in the time of COVID, online.

### February

Nduku P (2021) Co-production of a policy-relevant evidence map of South African environmental evidence. Presentation delivered at the EES webinar series 2021. Online.

Tshabalala, N (2021) Truth or conspiracy?, 19 February, Truth or Conspiracy? Navigating the Internet during a Pandemic, online.

Nuku P (2021) Co-production of a policy-relevant evidence map of South African environmental evidence. Presentation at the CEE webinar on ‘Evidence co-production and use in environmental policy processes in Africa’.

Tannous N (2021) Scoping review of responsive (or rapid) evidence synthesis services. Presentation at the CEE webinar on ‘Evidence co-production and use in environmental policy processes in Africa’.

Van Rooyen C (2021) A critical digital pedagogy of care.

Presentation to the UJ Academic Preparation Programme.

### March

Langer L (2021) Institutionalisation of evidence-use in South Africa. Presentation at RREP Quarterly Learning session on Embedding Evidence Use, 22-25 March. Online.

Stewart R (2021) How policy, implementation, evidence, and politics come together to improve the future of millions of South Africans. Presentation delivered at the Evidence and Implementation Summit 2021. Online.

Azunui M, Tshangela M, van Rooyen C (2021) Co-production of an evidence base on/for implementation of climate change mitigation in South Africa. Presentation delivered at the Evidence and Implementation Summit 2021. Online.

Langer L, Tshabalala N (2021) The art and science of using evidence in Africa: an evidence map of what we know about evidence-use. Presentation delivered at the Evidence and Implementation Summit 2021. Online.

Mansilla C, Nduku P (2021) The living hub of COVID-19 knowledge hubs. Presentation delivered at the Evidence and Implementation Summit 2021. Online.

Langer L, Madonsela A, Tshabalala N (2021) Gender Knowledge Hub (GKH). Presentation delivered at the Evidence and Implementation Summit 2021. Online. April

Stewart, R. 2021. Decolonizing ‘evidence for development’ with Ubuntu. Presentation delivered at the Decolonizing ‘evidence for development’ with Ubuntu webinar 2021. UJ Library, Online.

Ngcwabe, S. 2021. Decolonizing ‘evidence for development’ with Ubuntu. Presentation delivered at the Decolonizing ‘evidence for development’ with Ubuntu webinar 2021. UJ Library, Online.

Nduku, P. 2021. Decolonizing ‘evidence for development’ with Ubuntu: Capacities across the African continent. Presentation delivered at the Decolonizing ‘evidence for development’ with Ubuntu webinar 2021. UJ Library, Online. Madonsela, A & Tshabalala, N (2021) Tackling COVID-19 Misinformation shared via WhatsApp, 23 April, COVID-END Webinar Series, online.

## May

Tannous, N. 2021. Exploring partnerships for evidence with academic institutions. Presentation delivered at World Vision International Integrated Forum. Online

Stewart, S., 2021. Navigating Research Funding: helping you get started. Presentation delivered at UJ Library Improving the Impact, Visibility and Citation rate of your Research webinar series. Online

Kole, P. 2021. Presentation on Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System (SEIAS) Policy and Research Services Branch. Presentation delivered at Societal impact using evidence in policy: Launching the evidence management guide for SEIAS webinar. 24 May 2021. Online

Van Rooyen C, Madonsela A (2021) Tips for engaging policy-makers online. SEDI Learning Forum.

## July

Stewart R (2021) Making a difference with our research (aka research impact?). Presentation delivered at the UJ College of Business's Board of College Meeting. Online.

## August

Stewart R (2021) Evidence-use, civil society and strengthening governance in Africa. Presentation delivered at the Good governance, participatory democracy, and social justice: Civil society as an agent of change and innovation in Africa conference. Online.

## September

Motha, P., Ngcwabe, S. and Tannous, N. 2021. Reflections: Africa Evidence Week 2021. Presentation delivered at the PEERSS Monthly Meeting. Online.

Van Rooyen C & Tshangela M (2021) Co-production of an evidence base on/for implementation of climate change mitigation in South Africa. Presentation at the 6th Annual Biodiversity Research and Evidence Indaba, arranged by the national government Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

## October

Langer, L (2021) Getting Started + Systematic reviews and evidence mapping: Why are we mapping, anyway?

Langer, L; Dayal H (2021) "Evidence Mapping Tool: DPME and UJ-ACE collaboration"

Nduku P, Bakwunye N, Mbodla Z, Van Rooyen C (2021) The impact of COVID-19 on greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants from the transportation sector: A rapid review. Presentation to GDARD 3rd Environment Research Symposium.

Langer, L (2021) Evidence-informed decision-making, drawing lessons from health to non-health sectors: insights from South Africa

Nkululeko, T; Langer, L (2021) Evidence maps and rapid response services as effective mechanisms for the systematic use of evidence to inform government decision-making

Madonsela, A & Langer, L. 2021. Assessing measures of evidence informed decision-making and implementation

## November

Stewart, R. 2021. COP26 and Africa. Presentation delivered at the 'Reflections on COP26: The Impact on Africa' UJ webinar.

Ngcwabe S, Stewart R, Langer L. (2021) Insights to Strengthen Collaborative Research Networks: How the Africa Evidence Network is supporting evidence-use in Africa

Stewart, R. 2021. Reducing vulnerability through the increased use of evidence in decision-making. Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Workshop.

## POPULAR WRITING

In this section, you can review the popular articles that ACE staff have written over the 2021 year.

Chisoro C (2021) Designing equity into evidence-informed decision-making capacity development in Africa: Experiences from Cameroon. Blog posting on 05 Nov 2021 that is part of the AEN blog series on the Evidence Capacities webinar series. Available at: <https://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/en/learning-space/article/112/>

Motha P (2021) Capacity development aimed at system-level change in/for evidence use in Africa. Blog posting on 07 Dec 2021 that is part of the AEN blog series on the Evidence Capacities webinar series. Available at: <https://aen-website.azurewebsites.net/en/learning-space/article/114/>

Stewart R & van Rooyen C. Online article: 'Science changes – and so should rational behaviour'. *The Conversation*, published: 24 November 2021. Available: <https://theconversation.com/science-changes-and-so-should-rational-behaviour-166974>

Stewart R & Ngcwabe S. 'African researchers make headway in getting decisions made based on evidence'. *The Conversation*, published: 9 September 2021. Available: <https://theconversation.com/african-researchers-make-headway-in-getting-decisions-made-based-on-evidence-166995>



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