

Taking Stock of Organizations with Impact Evaluation Capacity Headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa

A New Database and Landscaping Analysis

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Abstract

The evidence-informed policy ecosystem has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Alongside an increase in the number of impact evaluations, the community of researchers and organizations in low- and middle-income countries conducting these studies continues to grow. Locally immersed researchers can help increase the policy use and utility of impact evaluation and related evidence, bringing critical insight on the priorities of policymakers and windows of opportunity to inform decision-making. Still, despite their vital role, many locally immersed research organizations encounter chronic funding challenges and other institutional and professional barriers.

CGD conducted a landscaping exercise to better understand the current landscape of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa that boast impact evaluation capacity. The resulting database is intended as a resource for funders looking to advance locally led development; to help facilitate coordination and networking; and to advance opportunities for collaboration among researchers, program implementers, policymakers, and funders.

We found that the number of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with impact evaluation capacity has increased over recent years. We identified 181 unique African organizations with impact evaluation capacity, representing a 26 percent increase since 2019. These organizations are distributed across the region, with the largest concentration in East Africa. A significant portion has received or currently receives US government support, though often indirectly, providing potential openings for deepening partnerships with locally led organizations. Finally, a wide range of types of organizations have impact evaluation capacity—independent think tanks/NGOs, academic institutions, and government-embedded or adjacent entities.

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I. Introduction

Over the past two decades, policymakers in many parts of the world have made progress using evidence, including from impact evaluations, to inform decision-making. Even amid these gains, the responsiveness, relevance, and usefulness of impact evaluation and related evidence for development policy and practice remain a work in progress. In 2020, the Center for Global Development convened a Working Group on New Evidence Tools for Policy Impact (NET Policy Impact), bringing together experts to shape a renewed agenda for investments in impact evaluation and related evidence systems to enhance their value for policy use. A key message that emerged from the working group is that evidence is more useful for policy and programming—and potentially more likely to inform policy and programming—if it is produced and led by researchers and organizations immersed in relevant policy contexts. Still, despite the critical role of locally immersed researchers in enhancing the policy value and utility of impact evaluation and related evidence, there is little funding to support them. Flexible, long-term resources that allow them to develop institutional capacity and partnerships with policymakers over time are especially limited.

CGD conducted a landscaping exercise to build a greater understanding of the current landscape of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa that boast impact evaluation capacity. The resulting database is intended as a resource for new and emerging funders to help facilitate coordination and networking and advance opportunities for collaboration among researchers, program implementers, policymakers, and funders.

This paper describes the motivation for this landscaping, which builds on CGD's NET Policy Impact Working Group and other related efforts in the development research and impact evaluation space while recognizing recent donor commitments to advance locally led development. It then describes the scope and methodology that guided the landscaping exercise. Finally, it offers key takeaways from the landscaping work and outlines future areas of inquiry.

II. Challenges and opportunities for locally immersed development research

Since the 2006 release of the CGD report *When Will We Ever Learn?: Improving Lives Through Impact Evaluation*,¹ there has been significant progress in the generation and use of evidence, specifically impact evaluation, for public policy decisions and development programs. The overall number of impact evaluations—a rigorous approach that establishes the attributable net impact of a project or

1 Savedoff, William D., Ruth Levine, and Nancy Birdsall. *When Will We Ever Learn?: Improving Lives through Impact Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2006. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/when-will-we-ever-learn-improving-lives-through-impact-evaluation>.

program on outcomes of interest—has grown steadily over the years.² Given their ability to establish attribution, impact evaluations are a uniquely well-suited tool to inform policy and programming decisions related to resource allocation, project design, and implementation. The overall field has also come a long way in addressing specific critiques of impact evaluation, including those related to scale, generalizability, and policy utility.³

Despite advancements, only a modest share of development policies and programs are rigorously evaluated. And even when rigorous evaluations are conducted, other factors limit their relevance, responsiveness, and usefulness for policy and programming decisions. CGD convened the Working Group on New Evidence Tools for Policy Impact (NET Policy Impact) from 2020–2022, comprising policymakers and experts from over 20 countries, to chart an agenda to enhance the policy value and use of rigorous evidence in global development.⁴

The working group’s findings and recommendations underscore the value of locally immersed researchers in evidence generation and use. Researchers with deep knowledge of their country contexts, who are immersed in prevailing policy environments, are well equipped to identify windows of opportunity to generate and synthesize evidence that can inform policy and programming in advance rather than providing insight after decisions have already been made.⁵ They are in a distinctively strong position to engage in evidence-to-policy partnerships, in which researchers and policymakers collaborate over time to generate, synthesize, and use evidence for a range of policy needs and decisions.⁶

Despite growing interest in such research, the working group found that locally immersed researchers receive only limited, at times unpredictable, funding—contributing to continued underrepresentation in development research. For instance, in academic fora, just 16 percent of articles published in top development journals from 1990 to 2019 were authored by Southern

2 Kaufman, Julia, Amanda Glassman, Ruth Levine, and Janeen Madan Keller. *Breakthrough to Policy Use: Reinvigorating Impact Evaluation for Global Development*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2022. <https://pubs.cgdev.org/evidence-to-impact/1-progress-and-challenges/progress/index.html>.

3 Bédécarrats, Florent, Isabelle Guérin, and François Roubaud, eds. *Randomized Control Trials in the Field of Development: A Critical Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198865360.001.0001>; Vivalt, Eva. “Heterogeneous Treatment Effects in Impact Evaluation.” *American Economic Review* 105, no. 5 (May 2015): 467–70. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.p20151015>; Ogden, Timothy N., ed. *Experimental Conversations: Perspectives on Randomized Trials in Development Economics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017. <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/experimental-conversations>.

4 <https://pubs.cgdev.org/evidence-to-impact/>.

5 Kaufman, Julia, and Jane Kabubo-Mariara. “Localizing Development Research.” Project Syndicate, March 23, 2023. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/participation-of-local-researchers-essential-to-improving-policy-outcomes-in-global-south-by-julia-kauman-and-jane-kabubo-mariara-2023-03>; Paul, Eitan, Farah Amalia, Sarah Kopper, and Poppy Widayarsi. “Setting up International Research Collaborations for Success.” The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), June 9, 2023. <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/blog/6-9-23/setting-international-research-collaborations-success>.

6 Taddese, Abeba. “Meeting Policymakers Where They Are: Evidence-to-Policy and Practice Partnership Models.” Center for Global Development, August 2021. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/meeting-policymakers-where-they-are-background-paper.pdf>.

researchers.⁷ Previous CGD research on constraints to organizational impact and growth in sub-Saharan Africa also surfaced challenges around uncertain, insufficient, and projectized funding, alongside staffing issues, including retention.⁸ And while collaborations between researchers across geographic regions have grown over the last decade,⁹ risks remain that North-South research partnerships “do not sufficiently account for the priorities and perspectives of Southern-based researchers.”¹⁰ Beyond collaborations among researchers, limited support is available to pursue long-term evidence-to-policy partnerships between policymakers, researchers, and knowledge translators (who help facilitate evidence uptake) to identify and develop opportunities for evidence use as policymakers raise new questions or shift priorities.¹¹ A large share of development research funding continues to support one-off projects and short-term consultancies, as CGD research has illustrated.¹²

Against this backdrop, funders—including several bilateral donors and philanthropies—have focused increasingly on advancing locally led development approaches. At the 2022 Effective Development Cooperation Summit, for example, a group of 15 bilateral donors—including the US Agency for International Development (USAID); the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; Canada; Denmark; and Korea—committed to advancing locally led development and empowering local development partners to promote long-term sustainability and impact.¹³ While these commitments are yielding slow progress in the localization of project implementation, locally led evaluation and evidence generation often continue to be overlooked.

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- 7 Amarante, Verónica, Ronelle Burger, Grieve Chelwa, John Cockburn, Ana Kassouf, Andrew McKay, and Julieta Zurbrigg. “Underrepresentation of Developing Country Researchers in Development Research.” *Applied Economics Letters* 29, no. 17 (October 7, 2022): 1659–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504851.2021.1965528>.
 - 8 Ezeh, Alex, and Jessie Lu. “Transforming the Institutional Landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa: Considerations for Leveraging Africa’s Research Capacity to Achieve Socioeconomic Development.” CGD Policy Paper. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2019. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/transforming-institutional-landscape-sub-saharan-africa-considerations-leveraging-africa>.
 - 9 Amarante, Veronica, and Julieta Zurbrigg. “The Marginalization of Southern Researchers in Development.” *World Development Perspectives* 26 (June 1, 2022): 100428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2022.100428>.
 - 10 Institute for Development Studies. “Pathways to impactful and equitable partnerships in Research for Development: A co-created, action-learning initiative,” <https://www.ids.ac.uk/projects/pathways-to-impactful-and-equitable-partnerships-in-research-for-development-a-co-created-action-learning-initiative/>.
 - 11 Taddese, Abeba. “Meeting Policymakers Where They Are: Evidence-to-Policy and Practice Partnership Models.” Center for Global Development, August 2021. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/meeting-policymakers-where-they-are-background-paper.pdf>.
 - 12 Kaufman, Julia, Amanda Glassman, Ruth Levine, and Janeen Madan Keller. *Breakthrough to Policy Use: Reinvigorating Impact Evaluation for Global Development*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2022. <https://pubs.cgdev.org/evidence-to-impact/1-progress-and-challenges/progress/index.html>.
 - 13 Norad. “USAID, Norad and partners to empower local development partners to promote long-term sustainability and impact on community.” December 13, 2022. <https://www.norad.no/aktuelt/nyheter/2022/usa-id-norad-and-partners-to-empower-local-development-partners-to-promote-long-term-sustainability-and-impact-on-community/>; USAID. “Donor Statement on Supporting Locally Led Development.” December 13, 2022. <https://www.usaid.gov/localization/donor-statement-on-supporting-locally-led-development>.

Nonetheless, there are encouraging signs on the horizon for this agenda. As recognition of the benefits of locally immersed research and evidence-to-policy partnerships grows, some donors have sought to support locally driven, policy-responsive research. For instance, USAID's new Evidence Localization Initiative aims to foster partnerships with local institutions, including African think tanks and research organizations, and regional evidence networks, and to streamline opportunities for the agency to advance locally led program evaluations and meet learning and evidence needs, including through its missions.¹⁴

Complementary efforts include:

- J-PAL's African Scholars Program, which provides funding and training for African researchers to conduct evaluations;¹⁵
- CEGA's Collaboration for Inclusive Development Research, which aims to assess the current state of inclusion for African scholars in impact evaluation research;¹⁶
- CEGA's Global Networks programs (including the East Africa Social Science Translation Collaborative, Development Impact West Africa, and the Working Group on African Political Economy), which invest in research opportunities and training for LMIC-based scholars and currently seed the Network of Impact Evaluation Researchers in Africa (NIERA);¹⁷
- the Partnership for Economic Policy's research and funding model, which offers grant funding and technical support for co-produced research projects led by local researchers in collaboration with key government and nongovernment policy stakeholders;¹⁸
- the World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) group, which conducts impact evaluations with a co-production model designed to involve local partners;¹⁹
- the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems (PEERSS) initiative, which convenes local research partners in regional clusters to learn from each other and collaborate on advancing evidence use in policy; and
- the International Centre for Evaluation and Development's ALL-IN program, among many others.²⁰

As new funders explore how to expand and build upon these nascent efforts, leverage low- and middle-income country government funding, and encourage a new era of evidence-informed decision-making to improve and save lives, more information on the impact evaluation landscape

14 Madan Keller, Janeen, Julia Kaufman, and Amanda Glassman. "A New Evidence Localization Initiative at USAID." Center for Global Development blog, May 1, 2023. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/new-evidence-localization-initiative-usaid>.

15 J-PAL. "J-PAL's African Scholars Program," <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/page/j-pals-african-scholars-program>.

16 Center for Effective Global Action. "Collaboration for Inclusive Development Research," <https://cega.berkeley.edu/initiative/cidr/>.

17 Center for Effective Global Action. "Global Networks," <https://cega.berkeley.edu/theme/global-networks/>.

18 Partnership for Economic Policy. "Our approach," <https://www.pep-net.org/approach>.

19 The World Bank. "DIME Overview," <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/dime/overview>.

20 "Opportunities for African and global south graduate students and scholars," https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E7tLbAve7G4BEg4Qeg065H_nbrsHYRvR/edit.

and partnership opportunities in African countries and beyond can provide useful insights. A recent scan of evidence-informed policymaking in East and West Africa from 2015 to the present emphasizes the lack of coordination among different groups in the evidence-informed policy ecosystem and the need for greater collaboration across siloes and practice areas.²¹

This landscape analysis is intended to inform new and emerging funders, facilitate increased coordination and networking, and advance community-building efforts to shift agenda-setting power and resources to researchers and organizations well positioned to put evidence in the hands of decision-makers willing to use it. Public resources and databases, such as this one, can help to build more coherence and connection in the evidence-informed policy space, surfacing opportunities for collaboration and engagement among researchers, implementers, policymakers, and funders in diverse communities of practice.²²

III. Scope

While acknowledging that impact evaluation is only one part of a broader evidence and knowledge system that captures relevant and timely information for development policy decision-making, CGD's NET Policy Impact Working Group focused on impact evaluation as an approach uniquely suited to estimating the *net attributable* impact of a policy, program, or intervention. Similarly, this landscaping exercise aims to capture organizations with impact evaluation capacity rather than accounting for the entire universe of organizations in the evidence-informed policymaking ecosystem that generates or translates evidence.

Further, it is meant to build on, update, and serve as a complement to existing databases and scoping efforts, including those previously compiled by On Think Tanks (OTT), the Africa Centre for Evidence (ACE), and past efforts by CGD and partners.²³ The scoping study conducted by ACE from 2018 to 2019 was particularly valuable, having identified 1,520 unique African researchers who have authored impact evaluation publications and 144 organizations with impact evaluation capacity that are

21 "Landscape Scan of Evidence Informed Policymaking in East & West Africa: Trends and Opportunities from 2015 to Today." Dalberg, June 2023. <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/EIP-Landscape-Scan-English.pdf>.

22 Chibwana, Chris, Chris Maloney, and Ousseynou Ngom. "Key takeaways from the Evidence-Informed Policymaking strategy's evaluation and landscape scan." William and Flora Hewlett Foundation blog, June 6, 2023. <https://hewlett.org/key-takeaways-from-the-evidence-informed-policymaking-strategys-evaluation-and-landscape-scan/>; Hoppe, Bruce, Sarah Lucas, and Claire Reinelt. "Supporting Evidence-Informed Policymaking: A Case Study in Visualizing Twitter Networks." March 27, 2019. <http://connectiveassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Supporting-the-Growth-of-Evidence-Informed-Policymaking.pdf>.

23 On Think Tanks. "Open Think Tank Directory," <https://onthinktanks.org/open-think-tank-directory/>; Erasmus, Yvonne, and Sunet Jordaan. "Scoping study of impact evaluation capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa." Johannesburg: Africa Centre for Evidence, September 2019. https://aenweb.blob.core.windows.net/aenweb/files/files/Scoping_study_of_impact_evaluation_capacity_in_Sub-Saharan_Africa.pdf; Taddese, Abeba. "Meeting Policymakers Where They Are: Evidence-to-Policy and Practice Partnership Models." Center for Global Development, August 2021. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/meeting-policymakers-where-they-are-background-paper.pdf>.

headquartered in Africa.²⁴ Taken together, these findings indicate widespread capacity among African researchers with African affiliations in conducting impact evaluations.²⁵

Building on these earlier efforts, CGD's landscaping exercise also takes stock of whether an organization has previously received US government funding, including from USAID. This information sheds light on past and current partnerships with US agencies amid the recent focus on locally led development and evidence use in foreign aid.

This landscaping focuses solely on organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa-based organizations continue to receive relatively modest donor funding and boast considerable potential and momentum for expansion and growth in policy-responsive research. The analysis could be expanded to additional regions in the future. Further, the landscaping does not include organizations with a global or multi-regional presence, though these play a critical role in evaluation generation, use, and peer learning, fostering evidence-to-policy partnerships, and employing locally immersed researchers as part of the evidence ecosystem in African countries. Another limitation is that contextual knowledge and local immersion are not linked solely to geography. Many in the diaspora can also provide valuable empirical insights for policy but are not captured by this analysis.

IV. Methodological approach

The landscaping study involved a multi-stage desk review to identify organizations in Africa with impact evaluation capacity.²⁶ This included identifying and reviewing existing scoping efforts (e.g., databases compiled by ACE and OTT), analysis of network platforms with member organizations that conduct impact evaluations (e.g., NIERA and the Africa Evidence Network), conference agendas (e.g., the Africa Evidence Summit), and discussions with development partners and peer research organizations.

USAspending, the official open-source database of US federal spending information, was reviewed to determine whether an organization had received US government awards. USAspending was also used to identify additional organizations for inclusion.

Impact evaluation capacity was determined by public or private reference to the organization having conducted an impact evaluation or providing training to conduct an impact evaluation. Organizations that have engaged in impact evaluation capacity strengthening activities but

24 Africa Centre for Evidence's 2019 scoping study found a total of 173 organizations that conduct or teach about impact evaluations in Africa, including organizations with a global presence that are headquartered outside of Africa.

25 Erasmus, Yvonne, and Sunet Jordaan. "Scoping study of impact evaluation capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa." Johannesburg: Africa Centre for Evidence, September 2019. https://aenweb.blob.core.windows.net/aenweb/files/files/Scoping_study_of_impact_evaluation_capacity_in_Sub-Saharan_Africa.pdf.

26 The information compiled from our landscaping review is up to date as of June 2023.

have not yet carried out an impact evaluation are also included in the landscaping. For additional details and definitions, please see the Appendix.

V. Findings and insights from the landscaping

The organizations identified and included in the landscaping are available in an online spreadsheet, available here: <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/database-impact-evaluation-capacity-ssa.xlsx>.

Looking across the set of organizations, four insights shed light on the current state of impact evaluation capacity in sub-Saharan Africa and the potential for greater collaboration with the US government.

1. The number of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with impact evaluation capacity has increased in recent years.

The landscaping exercise identified 181 unique African organizations²⁷ with impact evaluation capacity—a 26 percent increase from ACE’s 2019 study, which identified 144 organizations with impact evaluation capacity based in Africa.²⁸ The ACE study also examined specific impact evaluation publications, finding a steady increase in African authors with African affiliations.²⁹

Most of the 37 newly added organizations existed in 2019 but only recently developed impact evaluation capacity. Further, most of these organizations (n = 23) are in East Africa (more below). They are primarily independent think tanks/NGOs (n = 17) and universities (n = 16), and a small handful are government-embedded entities (n = 4).

2. Organizations with impact evaluation capacity are distributed across the region, with some concentration in East Africa.

The landscaping found that the headquarters of organizations with impact evaluation capacity in Africa are distributed across the continent. The top five countries with the most organizations are South Africa (11 percent), Kenya (10 percent), Ethiopia (7 percent), Tanzania (7 percent), and

27 Organizations affiliated with parent institutions were not factored into the findings in this paper. For example, Makerere University School of Health and Makerere University School of Statistics and Planning are only counted as one unique organization: Makerere University. The landscaping spreadsheet includes information on impact evaluation capacity of subsidiary organizations.

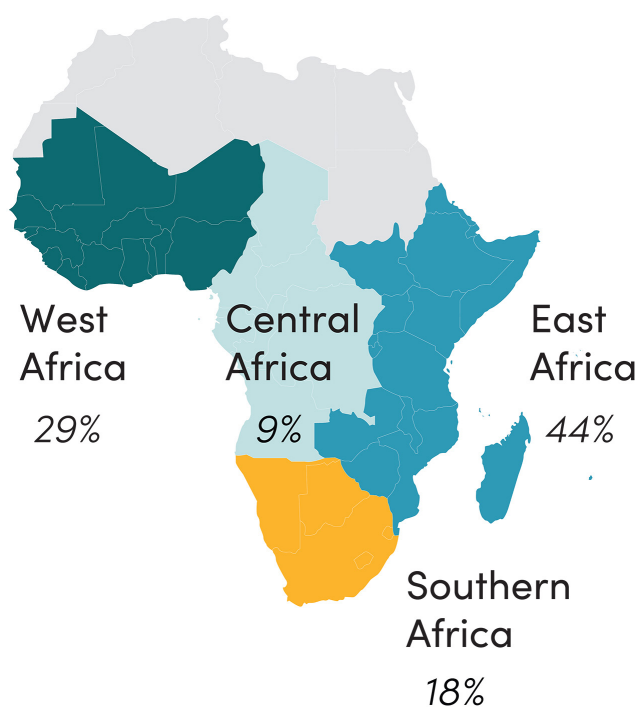
28 CGD’s landscaping and analysis assume that the organizations that ACE identified in 2019 have maintained their impact evaluation capacity. This could be further investigated as part of future research (see below section on ideas for further research).

29 Erasmus, Yvonne, and Sunet Jordaan. “Scoping study of impact evaluation capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.” Johannesburg: Africa Centre for Evidence, September 2019. https://aenweb.blob.core.windows.net/aenweb/files/files/Scoping_study_of_impact_evaluation_capacity_in_Sub-Saharan_Africa.pdf#page=12.

Uganda (6 percent). While the largest share of organizations remains concentrated in East Africa (44 percent, n = 80), a significant portion (29 percent, n = 52) is based in West Africa, reflecting growing interest and capacity in the region (see Figure 1).

The 2019 ACE study identified a concentration of impact evaluation capacity in Southern and Eastern Africa (1,146 individual authors across 17 countries), compared to 337 authors across 14 countries in Western Africa. The ACE study notes that Francophone universities and think tanks have been historically disadvantaged when engaging in international development research fora and pursuing funding opportunities. Dedicated resources for organizations in Francophone West Africa are essential to harness growing capacity in the region.

FIGURE 1. Geographic distribution of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with evaluation capacity

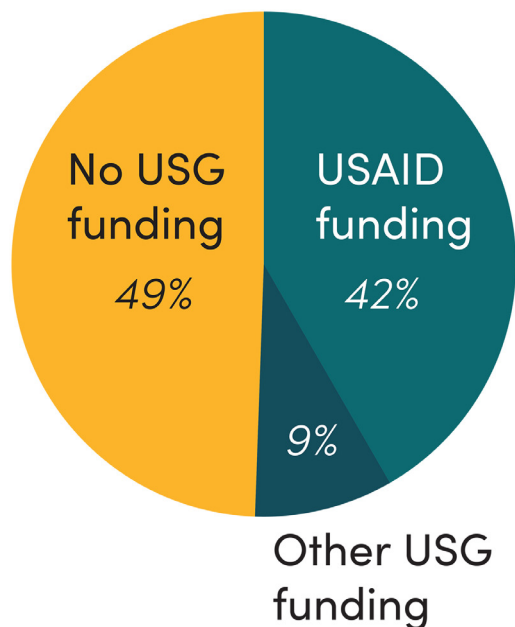


3. Over half of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with impact evaluation capacity have received US government support.

Of the 181 unique organizations identified in the landscaping, 51 percent (n = 92) have received funding from the US government, predominantly from USAID, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of State. Forty-two percent of the organizations (n = 76)

have received USAID funding, primarily via sub-awards or sub-contracts from prime partners (Figure 2). This finding suggests many of these organizations may be able to scale up collaborations with US agencies. More specifically, the landscaping sheds light on the potential for USAID to work more directly with these entities, contributing to USAID’s localization percentage targets—where in the past, the agency engaged only through US-based or international prime partners. These organizations can help advance the goals of USAID’s Evidence Localization Initiative to generate more policy-responsive, locally immersed evidence that helps fill the information gaps and needs of USAID and its partners.

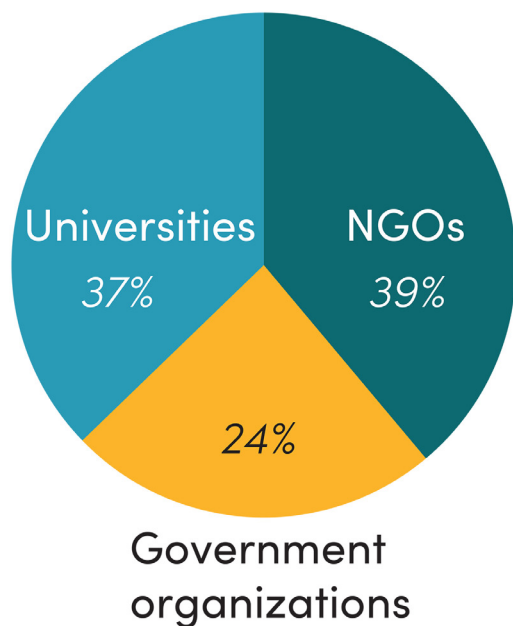
FIGURE 2. Organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with impact evaluation capacity that have currently or previously received US government funding



4. Different types of organizations have impact evaluation capacity, with a relatively even split among independent think tanks/NGOs, academic institutions, and government-embedded or adjacent entities.

Of the 181 organizations identified through the landscaping, 39 percent (n = 70) are independent NGOs/think tanks, 37 percent (n = 67) are universities, and 24 percent (n = 44) are government-embedded or adjacent entities (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Types of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with impact evaluation capacity



Several of the organizations classified as independent NGOs/think tanks are based at universities. When accounting for these, the percentage of organizations with impact evaluation capacity connected to academic institutions reaches 41 percent. CGD's NET Policy Impact Working Group explored the implications of different institutional arrangements, highlighting that current research funding models contribute to misaligned incentives between policymaker needs and academic researchers.³⁰ For instance, the incentives that underpin academic research help motivate valuable knowledge production in the public domain but can also limit policy relevance and use. Depending on the university or department, academic researchers may have professional incentives to look for novel and untried projects with a greater likelihood of being published in peer-reviewed journals. In contrast, it may be more challenging to undertake and publish studies that focus on typical policymaker questions about costs, context, and implementation. Some African researchers also work for both universities and separate NGOs or consultancy firms, further complicating incentive structures. More funding is needed for research that directly responds to near- and medium-term decision-making needs and fills information gaps along the entire causal chain for greater government use, regardless of the specific institutional arrangement of the evidence producer.

30 Kaufman, Julia, Amanda Glassman, Ruth Levine, and Janeen Madan Keller. "Recommendation 1: Design Evaluations That Start from the Policy Questions and Decision Space." In *Breakthrough to Policy Use: Reinvigorating Impact Evaluation for Global Development*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2022. <https://pubs.cgdev.org/evidence-to-impact/2-recommendations/recommendation-1-policy-question-and-decision-space/index.html>.

VI. Ideas for further research

While this landscaping is an initial effort to take stock of impact evaluation capacity and the prevalence of US support, many relevant areas of inquiry remain, including:

- **Trends over time.** This landscaping provides a snapshot of impact evaluation organizations in the current moment and thus provides limited insights on trends over time. While a comparison with prior scoping efforts surfaces some insights on overall growth in the number of organizations with impact evaluation capacity, a deeper comparative analysis could help identify more detailed trends, including countries, regions, or sectors that have seen more or less growth over time.
- **Key funding information.** Additional analysis should take stock of existing funders and funding amounts for impact evaluation studies and related evidence activities. Details about whether funding includes unrestricted support could also be informative. This would complement the information available in 3ie's Development Evidence Portal on the funders of specific impact evaluation studies, as well as existing lists of funding opportunities, and help identify opportunities for more funder collaboration, coordination, and co-financing.³¹ Unpacking approximate funding amounts could shed light on resources actually provided to local researchers for impact evaluation, other research activities, and capacity development, as well as gaps in funding access for specific sectors, regions, or groups.³² This would feed into CEGA's CIDR research agenda, which focuses on higher education, training and mentorship, publications and co-authorship, inclusive funding, and policy impact.³³ Looking ahead, a monthly newsletter on funding and support opportunities for relevant research and evidence organizations in sub-Saharan Africa could be developed and distributed to relevant research organizations.
- **Sector focus of identified organizations.** Further analysis could highlight neglected areas of study with high-value decision-making needs and substantial potential returns in the form of improved outcomes—such as taxation. According to Dalberg's recent scan of evidence-informed policymaking in East and West Africa since 2015, funders have increasingly pivoted from providing general support for evidence-informed policy and research institutions to focusing on evidence for specific development challenges.³⁴

31 Center for Global Development. "Impact Evaluation by the Numbers," 2022. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Impact-Eval-By-Numbers.pdf>; International Initiative for Impact Evaluation. "3ie Development Evidence Portal," <https://developmentevidence.3ieimpact.org/>; "Opportunities for African and global south graduate students and scholars," https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E7tLbAve7G4BEg4Qeg065H_nbrsHYRvR/edit.

32 Baobeid, Anwaar, Tara Faghani-Hamadani, Sara Sauer, Yap Boum, Bethany L. Hedt-Gauthier, Nicholas Neufeld, Jackline Odhiambo, et al. "Gender Equity in Health Research Publishing in Africa." *BMJ Global Health* 7, no. 7 (July 2022): e008821. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-008821>.

33 Ranganath, Maya, and Amy Shipow. "Shaping the Future of Inclusion in Global Development Research." Center for Effective Global Action blog, April 11, 2022. <https://medium.com/center-for-effective-global-action/shaping-the-future-of-inclusion-in-global-development-research-76f9763c208a>.

34 "Landscape Scan of Evidence Informed Policymaking in East & West Africa: Trends and Opportunities from 2015 to Today." Dalberg, June 2023. <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/EIP-Landscape-Scan-English.pdf>.

A deeper dive into the sectors each organization focuses on could be helpful for funders interested in specific sectoral or thematic areas, helping “align and leverage other sector- and issue-specific resources to advance evidence-informed policy goals.”³⁵

- **Organizational staff size.** The number of staff with impact evaluation capacity could be used to assess longer-term institutional capacity and potential implications for talent management and retention.³⁶ A related Dalberg analysis notes that while large numbers of African researchers have been trained in impact evaluation and evidence-informed policy in recent years, these researchers often face challenges finding “strong institutional homes” for their work.³⁷ A closer look at organizational size and staff capacity could shed more light on the institutional strength and maturity of the included organizations.
- **Organizational record in and potential for partnerships with policymakers.** As proposed by the NET Policy Impact Working Group, a community of practice on evidence partnerships could help develop detailed partnership funding guidelines and advance further research and shared learning on best practices for partnerships.³⁸ This group could also undertake research on how best to assess partnerships, adjust partnership approaches based on the specific policy needs at hand, and assess government progress towards institutionalizing a culture of evidence use. These research efforts could inform an investment case on why and how funders should support partnership building as an important intervention in and of itself as part of a commitment to putting power in the hands of those who best understand specific local contexts.

VII. Conclusion

The evidence-informed policy ecosystem has evolved significantly in recent years, with growth in the number of impact evaluations, the community of researchers and organizations in low- and middle-income countries conducting these studies, and the collaborations between researchers, knowledge intermediaries,³⁹ and policymakers. Locally immersed researchers can help increase the policy use and utility of impact evaluation and related evidence, bringing critical insight into the

35 Ibid.

36 Ezeh, Alex, and Jessie Lu. “Transforming the Institutional Landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa: Considerations for Leveraging Africa’s Research Capacity to Achieve Socioeconomic Development.” CGD Policy Paper. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2019. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/transforming-institutional-landscape-sub-saharan-africa-considerations-leveraging-africa>.

37 “Evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation’s Evidence Informed Policymaking Strategy: An evaluation of Hewlett Foundation processes and EIP grantee progress from 2018–2022.” Dalberg, June 2023. <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/EIP-Strategy-Evaluation-English.pdf>.

38 Kaufman, Julia, Amanda Glassman, Ruth Levine, and Janeen Madan Keller. “Recommendation 3: Advance Locally Grounded Evidence-to-Policy Partnerships.” In *Breakthrough to Policy Use: Reinvigorating Impact Evaluation for Global Development*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2022. <https://pubs.cgdev.org/evidence-to-impact/2-recommendations/recommendation-3-evidence-to-policy-partnerships/index.html>.

39 Taddese, Abeba. “Meeting Policymakers Where They Are: Evidence-to-Policy and Practice Partnership Models.” Center for Global Development, August 2021. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/meeting-policymakers-where-they-are-background-paper.pdf#page=9>.

priorities of policymakers and windows of opportunity to inform decision-making. Funders should consider this, particularly as many locally immersed research organizations encounter chronic funding challenges and other institutional and professional barriers.

Amid increased donor commitments to locally led development and recognition of the benefits of policy-responsive and locally led research, new opportunities have emerged to support and elevate organizations with impact evaluation capacity in sub-Saharan Africa. CGD's landscaping of these organizations is intended to build greater understanding of the existing organizational landscape.

The landscaping exercise found the number of organizations headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with impact evaluation capacity has increased over recent years. These organizations are distributed across the region, with the largest concentration in East Africa. A significant portion has received or currently receives US government support, though often indirectly, providing potential openings for deepening partnerships with locally led organizations. Finally, organizations with impact evaluation capacity vary in type—comprising independent think tanks/NGOs, academic institutions, and government-embedded or adjacent entities.

To learn more about a specific organization included in the landscaping, readers are encouraged to follow the links in the spreadsheet for additional details.

Appendix

Landscaping Key	Definition and Categorization Criteria
Organization full name (acronym)	Full name and acronym (if applicable) of the organization.
HQ country	Country where the organization's headquarters is located.
Region	Region of Africa where the organization's headquarters is located.
Type of entity	Notes whether organizations are think tanks/NGOs, universities (both public and private), or research units embedded in government. Research organizations embedded within universities were classified as think tanks/NGOs (e.g. Centre for Social Research (CSR) at the University of Malawi was classified as a think tank/NGO).
Affiliation	Notes if an organization is affiliated or embedded within another organization/entities (such as a university). If it is not affiliated with any other entity, it is listed as independent.
Location/reach of work	Characterizes an organization's geographic focus based on publicly available information; this may not be up-to-date or accurate, depending on the information available online. If no regional focus is clearly stated on the organization's website, the reach of work is listed as the HQ country. In cases where we were able to confirm regional work through publicly available information, but the organization does not state a specific regional focus, the reach of work is listed as "Africa (regional)." If the organization explicitly labeled a region as an emphasis of its work, the region was listed in parentheses (e.g. "Africa (Southern Africa)").
Link to org website	Links to the organization's main webpage or "about" page.
Source for impact evaluation conducted	Notes if organizations have past and/or current experience conducting impact evaluations, based on publicly available information referencing their conduct of an impact evaluation. This column may not reflect the full extent of an organization's impact evaluation capacity. In cases where multiple sources provided evidence of an organization conducting impact evaluations, one source is listed.
Source for involvement in impact evaluation training	Notes if organizations have past and/or current experience delivering or receiving training in impact evaluations, using publicly available information. This column may not cover the full extent of an organization's impact evaluation training capacity or initial capacity to conduct impact evaluations.
USAID awardee?	Results in this column are primarily determined by consulting USASpending.gov for published evidence of organizations or affiliated organizations receiving past (up to FY2008) and current awards from USAID, either as the prime recipient or through a sub-award. In some instances, publicly available information revealed partnerships between USAID and the organization, which were referenced in the absence of award data from USASpending.gov.
USAID prime award(s)	Counts how many unique prime awards an organization received from USAID.

Landscaping Key	Definition and Categorization Criteria
Other USAID sub-award(s)	Counts how many unique sub-awards an organization received from USAID.
Source for USAID partnership	Lists a single information source for an organization's USAID partnership (to support any entry of "Yes" in the column "USAID partnership") and is generally linked to the most recent USA Spending award data. In instances where evidence of a partnership was not evident from USA Spending data, but is available elsewhere online, the link to that online resource is included.
Other USG agency awardee?	These columns were included in the landscaping analysis to note any additional evidence of funding from the US government. The main purpose is to determine if the US government has funded an organization in any capacity (particularly when there is no evidence of a USAID award). The columns count how many unique prime and sub-awards an organization received from US government agencies outside of USAID. The "Source of USG partnership" links to a single resource on the organization's USG partnership.
USG agency	
Other USG prime award(s)	
Other USG sub-award(s)	
Source of evidence for USG partnership	
USG awardee?	Results in this column determine if an organization was marked as a "Yes" to receiving a USAID award or another USG agency award.