



EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICYMAKING STRATEGY 2024-2027

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The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation invests in creative thinkers and problem-solvers working to ensure people, communities, and the planet can flourish. Together with our partners, we are harnessing society’s collective capacity to solve our toughest problems — from the existential threat of climate change to persistent and pervasive inequities to attacks on democracy itself. A nonpartisan philanthropy, the Hewlett Foundation has made grants in the U.S. and globally for nearly six decades, based on an approach that emphasizes long-term support, collaboration, and trust.

The Gender Equity and Governance Program seeks to foster inclusive societies so that all people, and especially women and girls, are able to fulfill their life aspirations. Focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, Mexico, and the U.S., we make grants to expand women’s reproductive and economic choices, increase governments’ responsiveness to the people they serve, and improve policymaking through the effective use of evidence.

The team of Hewlett staff that informed this refreshed strategy included: Christopher Chibwana, Christopher Maloney, Jodie Clark, Mallika Dutt, May Aguiar, Ousseynou Ngom, Amy Arbretton, Carla Aguirre, Lori Grange, and Pooja Raval. We have made this strategy and related evaluations public to partners, funders, and civil society as part of the foundation’s commitment to openness, learning, and transparency. A memo detailing this refreshed strategy was shared with the Hewlett Foundation’s board in November 2023.

Acknowledgements

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Cover: A Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) tax agent inputs data on to their phone while visiting a store in the Eastleigh district of Nairobi, Kenya, on Thursday, Oct. 19, 2023. Credit: Patrick Meinhardt/Bloomberg via Getty Images

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Executive Summary

The Hewlett Foundation's Gender Equity and Governance (GEG) Program has been dedicated to promoting Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) since 2015. Focused in East and West Africa, the goal of the EIP strategy has been to encourage policymakers to incorporate evidence into their decision-making processes. Grantmaking efforts have centered on three key areas:

- Providing policymakers better access to evidence for decision making.
- Increasing their capacity and motivation to use evidence.
- Strengthening the ecosystem of organizations that facilitate the production and use of relevant evidence by governments.

To date, the grantees supported by the EIP team have made progress in increasing the availability and accessibility of evidence to policymakers across Africa. Grants have facilitated the creation of impact evaluations and alternative data sources, and EIP grantees have built strong relationships with policymakers through various initiatives, including evidence help desks, global partnerships on data governance, and networks to promote use of innovative data sources. Our grantmaking has also helped build a growing ecosystem of data and evidence organizations working with African governments that are based on the continent, facilitating greater use of evidence in local contexts.

Based on an [evaluation](#) of these efforts informed by a [scan](#) of the broader landscape, we have revised and updated the EIP strategy. Our overarching goal remains largely unchanged: to promote the consistent, responsible use of data and evidence to inform and improve policymaking in East and West Africa. But our refreshed goal places greater emphasis on ensuring that data and evidence are inclusive and contextually relevant; on recognizing that evidence is power and working to reduce inappropriate imbalances; and on doing more to address growing concerns respecting data governance.

Our work comprises three interconnected efforts:

- **Support Africa-based evidence organizations.** We can best achieve our goals for African governments and policymakers by fostering relationships with Africa-based evidence organizations with strong government ties. Our support will include flexible funding to enable these organizations to improve and expand their operations.
- **Build policymaker capacity and incentives to use data and evidence.** We will support efforts to ensure that policymakers have access to reliable data and evidence, as well as the incentive and skills to interpret, use, and govern it effectively and responsibly.
- **Strengthen the EIP ecosystem.** To break down silos within the evidence and data field and promote collaboration among diverse stakeholders, we will support platforms, networks, events, and working groups for sharing knowledge and best practices. We also plan to coordinate with other funders to increase and improve funding and support for evidence organizations.

Across all this work, we will keep an eye out for unfair power imbalances to ensure the inclusion of marginalized voices in evidence generation and use; this will include working closely with the foundation's Inclusive Governance team.

I. Introduction

Governments need data and evidence to make decisions and implement programs that effectively, equitably, and justly allocate scarce resources to meet people’s social and economic needs. For this reason, in 2015 the Hewlett Foundation launched a grantmaking portfolio to promote Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP), with a focus in East and West Africa. To advance this goal, we funded global and African research organizations, think tanks, universities, and civil society organizations that partner with governments. We focused on establishing conditions for policymakers in East and West Africa to make effective use of data and evidence to inform their policy decisions. When the strategy was last revisited, in 2018, we identified four conditions that we deemed critical for this purpose: Evidence needs to be available and accessible to policymakers; policymakers must be motivated to use this evidence; policymakers must have the capacity to use evidence effectively; and policymakers need productive relationships with the organizations producing and analyzing the relevant data and evidence.

Recognizing the enormous breadth and complexity of issues and areas that might be informed by better evidence use, we chose to focus our grantmaking on three, mutually reinforcing pathways: (1) supporting specific policy and program changes that have potential for broader influence (whether shaping priorities, enhancing programs, or deciding whether and how to modify underperforming programs); (2) promoting systemic changes in how policy decisions are made, such as improving data access, establishing evidence requirements for budget allocation, and increasing individual incentives for evidence use; and (3) building an EIP “field,” by connecting actors to share their experiences, publishing research about EIP practices, and showcasing the benefits of evidence use. Since 2018, we have allocated \$120 million to more than 55 grantee organizations.

Using evidence to make better policy is a key part of achieving the goals of every strategy under the **Hewlett Foundation’s Gender Equity and Governance (GEG) Program**, whether it be U.S. Reproductive Equity, Global Reproductive Equity, Women’s Economic Empowerment, or Inclusive Governance. In those strategies, however, better evidence and evidence use is but one means to their broader end, as opposed to the end itself. EIP’s contribution to GEG is thus twofold: to strengthen the overall evidence ecosystem in GEG’s geographies of interest — something desirable in and of itself — while also enabling the policy engagement work of the other strategies. Over the next three years, identifying and refining these distinctions and complementarities will be a key question, not just for the EIP team, but for the GEG program as a whole.

In September 2022, we undertook a planned refresh of the current strategy to gauge our contributions toward the goal of enhancing systematic evidence use by governments. Through this process, we learned that EIP has made progress in increasing the availability and accessibility of evidence to policymakers across Africa. EIP grantees have built strong relationships with policymakers through various initiatives and our grantmaking has helped build a growing ecosystem of data and evidence organizations working with African governments that are based on the continent, facilitating greater use of evidence in local contexts.

This progress notwithstanding, there is still a long way to go to institutionalize data and evidence use for policymaking. Many policymakers still lack access to data and evidence or the technical capacity to use it effectively. Where data and evidence are available, grantees report that policymakers use it selectively based on political expediency and established agendas.

Based on these findings and informed by a scan of the broader landscape, we will shift our EIP strategy to focus on supporting Africa-based evidence organizations with strong government ties; building policymakers' capacity and incentives to use data and evidence; and strengthening the EIP ecosystem. Our overarching goal remains largely unchanged, but we are placing greater emphasis on ensuring that data and evidence are inclusive and contextually relevant; on recognizing that evidence is power and working to reduce inappropriate imbalances; and on doing more to address growing concerns respecting data governance. Across all this work, we will keep an eye out for unfair power imbalances to ensure the inclusion of marginalized voices in evidence generation and use.

Our approach to strategy development

In September 2022, per standard Hewlett practice, we engaged an independent third-party consultant — Dalberg Advisors — to conduct a retrospective evaluation of the previous five years of the EIP grantmaking, including a broad landscape scan to identify trends from the last seven years. The evaluation served as a learning device so we could build on the experience and lessons learned from the important work of our grantees.

The evaluation was made difficult by the fact that we had not established either a clear baseline or a clear set of progress targets or indicators at the outset. Nor, as a result, had we collected good data from which to assess how effective our grantmaking had been in advancing the goals we identified in 2018.

The evaluators nevertheless did their best to understand whether and to what extent our efforts had improved conditions for the regular use of evidence by policymakers. Data to inform the evaluation was collected through an online grantee survey and interviews with focus groups, government officials in selected countries in East and West Africa, and other external stakeholders.

The landscape scan aimed to better understand the current and future state of evidence-informed policymaking, particularly given subsequent shocks to the system like the COVID-19 pandemic, the escalating impacts of climate change, and rising authoritarianism. In addition, we sought to use the scan to identify gaps and opportunities for future funding.

II. Looking back: What we have learned with our partners

A. Key evaluation findings

[The evaluation of our previous EIP strategy](#) revealed several key findings:

- 1. Access to data and evidence has improved, but, given the sheer scale of the problem, wide gaps remain.** We made grants to increase the availability and accessibility to policymakers of a wide range of data and evidence, but fully a third of our grant portfolio focused on impact evaluations. With some success, there was an increase in the number of organizations doing impact evaluations. As important, and more so than in the past, their evaluations responded to policymakers' actual needs. We also successfully promoted an increase in the availability of new and alternative types of data, including satellite and mobile network data. Grantees helped policymakers access and use this new data through evidence help desks, rapid response units, embedded learning partnerships, and regular forums with government officials. This progress notwithstanding, there is still a long way to go, especially in regards to the generation and use of innovative data sources.
- 2. The capacity and motivation of policymakers to use evidence have improved, but only in distinct pockets; work also remains on ensuring such evidence is used responsibly.** An unexpected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was an increase in demand for evidence by policymakers. Demonstrating the benefits of supporting improved relationships with governments, EIP grantees were called upon for help on a wide range of policy questions — everything from social distancing to safely reopening schools and more. But we should not make too much of these anecdotes, as the examples are still limited. In part, this is because many policymakers remain skeptical about using new data sources. But it is chiefly a matter of incentives, and grantees report that policymakers pick and choose when to engage with data and evidence based on political convenience and established agendas.
- 3. Many policymakers still lack either access to data and evidence or the technical capacity to use it effectively.** In the absence of efficient national statistical and data systems, even policymakers who value and want to use data and evidence are often unable to access it. And many lack the technical capacity to use what data and evidence is accessible.
- 4. The EIP field in Africa is far more robust, with significant opportunities to do more.** Our strategy supported the emergence of a field of organizations that could and would partner with governments in East and West Africa. This included grants to global organizations that set norms governing data and evidence use, such as our support to the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), which helped refine methods for applying randomized control trials to policy decisions. Our grantees also played a leading role in establishing global and regional norms around data governance, such as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, which drove the High Impact Initiative on the Power of Data at the 2023 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Action Weekend.

Over time, however, we increasingly focused on African organizations that could develop and promote the use of evidence tailored to the local contexts in which policymakers make decisions. The evaluation found that our grants helped grow and strengthen these organizations, especially because of their unrestricted nature. This, in turn, enhanced their influence — improving relationships between evidence producers and policymakers and increasing the value that policymakers put on data and evidence. Building relationships between evidence producers and policymakers has been an important driver of progress in all focus areas.

B. Key landscape scan findings

Our scan of the EIP landscape in Africa yielded several key findings.

1. The influence of African research institutions is growing. Bilateral donors and private foundations have been actively funding and strengthening African research institutions, connecting them to global EIP resources, and building their expertise in data collection, analysis, and use. Networks and peer South-South learning have also played a critical role in strengthening African research institutions, with organizations in the Global North supporting their development.

2. Policymakers want to improve their use of data and evidence. Policymakers in East and West Africa increasingly recognize the value of new research methodologies. Suppliers of innovative new data sources (geospatial data, drone data, artificial intelligence, etc.) are working closely with governments to build technical capacity and demonstrate the usefulness of their data. Policymaker demand for data and evidence has increased, and governments are engaging more with nongovernmental intermediaries and suppliers of evidence, forming partnerships with private sector companies and research institutions and working with NGOs to strengthen their data ecosystems.

3. There is a growing movement for improved data governance. Various stakeholders are pushing for data privacy laws and regulations, driving national-level conversations about better data governance as it relates to evidence-informed policymaking. Citizen advocates and media are important contributors to these debates. Finding a balanced approach to better data governance, while still maximizing data's potential for better policymaking, has become increasingly important.

4. There are nevertheless significant barriers to further progress. Chronic underinvestment in national statistical systems and data infrastructure, limited technical capacity among policymakers, competition for funding needed for other pressing crises and development challenges, and the complexity of the policymaking process all pose major challenges. So do political incentives, which (as noted in the discussion above) often lead policymakers to prioritize outcomes driven by other considerations. Making matters worse, most funders focus on sector- or issue-specific projects — limiting the ability of grantees to respond flexibly to the rapidly changing needs and priorities of policymakers. Finally, the absence of a common vision among actors in the EIP space impedes collaboration and limits overall impact.

5. Opportunities exist to overcome these barriers. Most obviously, we can strategically convene grantees and other actors across silos to share best practices, promote collaboration, and establish partnerships to address common challenges. Other ways to elevate data and evidence as tools for policymaking include: citizen advocacy to create political incentives to base policymaking decisions on objective evidence; better leveraging sector- and issue-specific resources, such as data for development funding and data governance initiatives; and replicating successful relationship-driven models from other fields. Catalytic interventions, influencing large-scale funders, and targeted investments within governments can address capacity building, policy implementation, and data infrastructure challenges.

III. Looking ahead: What we hope to accomplish with our partners

Drawing on lessons learned in the past five years, further informed by the findings of our evaluation and landscape scan, this section presents a revised goal and theory of change, together with plans for the next stage in our EIP work.

A. Revisiting the problem

It is helpful to restate the major premises that shape our understanding of the problem and opportunity in respect to the use of evidence in policymaking. The argument for making more and better use of evidence is fairly obvious, inasmuch as countries in East and West Africa are facing multiple concurrent crises that threaten to reverse development gains across the continent: Epidemics, inflation, debt, food insecurity, and climate disasters are stalling growth, straining social services, and destroying livelihoods. Most countries are behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and less than half of citizens trust their political leaders to deliver solutions.

Data and evidence can help policymakers design and implement policies that address these challenges. Evidence-informed policies have the potential to not only significantly improve people's well-being, but also to restore trust in the policymaking process. Yet policymakers do not consistently use evidence to inform their work for reasons discussed above: Data and evidence are often unavailable or inaccessible; and even when good evidence is available and accessible, policymakers often lack incentives to use it, or to use it responsibly.

On top of this, the data and evidence that are used have often been generated without including the voices and concerns of marginalized groups. The producers of data, and sometimes even its users, are often far removed from the communities that the data and evidence derive from or assess. This gives rise to a consideration we have not yet discussed — namely, the existence of power asymmetries in the production and use of data and evidence. The ability to collect or access data is a form of power, as is having the resources to analyze and present it. Those with this power can use it to advocate for their interests and to legitimize their viewpoints and agendas in ways unavailable to those who do not have similar access.

This is particularly important where data and evidence are scarce or difficult to collect, which gives even more power to those who control it. People and groups that are excluded from the evidence ecosystem are thus hampered in advocating effectively for their interests and participating fully in decision-making processes.

B. Progress and opportunities

Our support has helped nurture a growing field of African evidence organizations capable of responding to policymakers' needs for evidence. Yet, as the discussion above makes clear, obstacles remain to the routine use of evidence by governments — obstacles that require finding catalytic opportunities, coordinating with other funders, and working intentionally across different areas of the evidence-informed policymaking space.

Fortunately, we see a number of opportunities for the Hewlett Foundation to leverage its funding and experience for continued progress. These include:

- **Scaling successful African-led EIP models.** As noted above, we have already achieved some success from supporting a growing pool of African organizations capable of responding to the needs of their own governments. We see opportunities to replicate and enlarge these successful relationship-driven models — not just by directing more of our funding to these organizations, but by influencing the many other funders now adopting “localization” strategies (i.e., strategies that call for shifting resources to directly support African organizations). We can do this by sharing lessons from our own work, while promoting successful work by our grantees, and fostering African-led partnerships with evidence organizations based in the Global North.

- **Community voice.** Many stakeholders highlighted the extent to which individuals and communities across Africa have increasingly begun to generate their own data. People in local communities are recording teacher attendance, checking public water functionality, tracking the supply of medicine at public health clinics, and so on — using these data to hold governments accountable for public service provision. Data generated and owned by individuals and their communities — often referred to as “citizen-generated data” or “citizen science” — are thus an important addition to the more academic evidence that has traditionally informed policy. We see exciting opportunities to work with organizations that can translate such data for policy use, build policymaker capacity to trust and engage with this data, and support advocacy that draws on more inclusive data and evidence to enrich public policy debate.
- **Data governance.** We have already begun seeding a field of Africa-based organizations to shape a uniquely African perspective on data governance. Given continued momentum for data governance — spurred on by rapid growth in Africa’s digital economy, the ongoing spread of misinformation, and the breakneck pace of new AI-driven technology — we see significant opportunities to build on this work, including in specific policy moments in East and West Africa directly related to these issues, and by leveraging growing interest from other funders.
- **Coordination.** Grantees have expressed desire for more opportunities to learn from and coordinate with each other and with other funders, both within and across practice areas. Overcoming the tendency of funders to focus on projects and work alone will be difficult, but we believe there are rich opportunities to promote more and better coordination, starting with Hewlett Foundation GEG’s own portfolios.

C. Our refreshed EIP goal

The 2018 goal for the Evidence-Informed Policymaking strategy was:

To increase the systematic use of evidence by governments in East and West Africa to improve social and economic policies and, ultimately, lives.

The new goal of the Hewlett Foundation’s Evidence-Informed Policymaking strategy is:

To promote the consistent, responsible use of inclusive data and evidence to inform and improve policymaking in East and West Africa.

Our overarching goal remains roughly the same: to see policymakers in East and West Africa consistently rely on data and evidence to inform their policy decisions. This will, we believe, both lead to better outcomes for citizens and increase their trust in the policymaking process. But while our high-level direction remains the same, the strategy’s restated goal reflects several important shifts in nuance and direction.

1. The new goal is more explicit about the need for data and evidence to be inclusive and contextually relevant. Experience has shown that evidence is more likely to be used and much more likely to be effective if it is relevant to the local context, inclusive of local stakeholders, and an accurate reflection of the needs and aspirations of local communities.
2. Underlying the newly framed goal is frank recognition that data and evidence (like all knowledge) is a form of power. Yet power in the current evidence ecosystem is rife with imbalances: between Northern evidence organizations and their African peers, between national and local governments, between marginalized communities and elites, and between individuals and the state. Some power differentials may be sensible and productive, but often they are not. We are committed to working with grantees to identify and reduce unjust or inappropriate power imbalances, so policymakers, evidence institutions, and communities at all levels have equitable access to evidence and can engage in a fairer, more inclusive policymaking process.
3. As the availability and use of data grows, it is important that it be used responsibly. Concerns around data privacy and misinformation, for example, are pervasive. The emphasis in our goal statement on responsible use of data highlights our intention to continue to promote effective data governance — for example, appropriately balancing the value of data and evidence for policymaking with the need to protect individual rights and privacy.

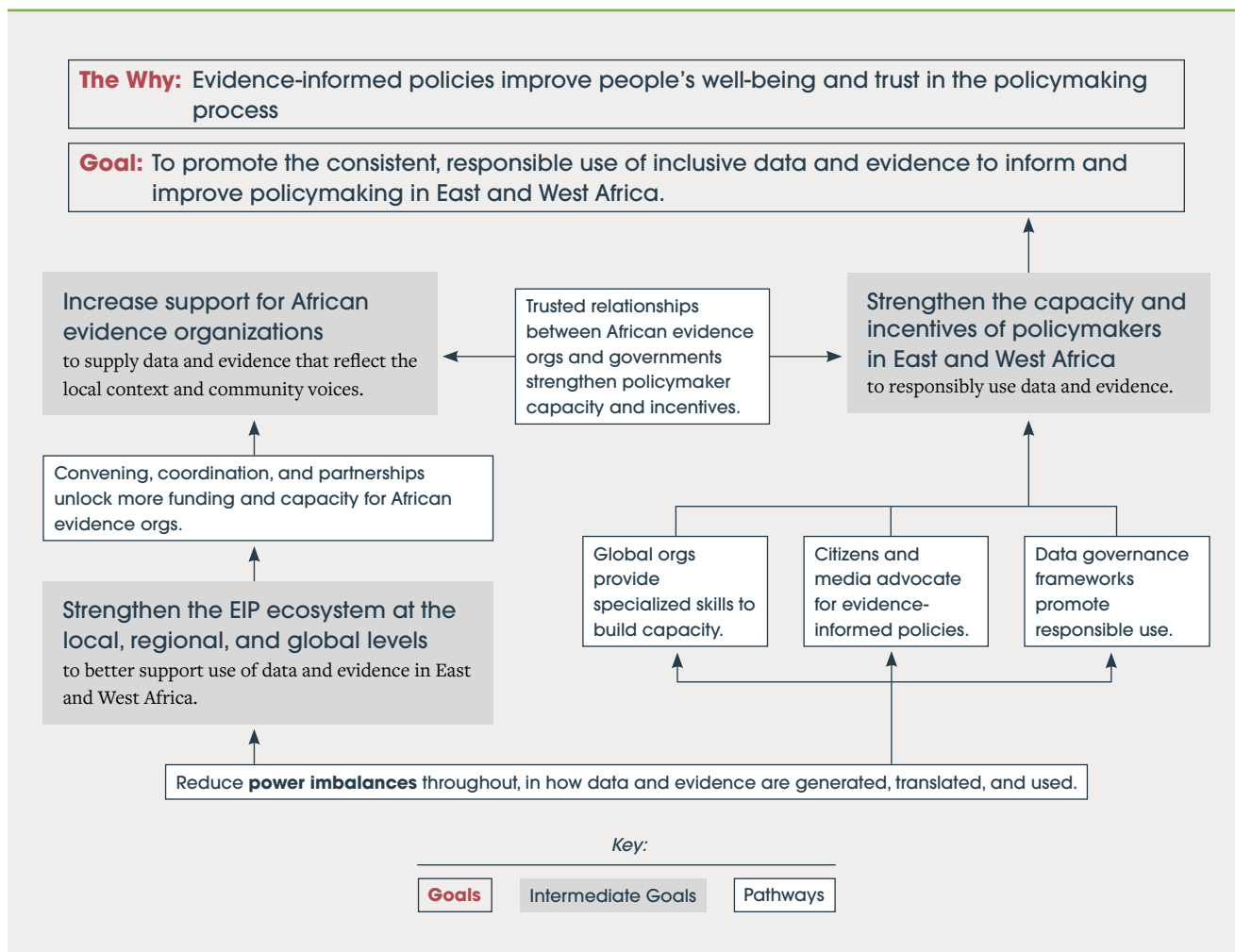
Some things are not changing. Most important, we retain the same geographic focus on East and West Africa. We also will continue to be agnostic about issues and sectors and will remain open to working across all stages of the policymaking cycle. Among other things, this just reflects the reality of how many organizations in the EIP space operate, and the unforeseen policy opportunities that will arise during the life of this strategy that our grantees will need the flexibility to help shape.

That same reality explains our decision to work regionally, rather than focusing on particular countries within East and West Africa. A regional approach makes sense for EIP for other reasons, too, making it easier for evidence organizations that work in multiple countries to take lessons and expertise from one country to another.

Why not expand our geographical focus even further? We believe it makes sense to remain focused on East and West Africa — rather than expanding, for example, to sub-Saharan Africa — because this is where we have, over the past decade, built networks, knowledge, and influence. It does not follow that work outside East and West Africa is not relevant to the strategy; efforts at the global level, for instance, will frequently further our goal. While the physical location of a grantee’s office and workforce will matter, it will not be determinative, and we expect to support grantees outside the region whose work has strategic impact in East and West Africa.

D. How we plan to achieve our goal: A refreshed theory of change

The pathways we believe could help us achieve our goal are shown in the graphic below, which offers a schematic view of our theory of change:



As the graphic indicates, we will work to advance our goal through three distinct but interrelated and mutually reinforcing efforts — each of which serves as an intermediate goal through which to measure overall progress.

1. Increase support for African evidence organizations

Strengthening African data and evidence organizations, particularly those that have strong relationships with governments, is at the core of our refreshed strategy. This is where, building on the foundation’s prior work and experience, we can best drive change. Put simply, African evidence organizations that build long-term, trusted relationships with their own governments improve both the capacity and incentives of policymakers to use data and evidence.

This is so for many reasons, but two in particular stand out. First, proximate organizations — that is, organizations with offices and staff where policies are being developed and implemented — are more likely to have a more nuanced understanding of the local context, including cultural, social, and economic dynamics that affect evidence generation and use. The resulting insight leads to work that better reflects the needs and aspirations of citizens and local communities, enabling the organizations to more quickly adjust and adapt to changing government needs and priorities. Second, building local capacity by funding proximate organizations, especially in the form of multiyear general operating support, enhances the long-term sustainability of our work. We are already seeing some of our grantees expand their operations, helping establish norms for evidence use in more African governments, and strengthening the overall EIP ecosystem.

To ensure that the pool of evidence organizations in the region continues to grow, we will also seek out new African grantees, including organizations that are smaller, less well-known, and/or operating at the subnational level. This is important to ensure that our grantmaking does not exacerbate existing power imbalances between well-known national or regional organizations and less established, but not less effective, peers.

Strengthening the capacity of African evidence organizations will require more funding for those organizations. Some of this will come from Hewlett, and we anticipate awarding a larger portion of our grant budget to African organizations. But we also plan to seek support from other funders by sharing lessons from our work, making introductions where appropriate, convening funders, and supporting our grantees to more effectively communicate the impact of their work to potential funders. Nor is capacity building only a matter of more grant dollars. We can and will also work to strengthen African evidence organizations by sharing our expertise as thought partners, providing organizational effectiveness support, funding platforms, and hosting convenings to increase opportunities for learning and partnership, and funding and promoting African-led partnerships with global organizations.

While funding African organizations has these benefits, a core challenge will be finding the right balance between these organizations and less proximate organizations that also play important roles in the African and global data and evidence ecosystem. Collaborations between more and less proximate grantees can leverage the strengths of both, creating synergies for more comprehensive and impactful interventions.

2. Strengthen the capacity and incentives of policymakers in East and West Africa to responsibly use data and evidence

A necessary complement to strengthening African evidence institutions is building both the capacity and the incentives of policymakers to use what those organizations produce, as well as evidence and data more broadly.

We will start with building capacity, by which we mean making investments that strengthen the necessary knowledge, skills, systems, and resources to ask the right questions and to identify, interpret, and apply evidence in a timely and effective manner. This includes new forms of innovative data, as well as types of data that are not available through local actors and data generated by citizens and communities. To help build the capacity of policymakers to use these sorts of data, we will continue working with our network of global EIP actors, which can provide specialized services in response to the needs and priorities of governments in East and West Africa. We also will support African-led partnerships with evidence organizations from outside the region to promote knowledge exchanges and spread best practices. We will, meanwhile, collaborate with Hewlett’s Inclusive Governance team to find grantees that can build policymaker capacity to understand and engage productively with data generated by citizens and communities.

Changing the incentives of policymakers to use data is a trickier matter. Policymaking is unavoidably political, and this built-in reason to disregard or make selective use of evidence is often exacerbated by systems that punish or discourage evidence use in decision making.

To overcome these challenges, we will need to think creatively about how to change the reward calculus policymakers face, using tools ranging from external advocacy to internal facilitation. We are interested in learning which approaches are most effective at incentivizing or creating cultures of inclusive evidence use — including what role media organizations, individuals, and advocacy groups can play in holding policymakers accountable to use evidence for policymaking. To this end, we will support grantees using a wide range of approaches. These might include such things as (1) lowering barriers to evidence use by giving policymakers facilitated access to relevant and reliable data through centralized databases, dashboards, and user-friendly tools that can be used without needing advanced technical skills; (2) establishing mechanisms for advocacy, transparency, and public accountability around evidence use in policymaking; and (3) designing incentive structures (e.g. performance evaluations, promotions, and recognition) that reward policymakers for using evidence in their decisions.

3. Strengthen the EIP ecosystem at the local, regional, and global levels to better support use of data and evidence in East and West Africa

Our current strategy has supported three distinct portfolios that were complementary, but often operated independently: impact evaluations, institutionalizing evidence use, and data revolution and data governance. Grantees interviewed for our evaluation consistently expressed desire for more opportunities to collaborate with and learn from others working across disparate data and evidence practice areas. Going forward, then, we will convene and coordinate diverse stakeholders more often to break down silos, as well as promote partnerships and engagement among grantees in different areas of practice. These efforts may include (but are not limited to) supporting peer-learning platforms, networks, events, working groups, and convenings (conferences, webinars, workshops, etc.) for actors at all levels to share knowledge and best practices.

We are also interested in helping to coordinate with other funders and other EIP supporters to increase and improve the quality of funding and other forms of nonfinancial support. Coordination can enhance the visibility of local African evidence organizations by showcasing and promoting their work, facilitating direct introductions between donors and grantees, and encouraging donor co-financing.

4. Addressing power imbalances

Across all these efforts, we must attend to and address unfair, inappropriate, and distorting power imbalances — ensuring that evidence is produced, used, and valued in ways that promote genuinely equitable and inclusive policymaking processes. This will require both increasing transparency and accountability within the evidence ecosystem and integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion as core principles of evidence generation and use.

That, candidly, is easier said than done. Securing greater inclusivity of marginalized communities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in the production and use of evidence requires challenging and/or ameliorating long-standing structural inequalities and power dynamics that exist within the evidence ecosystem. Undoing these will entail efforts like diversifying what constitutes “evidence” (e.g., including nontraditional but policy-relevant forms of evidence like individual voices); specifying and naming asymmetries in the range of power dynamics at play; and working both to level the playing field and build authentically equitable partnerships.

And speaking of power imbalances, it is important to recognize the disproportionate power that Hewlett wields — not only as a prominent U.S.-based funder, but also as a pioneer in the EIP space. This recognition underlies our decisions to follow the grantees by being sector and approach agnostic, while providing flexible funding where possible. Given the complexity of our efforts, this is something we will need to keep an eye on as we go along.

E. What is changing and what is not

The adjustments described above have significant implications for our grantmaking going forward. Most important, where our current strategy has supported large anchor grantees, many of which are global organizations, the refreshed strategy focuses on more proximate actors, particularly those that work closely with governments in East and West Africa. This, in turn, will require winding down or reducing support that currently goes to global organizations — shifts we will need to make carefully to avoid destabilizing our global grantee partners.

Equally important, a large share of the portfolio under our current strategy has been focused on supporting specific methods and evidence forms (e.g., impact evaluations, particular types of innovative data, etc.). The refreshed strategy, in contrast, is designed to enable grantees to respond, as seems best, to shifting policy challenges and priorities, which will likely comprise a wide variety of methods and forms of data and evidence.

This more ecumenical approach to forms of data and evidence is closely connected to our greater emphasis on finding more Africa-based grantees, which both need to and do work across issue areas, often using multiple methodologies. In identifying more proximate organizations, we will also be looking for grantees that create or work with innovative data sources: a change from our existing data revolution portfolio, which mostly supports global institutions. These shifts — looking for Africa-based grantees that work on multiple issues and use multiple methodologies, including innovative data sources — are necessary to build a field of organizations capable of adapting to the rapidly evolving needs of local policymakers in East and West Africa.

Focusing on equity, inclusion, and power imbalances will likewise have significant implications for grantmaking. Among other things, we will be looking for grantees that promote the use of more inclusive data, including those who can bring more rigor to citizen-generated data and help policymakers to use it well.

Lastly, the new strategy expands and deepens our field-building efforts to develop and strengthen an EIP ecosystem. The evaluation and landscape scan reports found that, while EIP institutions have gotten stronger and expanded their activities, the field remains disjointed. Under the refreshed strategy, we will therefore focus less on general field building, and more on strategically selected partnerships and coordination among grantees and funders.

The table below summarizes what we are continuing, what we will be doing that is new, and what we will be winding down:

What is continuing/deepening	What is new	What is winding down
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding more proximate/African evidence organizations that partner with African governments. ● Geographic focus: targeting policymakers in East and West Africa ● Funding efforts to ensure responsible data generation and use (data governance). ● Funding organizations that are responsive to the evidence needs of policymakers in East and West Africa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An explicit focus on identifying and addressing power imbalances to promote equity and inclusion in how evidence is generated and used for policymaking — thereby also strengthening trust in the ecosystem. ● Focusing on addressing incentives to improve demand for evidence by policymakers. ● Leveraging and coordinating with diverse funders to increase funding to proximate evidence organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broad field-building activities, including grants to organizations whose work does not directly impact policymakers in East and West Africa. ● A focus on promoting specific types of data and evidence (e.g., impact evaluations) above all other forms of evidence. ● An opportunistic approach to grantmaking that targets policy opportunities to demonstrate the value of evidence.

IV. Potential risks

While we took great care in developing our refreshed strategy, there are a number of risks that we will need to mitigate over the life of this strategy:

- **Difficulty measuring impact on people's well-being:** We acknowledge that the impact of EIP on people's well-being is the ultimate end goal, over which we do not necessarily have complete control. However, we will work with a learning partner to define upfront measures of "well-being" within the EIP portfolio, which will allow us to better-understand how to track progress. We may plan to track instances of evidence use for policy, the implementation of those policies, and the effect of those policies on communities.
- **Long timelines for impact make it difficult to understand whether the strategy is working:** We will use incremental progress indicators and consider supporting grantees to monitor progress beyond the end of the grant period. For example, we can identify bellwether policy and governance metrics in a variety of areas, regularly produced by third parties, that indicate whether a given space is generally moving in the right (or wrong) direction, and examine what that means for our grantees' ability to drive change in those spaces.
- **Breadth of strategic focus limits scale of impact in any one area:** We will encourage grantees to coordinate and/or pursue similar goals and issue areas, with a focus on addressing policymaker priorities. Additionally, we will allow flexibility for coalitions of grantees to seize specific policy opportunities in a given country and to concentrate work nationally into specific, high-relevance areas.
- **Lack of interest in EIP from other funders:** We will leverage funder interest in EIP-relevant sector and issue-area work to support EIP goals. We also plan to promote our grantees' work among the donor community and promote EIP as a key condition to achieve sustainable development outcomes.
- **Competition for resources in the development sector, while facing multiple crises, reduces funding for EIP:** We will encourage grantees to focus on demonstrating the value of EIP to address the highest-priority issues in a given country, including crisis response.
- **Inability to overcome EIP silos limits scale:** We will learn from past failures to promote cross-silo participation in broad networks and strategically convene grantees across silos to address specific, common challenges.
- **Influence from actors who do not protect individuals' data rights, privacy, and/or inclusion (whether countries, companies, and others) limits data governance gains:** to mitigate this risk, we will focus on working with receptive (and where possible, regionally influential) governments, and empower local organizations committed to promoting responsible, inclusive, and ethical data governance.

V. What we hope to learn with our partners

We have identified eight questions to track that relate to key elements of the EIP strategy. The questions are designed to test the strategy’s assumptions and hypotheses and to help us develop forward-looking insights. They focus on activities that are central to the success of our work to investigate what is working (and why or why not), and, depending on the answer, to help direct any necessary changes in approach.¹ We will take stock on an annual basis, analyzing relevant progress data and evaluating whether we need to change or adapt our grantmaking and other efforts. Depending on what we learn and how the work evolves, the questions themselves may change.

Theory Of Change Element	Learning Questions
African evidence organizations have more capacity to supply data and evidence that reflect the local context and community voices.	Q1: How is the new strategy affecting global grantees/partners? Which models and approaches have proven effective in fostering equitable partnerships between African-led initiatives and global organizations?
	Q2: As we work to increase the capacity of African organizations, how might we ensure inclusive support for organizations operating both across and within countries, including, for example, expanding our support to organizations operating at subnational levels? How might we tailor our grantmaking practices and beyond-the-grant-dollars work to expand our target grantee pool and support organizations that might be less-well known, established, or mature?
Policymakers have more capacity and incentives to demand and use data and evidence responsibly.	Q3: Which capacity-building initiatives for policymakers are both effective and scalable, and what does it take to scale or replicate them in a cost-effective way?
	Q4: What are the key factors that influence policymakers’ incentives to demand and use diverse and inclusive sources of evidence in a responsible way? What types of data and evidence are demanded most and why? In which stages of the policymaking cycle?
The EIP ecosystem is stronger with more funding available, and coordination across silos	Q5: Which approaches are effective to break down silos and foster coordination and collaboration among different sectors and stakeholders within the EIP ecosystem?
Power Imbalances. Address structural inequalities and power dynamics within the EIP ecosystem by prioritizing marginalized communities’ inclusion in evidence generation, fostering collaboration with diverse stakeholders, and ensuring equitable partnerships.	Q6: Within the EIP ecosystem, how do power imbalances manifest? What are the key factors contributing to these imbalances?
	Q7: Which interventions/actors have been effective at reducing power imbalances, and how?
EIP synergies within GEG. EIP and Inclusive Governance (IG) teams will pilot a collaborative approach to promote EIP by empowering marginalized groups and supporting policymakers’ use of citizen-generated data, with the aim of extending collaborations with other GEG strategies, based on the pilot’s outcomes.	Q8: How does EIP complement other strategies in GEG, and what sets it apart from the other strategies? What synergies between IG and EIP are most effective to advance progress toward their goals?

These learning questions are part of a wider Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) process that provides a roadmap for us to monitor progress and continuously learn in order to inform strategy adaptations and pivots, as needed. The MEAL model includes, along with the learning questions, a number of qualitative and quantitative indicators that will be used to track progress made by grantees toward outcomes, alongside monitoring external factors that may impact progress.

1. A program-wide review is being planned to evaluate all five GEG strategies in approximately three years. In anticipation, the eighth learning question asks how EIP’s work complements other GEG strategies, and what sets it apart from the other strategies.