



AEYL

Africa Evidence Youth League



MANIFESTO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, the Africa Evidence Network (AEN) assembled its eagerly anticipated biennial Evidence conference, following the calamitous COVID-19 pandemic period. Evidence 2023 was notable for being the first in-person conference after the previous two fully online editions due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2022. But another significant and noteworthy shift was observed this year; the active participation and engagement of youth. The inaugural Africa Evidence Youth League (AEYL) cohort was invited to feature at Evidence 2023.

The AEYL was officially launched on the 12th of September, a day before the commencement of Evidence 2023. Comprising 45 dynamic young professionals working in various fields related to evidence, these individuals bring diverse expertise and backgrounds to the league. What unites them is their shared commitment to fostering reform and development in Africa through the use of evidence.

A common and unanimous theme emerged from AEYL members: the urgent need to enhance education in Africa through the use of evidence. Education is recognised as a critical pathway to improving the quality of life for all African youth. However, it is also acknowledged that the

educational system in Africa faces significant challenges. Addressing these issues requires evidence-based reforms and collaborative efforts involving a wide range of stakeholders.

AEYL members are aware that it is the youth who are most affected by the education crisis, but they also recognise the substantial agency of young people to create opportunities that can accelerate evidence-based solutions. Leveraging their proficiency in technology, the youth can play a pivotal role in increasing access to quality education and educational resources.

The primary goal of the first AEYL cohort is to pave the way for a new generation of evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) youth leaders. They aim to inspire, connect, and support young Africans to innovate and drive EIDM efforts across the continent. The AEYL is dedicated to fostering positive networking and collaborations within the evidence ecosystem, facilitating mentorship opportunities, empowering young Africans, and mobilising resources to support EIDM youth engagement throughout Africa.

Recognising that education is a multifaceted challenge, AEYL members view this manifesto as an initial step towards identifying collaborative

strategies and laying the groundwork for future actions that will yield positive outcomes for youth within the evidence ecosystem. By harnessing the power of an evidence-based ecosystem, the AEYL aspires to become a formidable force in addressing education challenges and promoting evidence-informed decision-making across Africa.





“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” - Nelson Mandela

INTRODUCTION

One of the most progressive steps by the AEN was the launch of its youth league. This was a groundbreaking step in that it presents the very first cohort of African Youth Leaders focused on evidence and education. It is a very exciting prospect, as it holds much promise for the future involvement of the youth in many aspects of African society. It is worth noting that 70% of Africa's population is largely young (under the age of 30), but the role of African youth in evidence practise is often overlooked.

The AEYL is a dynamic cohort of emerging young leaders using evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) to steer inclusive development pathways within the AEN and beyond. AEYL members are driven by an unwavering desire to create change through the systemic use of evidence; they identify Africa's challenges and advocate for best practises based on evidence.

Close to the hearts of all AEYL members is the advancement of education in Africa. Education must be inclusive, envisage evidence, and incorporate indigenous knowledge and cultural systems for the greater good of all. The youth leaguers also acknowledge that the education systems in African countries face problems that are historical (because of colonialization), structural (lack of meaningful investment in infrastructure), and systemic. This manifesto is collaborative work, rooted in AEYL members' calls to revolutionise education systems both in policy and practise across the entire African continent. With the youth taking the lead in the use of data and evidence to show what works or not, the AEYL is certain of the positive amelioration that accompanies an educated society.

The AEYL emerges as a structured community of evidence and education practitioners that carefully designed this manifesto with the

sole purpose of nurturing, empowering, and amplifying the voices of emerging education evidence leaders across the African continent. They deem themselves responders to a resounding call—a call to innovate, progress, and better the material conditions of African youth. With a steadfast commitment to fostering evidence-informed decision-making, AEYL envisions a future in which education policies are carefully crafted based on robust data, teaching methods with solid ground in evidence, and young minds are instilled with a lifelong passion for learning and take pride in uplifting their communities and countries.

In this AEYL manifesto, we postulate that our mission as a young Africa goes beyond simply supporting emerging leaders by providing carefully facilitated mentoring, lively forums with diverse discussions, and stimulating virtual exchanges to create long-lasting relationships where the magic of meaningful collaborations continually happens.

AEYL aims to create a space where innovation meets tradition, a space where tomorrow's leaders can access the support and encouragement they need to pave the way to a future where evidence reigns supreme.

As AEYL embarks on this exciting and transformative journey, we are daring to imagine a continent where every decision is based on knowledge and every young person is allowed to challenge (and be challenged) while leading and creating a brighter and intellectually enriched future that uplifts our ways of life.



WHY EIDM

The AEYL believes that EIDM is key to strengthening the continent's education system. This is because, despite substantial investments in education, the expected outcomes have not been realised, and in some cases, the issues seem to be worsening. EIDM, however, provides tangible solutions that have proven effective and have the potential to continue working within the African context. We believe making decisions based on the best available evidence will lead to more effective policies and interventions that would improve the accessibility and quality of education on the continent.

The incorporation of EIDM into the education system aims to reveal existing solutions that can enhance educational outcomes. It emphasises the idea that the answers to the education crisis in Africa may not always be distant or complex; in fact, they often lie right before us. The challenge is to present these solutions in a way that is accessible to everyone, making them visible and applicable for the benefit of education in Africa. EIDM offers a pragmatic and evidence-based approach to address these challenges and optimize the resources invested in education.





Our work is inspired by the below vision and mission:

Vision

An equitable, efficient, and effective African society, principled by evidence-informed practise, led by young EIDM advocates with strong collaborators and partners, and supported by a fully-fledged African evidence ecosystem.



Mission

- To strengthen the production, access, and use of evidence in decision-making in the education sector across Africa.
- To facilitate training and education of African youth in EIDM.
- To empower young people to take on EIDM, agitate for the adoption of EIDM, and encourage them to join the evidence ecosystem.
- To forge strong networks and relationships amongst youth EIDM practitioners.



Core Values

The AEYL is driven by the following core values:

- Youth-driven
- Compassion
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Collaboration





Objectives

Delivering on our mission and vision and staying true to our core values will lead to the following four objectives:

1. Enhance capacity for EIDM

- ⊗ Enhance evidence capacities of emerging EIDM leaders through peer learning and EIDM mentoring.
- ⊗ Strengthen institutional capacity within the education sector.

2. Promote EIDM uptake

- ⊗ Identify constraints and opportunities for EIDM uptake within the education sector.
- ⊗ Facilitate the use of EIDM in education policy-making.
- ⊗ Accelerate the process leading to gender parity and equity.
- ⊗ Promote evidence-based curricula.

3. Usher the next generation

- ⊗ Nurturing young people's interest in and understanding of EIDM as a profession and career path.
- ⊗ Mobilise resources for EIDM engagements amongst the youth in Africa.

4. Forge an EIDM community

- ⊗ Foster collaborations.
- ⊗ Create inclusive knowledge-sharing platforms.
- ⊗ Champion a growing multisector youth EIDM movement.





KEY ACTIVITIES

The AEYL mission and vision will be achieved through the following activities:

- ⤵ AEYL launch event
- ⤵ AEYL meetings
- ⤵ Partnerships with high schools and universities
- ⤵ Establish connections with governmental agencies and organisations within the EIDM ecosystem
- ⤵ AEYL Manifesto
- ⤵ Landscape report mapping education EIDM needs in Africa and EIDM players/stakeholders within the education evidence ecosystem
- ⤵ AEYL mentorship
- ⤵ Establish an online platform to: share knowledge, showcase innovative solutions and foster collaboration and networks
- ⤵ AEYL award
- ⤵ Advocate for a more evidence-informed approach to education policy and practise on the continent

CURRENT STATUS

Africa's educational woes are endemic, sadly, and without much deliberate intervention, the material conditions of the youth will continue to exacerbate. The current status of education faces five key issues, namely: (i) policy and practise; (ii) economic/financial, (iii) contextual issues, (iv) infrastructure, and (v) limited resources. The table lists key factors associated with each issue.

ISSUE	FACTORS THAT UNDERPIN THE ISSUE
Policy and Practise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnect between policy and practise • Weak linkages between education and the labour market needs • Non-adaptive education systems/non-contextualised systems • Outdated curriculum • Limited to no evidence-based practise • Weak M&E systems in education
Economic/ Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 20% of the national budget is allocated to education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) • Not enough capacity to fund-raise • Education is not seen as "investible"
Contextual issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 40% of global out-of-school children are in SSA • As of 2019, 56% of children live below the poverty line in SSA • Inequalities with regard to access to education: education is largely a privilege and not a right due to inequity • Due to poverty and gender inequality, access for the girl child to education is limited (child marriage, period poverty)
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate school buildings • Lack of a conducive learning environment • There are little to no facilities that enable learners to discover their potential outside of academics
Limited resources	<p>Human resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills mismatch • Teacher-student ratio • Brain drain <p>Lack of teaching and learning materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough textbooks and electronic devices • Teaching equipment is inadequate • No clearly defined outcomes • Key performance areas remain a mystery <p>Lack of learning facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the Global North-South disparities

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The following proposed solutions are for those who are concerned with improving the continent's education system are largely inspired by the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025 (CESA 16–25). Like CESA 16–25, these solutions offer a road map to achieving the agenda set in Agenda 2063. The AEYL proposes that to improve education and address the challenges above, relevant actors can implement the following interventions:

Harness the capacity

- ⊗ Incorporation of ICT by leveraging the 4th Industrial Revolution.
- ⊗ Promoting EIDM practise and capacity building.

Addressing quality and equity challenges through:

- ⊗ Programmes that enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- ⊗ Clearly defined performance measurement standards.
- ⊗ Establishing sustainable interventions

that aim for consistent improvement. Improving completion rates: there is an improvement in enrolment rates at primary and secondary level; however, tertiary education enrolment remains under 10% due to high dropout rates at the secondary level.

Promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET) through:

- ⊗ Sound partnerships with industry experts.
- ⊗ Investment in financial and human resources
- ⊗ Expanding TVET facilities.

Promoting tertiary education through:

- ⊗ Programmes that aim to increase tertiary education enrolment.
- ⊗ Finding means for collaborations among African institutions.
- ⊗ Raising the quality of tertiary education institutions to compete with global players.

- ⊗ Sustainable financial investment into teaching and learning.
- ⊗ Incentivising breakthroughs by academics at various levels.

In the above interventions, a clear articulation of the role of EIDM in addressing these challenges and designing solutions.



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