

Terms of Reference for the Africa Evidence Network 2025 Governance Refresh: Launch of the Council of Chairs



1. OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICA EVIDENCE NETWORK (AEN)

The AEN is pan-African, open to all who live and work on the continent. It is unique in its inclusivity and diversity in six broad dimensions. It spans i) all countries in Africa; ii) all sectors across the Sustainable Development Goals; iii) all spheres, including government, academia, civil society, citizens, and all intermediaries; iv) the full diversity of roles within these spheres from members of parliaments to program managers to researchers; v) all elements of the evidence production and use cycle, from the generation of evidence to its integration into policy and implementation; and vi) all types of evidence from administrative data, to evaluations of all kinds, to experimental research, to citizen experiences and systematic syntheses of primary studies. Its strategic goals are to: foster collaboration among those engaged in or supporting EIDM in Africa, increase knowledge and understanding of EIDM, share capacities across the EIDM ecosystem, improve the enabling context by promoting EIDM in Africa, and advocate for Africa's full voice and participation in the national, regional, and global movements to increase EIDM.

2. WHAT IS THE AEN COUNCIL OF CHAIRS?

The Council of Chairs is a new body of the AEN aimed at strengthening the Network's governance processes while ensuring a member-driven approach. The Council of Chairs is responsible for appointing and overseeing the AEN Director, developing and monitoring the AEN strategy, mission, and vision, advocating for AEN, supporting fundraising efforts, and enhancing the Network's impact.

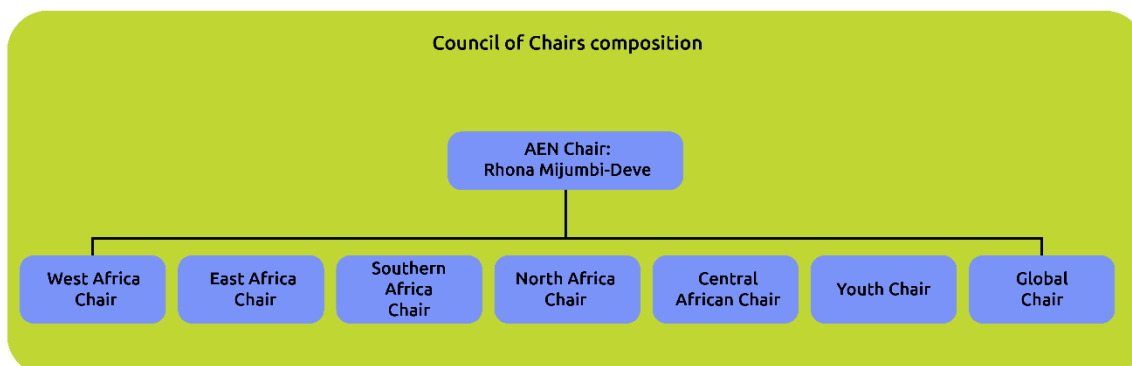
3. WHAT IS THE AEN COUNCIL OF CHAIRS COMPOSITION?

The AEN Council of Chairs consists of representatives from different regions and constituencies to ensure diverse and inclusive leadership within the Network. Chairs are voted in office for terms of three years, which are renewable. The inaugural council includes eight (8) chairs:

- 5x Regional Chairs: West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, North Africa, Central Africa
- 2x Constituency Representative Chairs: Youth Voices, Global Chair
- The AEN Chair (Existing position)
- Two Ex-Officio Members (AEN Director and Founding Chair)

The current AEN Chair, Dr. Rhona Mijumbi-Deve, is completing her first three-year term in 2024. For continuity, she will serve a second term (2025-2027) to guide AEN through this governance transition.

The diagram below provides an overview of the new Council of Chairs.



4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF CHAIRS

- **Meetings:** The Council of Chairs meets quarterly—twice a year in person and twice a year virtually.
- **Funding:** The Council of Chairs will have access to dedicated funds earmarked for supporting AEN's impact in their respective regions (e.g., West Africa) and constituencies (e.g., youth voices).
- **Support Services:** The Council of Chairs will receive administrative support, including secretarial assistance.
- **Leadership Selection:** The Council of Chairs jointly develops a system for nominating and selecting the next AEN Chair.
 - Evidence 2027 presents a strategic transition point as all Chairs will have completed their first term, and the AEN Chair will complete her second term.
- **Governance Revisions:** Future revisions to AEN's governance structure will be led by the Council of Chairs, including decisions on adding or removing Chairs and ex officio positions.
- **Reporting Structure:** The AEN Director and their team report into the Council of Chairs.
- **Remuneration:** Membership in the Council of Chairs is non-remunerated, except for per diems for meetings and attendance at evidence events.

5. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO SERVE ON THE COUNCIL OF CHAIRS?

The Council of Chairs seeks a diverse group of individuals with existing expertise in supporting evidence-use in Africa. Only AEN members can nominate other AEN members to be part of the Council of Chairs. To be eligible for the Council of Chairs, the nominee must:

- Be an active member of the Africa Evidence Network for a minimum of one year prior to nomination.
- Demonstrate commitment to AEN's mission and values.

- Have experience in evidence-informed decision-making, policy advocacy, or related fields.
- Possess strong leadership, strategic thinking, fundraising and governance skills.
- Represent a regional or constituency perspective aligned with AEN's strategic objectives.
- Provide proof of citizenship of and/or permanent residence in an African country (as defined by the [United Nations](#)).

6. WHAT IS THE NOMINATION PROCESS?

The AEN now invites nominations for the Council of Chairs for the 2025-2027 term. Members are encouraged to nominate individuals who meet the above eligibility criteria. The nomination process will be as follows:

- **Submission:** Any AEN member can submit nominations via the AEN Secretariat, including a brief statement of motivation and the nominee's qualifications.
- **Vetting:** The AEN Secretariat reviews nominations for eligibility against the above criteria.
- **Voting:** AEN Members vote for chairs representing their respective regions (e.g., a West African AEN member votes only for the West African Chair)¹.
- **Nominations** will commence on **2 April 2025**, and the deadline for nominations is **17 April 2025**. To submit a nomination, a nominator submits the [nomination form](#) containing all supporting information to the AEN (via info@africaevidencenetwork.org) by **17 April (23:59 SAST)**. All documentation should be emailed in PDF format to the AEN secretariat at info@africaevidencenetwork.org with the subject line **AEN COUNCIL OF CHAIRS NOMINATION**. Nominations in either English or French will be accepted. We can provide a French translation of this guidance for applicants if required.
- **Announcement:** Successful candidates will be announced on **30 May 2025**.

7. WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

After the submission deadline, the nominations will be reviewed by the AEN governance committee, and a list of shortlisted nominees will be prepared by **06 May 2025**. Online profiles of shortlisted nominees will be shared via the AEN on **10 May 2025**. Each AEN member will have one opportunity to vote for their preferred shortlisted nominee until **26 May 2025**. The final shortlisted nominations will be considered by the governance committee of the AEN and announced on **30 May 2025**.

7.1 WHAT ARE THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA?

Candidates for the Council of Chairs will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- **Commitment to AEN's Mission:** Proven engagement in evidence-informed decision-making and alignment with AEN's values.
- **Strategic Thinking and Innovation:** Ability to contribute to the development of AEN's strategy and vision.
- **Evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) Experience:** Practical experience in promoting or implementing EIDM practices.
- **Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation:** Experience securing funding and mobilising resources for initiatives.

¹ The only exception to this is voting for the Youth Chair – youth members of the AEN will be able to vote for their constituencies representative as well as their regional representative.

- **Regional or Constituency Representation:** Capacity to represent the interests of a specific region or constituency within AEN.
- **Collaboration and Advocacy:** Experience in working collaboratively with stakeholders and advocating for evidence-informed policies.

Criteria for assessment, therefore, is not prescriptive but rather reflective of the unique career trajectories and EIDM activities of the candidate as per the nomination. The governance committee will look for evidence of knowledge, experience, and leadership in assessing the submission for each candidate and the above criteria.

To enquire about the Council of Chairs call for nominations or anything pertaining to the Council of Chairs, contact **Siziwe** via info@africaevidencenetwork.org.