AFRICAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

Formerly Development Impact West Africa (DIWA)

Embedding Evidence in Public Decision-Making

ACDI Pan-African Strategy

2026-2030



Organisational Identity and Context

Who We Are

The African Center for Development Impact is an African-led institution that advances rigorous, policy-relevant evidence to strengthen public decision-making across the continent. We work at the intersection of research, policy, and governance, partnering with governments, African researchers, and regional bodies to embed evidence in the design, implementation and review of public programmes.





The Policy Problem We Address



Across Africa, public decisions with major social and fiscal consequences are still too rarely guided by rigorous, locally generated evidence, even as data and research activity expand. Structural barriers, including fragmented research and data systems, limited government capacity to commission and use evidence, weak incentives and routines for evidence use, and poor translation of research into decision-ready insights, mean that evidence often exists but does not shape real policy choices or outcomes.



The Opportunity for ACDI

ACDI is well positioned to respond to this demand, having already trained over 110 researchers and policymakers across eight West African countries and supported 19 demand-driven evaluations aligned with national priorities under its DIWA legacy. These investments have built a distributed network of practitioners whose expertise will continue to deepen the supply of high-quality local evidence. The Centre also benefits from strong and expanding partnerships with universities, research institutions, regional bodies, ministries, and development actors, creating opportunities for multi-country research, policy learning, and scaling of innovative, evidence-based interventions.

As an autonomous institution, ACDI has a platform to consolidate these gains, broaden its geographic reach, and further institutionalise evidence use within governance systems. Over the next strategy period, it can leverage its legacy, technical credibility, and collaborative networks to drive systematic improvements in policy design, implementation, and accountability across Africa.

110

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ACDI's Stakeholder Landscape



ACDI operates within a complex evidence-to-policy ecosystem involving multiple actors who influence how evidence is generated, translated, and used in public decision-making.

- **Priority stakeholders** – core partners for systems change include government institutions and policymakers, as well as African researchers, academic institutions, and think tanks.
- **Governments** are primary users of evidence and key decision-makers; ACDI engages them through long-term institutional partnerships, co-creation of research agendas, capacity building, and embedded advisory support.
- **African research institutions** are key producers of rigorous, contextually relevant evidence; ACDI supports them through competitive grants, advanced training, mentorship, communities of practice, and promotion of quality and ethics standards.

Strategic enablers include regional and continental institutions and development partners. Influencers and amplifiers include civil society organisations, media, and other knowledge intermediaries.

Internal stakeholders—ACDI staff, leadership, governing board, and advisory committees—are responsible for strategy execution, institutional stewardship, and quality assurance



Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Our Vision

An Africa where public decisions are consistently guided by trusted, locally generated evidence for equitable and sustainable development.

This vision reflects a long-term ambition to transform how public institutions across the continent design, implement, and evaluate policies, so that decisions are routinely grounded in high-quality, contextually relevant evidence.



Our Mission

To foster partnerships that generate and apply rigorous evidence to strengthen public policy and decision-making across Africa.

The mission emphasises building and sustaining relationships that bridge research, policymaking, and development practice. Through collaborative research, capacity building, and policy engagement, ACDI supports governments and institutions to design effective programmes, improve accountability, and institutionalise the routine use of evidence.



Core Values

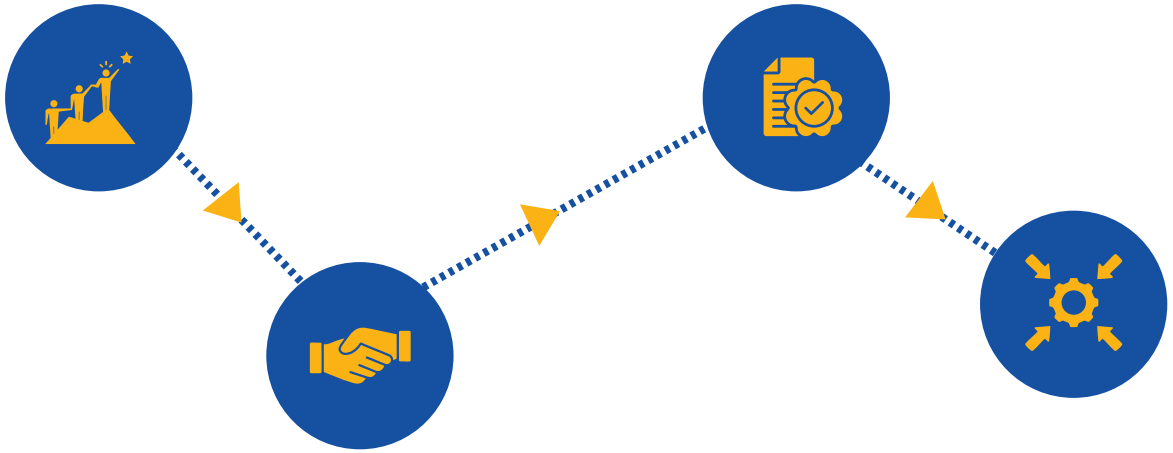
ACDI's core values define how the organisation works, the standards it upholds, and the behaviours it promotes across all partnerships.

African Leadership and Inclusion

Centring African expertise and perspectives in the production and use of evidence, and cultivating inclusive, representative networks of researchers, policymakers, and institutions that reflect Africa's diversity.

Data Integrity and Rigor

Upholding high standards of methodological soundness, transparency, and ethical practice so that evidence commissioned or disseminated by ACDI is credible, replicable, and fit for policy decisions.



Collaboration and Co-Creation

Advancing research and policy impact through joint work with governments, universities, and development actors to define priorities, design studies, and interpret results, ensuring relevance and shared ownership.

Impact Through Evidence

Prioritising outcomes over outputs, with a focus on translating research into meaningful improvements in public policy, service delivery, and governance, supported by learning and continuous adaptation.



Strategic Goals and Objectives

ACDI's strategic goals and objectives translate its vision of an Africa where public decisions are consistently guided by trusted, locally generated evidence into a coherent, actionable agenda for 2026–2030. The goals deliberately separate evidence supply, government demand and use, evidence translation, and ACDI's institutional sustainability, reducing overlap and clarifying accountability.

Strengthen Africa's capacity to generate high-quality, policy-relevant evidence

Increase the use of evidence in public policy and decision-making

Translate evidence into accessible, actionable insights that improve decision quality

Position ACDI as a trusted, sustainable, Africa-led institution for evidence and policy partnerships



Strategic Goal 1

Strengthen Africa's capacity to generate high-quality, policy-relevant evidence.

ACDI will invest in African researchers and institutions so that more evidence is produced locally, rigorously, and in direct response to policy priorities.

Key objectives

- Strengthen the technical skills of African researchers and analysts in rigorous evidence generation.
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of partner institutions to produce high-quality and credible evidence.
- Increase the production of high-quality, policy-relevant evidence led by African researchers.
- Build and sustain communities of practice for applied research and evaluation in Africa.
- Ensure that evidence generation incorporates gender-responsiveness and inclusive research design, data collection, and analysis.





Strategic Goal 2

Increase the use of evidence in public policy and decision-making.

This goal focuses on embedding evidence into the routines and systems of government so that it is used systematically rather than ad hoc.

Key objectives

- Embed evidence-informed decision-making processes within government institutions.
- Strengthen policymakers' capability to commission, interpret, and apply evidence.
- Establish and sustain long-term policy partnerships that create durable demand for evidence.
- Increase the number and quality of public policies and programmes informed by credible evidence.
- Strengthen policymakers' capacity to use evidence to design and implement gender-responsive and inclusive public policies.

Strategic Goal 3

Translate evidence into accessible, actionable insights that improve decision quality

ACDI will address the “last-mile” challenge by ensuring that existing and new evidence is timely, usable, and aligned with real decision windows.

Key objectives

- Produce timely, context-sensitive evidence syntheses on priority policy questions.
- Establish rapid-response mechanisms that provide evidence support to policymakers when decisions are needed.
- Increase access to and usability of ACDI’s knowledge products for policymakers and practitioners.
- Strengthen sustained communication channels between researchers and policymakers.
- Translate evidence into accessible insights that highlight differential impacts across gender and social groups.

Strategic Goal 4

Position ACDI as a trusted, sustainable, Africa-led institution for evidence and policy partnerships

This goal ensures that ACDI has the identity, systems, and resources needed to deliver its mandate over the long term.

Illustrative objectives (as outlined in the plan) include:

- Strengthening ACDI’s institutional identity, credibility, and influence across Africa.
- Building robust governance, quality assurance, and MEL systems.
- Securing diversified, aligned, and predictable funding to support core functions and strategic priorities.
- Developing and retaining a high-performing, values-driven team.

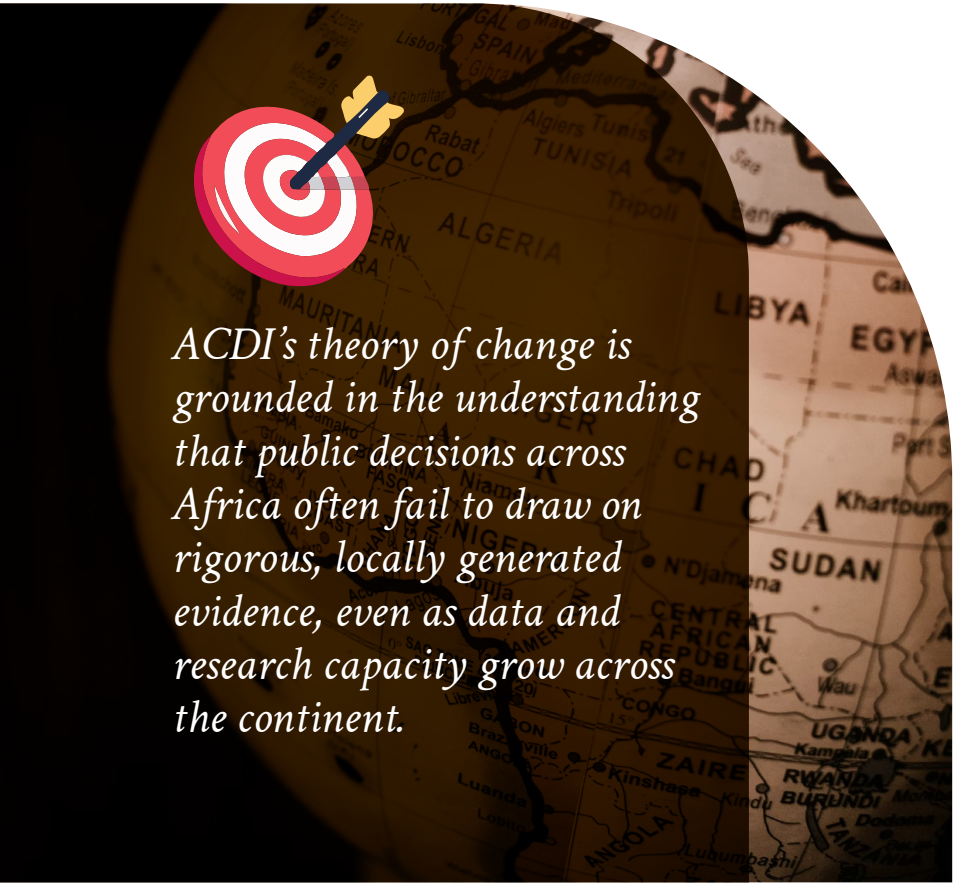






> *Together, these four goals and their objectives provide a structured framework for implementation, monitoring, and learning, while remaining adaptive to diverse country contexts and emerging policy priorities*

Theory of Change



ACDI's theory of change is grounded in the understanding that public decisions across Africa often fail to draw on rigorous, locally generated evidence, even as data and research capacity grow across the continent.

Evidence-informed policymaking requires strengthening both the supply and demand for credible evidence. If policymakers are equipped to understand and use rigorous evaluation, have sustained access to local research expertise, and operate within institutions that value accountability and learning, then evidence can meaningfully shape policy and public decisions. At the same time, if African researchers are trained, funded, and connected to policy processes, they can generate policy-relevant evidence that responds to the needs of their governments. By investing in capacity development, evidence translation, and strategic partnerships, ACDI aims to bridge research and policy, positioning itself as a trusted African institution supporting the institutionalisation of evidence use for equitable and sustainable development.





Pan-African Expansion Strategy

ACDI is evolving from a West Africa-focused initiative into a pan-African platform for evidence-informed policymaking. Anchored in Ghana as a learning hub, we will deepen partnerships in priority West African countries while expanding through regional economic communities and research networks into East and Southern Africa. Rather than opening multiple country offices, we will pursue phased, partnership-led engagement that privileges depth over breadth, co-created programmes with governments and African institutions, and multi-country initiatives that enable cross-country learning and scale.





Results Framework Overview

ACDI's results is summarised across four main levels:

Impact

Improved quality, equity, and accountability of public policies and programmes across Africa as evidence becomes embedded in decision-making systems.

Outcomes

System-level changes such as governments routinely commissioning and using evidence, African institutions leading high-quality evaluations, and timely, inclusive evidence informing key policy decisions.

Outputs

Concrete products and services, including completed evaluations, evidence syntheses, capacity-building programmes, and institutional partnerships that directly support the outcomes.

Activities

Training, grants, technical assistance, advisory support, and knowledge translation efforts organised through ACDI's strategic pillars.



Illustrative Outcome Areas by Goal

GOAL 1

Evidence supply

Increased number of high-quality, policy-relevant studies led by African researchers; stronger institutional capacities in partner universities and think tanks; active communities of practice around applied research and evaluation.

GOAL 2

Evidence use

Partner governments with formal processes for integrating evidence into planning and budgeting; policymakers with improved capabilities to commission, interpret, and apply evidence; more policies and programmes demonstrably informed by credible evidence.

GOAL 3

Translation

Regular production of evidence syntheses and rapid-response products; increased reach and usability of ACDI knowledge products; stronger, sustained channels for researcher–policymaker dialogue.

GOAL 4

Institutional strength

ACDI recognised as a trusted partner; robust governance and quality assurance systems in place; diversified and aligned funding; strengthened organisational culture and talent base.



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

ACDI will track progress against its four strategic goals over 2026-2030, following the listed KPIs:

Goals	KPIs
GOAL 1 **Strengthened Africa's capacity to generate high-quality, policy-relevant evidence**	1.1. Number of ACDI-supported policy-relevant evaluations and studies led by African institutions in partner countries, per year. 1.2. Number of ACDI supported evaluations that are published in high-ranking journals 1.3. Number of researchers that have undertaken policy relevant evaluations outside the ACDI Research Grant Competition (RGC) support
GOAL 2 **Increased use of evidence in public policy and decision-making**	2.1. Proportion of major policies/programmes in partner institutions that explicitly reference and use rigorous evidence supported by ACDI 2.2.Number of evaluations commissioned by partner institutions



Goals	KPIs
GOAL 3 **Translated evidence into accessible, actionable insights that improve decision quality**	3.1. Number of policy briefs, systematic reviews, and related products produced for identified decision windows 3.2. Percentage of surveyed policymakers reporting that ACDI products influenced specific decisions or design/implementation change during the strategy period. 3.3. Number of ACDI evidence products used for dialogues and forums with documented follow-up actions.
GOAL 4 **Positioned ACDI as a trusted, sustainable, Africa-led institution for evidence and policy partnerships**	4.1. Share of ACDI's approved annual budget covered by diversified, multi-year funding commitments aligned with the strategy. 4.2. Number of active, multi-year strategic partnership frameworks with joint workplans under implementation. 4.3. Percentage of surveyed key stakeholders rating ACDI as a "trusted" or "highly trusted" partner.



Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)



> *Monitoring, evaluation and learning will play a critical role in the operationalization of the Strategy. It will support the generation of evidence-based insights to assess the effectiveness of implementation and guide data-driven decision-making.*

MEL will promote transparency by communicating to all stakeholders what works well for ACDI, how it works, and identifying areas that require improvement. It will also enhance accountability by holding stakeholders responsible for fulfilling their roles in the operationalisation of the strategy. It will also ensure the plan remains adaptable, allowing for reviews and adjustments based on lessons learned from both successes and challenges during implementation.

Key components of the MEL plan will include detailed results framework, roles and responsibilities, data collection and management, data analysis and reporting, Learning and Adaptive Management. ACDI's detailed MEL system will not only to track progress but also support adaptive management and organisational learning. This will capture a structured set of indicators aligned with the four goals and key outcome areas, a regular reflection and learning processes with staff and partners to interpret findings and adjust strategies and integration of gender equality and inclusion metrics across programmes and institutional practices.



Partner with us

Partner with us to build stronger, more accountable public systems where evidence consistently informs decisions. We collaborate with governments, African research institutions, regional bodies, funders, ad civil society to co-design and deliver programmes that advance evidence generation, use, and regional learning.

To explore tailored partnership opportunities, please contact the African Center for Development Impact (ACDI):

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