

Utafiti Sera Inter-House Forum

Building Evidence Informed Policy Work in Africa: What
Have We Learnt; How Do We Move Forward?

February 27 – March 2, 2019
English Point Marina
Mombasa Kenya

Convenors:



Utafiti Sera Regional Inter-Houses Forum on Lessons Learnt in the Research – Policy Pathways

Background

In the past 3 years, PASGR, in collaboration with various partners have implemented the Utafiti sera model of bridging the gap in evidence and policy processes. PASGR's Utafiti sera is informed by the growing body of evidence that suggest that Evidence Informed Policy (EIP) stakeholder relations based on linear type of relation between research and policy needs are ineffective in dealing with 'policy messiness'.¹ Instead, Utafiti sera approaches EIP through the institutionalisation of negotiated and strong governance relationships between policy actors for optimal outcomes.² The Utafiti sera model intentionally creates safe spaces where researchers, policy makers and citizens obtain a better understanding of policy processes, are more aware and involved in the conceptualisation and conduct of research and thus constitute a joint construction of the evidence.³ Through Utafiti Sera, house members are able to examine the contexts in which research is to be implemented; and continue to interpret and contextualise the research within the implementation context.

To remind ourselves, Utafiti Sera for us in PASGR is a 'process', 'place', 'forum', 'platform', or 'vehicle' that facilitates the building of a community of stakeholders working together to ensure that appropriate and negotiated civic actions and policy uptake occur around a particular public problem for which there is research evidence. The actions include either the setting of relevant agendas, generation of public debates and awareness, inputs of comparative evidence into design of programmes, policies, or administrative and other forms of civic action. *Utafiti Sera* involves an intentional stretching of the boundaries of policy engagement through sustained actions and efforts by a community of actors who work to own both process and structure.

Using this approach, PASGR, with partners, have implemented several Utafiti Sera platforms known as 'Houses' in several countries viz Nigeria: action for empowerment and accountability; wage employment creation in cotton and sugar subsectors; Kenya: urban governance and city transformation, social protection I & II, wage employment creation in the sugar and horticulture sub-sectors, youth employment creation in agribusiness; Rwanda: urban governance and city transformation. In all the houses, the process has been similar: a rigorous political economy analysis and mapping to identify stakeholders and interests; a mapping of available evidence; constituting the house and house science to policy engagement processes, culminating in policy influence and engagement.

Utafiti Sera houses have worked to create vibrant research-policy communities on development/policy issues, have produced and made available relevant research to policymakers and practitioners while engaging with key players in policy advocacy. Because the houses are different and have various stakeholders, they invariably use various processes, platforms, forums and other mechanisms to facilitate translation of evidence to support policy processes. There are various challenges when it comes to linking

¹ Lomas J. Connecting research and policy. *ISUMA*. 2000;1(1):140–4;

² La Brooy and Kelaher 2007 The research–policy–deliberation nexus: a case study approach. *Health Research Policy and Systems* (2017) 15:75

³ Murray L. Deliberative research for deliberative policy making: creating and recreating evidence in transport policy. *Soc Policy Society*. 2011;10(4):459–70.

research evidence to policy such as competing interests with other factors in the policy making process, relevance and the best possible and effective intervention methods to use.

We think it's time to take stock, learn from and with each other and design a future for EIP through Utafiti Sera. What has been exciting about your house activities? What key lessons stand in supporting EIP work in your area of work? How can these be applied to strengthen the broader field of EIP? What do we need to change and how can we make the houses more productive, sustainable and with greater policy impact? Are you curious about what the other houses are doing?

The *Utafiti Sera* Regional Inter-Houses forum will be a fun-learning opportunity for the different houses to share lessons from their thematic areas of focus, lessons learnt, gaps and challenges experienced while engaging in the research-policy community. This forum would also help shape future *Utafiti Sera* engagements and provide substantial guidance on the dynamics of the African Policy making landscapes.

Inter-House Regional Conference Objectives

1. Provide context and a learning opportunity for the different *Utafiti Sera* houses to learn about the evidence ecosystem with regard to their development or policy issue.
2. Share lessons, experiences and insights learnt from the different *Utafiti Sera* engagements
3. Utafiti Sera House leads to share on the gaps identified in addressing the various development or policy issues tackled.
4. Propose a way forward on future *Utafiti Sera* projects that can bridge the policy gaps identified.

Expected Outcomes

1. Shared learning on the best mechanisms that work in the different policy pathways that allow translation of research evidence to policy in diverse contexts.
2. Documentation of best practices, challenges and success stories of the different *Utafiti Sera* Houses.
3. Ideation of possible future *Utafiti Sera* projects in the different countries.

Utafiti Sera Houses

1. Social Protection (II) Kenya
2. Youth and Employment Creation in Agribusiness – Kenya
3. Urban Governance and City transformation – Kigali
4. Urban Governance and City transformation – Nairobi
5. Action for Empowerment and Accountability – Nigeria
6. Wage Employment Creation in Sugar and Cotton Sub-sectors – Nigeria

Convening Dates

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