

How Peer Exchange and Co-Creation Laid the Foundation for National Data Reform in Togo



Introduction

In Togo, the government was exploring implementation of a vital policy mechanism known as a “statistical visa”. The statistical visa tool is designed to improve the quality, credibility, and coordination of data collection by requiring formal approval from the country’s statistical authority for all major studies and surveys. Though already in place in countries like Benin and Senegal, Togo had yet to operationalize such a system.

The process began when the [African Center for Equitable Development](#) (ACED), a West Africa-based policy and evidence organization, co-developed a technical information note in collaboration with Togo’s National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies (INSEED). **What began as a simple request for background information evolved into a dynamic, co-created process that blended learning visits, comparative analysis, and stakeholder engagement.** The result: a widely accepted information note that laid the foundation for a new national data governance framework, supported the design of an official statistical visa toolkit, and catalyzed deeper collaboration across the country’s evidence ecosystem.

The Challenge

As momentum to strengthen national data systems grew in Togo, they lacked a formal statistical visa mechanism – a key tool used to guide and oversee official data collection. For INSEED, Togo’s national statistics office, this gap posed both a challenge and an opportunity: how to design and implement such a system.

Having supported evidence producers, users, and regulators across the region, ACED was well-positioned to assist. When INSEED expressed interest in developing a statistical visa, the two organizations formalized a partnership through a memorandum of understanding. The goal: to co-develop a practical roadmap that could take INSEED from concept to implementation.

The topic was complex, but the timing was right. INSEED had ideas but needed structured guidance on the process and the content of the toolbox to move forward.

Design and Development

ACED proposed a two-part approach:

1. **Facilitate a peer learning exchange** with Benin, where a statistical visa mechanism had been operating successfully for years,
2. **Co-create a comparative, actionable information note** summarizing how statistical visas work in other countries.

ACED started its support by organizing a visit to Benin for five senior INSEED officials. There, the Togolese team observed live sessions of statistical visa reviews, engaged in peer-to-peer learning, and saw the day-to-day realities of implementation. These first-hand insights strengthened the credibility of the information note and the proposed approach, and sparked connections that continued well after the visit.



Stakeholders from Togo and Benin participate in peer learning exchange

To produce the information note, ACED began with a rapid systematic review of how statistical visas are implemented in various countries. Drawing on experiences from Benin, Senegal, and France, the team developed a draft note that outlined legal frameworks, operational procedures, key actors, and user experiences. But the note didn't just present global models — it translated those lessons into tailored recommendations for Togo, grounded in the country's legal, political, and administrative context.

The information note itself was designed to be short, accessible, and actionable. It covered not only what a statistical visa is, but why it matters, how it is used, and what concrete steps Togo would need to take to design and implement the process.

The Engagement Strategy

Rather than handing over the final information note, ACED convened a validation session to present and discuss the findings with key stakeholders, including collecting their feedback. Some participants, including INSEED leadership, had been involved in the note's development, which fostered a sense of collective ownership.

This collaborative review process didn't just build credibility, but helped create momentum. The validated information note became the foundation for the next phase: co-developing a full statistical visa implementation toolkit for Togo. This seven-part toolkit included legal templates, application forms, evaluation criteria, and procedures, all grounded in the information note's recommendations.

A national workshop was scheduled to review and finalize the toolkit that has been designed to compose the process for granting a visa for statistic operations —with the information note serving as a reference point throughout.

The Impact

The information note became a catalyst for structured national action. Specifically, it contributed to:

- Deepening INSEED's institutional understanding of how a statistical visa functions and what is required to operationalize it
- Building direct collaboration between INSEED and peer institutions in Benin, establishing a valuable peer learning channel
- Developing a comprehensive statistical visa toolkit for standardizing data quality, access, and use across sectors. This includes engaging a wide network of stakeholders, building momentum and legitimacy through inclusive validation processes, which are designed to ensure broad institutional ownership.



ACED and INSEED sign strategic partnership agreement

The **information note is now recognized not just as an evidence output but as an anchor for a larger change process** – anchored in context, peer learning, and shared ownership.

Key Success Factors



1. Driven by clear demand and collaborative engagement

The work began with clear demand from INSEED. ACED worked with INSEED to define their objectives and co-create the information note at a moment of active interest, ensuring relevance, timing, and ownership.



2. Peer-to-peer learning

Seeing how the system worked in Benin made the concept real and achievable.



3. Practical design

The information note was structured to be digestible, legally grounded, and practical rather than academic.

Conclusion

The statistical visa information note in Togo illustrates how **an evidence product can do more than inform; it can drive change**. By staying responsive, grounding in user needs, and building on relationships, ACED provided a rapid response to help turn a complex idea into a concrete reform pathway.

This experience reinforces a critical lesson: **success depends not just on the content of an evidence output, but on how and when it is created**. With the right process—co-creation, relevance, and timing—an information note can become a catalyst for institutional reform.

Related Resources

This case study is part of a four-part series, developed by Africa LEEPS, exploring effective evidence outputs that have successfully communicated information to policymakers in different contexts and were tailored for policy impact. To view the other case studies in this series, please click on the links below:

1. [Evidence that Works: The Anatomy of a High Impact Policy Output](#)
2. [Delivering Evidence in 9 Days: How a Rapid Response Brief Shaped the Conversation Around Screen Time in Brazil](#)
3. [Red Light, Green Light: How a Scorecard Turned Data into Progress in Nigeria](#)
4. [How Peer Exchange and Co-creation Laid the Foundation for National Data Reform in Togo](#)

About the Africa LEEPS Partnership

Africa LEEPS aims to advance the use of evidence in policymaking to support progress towards the SDGs. The partnership brings together leading evidence organizations from across Africa to learn from each other, exchange knowledge and experiences, and jointly problem solve – to strengthen evidence-informed policymaking and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Technical capacity strengthening and policy engagement activities are led by three initiatives: the Centre of Excellence Evidence Policy Action established by the [African Center for Equitable Development \(ACED\)](#), the East African Regional Evidence Synthesis Initiative established by the [Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis \(ACRES\)](#) and Alliance for Evidence and Equity in Policy-making in Africa established by the [African Institute for Policy Development \(AFIDEP\)](#).

[Results for Development \(R4D\)](#) serves as the learning and engagement coordinator for LEEPS.

LEEPS is funded by the [International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#), the [William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#), and [Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH](#).