

Linking economic research and policy-making: The role of AERC

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I Introduction

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) was established in 1988 to support macroeconomic “*policy-oriented*” research by African researchers. Dissemination of AERC supported research is targeted towards the academic community and decision-makers in African governments as well as to professionals within and outside Africa.¹

AERC is widely regarded as having developed a pan-African network of credible, talented economists. However, a question being asked by AERC is how to encourage the utilization of researchers and research in the economic policy development processes of African governments. To help determine what can be done in this regard, AERC commissioned two studies to look at the relationship between researchers and policy makers at the national level.

This synthesis paper deals with findings of these two “policy” studies. Each study looked at the current relationship between research and policy in countries where AERC has been involved with local researchers or policy makers to varying degrees. The “Anglophone” study included Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia; the “Francophone” study considered three CFA Franc zone countries – Senegal, Cameroun and Côte D’Ivoire. This report presents the broad findings of both studies and describes the following:

- The features of the policy-making structures and processes including commonalities and differences as well as trends and recent developments.
- Highlights of the attitudes and perceptions of researchers and policy makers based on views expressed during interviews.
- A summary of the ideas and suggestions made regarding AERC’s role in strengthening research-policy linkages.
- The consultant’s recommendations to AERC of selected actions to support and encourage interaction and communication among policy makers and researchers.

Study objectives and approach

The primary objective of each study was to identify ways through which AERC-supported research (and African researchers generally) could more effectively contribute to policy decision-making. To accomplish this each study examined:

- The current structures and principal features of the formal and informal decision-making process pertaining to macroeconomic policy in each country – in effect, a general “map” of the policy-making environment.
- The extent to which these processes draw upon African economic research and the related professional skills located within and outside the formal policy making structures.
- The perceptions of policy makers, researchers and other professionals on the linkage or absence of linkage between economic research and policy decision-making.

In the course of interviews, suggestions were made on ways AERC could facilitate a more effective relationship between researchers, research outputs and the policy process, given its current mandate and limited resources. It is important to emphasize that neither study assessed the quality of specific research work or the effectiveness of specific policy-making bodies.

The studies reflect the personal views and experience of senior government officials, academics, members of the private sector and other non-government organizations. Comments and observations were gathered from meetings with over 140 individuals in the seven countries between March 1993 and October 1994.

Views were also heard from individuals in the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, and the two CFA Franc zone central banks — Banque des Etats de L’Afrique Centrale (BEAC) and Banque Centrale des Etats de L’Afrique de L’Ouest (BCEAO). Findings of the Anglophone and Francophone studies were presented at AERC’s Biannual Research Workshops in December 1993 and 1994 respectively, providing opportunities for input from AERC researchers, resource persons and Advisory Committee members.

This project is not the only effort undertaken by AERC to bring policy development and research closer together. Some other activities are briefly described below:

- Members of the AERC network have organized national policy seminars to promote interaction among local researchers and policy makers. So far such seminars have occurred in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Côte D’Ivoire.² (Comments on all but the Nigerian seminar are incorporated into this report.)
- Commissioned studies on issues of interest to the economics profession and policy makers – for example, *“The State of Graduate Training in Economics in Eastern*

and Southern Africa”, Mohamed S. Mukras, 1990, AERC Special Paper 8.

- Workshops co-sponsored with regional economics associations, such as the recent International Conference on African Economic Issues, held in Arusha involving the Eastern and Southern African Economic Association, the West African Economic Association, the Economic Society of Tanzania and the Economic and Social Research Foundation in Dar es Salaam.
- Plenary sessions during AERC’s bi-annual research workshops, which focus on broad policy issues, as well as synthesis papers on topics such as informal financial markets or financial liberalization and bank restructuring.
- A recently initiated policy involvement questionnaire, which asks researchers to describe the degree of their involvement in economic policy development. The questionnaires invite AERC researchers to make suggestions on how AERC can promote the utilization of research in the policy development process. Comments from some of the questionnaires are provided in Section 3 of this paper.

II Features of policy decision-making structures and processes

Economic policy-making in each of the countries studied involves a number of institutions and individuals who can be described as key influencers. Each study looked at the broad policy role played by different national (and a few regional) organizations and the degree to which these organizations utilize local researchers, particularly those in universities. Four types of organization and their general role in the policy process were looked at.

- “Political” bodies which play a decision-making role but usually rely on other government departments for economic policy advice, analysis or research. Examples would include parliaments or national assemblies, presidential, prime ministerial offices and cabinet secretariats.
- National central banks including the two CFA Franc zone central banks, BEAC and BCEAO.
- Government ministries and departments with specific responsibility for key aspects of economic or fiscal policy. Ministries responsible for finance or economic affairs and national planning commissions were the primary organizations looked at. A variety of sector ministries were also visited, including those responsible for agriculture, industry, commerce and trade.
- Organizations with current or potential research capacity with various degrees of independence from government. This category was quite broad and included universities, research institutes and policy centres. Also included in this group were various private sector bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, sectoral associations as well as consultative groups in which industry, labour unions or other groups play a major role.

Some organizations were visited which do not fit into any of these categories but are relevant in linking research with economic policy development — the media or social policy NGOs would be examples well as cooperative societies, women’s organizations environmental groups and so on.

Organizations were looked at in relation to their role in research or in economic policy development. Attention was given to recent developments or activities that might create opportunities for bringing researchers and policy makers into closer contact. Outlined below are some of the common features noticed across the seven countries, as well as some of the differences in policy-making structures or processes. Trends and new developments are also noted.

Commonalities in policy-making structures/processes

In different ways each country is experiencing a transition in governance and policy structures. This is bound to have an effect on the *content* of economic policies as well as the *process* through which policy development occurs.

It is not uncommon for the structure and mandate of a ministry to change periodically, particularly when ministers or governments change. However, during the course of the study the following significant changes in economic policy leadership and the policy environment occurred.

- The creation of super-ministries, typically combining finance, national development planning as well as functions such as national statistics. This development was most notable in the three Francophone countries.
- The first devaluation of the CFA Franc. This singular event was described by one central bank Governor as “catalytic”. CFA Franc devaluation has stimulated a great demand for research and has brought into open discussion questions regarding the future roles of BEAC and BCEAO.
- A major transition in political leadership in Côte D’Ivoire and a continued trend towards political and economic liberalization in all others countries visited.
- The appointment of one new central bank Governor during the period of this study and change of at least one other Governor shortly before the period of study.
- The creation in four countries of new national policy/research centres during the period of study (although none are yet fully operational).

Against this backdrop, a number of features are common to the policy-making landscape in the countries visited.

Generally, the dominant roles in economic policy are played by the ministries of finance (or super ministries as noted above) and central banks. National planning commissions appear to be declining as a major instrument of economic policy development in most countries.

In all countries visited, various forms of presidential commission or consultative bodies involving the private sector are present. These groups are being used to varying degrees

in an effort to develop consensus on a range of economic, trade, industrial and social policy issues. In Zambia, Senegal and Uganda these are relatively new bodies. Experience varies greatly in regard to how influential these groups are.

Generally, consultative bodies have little independent capacity for research or analytical work. Only in Uganda was university participation particularly noticeable. In many countries, inclusion of universities or university-based economists has at best been marginal.

There are efforts in all countries to develop a more inclusive approach to policy discussion and development. While some governments are clearly more guarded and cautious than others, the trend is certainly towards greater openness. There are, however, considerable differences among the countries in the degree of involvement in consultative bodies of civil society groups, such as women's organizations or labour unions.

In most countries, significant efforts have gone into enhancing the capacity of the private sector to develop views on economic, industry, trade and labour policy. Two examples are noteworthy – the Uganda Manufacturers Association and its interaction with the Office of the President, and the Confédération Nationale des Employeurs du Senegal.

In the Anglophone countries visited, the role of national central banks is changing in two major respects. A customary role in development management, in areas such as sectoral policy or regional development, is declining. Most central banks continue to be involved at the staff level in interministerial working groups on major projects like civil service reform or divestiture of state-owned enterprises. Central banks appear to be moving further in the direction of independence generally. Many are paying much closer attention to regulatory issues and their role in the maintenance of a stable environment in which various forms of private sector financial service can operate.

Sadly, a degree of instability in universities is also a point of commonality. Most universities have experienced significant financial constraint, student or faculty unrest or discontinuity in the academic year. Some have experienced difficulties in all three areas. In Cameroun, an expansion from one to *six* universities in little more than a year, has compounded some of the problems noted above. Turbulence in the academic environment is bound to have an effect on the output and capacity of university-based researchers. It also influences the way senior government officials look at universities. All countries have parliamentary or national assembly committees which ostensibly play a role in economic policy development. Most political committees share the same constraints – including a lack of general understanding of economic issues. In a few countries – Ghana, for example – university researchers have been utilized to provide parliamentarians with basic orientation sessions on various economic issues. That being said, there are parliamentarians in each of the countries who have economics knowledge and appreciate the role that research can play in support of policy development. In none of the countries visited did parliamentarians or national assembly members have the resources or capacity to undertake their own research.

A final point of commonality among all countries visited is that individuals – through their personal attributes, background, connections, status – appear to be a greater factor in the link between research and policy than institutional roles. In other words, the

attitude of an individual senior policy maker towards researchers can significantly shape the behaviour of government departments. Frequent examples were given of the deterioration of interaction between a policy makers and researchers because of the departure from the scene of a key individual. (Examples of the reverse were also noted.)

Differences in policy-making structures/processes

Without surprise, noticeable differences occur when comparing Francophone and Anglophone countries. Nonetheless, many differences in the policy-making process transcend linguistic/cultural boundaries. The following points are most striking.

Consultative bodies involving the private sector exist in all countries but vary significantly in many respects. In Uganda and Senegal they come closest to representing a functional partnership between government and the private sector. In Senegal's case, leadership of the *Groupe de Réflexion sur la Compétitivité et la Croissance* was jointly determined by business and government leaders. By contrast, Zambia's attempt to organize a Presidential Commission on the Economy was greeted with considerable scepticism. Interpretations of the government's intentions varied markedly among those interviewed and many doubted that the group would have much influence on policy.

In most countries (including all three CFA Franc zone countries), planning commission functions have been integrated into a finance ministry. Separate national planning commissions continue to exist in Ghana and Zambia. However, their level of activity and visible influence over economic policy is considerably less than that implied by their stated statutory or constitutional role. Only in Tanzania did the national planning commission appear to have significant influence on economic policy.

In the CFA Franc zone, BEAC and BCEAO interact with local researchers in a markedly different manner than do national central banks in some anglophone countries. In Yaoundé and Dakar, the respective headquarters of the two banks, very little interaction occurs between the central banks and local researchers or universities. The national offices of BEAC and BCEAO do not appear to interact with local researchers any differently than do their headquarters. Collaborative research between BEAC and BCEAO research staff and external researchers (such as found among academics and central bank researchers in Tanzania and Uganda) is virtually unheard of.

The recent CFA Franc devaluation appears to have prompted an unprecedented level of interest in economic research. In some cases this has stimulated considerable media interest in economics, including interviews with local AERC researchers. In each Francophone country, policy makers and private sector organizations gave examples of the need for research in relation to the impact of devaluation and exchange rate policy.

Economic journalists appear to be more active as a professional group in the CFA Franc countries, where efforts have recently been made to enhance the ability of the print and broadcast media to cover economic issues. The media training sessions and briefings that occurred in Côte D'Ivoire were not heard of in the Anglophone countries visited.

Frequent comments were made about the academic and institutional "culture" in Francophone countries, which is seen as more rigid and specialized than in anglophone

countries. The absence in Francophone countries of formal and informal interaction and collaboration across institutional boundaries is largely attributed to the “culture” of the Francophone academic environment.

Universities are seen as concerned with intellectual contemplation and have generally weak ties to government and business. There is a history of remoteness from the real world which appears to have resulted in university education that is less connected to actual policy issues or economic problem-solving. These observations are offered with some hesitancy as it was not the objective of this study to assess the strengths and weakness of Francophone higher learning. However, views on the culture of Francophone education and governance were so frequently cited as a reason for weak policy-research linkages that I am compelled to include them. Moreover, these views were expressed by people from both the Francophone policy-making *and* academic communities. For a fuller review of this issue, an AERC special paper, “*Graduate Training in Economics in Francophone West and Central Africa*” makes interesting companion reading to this report.³

While expatriate economic advisors are found in most countries’ finance ministries or planning commissions, the prevalence of senior French political advisors and their role in economic policy decision-making is certainly unique to the CFA Franc zone. Although there is some evidence that this practice is declining (or less visible), expatriate advisors in the Anglophone countries do not fulfil the same range of functions as their French counterparts, nor do they exert comparable political influence.

There appears to be a wider range of national policy/research organizations active in the Francophone countries than in the Anglophone countries. The characteristics of these organizations vary widely from completely independent bodies to government departments like Côte D’Ivoire’s Direction et Contrôle des Grands Travaux (DCGTX). As a major centre for project analysis and sectoral research, DCGTX does not appear to have a counterpart in Anglophone countries.

Research or policy organizations that exist outside government, for example, the Institute of Economic Affairs in Ghana, for the most part have emerged only recently. They also tend to rely heavily on multiple, small sources of donor support and have so far played a limited role in conducting rigorous economic research.

Informal discussions and consultations on economic policy issues occur everywhere. However, the extent of such activities and the range of participants varies considerably. Tanzania, Uganda and to a lesser extent Côte D’Ivoire, enjoy strong informal linkages between academic researchers and policy makers. In Senegal, Cameroun and Zambia, such relationships are much less prevalent.

Although economics societies or associations at the national level vary significantly in their activities in Anglophone countries, they are completely absent in the Francophone countries visited. This would appear to substantiate the view expressed by many interviewed, that Francophone economists do not have a sense of a shared “economics” profession as do their Anglophone counterparts. This sense of a “community of economists” was particularly noticeable in Tanzania and Ghana. Economists in the Anglophone countries are far more likely to interact across organizational or employment boundaries.

Notwithstanding the above, comparatively fewer economics publications providing information on national or regional economic issues were found in the Anglophone compared to the Francophone countries. None of the Francophone countries have an economics bulletin or journal (these are typically the product of a national level economics society). However, there are various newsletters from organizations such as CIRES and CAPEC in Côte D'Ivoire as well as a range of publications from regional organizations like the African Centre for Monetary Policy.

III Attitudes and perceptions shaping research-policy linkages

Views on the barriers between research and policy were mixed. Although researchers had generally consistent views on this subject, they were not necessarily different from the views expressed by policy makers.

What researchers see

The role of donors in supporting the use of local researchers is extremely important. Donors are seen as too ready to overlook local research capacity in favour of expatriate researchers.

There is a perception that donors are generally more interested than governments in drawing on external, independent economic research. Conversely, governments are seen as guarded in seeking input from local researchers, particularly those based in universities.

Access to data is viewed as generally problematic, either because it does not exist or because access to data is closely guarded for political reasons. Policy makers are seen as uninterested in utilizing external researchers, and uninterested or unwilling to take the long-term view of issues or incorporate research findings into policy decisions.

What policy makers see

Some policy makers more than others fear that independent research and external discussion on economic policy options will serve only to provide opportunities for political criticism. There is a concern that alternative policies options which may be supported by research and open policy discussion will undermine political authority.

One barrier preventing researchers from contributing more substantially to policy decision-making is that policy makers' needs are often driven by rapidly changing political, economic or social circumstances. Frequent examples were offered of policy decisions taken in the absence of supporting research and, in some cases, in contradiction with the policy direction suggested by available research.

Policy makers feel that many researchers do have sufficient understanding of the policy process and the many factors which may influence decision-making. Even where research is available to support a particular policy option, tangential factors may result in

a decision which, in effect, ignores the arguments of available research. Researchers do not always recognize the social or political factors which have bearing on political decision-making. Reform in many countries will likely increase the complexity of the policy development process.

Policy makers in some of the countries visited expressed frustration that external researchers did not always respect confidentiality associated with involvement in government work. Some see researchers as unwilling to conform to certain “rules” that should govern participation in policy-related research, such as refraining from publicly releasing full or partial findings or releasing proprietary data to third parties including the media.

A considerable number of policy makers view academics as interested only with theoretical or philosophical issues. This characterization was certainly more pronounced in the Francophone countries. A significant number of policy makers do not see universities as able to provide value-added in policy development. As noted earlier, this view was more prevalent in the Francophone countries.

Despite weaknesses in the links between research and policy in the Anglophone countries, institutional boundaries are seen as reasonably permeable. Francophone traditions of specialization in higher education, coupled with career progression within prescribed institutional boundaries, heavily influence the way in which Francophone researchers and policy makers interact.

Although all the national seminars learned of during this study were considered useful events, more often than not their greatest success was getting people into the same room who did not normally interact. From a substantive policy point of view, most policy makers did not feel they received much more than exposure to technical papers or methodological debate. Few barriers were broken in regard to policy dialogue.

What both groups see

Despite some conflicting perceptions which researchers and policy makers have of one another, virtually everyone expressed the need for researchers and policy makers to communicate and interact more frequently, particularly at the national level.

Both researchers and policy makers identified the need for some strategy to reduce the gap in their interaction. Those from both groups who are familiar with AERC, see it as an important body which might assist in this process.

Both groups shared concerns about the quality of data available and expressed the need for arranging easier access for researchers. Both groups also expressed the view that encouragement of collaborative research was desirable. Efforts to involve people from across institutional boundaries – universities, policy/research centres, central banks and ministries – was seen as desirable. Some scepticism was expressed about the degree to which BEAC and BCEAO could be induced towards greater collaborative efforts.

Policy makers and researchers noted the trend towards greater involvement of civil society groups in policy consultation. However, both expressed concern that many civil society groups (as well as politicians) had relatively little understanding of economic issues. A need for local non-technical orientation sessions was frequently expressed.

Comments from AERC's policy questionnaire

A review of questionnaires completed by AERC researchers provides a view of suggested changes and innovations they think AERC should consider to assist researchers to have a greater impact on economic policy-making. The following comments are from thirteen (13) researchers who have attended five or more AERC Research Workshops. Of this group, over half have attended at least eight workshops and eight individuals have completed three or more AERC-supported research studies. The following are some selected comments:

- Distribute research papers more widely in the country that the researcher comes from and to institutions in the relevant sub-region.
- Develop computer networking and speed up the publication process.
- There should be more national AERC research dissemination seminars.
- The executive summaries of completed research should be distributed among African economic policy ministries periodically.
- Regular organization of policy workshops (once in three years) in each country to bring to the attention of policy makers results from AERC funded research.
- Researchers should provide summaries of work (in non-technical language) to daily newspapers and other media.
- Policy workshops already in progress should be held more frequently.
- Make better use of abstracts and summaries to show results of research and encourage researchers and their institutions active promote their work.
- Make AERC more bilingual in the area of publications.
- Increase the involvement of policy makers in AERC research workshops as observers and use the opportunity to facilitate dialogue between researchers and policy makers from the same country or sub-region.

IV Suggestions regarding role of AERC

Of those interviewed, the majority in Francophone countries were unfamiliar with AERC. Among academics, other than those in Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania, knowledge of AERC was limited to general awareness or awareness that a colleague's was involved in AERC.

More often than not, policy makers were unaware of AERC or that it supported research undertaken by their fellow nationals. Other than in Tanzania, most policy makers had not seen materials disseminated by AERC; few had received research disseminated locally by AERC-supported researchers. Because of the relatively low level of familiarity with AERC in Francophone countries, fewer comments were heard regarding AERC research workshops or other activities than was the case in the Anglophone countries visited.

Those familiar with AERC see it as playing a unique role in policy capacity-building. AERC is seen as an important tool for promoting the use of African economic research. A desire to see AERC do more to emphasize and strengthen the link between research and policy, was expressed everywhere. AERC was urged to have more frequent direct contact with policy makers.

Most felt that AERC should continue to remain "neutral", by being a strong advocate of research/policy dialogue and continuing to refrain from advocating any specific policy view. The consensus among those associated with AERC was that AERC's *primary* goal should be the development of researchers and its *secondary* goal be strengthening research-policy linkages. Nobody interviewed felt that these goals were mutually exclusive or that one or the other goal should not be pursued. Over the course of the two studies, ideas and suggestions emerged which fell into the five main areas noted below.

Broadening opportunities for policy input and dialogue

The development of independent policy/research organizations and private sector-oriented consultative groups may broaden demand for research and opportunities for policy input in each country. These bodies present excellent opportunities to strengthen the link between university and non-university based researchers and policy decision-making. Numerous suggestions were made for how AERC might interact with both groups or encourage researchers to interact:

- Joint publication of research summaries or bulletins targeted to local policy makers describing policy-oriented research activities.
- Using both groups as sources of “policy-oriented” resource people, Advisory Committee members and participants in events such as national or regional policy workshops.
- Use of such groups as informal consultative bodies as AERC periodically considers different thematic and non-thematic research or policy study priorities.
- Deliberate use of such groups as an audience for dissemination of AERC-supported research findings.

Communication tools to link researchers and policy makers

The need for less technical and more policy-oriented discussion papers at both the national and regional levels was constantly emphasized. Suggestions heard were:

- Provision of assistance by AERC in the development of national policy workshops.
- Direct dissemination by AERC of policy-oriented materials to senior policy makers.
- AERC should be more active in publishing policy synthesis papers targeted explicitly towards a policy audience – senior government officials, central bank governors and executives, directors of NGOs and policy centres, parliamentarians. In order to ensure sensitivity to this audience, synthesis papers could be commissioned from those in the policy field (which includes some researchers). Synthesis papers could also be developed by thematic area or on regional issues.
- Sponsorship (or co-sponsorship with existing sub-regional bodies) of regional or sub-regional policy seminars bringing researchers into direct contact with senior policy makers.
- More extensive French language publication of research papers and other materials of interest to policy makers.

Although many Francophone researchers are evidently comfortable working in English (some see professional advantage in doing so), dissemination to policy makers and others is constrained by translation difficulties. AERC efforts to reach policy makers may be similarly constrained unless more materials are developed in French.

Strengthening participation in the AERC network

Stronger efforts by AERC to draw in potential researchers from universities, ministries, the private sector and policy/research organizations were frequently urged in all countries.

Ideas suggested included:

- Greater encouragement of collaborative research projects involving both government and non-government researchers.
- Support for a limited number of selected research proposals that are outside AERC's thematic areas but have particular policy relevance to a region or more than one country.
- Development of collaborative projects – publications or special papers — with policy/research organizations in countries where they are now operational such as Côte D'Ivoire, Tanzania, Ghana and Uganda.
- Development of a “marketing” plan to increase the participation of new researchers from universities, central banks, ministries, policy/research organizations and other organizations, particularly in Francophone countries. Sources of researchers suggested:
 - newly emerging policy or research centres with “think tank” relationships to government, such as those supported by ACBF and other donors;
 - planning or policy directorates in central or sectoral ministries or regional organizations;
 - independent private sector organizations or consultative bodies and policy institutes closely associated with private sector organizations (e.g. Senegal's Groupe de Réflexion sur la Compétitivité et la Croissance, the Uganda Manufacturer's Association or Ghana's Institute of Economic Affairs);
 - trade union organizations with a research arm or research capacity nationally or through their association with international labour federations;
 - commercial banks and financial institutions or nationals employed by international banks within their country; and,
 - NGOs which can identify qualified economists to undertake economic research. Labour unions, some women's organizations and cooperative societies employ economists, although few individuals have opportunities to maintain professional skills or keep current with economic affairs.

- Discussion with central banks – particularly with BEAC and BCEAO – to broaden participation of central bank researchers and encourage collaborative research with local external researchers.
- Possible co-financing of research with policy/research organizations or organizations, such as the Bank of Ghana, that have a dedicated research fund.

Modifications to AERC's research process

Although no significant changes to the research workshop process were suggested, a few ideas were put forward:

- Greater attention should be given to the policy dimensions of new proposals during the preliminary screening and feedback.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the policy context and implications of research proposals and reports during the workshop discussions without reducing the importance placed on methodological discussion and feedback.
- Increased emphasis on helping researchers identify a dissemination strategy and an appropriate target audience nationally and regionally.
- Inclusion of more resource people drawn from the ranks of African policy makers.
- More extensive use of plenary sessions to look at specific policy issues arising from the growing body of AERC and non-AERC research.

Graduate training and professional development

Many interviewed questioned how effectively universities prepared graduate students for work in policy-making. Some suggestions made were:

- Design of a policy implementation module for use by economics departments and AERC's own collaborative MA program which would focus more on the processes of policy decision-making and skills helpful in presenting research to a policy audience.
- Utilization of more senior policy makers and external resource people in graduate training and place greater weighting on student presentations, training in the design of different forms of consultative process, group work and the presentation of policy issues and options.
- AERC could provide or work with others to provide training workshops for researchers, exposing them to new ideas and developments in the policy

environment (e.g. media roles, consultative mechanisms, development of private sector and policy/research groups) and provide practical training in presentation skills, interviewing skills, media relations.

Other ideas/observations

Persistent questions arose regarding AERC's choice of thematic areas and whether or not AERC was too restrictive. Some individuals argued that there was a need for governments to play a direct role in identifying thematic priorities if AERC's research is to be truly relevant to policy makers. Others, however, saw it as the role of non-government research organizations or emerging policy/research centres to respond to governments' pressing research needs. They preferred to see AERC focus on broader themes or research that requires more theoretical, comparative or lengthy investigation or international collaboration. Views on this matter were decidedly mixed.

Some researchers see AERC as setting out conflicting tasks. Researchers are urged to conduct academically rigorous research while at the same time produce research that is "policy-relevant". This implies that research must be produced in a form that is useful to policy makers and relevant to the policy issues facing governments. However, there is a strong consensus that policy-oriented research involves a different type of analysis and presentation than does academic or theoretically-oriented research.

Many different views were expressed on the degree to which researchers themselves should or should not be expected to translate research findings into policy language. Most did not see it as the researcher's role to transform research into policy analysis or discussion papers. At the same time, however, most felt that it is important for researchers to be able to communicate the broad policy implications of their work far more effectively than is currently the case.

V Recommendations

As evident above, a considerable number of ideas have been put forward during the course of the two studies. Although it clearly has a commitment to strengthening policy-research linkages, AERC has some constraints as well as opportunities in this regard. Any effort by AERC to strengthen research-policy linkages will need to be considered in light of these.

Constraints

- Complementarity with AERC's core activities. AERC has become extraordinarily busy with its growing research program, training and other projects. Activities to enhance policy-research linkages should complement these core activities.
- Financial and human resource limitations. There are limits to organizational growth and limits to how far senior AERC staff can be stretched. One of AERC's attributes is its relatively small size and the degree of senior staff involvement in substantive program activities.
- The need to be realistic about the capacity of a pan-African organization to change what is essentially local interaction between policy makers and researchers.

Opportunities

- AERC has a high level of credibility among researchers and those involved in policy. It is highly regarded among those familiar with it. Because of this, it is well situated to bring researchers and policy makers closer together.
- AERC has already developed some valuable experience facilitating interaction among researchers and policy makers. The knowledge and contacts acquired can be built upon.
- The success of AERC will to some extent be measured in the long term by improvements in the economics profession and the policy capacity of governments. In short, AERC has a direct stake in seeing researchers contribute more to policy

development.

Even if it wanted to, AERC could not use all of the ideas put forward in this study. Some selection is needed. It is recommended that AERC incorporate three basic thrusts into its planning process. A few carefully planned and executed activities in each of the following areas should contribute to improved research-policy linkages. The areas are:

- An outreach strategy to increase awareness of AERC among policy makers and potential researchers.
- An interaction strategy to increase the frequency and quality of dialogue between researchers and policy makers.
- An education/training strategy to increase among researchers an understanding of policy processes and of tools and approaches that are useful in adding value to policy development.

I would like to emphasize that in these recommendations, “*policy maker*” includes those who play a key role in consultative bodies or national policy/research centres. Although such people are not decision-makers, they may be extremely influential and responsible for thinking on economic issues that will heavily influence policy makers. In some countries, those leading such groups were particularly interested in learning about available research and enhancing their own research capacity.

Outreach

- The idea of an explicit “marketing” plan has considerable merit. Although AERC constantly tries to meet potential researchers, an annual plan identifying outreach objectives by country could be useful. Obviously this effort will be incremental, but an outreach plan could focus on two target groups: i) countries where the objective would be to support local AERC researchers in their attempt to connect with local policy makers, and; ii) countries where the objective would be to locate new researchers and identify key policy makers to make them aware of AERC.

A more systematic outreach plan could place some additional demands on senior AERC staff. However, a growing pool of senior AERC researchers – some with credibility among policy makers – could be contracted to support this effort.

- Publication efforts are closely linked with marketing. Although many suggestions have been offered regarding publications, AERC does not currently have a periodical or mailing explicitly targeted to policy makers. Many policy makers interviewed expressed a desire for this. It is suggested that AERC explore different models for a publication oriented to senior policy makers and undertake some “market testing” among a sample group of policy makers to determine design. It

may be that a different form of publication may be required for Francophone Africa. It might also be possible to develop a publication under joint sponsorship with another regional or sub-regional body. Policy makers frequently expressed that they had no information on African research and that they had little opportunity (or background) to read full research studies or highly technical papers.

Interaction

Direct interaction among researchers and policy makers does not occur very often. A few national level seminars and some regional meetings have occurred in the past few years. Based on comments made by researchers and policy makers, direct interaction, particularly at the national level, helps change perceptions and attitudes and initiates valuable contacts. Efforts in three areas are suggested:

- AERC should continue to encourage and support national policy workshops. Because there are significant limitations to what AERC can do at the national level, some suggestions are offered to focus AERC's efforts.
 - Play largely a catalytic role in getting an initial national workshop off the ground, with the lead role played by national organizations.
 - Consider developing a handbook to guide local organizations in planning and implementing workshops or seminars. AERC has accrued substantial direct experience and is well-placed to collect information on the strengths and weaknesses of national seminars across the region.
 - Concentrate on advising others how to achieve the most from national seminars and incorporate seminar results into AERC publications where possible.
 - Facilitate the presentation of AERC-supported synthesis and special papers at national seminars. Often these papers will be more slanted to a policy audience than individual research papers and can therefore elicit broader dialogue among seminar participants.
 - Ensure that AERC-supported research or publications used in national seminars in Francophone countries are available in French.
- AERC should concentrate its efforts to facilitate research-policy dialogue at the regional and sub-regional levels. This is where AERC has comparative advantage. It can draw upon a broad number of top researchers, including some policy makers, to prepare materials. The first such event recently occurred in March, 1995, and brought researchers and policy makers together to look at the growing body of African research on exchange rate policy, fiscal and monetary policy, formal and

informal financial markets, the overall macro agenda as well as a draft of this paper.

Participants found the interaction between researchers and policy makers to be extremely useful. Indeed, working groups in each of the above areas identified a range of policy-oriented researchable issues in areas such as: competitiveness; exchange rate regimes; economic/regional integration; optimal size of government; informal sector taxation; the usefulness of monetary targeting; composition and priorities of public spending; effectiveness of investment codes; factors determining savings and investment; and, the budget process.

The need for opportunities for further in-depth discussion among the research and policy communities was clearly expressed. Experience with future events will help AERC and others identify preferences and reactions to different seminar/workshop and publication models. A number of issues are suggested for further discussion with policy makers.

- How technical or methodological should seminar papers be? Do policy makers want opportunities to discuss the implications of different policy choices in relation to an issue or do they want to use researchers to simply improve their understanding of the subject generally? In essence, what do policy makers want from such events?
- Should policy makers' seminars be truly pan-African or sub-regional? Should they concentrate on reviewing a synthesis of existing research or articulating need for future research or some combination of both?
- Who should participate in future? Those directly responsible for policy decisions in central banks and ministries? Members of consultative bodies and national policy centres? Are different types of regional or sub-regional events needed for different groups? How should AERC proceed in relation to events in Francophone countries?
- How frequently should events be held? How can value be maximized? Should the same participants meet again? Should seminars include completely new participants each time or a mix of old and new participants? How should proceedings be disseminated? What format would best encourage open discussion? What approach would maximize dialogue among policy makers and researchers?

Education and training

It is difficult to make explicit recommendations in this area as the study only tangentially looked at economics training and education. Nonetheless, it seems clear that a connection exists between researchers' skills, training and education and their ability to influence or interact with policy makers.

Many researchers are not familiar with policy decision-making processes; nor do they have contacts with those involved in policy development. Graduate training, particularly in Francophone countries, does not do much to enhance students' feel for policy issues and thinking. This seems unfortunate if researchers are to do their share in bridging the gap between research and policy. From a policy maker's perspective, a researcher who ignores the policy context of a research issue and then expresses the policy implications of their findings in one or two sentences, is unlikely to be sought out as a source of policy input. Three areas seem worth consideration:

- There are a considerable number of AERC research papers that are timely and relevant to policy makers, but the authors clearly struggle with articulating policy implications. It is not apparent that AERC is doing as much as it can to develop researchers who need assistance in this area. Different approaches might be considered among the following:
 - The secretariat provide more guidance and feedback to researchers during the review of papers. There is room for AERC to be more demanding of some researchers in regard to the policy aspects of their work.
 - An increase in the degree of policy-related discussion and feedback during the research workshop. AERC could (as suggested by many interviewed), increase the proportion of policy makers among its resource people. Alternatively, it may be worth considering some form of floating resource persons group, composed largely, if not exclusively, of policy makers. Members of such a group could review and identify promising research and meet with selected researchers during the course of a workshop. Possibly their comments could be included during the review with technical committees. Such an approach could enhance policy focus where most needed without detracting from the largely technical or methodological focus of the workshop.
- A review is suggested of graduate training programs, including the joint electives, to assess whether the current curriculum is doing as much as possible to develop economists capable of contributing to policy development. Four questions are suggested:
 - Beyond analytical methodology, what aspects of the policy-making process or policy environment do programs currently ignore?
 - What are the best practices and innovative learning tools in use elsewhere relevant to training those involved in public policy? How can these approaches be integrated into economics training in Anglophone and Francophone Africa?
 - What role can policy makers, policy/research centres, consultative groups and other organizations play that would add value to economics training programs?

- Are there in-service learning activities that might serve the needs of researchers interested in enhancing their ability to contribute to policy development? What role should AERC play, if any, in this area?
- Connected to education and professional development is the question of how much is known about the economics profession in Africa and the varied activities of researchers and potential researchers. AERC has made some effort to collect information about researchers' activities and views. However, opportunity for AERC to gather data about researchers has not yet been sufficiently explored. Economists from many countries participate in AERC activities. AERC has an excellent opportunity to collect information about this group.

It is suggested that AERC consider the development of a comprehensive data base that would be fed automatically during registration of participants in any AERC-supported activity. Data need not be identifying information (anonymity could be assured) as the objective would not be a consultants roster. Information could be collected on gender, age, education/training, wage employment, consulting activities, income, research activities, association memberships, etc. Such a system could allow AERC to identify professional trends, regional variations, changes in involvement of researchers in policy and so on. Collection of such data does seem relevant to AERC's mandate. However, the resource implications of such an activity would need to be fully explored.

Notes

1. AERC also supports conferences, seminars and workshops, provides institutional support to university teaching departments, research centres and economics associations, and provides graduate training opportunities. To varying degrees each of these programme elements are directly or indirectly concerned with linking economic research and policy.
2. An excellent overview of these workshops is provided by Olu Ajakaiye and Adedoyin Soyibo, "National Workshops on Links Between Research and Policy: A Synopsis of the Nigerian, Ghanaian and Ivoirian Experience", *African Journal of Economic Policy*, Vol. 1, Number 2
3. H. Jacques Pegatienan, AERC Special Paper 7, February 1990.

Appendix A: Country visits

Ghana

Dr. G.K. Agama, Governor, Bank of Ghana
Dr. John Kwabena Kwakye, Bank of Ghana
Dr. H.A.K. Wampah, Bank of Ghana
Dr. Charles Jebuni, University of Ghana
Dr. C.K. Dordunoo, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Mr. G.K. Amuzu, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Dr. F.D. Tay, National Development Planning Commission
Dr. Charles Mensa, Institute of Economic Affairs
Dr. Jonathan Frimpong-Ansah
Dr. E.M. Omaboe
Nana Aye Kusi Boadum, Chief of Apaah-Ashanti
Mr. Ravi Kanbur, Resident Representative, World Bank

Uganda

Dr. Louis A. Kasekende, Bank of Uganda
Mr. M. Malik, Bank of Uganda
Dr. Petter Langseth, Uganda Civil Service Reform
Mr. Chukwuma Obidegwu, World Bank
Dr. Germina Ssemogerere, Makerere University
Mr. Tim Lamont, Economic Planning Advisor, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Prof. Erisa O. Ochieng, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Dr. James Bucknall, Consultant, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Dr. William S. Kalema, Uganda Manufacturers Association
Mr. Keith Muhakanizi, Advisor to the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning
Ms. Luisa Masutti, Consultant (Capacity-Building Project), World Bank

Tanzania

Dr. Fidelis Mtatifikolo, Civil Service Department, President's Office
 Mr. N.N. Kitomari, Deputy Governor, Bank of Tanzania
 Mr. Peter Ngumbullu, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Finance
 Mr. Len Kisarika, Bank of Tanzania
 Mr E.M. Masanja, Ministry of Finance
 Mr. Felix K. Tema, Tanzania Cooperative Alliance
 Mr. Rashidi, Governor, Bank of Tanzania
 Prof. Haidari Amani, University of Dar es Salaam
 Dr. Joshua Doriye, Planning Commission
 Dr. Charles Kimei, Bank of Tanzania
 Dr. Jonas Kipokola, Planning Commission
 Prof. Nguyuru Lipumba, Advisor to the President
 Dr. A.V.Y. Mbelle, University of Dar es Salaam
 Dr. Joseph Semboja, University of Dar es Salaam
 Mr. G. Mgonja, Director, Bank of Tanzania
 Mr. S. Odunga, Ministry of Finance
 Dr. N.E. Osoro, University of Dar es Salaam
 Mr. Iddi Simba, Confederation of Tanzanian Industries
 Mr. Samuel M. Wangwe, INTECH
 Mr. J. Chimgege, Union of Women in Tanzania
 Mr. F.P. Nyambo, Union of Women in Tanzania

Zambia

Dr. C.M. Fundanga, Permanent Secretary (Economics and Finance), Cabinet Office
 Mr. Leonard Nkhata, Permanent Secretary, National Commission for Development Planning
 Dr. I. Mwanawina, Head, University of Zambia
 Dr. Situmbeko Musokotwane, Bank of Zambia
 Mr. Austin Mwape, Bank of Zambia
 Dr. Jacob Mwanza, Ministry of Finance
 Mr. Bruce Bolnick, Consultant, Ministry of Finance
 Dr. Ephraim Kaunga, Zambia Industrial and Mining Corporation
 Mr. Dominic Mulaisho, Governor, Bank of Zambia

Cameroun

Mr. P Chateh, PRISERI
 Dr. F. Sikod, PRISERI
 Dr. E. Ngolle Ngolle, Universite de Yaounde II
 Prof. Dr. S. Ngongang, Universite de Yaounde II

Prof. Touna Mama, Universite de Yaounde II
 Mr. Bernard Ouandji, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
 Mr. Robert Blake, World Bank
 Mr. Joseph Ingram, Resident Representative, World Bank
 Ms. Mary Lou Ingram, World Bank
 Mr. J. Tedou, Ministry of Plan and Territorial Development
 Dr. A. Ngenga, Ministry of Agriculture
 Mr. T. Kinga, Ministry of Industrial and Commercial Development
 Mr. Bahiol, Societe Nationale d'investissement (SNI)
 Mr. Balinga, Ministry of Technical and Scientific Research
 Mr. M. Balima, UNDP
 Mr. Justin Ndioro, Office of the President
 Hon. Mr. Z. Perevet, Secretary of State, Ministry of Plan and Territorial Development
 Mr. A. Monkam, CRETES
 Mr. A. Youmbi, Enviro Project
 Mr. Galy, IMF
 Mr. J. Henga, Ministry of Finance
 Mr. E. Leunde, BEAC
 Mr. A. Renamy-Lariot, BEAC
 Mme. E. Tankeu, former Minister of Plan and Territorial Development
 Mr. R. Mbassa Ndine, Mission de Réhabilitation des Entreprises du Secteur Public et Para-Public

Côte d'Ivoire

Mr. A. Gon Coulibaly, DCGTX
 Mr. T. Nassirou, DCGTX
 Mr. M. Lamine Sylla, DCGTX
 Mr. R. Yapo Assamoi, DCGTX
 Mr. Sogodogo Alassane, DCGTX
 Mr. A. Diabate, Fraternité Matin
 Mr. J. Hamilton Aka, Association des Journalistes Economiques et Financiers de Côte d'Ivoire
 M. Mamadou Diaby, Radio-Côte D'Ivoire
 Mr. Y. Kouadio, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Finance
 Mr. M. Bessy, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Finance
 Mr. M. Koepe, BCEAO
 Mr. Diguët, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Finance
 Mr. K. Diomande, PAGE-CIRES
 Mr. G. Dia Koffi, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie
 Mr. O. Diarra, National Assembly, Commission des Affaires Economiques et Financières
 Mr. B. Contamin, ORSTOM

Mr. J. Ette, FASEQ-CEPRASS
 Mr. T. Kone, PNAE
 Prof. A. Sawadogo, NESDA
 Mr. G. Gbaka, Office of the President
 Mr. E. Enoh, Office of the Prime Minister
 Mr. J. Y. Yao, CIRES-CAPEC
 Mr. L. Camara, ADB
 Mr. J. Pegatienan, CAPEC-CIRES
 Mr. A. Coulibaly, UNDP
 Mr. N. Soro, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
 Prof. Allechi M'Bet, FASEQ

Senegal

Dr. B. Sabadogo, Cesaq
 M. Baba Dioum, Ministère du Développement Rural et de l'Hydraulique
 M. A. Faye, Ministry of Finance
 Mr. S. Amar, World Bank
 Mr. M. Cama, Confédération Nationale des Employeurs du Senegal
 Mr. T. Makandawire, CODESRIA
 Mr. E. Kouassi Kouame, BCEAO
 Mr. P. Hubert, Office of the President
 Mr. A. Dieye, BCEAO
 Mr. M. Ndiaye, Cellule d'Appui à l'Environnement des Entreprises
 Mr. M. Samb, Development Management Project
 Mr. A. Diagne, Groupe de Réflexion sur la Compétitivité et la Croissance
 Mr. A. Diop, Cellule d'Exécution du Projet d'Appui Institutionnel/BAD
 Dr. A. Diaw, University of Dakar
 Dr. Salif Sada Sall, University of Dakar
 Dr. A. Ndiaye, University of Dakar
 Mr. C. Gueye, University of Dakar
 Mr. B. Niang, University of Dakar
 Mr. T. Diop, University of Dakar

Washington, D.C.

Mr. A. Diagne, University of Dakar, Senegal
 Mr. M. Diop, Ministry of Finance, Senegal
 Mr. M. Ouattara, Faculté des Sciences économiques et sociales, Abidjan
 Mr. R. Tchoungui, Office of the Prime Minister, Cameroun
 Mr. E. Ngankam, DIKALO, Cameroun
 Mr. B. Ngo, World Bank/EDI
 Mr. Lawrence Hinkle, World Bank

Mr. M. Toure, IMF

Mr. S. Devaranjan, World Bank

Mr. P. Youm, IMF