AERC’s Role and Opportunities for Partnerships in Africa’s Growth Agenda
Overview of AERC

Researchers, Educators, Policy Makers and Institutions

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), established in 1988, is a public not-for-profit organization devoted to the advancement of economic policy research and training in sub-Saharan Africa.

AERC’s principal objective is to strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into problems pertinent to the management of economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Our Vision and Mission

Vision
Sustained development in sub-Saharan Africa grounded in sound economic management and an informed society

Mission
To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into problems pertinent to the management of economies, through a programme combining research with post graduate training in economics
AERC Capacity Building Framework

**Research**
- Thematic research
- Collaborative research
- Special workshops

**Training**
- Collaborative Masters Programme (CMAP)
- Collaborative Masters in Applied & Agric. Economics (CMAAE)
- Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP)

**Policy Outreach**
- Senior Policy Seminars
- National Policy Workshops
Objectives

1. Enhance the capacity of locally based researchers to conduct policy-relevant economic research
2. Encourage its application in the policy context
3. Promote the retention of such capacity
What We Do

- Inform economic policies in Africa through research and building capacity for:
  - Conducting policy-oriented research
  - Conducting policy analysis
  - Facilitating informed policy dialogue
  - Young expertise – imbedding them in local conditions to enable innovation

- Quality training programs to augment thin capacity for evidence-based policy making

- Hallmark: rigor, evidence, collaboration, policy relevance
  - Complemented by communications and outreach
Capacity Building Framework

Research
- Thematic research
- Collaborative research
- Technical research workshops

Graduate Training
- Collaborative Masters Programme (CMAP)
- Collaborative Masters in Applied & Agric. Economics (CMAAE)
- Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP)
Thematic Research

- **A learning by doing research** - geared towards the building of research capacity of African economists and policy analysts to undertake high quality and policy relevant economic research.

- **5 Thematic Research Themes:**
  - Poverty, income distribution and food security
  - Macroeconomic policies, investment and growth
  - Finance and resource mobilization
  - Trade and regional integration
  - Agriculture and natural resource management

- **Biannual Research Workshops** - control quality of thematic research through peer review and consultation with international resource persons

So far has mentored 3400 African researchers from 35 Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries
Collaborative Research

- **Addresses topical policy relevant issues:**
  - Teams senior researchers from SSA and elsewhere for in-depth investigation and country case studies

- **Among the most impactful AERC collaborative projects are:**
  - *Poverty, Food security, Income Distribution and Labour Market Issues in SSA* - has been a cornerstone of African governments’ Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
  - *Institutions and Service Delivery (ISD) Project* - was the basis of the World Bank Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) project
  - *Structural Transformation of African Agriculture*
  - *Financial Inclusion*
  - *Reproductive Health, Growth and Poverty Reduction*
Other Research Activities

- **Technical Research Workshops:**
  - For equipping researchers with existing and current analytical tools and software in order to develop capability to be able to carry out policy research analysis using the tools learnt.

- **Institutional Partnerships**
  - For strengthening, information sharing and enhancing the link between research and policy at national, regional and global levels

- **Visiting Scholars Programme**
  - In partnership with the International Monetary Fund and the Journal of African Economies, University of Oxford, to further capacity building efforts of its researchers.
  - A special AERC/World Bank (WB) Robert McNamara Women’s Fellowship Programme initiated to enhance women participation in research
The Training Programme

Motivated by:

Severe shortage of economists to conduct economic policy research and graduate-level teaching at universities in sub-Saharan Africa.
Collaborative Master’s in Agricultural and Applied Economics (CMAAE)

- Overall goal: To build capacity for agricultural and applied economics education in Africa
- Network of 17 public universities in 13 countries of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa
- 631 supported to date
  - 398 male (63%)
  - 233 female (37%)
- Graduates: 317
  - 80% progressed to employment
  - 20% progressed to PhD
- Supported 15 faculty research
- 11 theses dissemination workshops, Senior Policy Seminars
Research Meets Policy

Dissemination of Research findings

Research

Senior Policy Seminars & National Policy Workshops

Policy

Feedback on Policy relevance & perspective
Research Meets Policy

- **Regional Senior Policy Seminars**
  - Senior African Policy makers at the level of Ministers, Governors of Central Banks, Advisers to Presidents, Permanent Secretaries, Directors of government departments
  - Share and deliberate on research findings
  - Encourage Evidence-based policy making.

- **Support for National Policy Workshops**
  - Showcasing AERC research findings
  - Informing policy making
  - Obtaining feedback on the policy relevance of AERC research
  - Indicating policy research issues of interest to the farmers, the private sector and policy makers.

- Regular Dissemination workshops at the conclusion of AERC collaborative and other research projects.
Dissemination
Smallholder Farmers - through Alumni theses dissemination

Farmers seek more clarification from CMAAE graduate presenters during the past theses dissemination workshops
Accomplishments

- **Policy Relevant Research**
  - Supported close to 1000 thematic research projects involving researchers from 43 countries in Africa.
  - Partnerships with global knowledge centres
    - Including CGIAR, WB, etc.
  - The AERC website now has about 1000 publications and working papers:
    - AERC Research Papers
    - Policy briefs,
    - Framework papers,
    - Country case studies
Accomplishments (cont)

- **Individual Capacity Building**
  - Supported over 3,300 researchers
  - Supported over 2,600 masters graduates
    - Working in government ministries, central banks, national policy research institutes, universities, international organizations, etc
  - Supported over 500 through the PhD Programme
    - Nearly all retained in Africa
    - Majority (71%) have become faculty members in universities
    - Internships with global institutions and YP programmes.
  - Over 1,200 Senior African policy makers are in AERC’s high-level policy network
Supporting Systems within AERC

- Governance system – only African Institution with a five star ranking on Global Transparency

- Programme Implementation Framework
  - 5 Year Strategic Plan
  - Annual Work Plans and Budget
  - M & E systems

- Policies and Procedures
  - HR Policies and procedures
  - Finance and Admin policies and procedures
  - Procurement policies and procedures
  - Programme Administration policies and procedures

- Specific Donor Requirements
  - compliance ensured
Conclusion

- Leveraging network resources has enabled wider reach and institutional strengthening.
- Network researchers are part of the emerging networks of action-oriented research.
- Partnerships with global centres has been immensely valuable to sustainable capacity building for economic policy research and training in the region.
- Student interns – catch them when they are young!
THANK YOU

African Economic Research Consortium
Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique
PO Box 62882 – 00200 City Square, Nairobi, Kenya
Middle East Bank Towers, 3rd Floor, Milimani Road
Tel: (254-20) 273-4179 / 273-4157
Fax: (254-20) 273-4173
exec.dir@aercafrica.org / research@aercafrica.org / training@aercafrica.org
communications@aercafrica.org / publications@aercafrica.org
www.aercafrica.org