

AERC INSIGHT



AERC 60TH BIENNIAL PLENARY SESSION

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Note from the Executive Director



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly newsletter, INSIGHT!

We are enthusiastic to share with you some exciting updates and news from the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). We are back with another edition themed “Strengthening Partnerships: Collaborating for Sustainable Development in Africa,” packed with all the latest news and insights.

In this issue, we share a lot of material including the forthcoming and past AERC Biannual Research Works; the latter on “Youth Demographic Dividend, Migration, and Economic Opportunities in African Economies” was key in tackling the complex and challenging issues relating to education and job creation for the youth, women and the most vulnerable. This was also an opportunity for AERC to reaffirm its commitment to providing evidence-based research for uptake into policy to reduce the huge unemployment gap across the continent.

We have been busy re-establishing strong connections and raising the institution’s profile across international DFIs, policymakers, the private sector and global development partners.

This new visibility and strategic relationship drive includes AERC’s courtesy call to the Governor, Central Bank of Kenya and also a call on the Kenya Bankers Association; participation in the 2024 African Development Bank (AfDB) Annual Meetings and the Annual General Meetings of the Eastern and Southern Africa Trade and Development Bank (TDB) amongst other events as you will see in this edition.



Embarking on a new creative and impactful journey like this is never easy. Our latest newsletter will bring you face-to-face with a depiction of a bestselling periodical, while also immersing you into the vital gender mainstreaming agenda at AERC.



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You will all receive this publication once every quarter as you discover the magic and impact that the AERC achievements bring to the life of citizens across the continent, as the organization marks its thirty-sixth anniversary. In these over three decades of accomplishments, AERC has built a solid core of highly credible research that has enhanced the professional stature of our network both locally and internationally – as we focused our attention on issues critical to Africa’s development.

Do feel free to share feedback, observations, and questions you may have on the different topics and news items in this edition. Enjoy!!

Prof. Victor Murinde
Executive Director, AERC

Youth, Demographic Dividend, Migration, and Economic Opportunities in African Economies

The African Economic Research Consortium's (AERC) plenary session of the 60th Biannual Research Workshop was held on 2nd June, 2024 at Radisson Blu Upper Hill, Nairobi. National (Kenyan) and international participants from Africa, Europe, North America, and Asia attended the workshop. The opening session, chaired by Dr. Patrick Njoroge, immediate former Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), called for tapping into the youth and harnessing technology to generate jobs and sustainable economic developments in Africa.

The plenary session, themed “Youth, Demographic Dividend, Migration, and Economic Opportunities in African Economies,” was based on AERC research projects and provided a timely opportunity for researchers to interact with policymakers and private sector decision-makers from many African countries.

Representing Hon. Professor Njuguna Ndung'u, Cabinet Secretary for the National Treasury and Economic Planning in Kenya, Dr. Rose Ngugi, the Executive Director of the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), referenced the efforts being made by the government of Kenya to close the youth unemployment gap, while also noting the advantages and disadvantages of the demographic dividend.



We need timely and actionable policies to reduce the huge unemployment gap across the continent. There is no better development plan than investing in our youth, who are our future.

Their continuous increase in numbers is a double-edged sword. It can be beneficial for inclusive growth and sustainability or a ticking time bomb on a quest for highly productive livelihoods if not appropriately harnessed by African governments. African governments can proactively harness

demographic dividend benefits when young people have adequate employable skills and access to decent employment,” Dr. Ngugi remarked.

During his opening remarks, Professor Victor Murinde, the Executive Director of the AERC, emphasised the organisation’s continued commitment to providing evidence-based research for uptake into policy, helping improve economic opportunities for the youth while fostering the benefits of demographic dividends and migration in Africa.

“Africa is grappling with the complex issues of creating jobs, migration, and demographic dynamics. The labour market aspect of this year’s plenary underscores the

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importance of job creation and poverty reduction in Africa,” he said, adding that AERC has a long tradition of researching these interrelated issues to generate new ideas and transformational policies.

“In Africa, despite the investment in education, access and quality of provision remain enormous challenges limiting the possibilities of youth, women and the vulnerable to have decent work. With the growing population, rapid urbanisation, increased trade and technology, entrepreneurial and employment possibilities can be uncovered,” he added.

Professor Aly Ahmadou Mbaye, Professor of Economics and Public Policy and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal, pointed out that promoting youth productivity in the informal sector should be a key strategy for capturing the demographic dividend.

“Productivity affects international

Africa is grappling with the complex issues of creating jobs, migration, and demographic dynamics. The labour market aspect of this year’s plenary underscores the importance of job creation and poverty reduction in Africa,

competitiveness, and we need to close the mismatch in the informal sectors to balance unemployment and be able to compete at global levels. The demand for employment is still very high in Africa, and this general trend is compounded by the fact that the proportion of the young population is high, leading to people turning to the informal sector for jobs,” he said.

“The African informal work sector’s importance to the continent’s development in providing jobs for the youths cannot be

overemphasised. However, the sector’s full potential to accommodate the ever-growing youthful population across the African continent is yet to be realised, and as policymakers, we need evidence-based sessions like this one to convince governments of the need to pay more attention to this area.”

Economic opportunities for African youth, women, and the whole population can expand by leveraging technology, implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and improving educational quality with the aim of inclusive growth. One of the arguments for youth engagement in the productive sectors of the economy is the development of employable skills. Well-educated and healthy individuals with diverse skills are likely to participate in highly valued economic activities, thus boosting economic development prospects.

The plenary session featured three additional presentations by eminent



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economists: Prof. Imran Rasul, Professor of Economics, Department of Economics, University College London (UCL) on “Tackling youth unemployment in Africa”; Prof. Lant Pritchett, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, spoke on “Investing in human capital/education for a demographic dividend” and finally, “Migration Policies in Africa’s RECs” by Blaise Gnimassoun, Université de Lorraine, and Université Paris Nanterre.

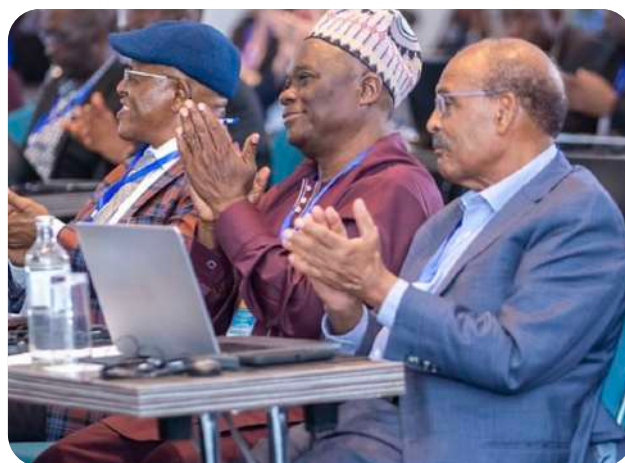
A high-level policy panel discussion on the theme, moderated by Ms. Maggie Mutesi, Africatalyst, set the stage for frontier research by leading academics generating evidence on opportunities, risks, and challenges that affect the youth and how African economics can harness the trade-offs of demographic dividend and migration for sustainable development.

Concurrent sessions of the biannual research workshop started on Monday, 3 June 2024. They featured 63 presentations of research proposals, work in progress, final reports, and interim PhD thesis reports. The sessions covered a wide range of topics that fit into one or the other of the focal areas of AERC’s thematic research programme: poverty, income distribution and labour market; macroeconomic policies and growth; finance and resource mobilisation; production, trade,

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and economic integration; as well as agriculture, climate change and natural resource management issues.

Some of the notable emerging suggestions from the AERC Biannual meeting included fronting human capital development to enhance youth skills to nurture employability and entrepreneurship via widespread TVET provision and aligning the education curriculum to embody science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related courses to spur innovativeness and ingenuity in young people, thus creating jobs in the digital space, the manufacturing sector and the ever-growing AI-driven future.





Building Resilient African Economies in the Face of Global Shocks

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) hosted a successful side event at the 2024 African Development Bank (AfDB) Annual Meetings on 27 May 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. Focusing on the theme “Building resilient African economies in the face of global shocks”, this dynamic side event convened influential policymakers, development practitioners, leading researchers, and private sector representatives.

This meeting was officially opened by H.E. Bihi Iman Egeh, Minister of Finance of the Federal Government of Somalia. In his remarks, H.E. Egeh observed that post-Covid-19 pandemic, growth remains elusive in most African countries. This is given the fact that many African countries have a weak ability to respond to various shocks. He added that the multiple shocks of COVID-19, the climate crisis, and the Ukraine-Russian war have made more than 18 million people poorer on the continent.

Prof. Victor Murinde, AERC Executive Director, in his welcoming remarks, said that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unexpected exogenous shocks that have resulted in global, regional, and national policy responses.



Over the past few decades, economic performance in Africa has been shaped by shocks of varying magnitude, duration, and recurrence, some of which have been frequent, thus leading to financial crisis.

Dr. Kathryn Toure, Regional Director, Eastern and Southern Africa International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Regional Office, said that IDRC has a

proud history of working with researchers to explore opportunities for collaboration. Drawing from the IDRC-supported initiatives and other recent African-led research, this meeting addressed Finance and the Impact of War, Macroeconomic Shocks and Microeconomic Stability, Resilience in Fragile Contexts, and Gender-Sensitive Policymaking.

Professor Dirk Willem te Velde, Principal Research Fellow and Director of ODI’s International Economic Development Group, moderated the meeting. The panellists included H.E. Egeh, Prof. Murinde, Dr. Toure, and Prof. Jane Kabubo–Mariara, Executive Director of the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP).



Knowledge Event during the 2024 African Development Bank Group Meetings



The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) convened a high-level stakeholders’ side event at the 2024 African Development Bank (AfDB) Annual Meetings on 27 May 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting, which included ministers of finance, governors of central banks, representatives from the private sector, continental and regional think tanks, policy analysts, multilateral development banks, and development financial institutions, discussed Africa’s needs and opportunities and innovative approaches to supporting African human capital development.

Prof. Njuguna Ndungu, Cabinet Secretary, National Treasury and Economic Planning,

Kenya, in his remarks during the official opening, said that the theme of the session was very interesting and topical, adding that he was honoured to talk about the subject matter. He stressed that the benefits of demographic dividends are not automatic. “These benefits depend on the policy framework such as human capital development, education, health

Africa needs to scale up investment in human capital through education and training, learning and experience, modalities for labour mobility across borders,

and nutrition, labour markets, in addition to good governance and quality of institutions”

Prof. Victor Murinde, AERC Executive Director, highlighted the centrality of Human Capital Development, noting that focusing on the demographic dividend and skilled labour is imperative. He observed that youth provide tremendous potential. “Demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure,” he said.

Africa has a strong competitive advantage owing to its relatively large and youthful population compared to other regions. However, it has yet to fully exploit this window of opportunity to benefit from its



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Countries that invest in human capital by promoting education, training and overall human capital development tend to be more competitive in the global arena

“demographic dividend” for sustained, inclusive growth and development. The continent ranks poorly globally in the Human Development Index (HDI).

Africa needs to scale up investment in human capital through education and training, learning and experience, modalities for labour mobility across borders, or health interventions for improved social and economic outcomes. This is vital in shaping future incomes and productivity. Equipping its populace with education, skills, and jobs stands to be the most important impetus for economic growth on the continent. Harnessing the potential of human capital is a sustainable key to social progress and economic transformation for the continent.

Countries that invest in human capital by promoting education, training and overall human capital development tend to be



more competitive in the global arena, and they are better positioned to adapt to technological changes, foster innovation and drive economic growth. There is, therefore, a need to facilitate regional and country-owned policy reforms, action plans and cross-country learning to enhance the circular movement of skilled labour across nations.

The event deepened discussions on a renewed emphasis on harnessing Africa’s demographic dividend through skills training and decent jobs across nations. More specifically, the debate focused on ascertaining ways of accelerating human capital development to enhance sustainable growth and development, discussing the positive relationship between human capital development and innovation

to drive sustainable growth and job creation. The participants also deliberated on the critical role of institutions in human capital development and the importance of investing in innovation, digitisation, and ICT access for the realisation of the demographic dividend.

This event was moderated by Dr. Rose Ngugi, the Executive Director of the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA). The panellists included Dr. Martha Phiri, Director of Human Capital, Youth and Skills Development at the Africa Development Bank; Dr. Kwame Owino, Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Economic Affairs; and Mr. William Asiko, Vice President of the Africa Regional Office at the Rockefeller Foundation.

AERC-IDRC Preliminary Findings Workshop on Impact of War in Ukraine on Food Security in Low-Income Countries



The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), in collaboration with the Economic Research Forum (ERF) and Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), hosted a preliminary findings workshop virtually, ensuring the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders, on May 13, 2024. The workshop was based on the project “Impacts of War in Ukraine on Food Security in Low-Income Countries”.

The Project, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Global Affairs Canada, aims to support evidence-informed and gender-responsive policy responses to address the current impacts of the war on food security and enhance longer-term resilience to shocks for vulnerable populations in low-income countries in Africa and the Middle East.

The project has specific objectives, including investigating gender-differentiated impacts of the crises at household and economy-wide levels,

assessing the gender sensitivity of existing policy responses, analysing the effect of macroeconomic shocks or mitigation policies on socioeconomic indicators at individual or household levels, and analysing the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war measures across different economic sectors. The project aims to investigate the distributional impact of these measures on different types of groups, to help identify optimum policy responses in specific contexts and effective for particularly vulnerable groups.

During the workshop’s official opening session, Dr. Abbi Kadir, AERC’s Director of Research, noted that the reorganisation of Africa’s agricultural sector is long overdue, given that the continent has not been able to adequately feed itself. “We need to orient agricultural countries toward self-sufficiency in terms of food security,” he said.

Professor Heinrich Bohlmann, Research Director of the Macro-micro Policy Modelling group at the PEP, observed that this project provides a template for other countries to investigate these important issues. Dr. Arjan de Haan, Senior Programme Specialist at the IDRC, said that it is always a wonderful experience to work with AERC, adding that the workshops are a great opportunity to share outcomes.

Professor Dirk Willem te Velde, Principal Research Fellow and Director of International Economic Development Group and director of the Supporting Investment and Trade in Africa (SITA) Programme at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, chaired the workshop.

Two papers were presented at the workshop: Impact of the War in Russia-Ukraine on the African Economies Egypt and Kenya: A gendered macro-micro modelling assessment led by PEP and The Impact of Russia-Ukraine War policy interventions across different economic sectors in Kenya with gender dimension led by AERC. The final review workshop is scheduled for the first week of September.

This meeting discussed possible avenues for collaboration, which include joint development of research and working paper series, book volumes,



AERC Pays Courtesy Call on Governor, Central Bank of Kenya



A delegation from the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) led by Prof. Victor Murinde the Executive Director, paid a courtesy call on Dr. Kamau Thugge, Governor, Central Bank of Kenya. This call was paid to deliberate on pertinent partnership matters between the two institutions as well as policy issues that relate to the development of Africa. The meeting took place on Tuesday, 13 August 2024 at the Governor's office in Nairobi, Kenya.

This meeting discussed possible avenues for collaboration, which include joint development of research and working paper series, book volumes, participation of CBK staff as paper presenters and discussants at

the AERC flagship events such as the biannual research workshops, senior policy seminars and national policy workshops. The AERC can also provide executive short training courses, retooling workshops and doctoral training to the Bank staff for continuous improvement of the research capacity.

This meeting discussed possible avenues for collaboration, which include joint development of research and working paper series, book volumes,

The two institutions are looking forward to developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will provide a framework for collaboration in various activities with the objective of promoting a strategic and equitable partnership. The CBK has been an active partner of the AERC since the latter's inception.

In attendance at the courtesy call were the Director, Research Department, Prof. Robert Mudida and Dr. Maureen Were from the CBK and the AERC Director of Research, Dr. Abbi Kedir, Dr. Tom Kimani, Lead Manager Training Programme, and Ms. Lydiah Auma, Strategic Partnerships Officer.

AERC Spearheads Discussions on Digital Finance at International FinTech Conference

The Africa Economic Research Consortium (AERC) will be participating in the International Conference on Global FinTech Ecosystem and FinTech-Enabled Trade in Services from July 22nd to 23rd, 2024, at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom. Professor Victor Murinde, Executive Director of AERC, served as the keynote speaker, delivering an insightful address on unlocking the potential of digital finance.

The two-day conference also aims to enable researchers to engage with policymakers, private sector practitioners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to chart further research, identify emerging issues, and continue generating new findings and disseminating knowledge and experiences related to the global financial system and the world economy.

Additionally, it brings together world-leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in the fields of FinTech and financial services to share insights on the shifting global economic and financial trends and how to build resilience for future shocks. Ongoing research and preliminary findings will be debated and contested, highlighting new methodological advances in economics and finance and exploring solutions for restoring global financial stability and economic sustainability.

Briefing students about formal affiliation to AERC, Prof. Murinde said that plans are underway to institutionalize association so that all stakeholders are integrated. The AERC will have categories of membership including Affiliate (PhD and Master's); Associate (Post Doctoral); Fellows

(Resource Persons and those holding senior positions); as well as Emeritus Fellows (Retired Resource Persons). All the network members in the various categories will have an opportunity to identify with AERC in one way or another so they can have a skin in the game.

During the launch of the SFSE 2024, the AERC seized the opportunity to recognize academic excellence and awarded the CMAAE Academic Advisory Board prizes to the best performing students. This happens every year. In this regard, the institution recognized the three (3) best performers in the 2023 SFSE as follows:

- 1. The Best Student: Mr. Moitlamo Ookeditse Mpinda, Egerton University**
- 2. First Runners-up: Mr. Garai McDonald, University of Pretoria**
- 3. Second Runners-up: Mr. Hanco Marais, University of Pretoria**

The AERC Shared Facility for Specialization and Electives is a programme for centralized offering of a menu of elective courses to master's students from CMAAE participating universities by internationally sourced visiting lecturers for an intensive duration of 3-4 months. The teaching of elective courses is delivered on a virtual platform through live or synchronous lectures via the Zoom platform and AERC's Learning Management System (LMS), complemented by the AERC eLibrary and MyLoft where textbooks, reference journal articles and lecture materials/notes are easily accessible, and lecture recordings are made available for asynchronous access to lessons by students.





AERC's Grand Courtesy Call to Kenya Bankers Association



Prof. Victor Murinde, Executive Director, AERC, led a team that paid a courtesy call to the Kenya Bankers Association (KBA) at their head office in Nairobi, Kenya. The AERC team was received by Mr. Raimond Molenje, Ag. Chief Executive Officer, KBA. This was one of a series of visits the AERC executive director is making to familiarize himself with some of the AERC's partner institutions across Africa. The KBA is

one of the African Economic Research Consortium's (AERC) partners.

During this visit, Prof. Murinde noted that AERC and KBA have had a fruitful and warm relationship over the years. He went ahead to add that given the fact that AERC is a premier capacity building institution in the advancement of research and training to inform economic policies in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a lot that the

two organizations can do together. "The AERC is one of the most active Research and Capacity Building Institutions (RCBIs) in the world, with a focus on Africa," he said.

"Commercial Banks have training needs, and thus AERC can partner with KBA to do a step change to break a new ground in this kind of collaboration by customizing training needs for the African market, particularly on green finance," said Prof. Murinde, adding that Kenya is one of the pan African centers putting the two institutions, which are both in the country at a great regional focus for such a co-operation; others pan African centers include Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Prof. Murinde gave a short brief on the forthcoming AERC Biannual Research Workshop, and proposed to KBA that it would be possible to host a side event during this major workshop and pull in Nobel prize winner to give a paper. Each of these AERC's biannual research workshops attracts (physically or online) more than 500 researchers, academics, policy makers and other economists who participate in the research programme.

"The Biannual Research workshops provide a forum in which the participants can meet each other within a worldwide network of professionals, and deal with issues relevant to Africa's economic development. They also provide an opportunity for monitoring the progress and quality of the various research projects sponsored by AERC, thereby fulfilling one of its major mandates – to strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa," said Prof. Murinde.

On his part, Mr. Raimond Molenje noted that the journey that AERC and KBA have walked together harmoniously over the years has produced excellent results.

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“The two institutions can henceforth do certainly more to cement this relationship. We are keen to continue partnering with valuable organizations like AERC and will develop work streams for such endeavors. We as well recognize the support we have got from AERC and are ready to do more together in terms of policy dissemination and workshops,” he said.

Mr. Molenje said that the KBA brings all commercial banks in Kenya together. He added that it is an industry association that was established in 1962, by the Registrar of Trade Unions. Initially, the association’s primary objective was to represent member banks in negotiating the terms and conditions of their unionized employees, however, it has since morphed to embrace other activities.

The KBA is also engaged in standardization of management practices across the industry to ensure harmony. The Kenya Bankers Association is the umbrella organization representing 46 licensed and regulated financial institutions by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK). The KBA’s mission is to promote a reliable and professional banking sector that provides the best financial services to Kenyans who entrust their hard-earned resources with the member banks.



The KBA is also engaged in standardization of management practices across the industry to ensure harmony.

“Over time, the Kenya Bankers Association’s ambition has expanded to include promoting industry development and economic growth by engaging with the government and the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), the sector regulator. This ambition was further strengthened when the association unveiled its new brand and ambition statement: One Industry. Transforming Kenya,” said Mr. Molenje.

Mr. Molenje observed that the Kenya Bankers Association has revised its mandate to strengthen the banking industry’s role as a critical driver of economic growth. The new mandate includes lobbying and advocacy efforts and promoting industry development as well as innovation through collaboration with members and stakeholders on strategic initiatives.





AERC Meets with Economics Department Staff at University of Nairobi



The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) was hosted by the University of Nairobi's Economics Department at the University's Nairobi Main Campus last week on Wednesday, July 10, 2024. Prof. Victor Murinde, Executive Director, AERC and Dr. Martine Oleche, the Chairman of the Department of Economics and Development Studies at the University of Nairobi led the teams drawn from the two organizations in this crucial meeting.

The discussions covered various issues including ways of exploring possible collaboration on the university's thematic priorities. Other areas of focus included the department's outstanding multidisciplinary and multipurpose research capacity in Kenya, in the African region and globally as well leveraging on AERC's reputation as a leader in policy-oriented economic research in the continent.

This transformative programme will empower individuals from economically disadvantaged communities. By equipping them with essential skills and support

Prof. Murinde praised the long cooperation AERC has had with the University of Nairobi's Economics Department. "I am delighted to be here to share some developments on the AERC strategic options going forward," he said adding that ground for AERC's new 2025-2030 is ripe. He noted that the best institutions now have 10-year plans for a longer-term trajectory and AERC is thinking along similar lines.

He pointed out the successful step change that AERC has made over the years from Collaborative Master's Programme (CMAP) to Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP). The CMAP is a programme for direct support of master's level studies in economics, while the CPP is AERC programme for direct support of doctoral level studies in economics. The AERC supports students from the University of Nairobi in these programmes.

Prof. Murinde observed that AERC will share some information with the University of Nairobi on plans to partner with Mastercard and other institutions over the course of ten years to offer a total of 1000 scholarships in support for PhD academic programmes across Africa. The overarching aim of this program is to foster empowerment among young individuals to evolve into transformative leaders capable of making substantive contributions to both national and regional

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development endeavors. The scholarships will cater for 70% female students to compensate for their low numbers and AERC will work together with the University of Nairobi on roadshows to promote this programme.

“This transformative programme will empower individuals from economically disadvantaged communities. By equipping them with essential skills and support, it will enable the scholars to successfully navigate their educational journey and make meaningful contributions to their home countries,” he said.

Prof. Murinde also talked about retooling faculty and researchers to new methods including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning methods. He added that the world has moved on hence the urgency to explore potentials of AI to improve teaching, learning and research in higher education. He emphasized the importance of AI in the evolving classroom landscape.

On formal affiliation to AERC he said that plans are underway to institutionalize this so we can have AERC Affiliate (PhD and Master’s);

Associate (Post Doctoral); Fellows (Resource Persons and those holding senior positions); as well as Emeritus Fellows (Retired Resource Persons). All the network members in the various categories will be given an opportunity to identify with AERC in one way or another so they can have a skin in the game.

Dr. Oleche observed that the department of economics and development studies carries out research on high priority areas of social-economic development in Africa and world-wide. He expressed gratitude to the AERC for supporting the department in various ways including scholarships and grants adding that this has strengthened the partnership between the two organizations.

From their perspective emphasized that “AERC must be supported because you cannot have another outfit like it, adding that if you are an economist in Africa and you haven’t engaged or interacted with AERC, then you are not a serious economist”. Dr. Oleche suggested that the two institutions should have frequent meetings to reinforce this partnership.

The Department of Economics and Development Studies, fondly known as DEDES, trains Kenyan and international students in all fields of economics and development studies, thus contributing directly to sustainable human capital accumulation in Africa and beyond. DEDES has emerged as a destination of highly qualified students, young and experienced scholars; and importantly – of practitioners and senior policy makers who want to acquire analytical skills in various branches of economics and development.

The Department is the successor to the former School of Economics (SOE) and Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The two units were merged in 2021 in a university-wide reform of curricula, data, people and governance structures. DEDES is one of the largest departments in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at the University. Its core mandates include teaching, learning, research, innovation, consultancy and community service. The DEDES is a longstanding member of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and participates in several of the Consortium’s flagship initiatives, notably, the Collaborative Master’s Programme (CMP) and the Collaborative Ph.D Programme (CPP).



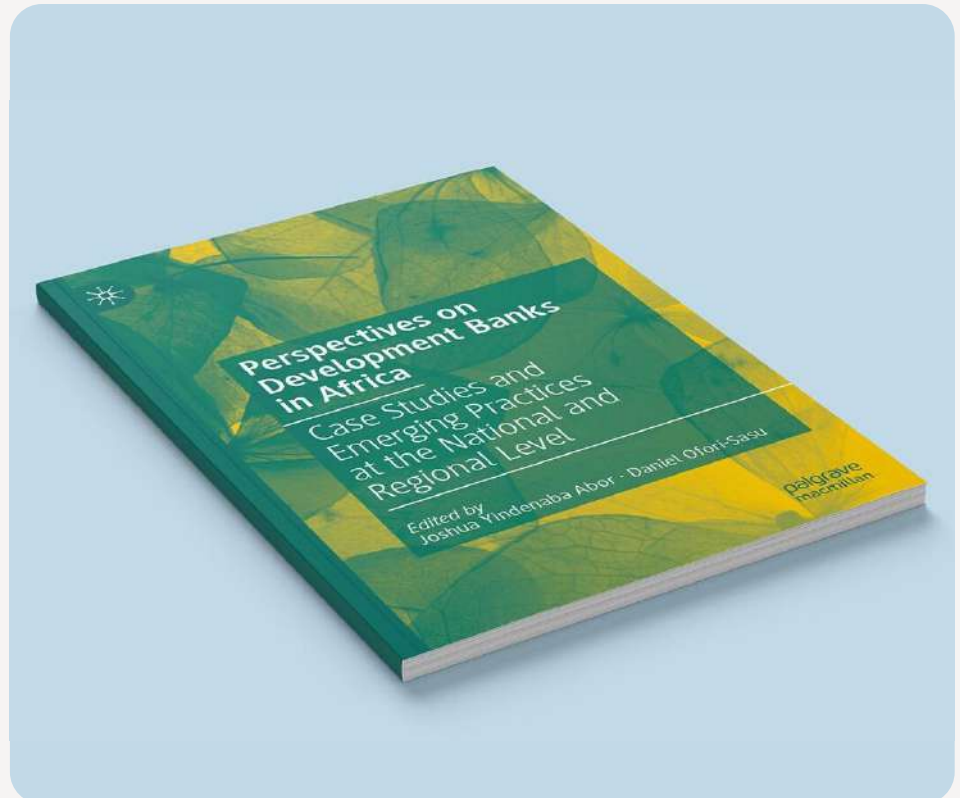


Prof. Victor Murinde contributes a chapter in an edited book volume

Prof. Victor Murinde, AERC Executive Director has contributed a chapter in an edited book titled “Perspectives on Development Banks in Africa”. Chapter 7 of the book on “Kenya Development Corporation as an Instrument of Economic Growth” is authored by Victor Murinde and Peter W. Muriu. This chapter points out that the mobilization of long-term capital is one of the major obstacles to economic development for emerging economies. It further notes that long-term investment is a precursor to economic transformation, which is vital for the expansion of productive capacities and for infrastructure development.

Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) fill the void left by retail commercial banks, which view long-term projects as risky (Lemma, 2018). DFIs finance medium- and large-scale projects in prioritized sectors with lengthy maturities which require long-term funding. They provide lending and equity participation, that entails close monitoring of projects, which is important for relationship banking. (Luna-Martinez & Vicente, 2012; Savoy et al., 2016).

The authors note that although there is a growing literature on the role of development banks in accelerating economic growth, the literature on DFIs performance, corporate governance, regulation and policy options in Africa remains scant. DFIs have been in existence in Kenya since the 1960s. That notwithstanding, there still exists a development financing gap. This chapter uncovers the evolution and role of DFIs in the development discourse paying special



attention to Kenya Development Corporation. The chapter illuminates the profile, potential contribution to development outcomes, challenges encountered as well as policy options.

They argue that Kenya is not necessarily a representative of DFIs activities in Africa, but an interesting laboratory for investigation for the following reasons: even though East and Central Africa economies are at different stages of financial, institutional and economic development, Kenya is the main financial hub with the highest concentration of DFIs. Second, the financial sector is largely

bank oriented. Policies that promote DFIs may, therefore, have implications on overall financial stability.

This study is, therefore, timely with regard to how access to a firm’s long-term finance may affect economic growth, employment and other development outcomes, especially among small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Findings from this case study may also ignite policies relevant to the development of appropriate institutional framework that can enhance DFIs investments. The book was published by Palgrave Macmillan and it is edited by Joshua Abor and Daniel Ofori-Sasu.

OFF THE PRESS

Prof. Victor Murinde's Chapter Contributions featured in a book titled "Inclusive Financial Development"



Prof. Victor Murinde, AERC Executive Director recently gifted Ms. Erin Tansey, IDRC Director for Sustainable Inclusive Economies (SIE) an edited book volume titled "Inclusive Financial Development" in which he contributed three chapters. Ms. Tansey who was visiting Nairobi from Ottawa, Canada to engage AERC on future collaborations was delighted to receive the intellectually stimulating book.

Inclusive Financial Development edited by Ahmad H. Ahmad, David T. Llewellyn and Victor Murinde was published by Edward Elgar Publishing. It provides theoretical and empirical analyses of the nature of financial inclusion. The contributing authors explore the impediments to inclusion that exist around the world, the

macro and stability implications, and the regulation dimension.

Chapter 5 of this book on "The impact of financial inclusion on sectoral economic growth" is authored by Victor Murinde, Ayse Demir, Joseph Ajefu and Syed Bukhari. This chapter observes that in a panel of 69 countries covering the period 2004-2017, the

impact of financial inclusion on agricultural, industrial and service sectoral growth appears to change depending on the financial structure of the country. It has comparative advantage in promoting agricultural growth in countries with financial systems dominated by markets, while its effects are stronger on services and industry growth in countries with market-based financial systems.

Then again Prof. Victor Murinde contributes to Chapter 7 of the volume titled "The rise of cross-border pan-African banks in the WAEMU". This chapter is authored by Victor Murinde, Issouf Soumara and Kouama Dasira Kanga. It reviews the recent trend of pan-African banks presence in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) region. The chapter notes that the

In the concluding chapter where Prof. Murinde is featured again describes the main aspects of inclusive financial development covered in the book.

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proportion of foreign banks grew from 63% in 2000 to 79.5% in 2017, and the share of cross-border pan-African banks rose from 29% in 2000 to 62% in 2017.

The ownership structure of the banking sector is changing fast, implying changes in the structure of the banking sector in terms of competition, lending and stability. This chapter similarly shows how the increasing cross-border pan-African banks activities in the regional countries has improved competition within the banking sector, while at the same time, it has increased access to bank loans. The current rise of pan-African banks has different policy implications. This trend can be sustained by investing in new technologies which enable banks to go digital. Policy makers and regulators should also be sensitive to the need to promote the use of new technologies which are necessary to improve the efficiency of pan-African banks and to reduce intermediation costs.

In the concluding chapter where Prof. Murinde is featured again describes the main aspects of inclusive financial development covered in the book. It summarizes the research findings, policy implications and direction for future research. The chapter

delivers six key messages. First, emphasis is made on the role of financial regulation in financial inclusion, to entrench trust and confidence in financial institutions, ensure systemic stability and consumer protection.

Second, they endorse the strong empirical evidence, which shows that financial inclusion has been greatly improved by the adoption of digital finance, especially in Africa where the financial access gap has been very wide; appropriate policy and interventions are urgently required to scale up interoperability of retail electronic payments platforms and provision of electronic-ID system.

Third, there is robust evidence that financial inclusion promotes economic growth, notably more in agriculture and services than other sectors of the economy; this solid evidence is timely for government intervention in the two sectors where households and companies are most active and where participation opportunities are greater for and women entrepreneurs and start-ups by the youth.

Fourth, the rise of the pan-African cross-border banking revolution has improved

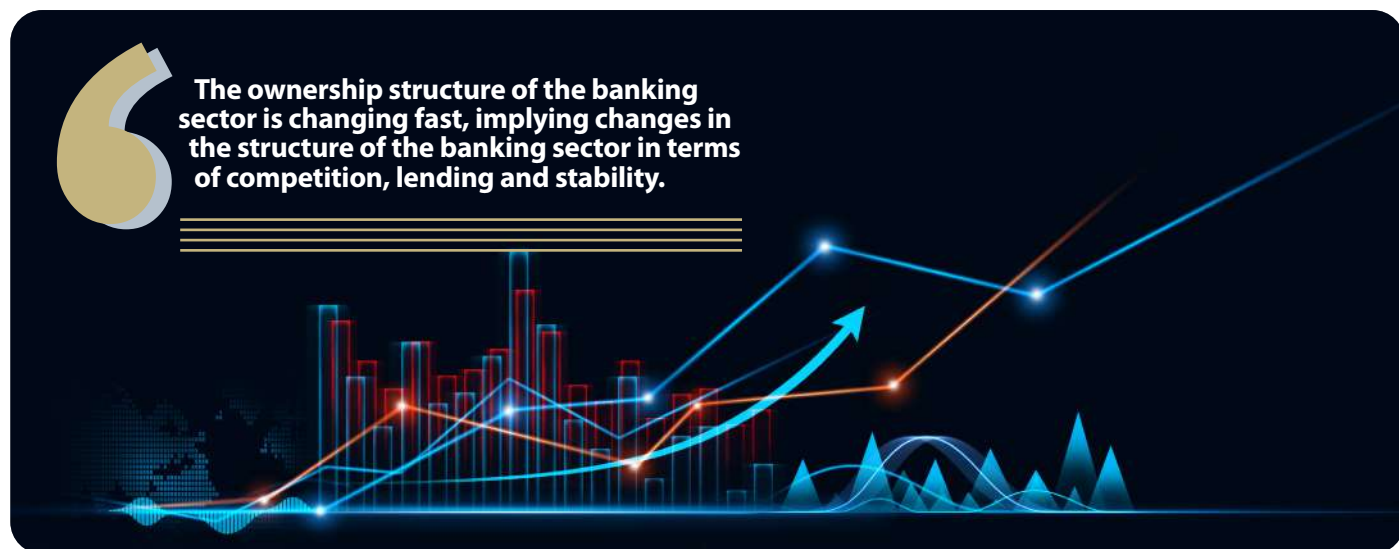
competition within the banking sector, which in turn has increased access to bank loans for households and businesses. Fifth, mobile money – the most elementary form of FinTech which started in Africa and is diffusing rapidly worldwide – has become part of the financial system in several African countries and has disrupted the well-entrenched digital divide between the North and the South.

Sixth and finally, there are still several challenges to achieving inclusive financial development including infrastructure, internet security, and lack of incentive compatibility between government actors and private sector agents; they highlight future research to address these challenges and generate new evidence to guide new policies and practices to enhance inclusive financial development and growth.

“Here is the inside of my brain” Prof. Victor Murinde, AERC Executive Director seems to say while gifting a book titled Inclusive Financial Development to Ms. Erin Tansey, IDRC Director for Sustainable Inclusive Economies (SIE).



The ownership structure of the banking sector is changing fast, implying changes in the structure of the banking sector in terms of competition, lending and stability.





GENDER MAINSTREAMING Agenda at AERC



Lanoi Maloiy, PASHFARM Gender Expert at AERC

What has been your role in the AERC PASHFARM project?

I am a women studies and gender scholar who has worked in academia and gender consulting in the agriculture sector – undertaking gender analysis of food value

chains in Mwanza and Tanga in Tanzania and enhancing inclusivity in irrigation schemes in Uganda. For the Policy Analysis for Sustainable and Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets (PASHFARM), I have been brought on board by AERC to mainstream gender across the project in terms of proposal selection, encouraging the selection of gender-balanced and gender-responsive research teams, as well as undertaking gender research training for research teams awarded grants.

How have you managed to integrate gender into the PASHFARM Project, and how do you see your professional career because of being associated with AERC?

Gender in PASHFARM is conceptualised as research and interventions that investigate different groups of men and women, including young men and women's involvement in food nutrition enterprises,

including informal and formal trading. It is important to think about how different aspects of food nutrition, such as food markets, food policies, programmes and research, affect these groups, including identifying and addressing gender issues within the African food and retail markets through policy changes and implementation of gender-responsive programmes. Given this perspective of gender in PASHFARM, my role was to read through 104 research proposals submitted by economic and food researchers, examining how well gender issues and gender analysis have been integrated. At the same time, identifying at least five Gender focused research projects among the final 20 multidisciplinary projects that were shortlisted. I also trained representatives of the 20 research projects on key gender concepts and how to undertake gender-responsive research projects.

AERC ROUND-UP



Policy Analysis for Sustainable and Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets- Pashfarm



The session was facilitated by Dr. Mark Korir (Agriculture Economist/Manager Training), Dr. Maureen Cheserek (Nutrition Specialist) and Dr. Lanoi Maloy (Gender Specialist) with the administrative and IT support of AERC staff.

The Policy Analysis for Sustainable and Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets (PASHFARM) project is one of the AERC's flagship projects, with twenty (20) research teams spread over eighteen (18) Sub-Saharan African (SAA) countries. These countries are faced with many public health challenges, including the consumption of poor diets by households. The key question of the project is how to make nutritious foods available, accessible, safe and affordable to low-income consumers. The retail market food environment influences consumers' dietary preferences, food choices and nutritional outcomes. However, in Africa, most consumers have inadequate access to nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables, animal-source foods, and biofortified foods (iron-rich beans and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, among others). Gendered barriers also limit consumers from accessing and consuming nutritious and healthy foods. Therefore, the PASHFARM project

endeavours to generate research evidence to inform policy, practice, and individual decision-making. The project leverages the expertise of multidisciplinary research teams, including economists, nutritionists, and gender experts, among others.

AERC presented its first Learning Lab on 18th June 2024 at the 9th Annual Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health (ANH) Academy Week. The lab was titled 'Integrating Nutrition and Gender in Food Environment Research Projects'. The session was facilitated by Dr. Mark Korir (Agriculture Economist/Manager Training), Dr. Maureen Cheserek (Nutrition Specialist) and Dr. Lanoi Maloy (Gender Specialist) with the administrative and IT support of AERC staff. The learning session provided an opportunity for the 83 participants (researchers, academia, and practitioners) to strengthen their knowledge and skills while integrating nutrition and gender in food environment research. It

highlighted the role of retail markets in improving nutrition, appropriate nutrition methods and metrics, gender concepts, and analysis relevant to food environment research.

Learning Lab Link:

[https://www.anh-academy.org/academy-week/2024/programme/learning-lab-integrating-nutrition-and-gender-in-food-environment\](https://www.anh-academy.org/academy-week/2024/programme/learning-lab-integrating-nutrition-and-gender-in-food-environment/)

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0D77ypjBA4>

PASHFARM project team. From the front- ANH2024 Learning Lab Facilitators-Dr. Maureen Cheserek, Dr. Mark Korir and Dr. Lanoi Maloy. From behind-Technical team: -Mr. Lawrence Kaberi, Ms. Evar Kiambuthi, Mr. Daniel Njiru, Ms. Bertha Chedeye and Mr. Gerald Riziki.

MY STORY: The Impact of the CPP JFE Mentorship on Mr. Prince Opoku's Education and Career



BIO

Prince Kwabena Mensah Gyamfi Opoku is a PhD Economics student at the Department of Applied Economics at the School of Economics, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He holds a Master of Philosophy in Economics and was a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant at the University of Ghana, Legon.

Mr. Opoku's current work focuses on Food Security and Environmental Sustainability in Africa, especially the impact of financial development and a country's climate adaptation strategy on food security. He also focuses on renewable energy and sectorial growth impact on environmental sustainability.

He examines this field with the goal of producing convincing evidence for public policy decisions. He has a broad interest in the Drivers of Development in Africa, and his areas of research interest include Development Economics, Financial markets and institutions, Climate change, Food security in Africa, and Environmental Sustainability.

TESTIMONIAL

Participating in the CPP-JFE 2023 was an incredibly enriching and transformative experience. The programme significantly deepened my knowledge in Research, Econometrics, Development Economics, Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, providing a robust platform to engage with some of the most brilliant minds in Africa. The rigorous and comprehensive curriculum challenged me to think critically, enhancing my ability to understand and apply complex economic theories to practical, real-world situations.

The faculty members were truly exceptional. Their extensive knowledge, coupled with their dedication and passion for teaching, played a pivotal role in my academic growth. Their mentorship and guidance were instrumental in helping me achieve my academic and professional objectives.

The collaborative and intellectually stimulating environment fostered by the programme encouraged profound discussions and debates, allowing us to learn from each other and expand our perspectives. The friendships and professional networks I developed during this period are invaluable and will undoubtedly support my personal and professional development for years to come.

Overall, the CPP-JFE 2023 marked a pivotal moment in my academic journey. It has given me the essential skills and confidence to pursue my career aspirations and make meaningful contributions to economics in Africa.

AERC at the International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE)

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) recently participated in the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) held at the National Agricultural Science Complex (NASC), New Delhi, India. The event took place on 2-7 August 2024. The conference, whose theme was “Transformation Towards Sustainable Agri-Food Systems” was officially opened by Shri Narendra Modi, the Hon. Prime Minister of India, and accompanied by Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the Hon. Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, India.

Distinguished persons in attendance included Prof. Matin Qaim (Centre for Development Research, Zef), Prof. Uma Lele (formerly World Bank), Prof. Prabu Pingali, Prof. Joackim von Braun (University of Bonn), Prof. Johan Swennen (former Director General, IFPRI), Prof. Will Martin (formerly World Bank), Prof. Kei Otsuka (University of Kobe), Prof. Christopher Barrett (Cornell University), and Dr. Schengen Fan, among others. A total of 1,022 delegates emanating from 58 countries were in attendance. India led with 22% of the delegates, USA (17%), Germany (11%) Kenya (7%), Italy and China at 6% each, and Japan and UK at 4% each.

The panel in which AERC was invited to lead was titled “Research in Nutritious Food Markets for Policy Influence in sub-Saharan Africa”. It had four presentations by researchers under the AERC-BMGF Policy Analysis for Sustainable and Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets (PASHFARM) as follows:



“Transformation Towards Sustainable Agri-Food Systems” was officially opened by Shri Narendra Modi, the Hon. Prime Minister of India.

1. Rural Wealth and Access to Nutritious and Healthy Diets: Panel Data Evidence from Zambia by Dr. Martin Paul Jr. Tabe-Ojong

2. Food Price Volatility, Affordability, and Inequalities in Nutritious Diets: The Case of Ghana by Dr. Isaac Kwesi Ofori

3. Gendered Participation along the Food Vending Value Chains in Urban Informal Settlements in Kenya by Dr. Pamela Marinda; and

4. The Gendered effect of Food Cost and Price Variability on Consumption of Nutritious Foods and Diets by Ms. Doris Macha.

The presentations were followed by a policy roundtable by Prof. Tom G. Ondicho, Department of Anthropology, Gender, and African Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya;

Prof. Bereket Kebede, University of East Anglia, UK; Ms. Doris Macha, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and moderated by Dr. Mark Korir, Manager, Training, AERC.

The panel concluded that control of food price volatilities is critical to food security and the consumption of nutritious diets; that lack of infrastructural facilities reduced profit margins and hampered provision of quality and nutritious foods; and that it is imperative that stakeholders support policies that provide for infrastructural facilities in retail markets for nutritious foods. The session generated a lot of interest with the conference delegates including the AERC resource persons (Prof. Victor Okoruwa- Thematic Group E and Prof. Daniel Sakyi- SFSE Visiting Professor), researchers and alumni.

A mid conference tour was organized for the delegates, one of which was PUSA Panorama: A Journey through Agricultural Excellence which showcased India’s agricultural research and innovations including horticulture, phenomics, integrated fish farming, automated irrigation, green manure, and research in long-grain Basmati, among others.

NEWS

AERC Officially Opens Shared Facility for Specialization and Electives (SFSE) 2024

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) has launched the Collaborative Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics (CMAAE) and Shared Facility for Specialization and Electives (SFSE). The programme is rolled out annually in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa. The event which was officiated on a virtual platform by Prof. Victor Murinde, the AERC Executive Director, took place on Thursday, August 1, 2024.

A total of 123 students are participating in the programme this year and the composition is 53 (43%) women. It is important to note that 70 of the 123 students from the seven (7) CMAAE-accredited departments will be attending the face-to-face session of the SFSE at the University of Pretoria (UP) beginning October 2024, alongside the (17) students who are drawn from the UP, the co-hosting institution. The remaining 37 students will attend the SFSE online from their home universities.

The students are from the following CMAAE network universities: Egerton University, Kenya; University of Eswatini; Haramaya University, Ethiopia; Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), Malawi; Makerere University, Uganda; University of Nairobi, Kenya; University of Pretoria, South Africa; Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania; Stellenbosch University in South Africa; and University of Zimbabwe.

These students are drawn from 17 African countries, namely: Botswana, Burundi,



Djibouti, DRC, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Thirteen (13) Lecturers/Professors have been competitively recruited to teach the 13 elective courses being offered in this year's SFSE.

While addressing the gathering, Prof. Murinde said "I note that this is the 19th Session of the annual CMAAE Shared Facility for Specialization and Electives, having had the first one in 2006. I thank the University of Pretoria for tirelessly hosting the physical SFSE from 2006-2019 and co-hosting the virtual SFSE with the AERC from 2020 to 2022, during the COVID 19 pandemic."

He added that "in the post-COVID era, a new

chapter of blended or hybrid delivery of the SFSE commenced in 2023, combining both virtual and face-to-face modalities. This too was co-hosted by AERC and the University of Pretoria and is being implemented again in 2024. We view this as the optimal delivery mechanism for our academic programmes, going forward."

This year, the purely virtual component runs between August and September, while the face-to-face/online SFSE session runs between October and November 2024.

Prof. Murinde also informed the students that the AERC will share more information with them on plans to partner with Mastercard and other institutions over the course of ten years to offer a total of 1000 scholarships in

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support for PhD academic programmes across Africa. The overarching aim of this programme is to foster empowerment among young individuals to evolve into transformative leaders capable of making contributions to both national and regional development endeavors. The scholarships will cater for 70% female students to compensate for their dwindling numbers.

Briefing students about formal affiliation to AERC, Prof. Murinde said that plans are underway to institutionalize association so that all stakeholders are integrated. The AERC will have categories of membership including Affiliate (PhD and Master's); Associate (Post Doctoral); Fellows (Resource Persons and those holding senior positions); as well as Emeritus Fellows (Retired Resource Persons). All the network

members in the various categories will have an opportunity to identify with AERC in one way or another so they can have a skin in the game.

During the launch of the SFSE 2024, the AERC seized the opportunity to recognize academic excellence and awarded the CMAAE Academic Advisory Board prizes to the best performing students.

This happens every year. In this regard, the institution recognized the three (3) best performers in the 2023 SFSE as follows:

1. The Best Student: Mr. Moitlamo Ookeditse Mpinda, Egerton University

2. First Runners-up: Mr. Garai McDonald, University of Pretoria

3. Second Runners-up: Mr. Hanco Marais, University of Pretoria

The AERC Shared Facility for Specialization and Electives is a programme for centralized offering of a menu of elective courses to master's students from CMAAE participating universities by internationally sourced visiting lecturers for an intensive duration of 3-4 months. The teaching of elective courses is delivered on a virtual platform through live or synchronous lectures via the Zoom platform and AERC's Learning Management System (LMS), complemented by the AERC eLibrary and MyLoft where textbooks, reference journal articles and lecture materials/notes are easily accessible, and lecture recordings are made available for asynchronous access to lessons by students.





Will a Central Bank Digital Currency Transform Africa's Architecture?



The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), in collaboration with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), hosted a pivotal side event at the 2024 Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank Group in Nairobi. The event centred on the crucial theme: "Making the Global Financial Architecture Work for African Countries."

Amid frequent global shocks and geopolitical uncertainties, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, African economies face significant challenges. These include limited access to

resources, rising inflation, interest rate hikes, and currency depreciation, all of which have exacerbated debt burdens and restricted many African countries from accessing international financial markets.



One key solution to these challenges lies in the adoption of a central digital currency, which could transform Africa's financial architecture and solid policies.

"This session is a critical platform to address the urgent need for reforming the global financial architecture to better support African countries. By sharing evidence-based policy proposals, we can foster resilience and sustainable growth in the face of global shocks," said Prof. Victor Murinde, Executive Director, AERC.

One key solution to these challenges lies in the adoption of a central digital currency, which could transform Africa's financial architecture and solid policies. Central banks are at the heart of financial ecosystems, and discussions around implementing a central digital currency could be pivotal for Africa's

AERC ROUND-UP



This session is a critical platform to address the urgent need for reforming the global financial architecture to better support African countries.

economic development. A central digital currency could streamline cross-border transactions, enhance financial inclusion, and provide a more stable financial system.

As African economies continue to grow, establishing a secured Digital Single Market by 2030 is essential. This market would ensure the free movement of persons, services, and capital, allowing individuals and businesses to seamlessly engage in online activities in line with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Dr. Kathryn Toure, Regional Director of IDRC, highlighted, “This event is

an opportunity to highlight innovative practices and policy directions that significantly impact Africa’s economic resilience and development.”

“To drive digital transformation, it is crucial to create a harmonised environment that guarantees investment and financing driven by solid policies. This can be achieved by setting up a digital sovereignty fund to close the digital infrastructure gap, ensuring accessible, affordable, and secure broadband for all, regardless of demography, gender, or geography,” she added.

Additionally, promoting open standards and interoperability for cross-border

trust frameworks, personal data protection, and privacy is vital. Raising awareness and addressing issues related to cybersecurity and personal data protection is also essential.

African countries must also take the lead in managing and using Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs), ensuring that technical and administrative operations meet international standards. This will foster trust in African domain names and bring financial, economic, and socio-cultural benefits to the continent.

Furthermore, building inclusive digital skills and human capacity across various sectors, including digital sciences, judiciary, education, and vocational training, is crucial for leading and powering digital transformation.



EXPANDING INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES- ISSER and AERC host a Dissemination and Advocacy Training workshop on Special Drawing Rights Financing

To contribute to addressing Ghana's economic challenges amidst global uncertainties, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) co-hosted a dissemination and advocacy workshop on Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) Financing. This event was part of the Reforms for Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) Financing in Ghana's Economic Recovery project, led by ISSER researchers with funding and technical support from the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). The project aimed to explore how Ghana can utilise SDRs in financing economic recovery

efforts and alleviating the socioeconomic impacts of recent global shocks and the country's increasing public debt.

Prof. Quartermen encouraged active participation from attendees, underscoring the importance of enriching the draft research report with the perspectives of key stakeholders.

The one-day forum gathered stakeholders from diverse sectors, including banking, regulatory financial institutions, academia, policy, and the media. Participants engaged in discussions not only on the project findings but also on broader strategies to overcome structural challenges in Ghana's economy and build resilience. Additionally, the workshop featured a dedicated session focused on SDRs advocacy, emphasising the commitment to promoting the SDRs financing mechanism and advocating for reforms in its utilisation.

Highlights of the discussions



AERC ROUND-UP



The event facilitated engagement between the research team and the media, enabling the dissemination of key messages and recommendations. Dr. Richmond Atta-Ankomah is captured here, addressing questions from journalists during the event.

The workshop opened with welcome remarks from Prof. Peter Quartey, Director of ISSER and principal investigator of the project. Prof. Quartey set the stage by delving into the challenging financial landscape of many African nations, emphasising the critical need for reform in the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) financing architecture to better support developing countries. He shed light on the collaborative effort between

AERC and ISSER, highlighting their joint mission to explore avenues for reform and leverage SDRs for economic advancement. Prof. Quartey encouraged active participation from attendees, underscoring the importance of enriching the draft research report with the perspectives of key stakeholders.

Following a brief message from AERC representative, Dr. Diana Muchai, Dr. Atta-Ankomah presented key messages from the study. His presentation underscored the multifaceted challenges faced by Ghana, including the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian-Ukraine war and climate shocks, as well as escalating external debt. He stressed the need for Ghana

to access cheaper financing options, such as SDRs, to facilitate economic recovery and sustained growth. Dr. Atta-Ankomah proposed policy recommendations, including rechanneling unused SDRs to countries in need and revising allocation frameworks to consider regional (or country) specific financial needs.

As one of the invited discussants tasked with sharing perspectives on the draft research report, Prof. Ebo Turkson from the Department of Economics at the University of Ghana expressed that the research is well-motivated and highly relevant to Ghana's current financial landscape.



AERC ROUND-UP



Enabling Advocacy for SDRs Reforms

Led by Dr. Gloria Afful-Mensah, the training session on SDRs advocacy was an important component of the event, showing the commitment to fostering effective advocacy on the findings and SDRs financing.

In addition to facilitating evidence-led discussions, the workshop featured a training session on advocacy for reforms in SDRs financing led by project team member Dr. Afful-Mensah. This interactive session covered topics such as the importance of advocacy, key stakeholders, advocacy strategies, and developing an advocacy action plan, equipping participants with information and tools essential for effective advocacy on SDRs reforms.

In her opening and closing remarks, Dr. Diana Muchai praised the ISSER team for its achievement as the first among the research teams spanning several countries to complete this phase of the SDRs reforms project.



In her concluding remarks, Dr. Dianah expressed enthusiasm about the workshop's outcomes and stressed the importance of disseminating research findings to relevant stakeholders. She emphasised the need for research to inform policymaking and decision-making processes and advocated for widespread dissemination of the research results through various channels, including social media platforms.

Held on 14th March 2024 at ISSER, the workshop provided a valuable platform for dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. The insights from the workshop are expected to inform policy decisions aimed at accelerating Ghana's economic recovery and fostering resilience in the post-pandemic era. Both the AERC representative and participants expressed heartfelt gratitude to ISSER for its invaluable contributions to knowledge dissemination and policy dialogue on SDRs in Ghana.

AERC ROUND-UP



The workshop attracted a diverse array of stakeholders, including many who had participated in the inception workshop held in August 2023. This reflects ISSER's commitment to involving stakeholders at every stage of the research process.



Leveraging Enhanced Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) Allocation to Finance Resilient Economic Recovery in Ethiopia. Dissemination and Advocacy Capacity Building Workshop Hyatt Regency Hotel, March 8, 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Enabling Advocacy for SDRs Reforms



Ambassador Peter Robleh

The Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI), in collaboration with the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), organised a Dissemination and capacity-building workshop on Leveraging Enhanced Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) Allocation to finance Resilient Economic Recovery in Ethiopia. Abdurahman A. Hussien, a senior research fellow at HESPI presented the findings of the study for the Ethiopia case. Participants included experts from the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank of Ethiopia, independent researchers as well as representatives from development partners including USAID and UNDP. The workshop's objective was to validate the study's findings and impart advocacy strategy knowledge and skills to key stakeholders. The welcome address was made by Ambassador Peter Robleh, Associate Managing Director of HESPI. He depicted the gloomy macroeconomic situation in countries in the global south, including Ethiopia, following the overlapping shocks and the need for reform in the international financial architecture so that they are responsive to the needs of such countries. He

underlined the need to amplify the voice for reform based on evidence. In this regard, he applauded the financial and technical support by AERC to generate evidence using country case studies in Africa, thereby supporting the voice for reform.

Opening remarks were made by Daniel Fantaye, Programme Director of HESPI. In the opening remarks, Fantaye discussed the state of macroeconomic malaise in countries in the global south following the multiple global shocks. He also highlighted the precedence taken by debt servicing over important social and economic sectors due to growing indebtedness and dwindling domestic and foreign finance. He continued his remarks by pointing to the mismatch between SDRs allocation and SDRs utilisation, where countries that need them the most get the least. Finally, he underlined the urgent need to have a collective voice to call for reform in SDRs allocation using evidence such as the findings from the Ethiopian case study.



Abdurahman Hussien

Following the opening session, Abdurahman Hussien, a Senior Research Fellow at HESPI, highlighted the study's key findings and key policy recommendations, namely Case studies on Evidence to drive reforms for Special

Drawing Rights (SDR) Financing in SSA Economic Recovery: The Case of Ethiopia.

He observed that the rising debt service in recent years in Ethiopia has been crowding out the limited resources from important social and economic sectors, causing a reversal of development gains made in the 2000s and 2010s, noting the vulnerability of the economy to climate change-induced shocks such as drought. The study implied that the country needed financial assistance for short-term relief from liquidity crunch and to finance medium- to long-term resilient recovery.

The study also highlighted the need for a collective voice at the continental level to push for reform on SDR allocation and reallocation at global platforms such as the G20 World Bank-IMF Spring meetings, among others.

The presentation was followed by a panel discussion on Ethiopia's debt and Balance of Payment situation. Panellists included Yohannes Alemayehu, Team Leader of the Balance of Payment (BoP) division at the National Bank of Ethiopia; Yohannes Hailu, representative from the debt management division at the Ministry of Finance currently leading the Economic Reform and Privatization Secretariat for State Owned Enterprises Monitoring and Oversight division head; and Dr. Firew Bekele, an independent researcher.

The study also highlighted the need for a collective voice at the continental level to push for reform on SDR allocation and reallocation at global platforms such as the G20 World Bank-IMF Spring meetings, among others.



Mr. Yohannes Hailu emphasised the need to refocus efforts to restore fiscal discipline in the revised Home-Grown Economic Reform (HGER 2.0). Specifically, he argued the need to keep the promise to limit direct borrowing from the NBE. He also argued the need to reduce inefficiency among state-owned enterprises (SOEs) by instilling business-oriented corporate practices, indicating that the latest debt management strategy, which expired in 2020, needs to be updated regularly.

Finally, he underlined the need to enhance domestic resource mobilisation capacity. In this regard, he expressed his optimism about the potential of the newly established capital market to mobilise domestic capital. Mr. Yohannes Alemayehu admitted that the widening trade deficit is a key contributor to Ethiopia's growing indebtedness, particularly the very little progress in exports in the face of increasing imports.

He acknowledged that the appreciation of the real effective exchange rate (REER) against major trading currencies, which is in part due to rising inflation, also plays solely in the low performance of the export sector. He continued to argue that although devaluation of the domestic

currency helps to improve exports, it will also have unintended consequences, including significant inflationary pressure. For this reason, it's not clear if the government will devalue the currency.

However, he argued the government is taking monetary policy measures to restore price stability. The government has also encouraged an import substitution strategy recently to help narrow the external trade imbalance. Dr. Firew Bekele recalls the reluctance of the previous government to practice cautious borrowing over a decade ago. The argument then was Ethiopia needs more borrowing. He indicated how the lack of seriousness in practising prudent debt management partly contributed to the state of debt distress we are in today. He emphasised the need for a stronger parliamentary oversight on debt acquisition and debt management.

Key takeaways from the dissemination session were:

- SDRs are a vital source of financing for countries like Ethiopia, and there should be a collective voice in the call for reform in SDRs allocation and recycling.
- Participants recognised that SDRs are not

a silver bullet to Ethiopia's macroeconomic problems. Hence, restoring discipline in macroeconomic management should be given equal, if not more, emphasis. In this regard, building the capacity and mandate of the legislature to have a stronger oversight role over the executive was emphasised.

- Given Ethiopia's tax share of GDP is about half of SSA's average, the need to enhance domestic resource mobilisation (DRM) was also emphasised. In this regard, the need to build the capacity of revenue authorities was raised.

The dissemination session was followed by a capacity building training on policy advocacy by Abdurahman Hussien. The training aimed at developing the capacity of the participants to implement research-based and outcome-driven advocacy strategies. The focus of the training was the rechanneling of SDRs through multilateral development banks (MDBs). The training identified the issues to influence through advocacy, the advocacy strategies and spaces, and the role and mandate of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media. The training emphasised the need to build the capacity of the legislature and executive and promote transparency and accountability at the national level.

AERC ROUND-UP



Highlights from the INCLUDE Platform Meeting held on 25 - 26 June 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya & Online



The Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies (INCLUDE) held a meeting for its Platform Members on 25-26 June 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting's objective was to share updates from ongoing programs and exchange ideas about future Platform activities. The updates revealed a revised monitoring and evaluation framework for learning that incorporates insights from systems thinking, knowledge utilisation, contribution to change, and tracking outputs and traces signals for change.

The communications update highlighted growing communications and outreach via

the website with over 23,000 users, downloads of over 4,000 knowledge products, a newsletter engagement rate of 35% and an increase in LinkedIn followers by 36%. As part of the update, African Policy Dialogues (APDs), one of the three pillars of work, have initiated policy changes in Africa due to the support and convening power of Platform Members and their organisations. APDs are based on a results-oriented approach, respond to existing policy gaps, leverage a network of diverse actors and are embedded in the context of countries where they are implemented.

The ongoing APDs focus on decent work for youth in Ethiopia, local economic development

in Ghana, good governance in the extractive sector in Mozambique and labour market institutions in Uganda. Regarding research, the ongoing projects focus on green jobs and the future of work, greening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for the solar industry in Africa and mapping of youth employment and inclusion interventions.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its pathways to inclusive development were discussed in a session that Batanai Clemence Chikwene, African Trade Policy Centre, UNECA facilitated. The AfCFTA's pathways to inclusive growth and development include concerted effort and strong political will to build regional value chains and regional production networks, develop trade-related infrastructure, support SMEs owned by youth and women and those in rural areas, harness digital trade and learn from areas that have shown positive impact. The meeting also discussed a new research programme on green jobs for youth in a just food systems transition in Africa.

Members agreed on the need to continue working on youth employment and focus more on climate change and agriculture while emphasising the political-economic lens. There is also a need to include a perspective on business and trade and emphasise on green and sustainability as opposed to livelihoods and employment opportunities. Regarding the future of the Platform, it was broadly agreed that the three pillars of work (research, knowledge exchange and policy dialogues) are relevant and strategies to strengthen the value proposition and funding strategy will collaboratively be developed in the coming days.



Ministerial-Level Adoption of the Draft Continental Methodology on the Collection of Data on Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) in Africa

The Fourth Meeting of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals at the Ministerial level was held from 16-17 May 2024 at Sipopo International Conference Centre in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The main objective of the meeting was to consider draft continental strategies, which included the Green Minerals, Fashion Industry Development and Programme Delivery Framework, as well as other technical documents such as the African Union Start-Up Policy Framework, African Union Stakeholder Engagement Manual for Trade Policy Making in Africa and to take note of the various technical reports and presentations in the areas of Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals.

In 2022, the African Union (AU) established a task force in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, working closely with the African Export and Import Bank (AFREXIMBANK) and convened a round of technical meetings. The Task Force has a mandate to provide technical and political guidance to develop the Continental Methodology for ICBT Data Collection and oversee its implementation.

One of the technical reports adopted at the ministerial level in Malabo is a harmonised methodology for informal cross-border trade data collection, which is critical in monitoring intra-African Trade



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in the context of the African Continent Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). As a member of the task force, Abbi M. Kedir, AERC Director of Research, has participated in the task force since its establishment and contributed to the development of a harmonised continental methodology for ICBT data collection.

The adoption of the draft methodology is a major milestone in the work of the task force and paves the way for it to be finally adopted by the assembly of African Heads of State, which will be held early next year. Abbi stated that “COMTRADE statistics of IMF is simply an underestimate of the actual trade (both in volume and value) that takes place among African countries. The adoption of the draft methodology will be a useful technical guide while embarking on data collection in at least 10 African countries. I believe in time the methodology will be adopted for cross border data collection in all the 54 African countries.”





PROPEL HEALTH

AERC Leads Collaborative Efforts to Strengthen Primary Healthcare Financing in Botswana



The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), with support from the PROPEL Health Project-Implemented by AERC through Palladium, recently spearheaded a groundbreaking Inter-Ministerial Policy Dialogue in Gaborone, Botswana, from 15th to 19th April 2024. Held at the Phakalane Hotel, the event aimed at revolutionising Primary Healthcare (PHC) financing and efficiency, brought together key stakeholders from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Finance

(MoF), and the National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency (NAHPA), highlighting the importance of a collaborative approach to healthcare reform.

Empowering Healthcare with Strategic Collaboration

Dr. Abbi Kadir, Acting Executive Director of AERC, emphasised the necessity of multi-sectoral collaboration in achieving effective PHC financing. The dialogue underscored the need for structured frameworks that facilitate cooperation between health and

finance ministries, driving better health outcomes through optimised resource allocation and innovative financing mechanisms.

Key Highlights from the Dialogue

- **Innovative Approaches to PHC Financing:** The dialogue showcased Botswana's commitment to health sector financing, identifying challenges such as underspending and the lack of comprehensive cost data. Participants discussed the development of resource

AERC ROUND-UP



allocation frameworks and the importance of efficient resource use in service delivery.

- **Collaborative Frameworks for Better Outcomes:**

Emphasis was placed on the creation of collaborative structures between MoH and MoF. These frameworks are designed to enhance cooperation for resource mobilisation and improve PHC service delivery through strategic partnerships and engagement channels.

- **Optimizing Resource Allocation:**

Discussions highlighted MoF's role in resource mobilisation and allocation, while MoH focused on efficient resource use and service delivery. Improved data management and the involvement of key decision-makers were identified as crucial for successful implementation.

A Call for Sustained Collaboration

Participants expressed strong support for ongoing collaborative efforts, stressing the importance of decentralised decision-making to empower District Health Management Teams (DHMTs). High-level action points included strengthening data management, establishing regular review meetings, and developing robust resource allocation frameworks.



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Commitment to a Healthier Future

The dialogue concluded with affirmations from various stakeholders, including USAID, which reiterated its commitment to supporting Botswana's health system development. AERC's Sylvia Ayon highlighted the PROPEL Health Project's mission to enhance health services, underscoring the critical need for continuous innovation and collaboration in healthcare financing.

Join the Movement

This Inter-Ministerial Policy Dialogue marks a significant milestone in Botswana's journey towards improved healthcare financing and service delivery. AERC remains dedicated to fostering partnerships and providing technical assistance across Africa, driving forward the vision of universal health coverage through strategic, multi-sectoral collaboration.





Impact Evaluation Faculty Retooling Workshop

Every year, vast amounts of resources are devoted to the implementation of social-economic policies. In the context of limited resources, policymakers, programme managers, and civil society need to examine whether programmes are having their intended impact. Good evaluations play an important role by providing concrete evidence of the impact of programmes on target populations. Does a programme have an impact? Does the programme have a different impact on different groups of people? Do different programme components have different impacts? Why and how does the programme have an impact? Which programmes are more cost-effective in achieving desired outcomes? Those are important questions that rigorous evaluations can answer.

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), in collaboration with the University of North Carolina and the American Institutes for Research (AIR), held an Impact Evaluation Faculty Retooling Workshop from 1-6 July 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. A total of 31 teaching faculties (17 of whom are women) drawn from the AERC network of the Collaborative Masters in Agricultural and Applied Economics (CMAAE), the Collaborative Masters Programme (CMAP), and the Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP) universities in the following 20 African countries attended the workshop. This diversity enriched the learning environment, allowing for a broad exchange of experiences and perspectives.

Nationality	No. of Participants	Nationality	No. of Participants
1. Tanzania	1	2. Eswatini	1
3. Nigeria	2	4. Malawi	1
5. South Africa	4	6. Zambia	1
7. Cameroon	1	8. Benin	1
9. Cote 'd'Ivoire	1	10. Rwanda	1
11. Kenya	4	12. Burundi	1
13. Botswana	2	14. Namibia	1
15. Uganda	2	16. Gambia	1
17. Liberia	1	18. Zimbabwe	2
19. Ghana	1	20 Ethiopia	1

The training was facilitated by Prof. Sudhanshu Handa, Kenan Eminent Professor of Public Policy, University of North Carolina and Institute Fellow, American Institute for Research (AIR); Prof. Gustavo Angeles, Chief of Social & Economic Policy, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti; Prof. Tia Palermo, University of Buffalo, President, Presto Research; and Prof. Duah Dwomoh from the School of Public Health, University of Ghana-Legon.



The Participants of the 2024 Impact Evaluation Workshop, Fairview Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.

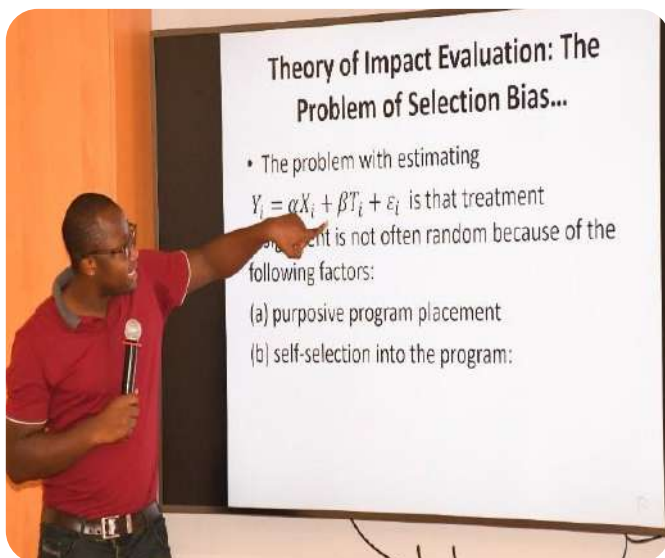
The workshop was designed to equip participants with the necessary skills to accurately assess the impacts of significant social and economic policies. By fostering a deep understanding of evaluation principles, the workshop enabled participants to address key questions regarding the effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and differential impacts of various programs across diverse demographics. Among the topics covered by the four facilitators include Introduction to Impact Evaluation, Experimental Designs for Impact Evaluation, Statistical Power and Clustering, Difference-in-Differences Models, Matching Procedures, Integrating Gender into Impact Evaluation, and Natural Experiments and Interrupted Time Series, among others.

Slide presentations, notes, assignments, and announcements were delivered through the AERC Learning Management System (LMS) AERC e-LEARNING PLATFORM (aercafrica.org), ensuring the trainees' availability even after the workshop. The LMS also acts as a repository, and the materials are available for future trainees.

Participants of the workshop received verifiable certificates from the AERC with unique QR codes that verify attendance. These digital certificates were issued through the AERC Learning Management System on the last day after participants conducted the evaluation. The participants were very happy with this new feature. It was the first time digital certificates were issued in this series of workshops, marking a major addition to the training and something we should continue to do in the future.



The Participants Overwhelmingly Reported that the Workshop Met its Objectives, as Presented in the Feedback Below:



The workshop has proven to be an invaluable experience for all participants, providing them with essential skills and knowledge in impact evaluation methodologies. The overwhelmingly positive feedback indicates that the training was highly effective and met the expectations of the trainees. The high average ratings for the appropriateness of the training methods, the quality of the workshop facilities, and the likelihood of recommending the workshop to colleagues underscore the success of the workshop. Participants expressed their intention to incorporate the learned techniques and methodologies into their teaching, research, and professional practices. They highlighted the usefulness of the workshop in enhancing their understanding of complex topics, improving their ability to conduct rigorous impact evaluations, and fostering innovative approaches in their work.

- “Trainers and materials are of great quality, and combining theoretical and practical approach is appreciated.” - Prof. Alain Babatunde, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin
- “I feel empowered to use this analysis in my future studies as well as to train others. It was packed and impactful.”- Dr. Delisile Dlamini, University of Eswatini
- “It met my objectives by making me understand what IE is and the methodologies used. I am now confident to read the journal articles that I would skip because I didn’t know what Difference-in-Difference is. So, I am very happy for the opportunity. Thank you very much!” - Prof. Beatrice Mkenda, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- “The course will be improved by using many practical exercises and case studies with Stata.”- Dr. Yomin Yapo, University Felix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d’Ivoire





The Commencement of the 2024 Joint Facility for Electives

2024 marked the fifth consecutive year of delivering the Collaborative Masters Programme (CMAP) and the Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP) Joint Facility for Electives (JFE) entirely online. Virtual learning is being delivered through live or synchronous lectures uniquely combining the AERC online Learning Management System (LMS) and the Zoom video-conferencing platform, complemented by the AERC online library (eLibrary) where textbooks, reference journal articles and lecture materials/notes are easily accessible, and lecture recordings are made available for asynchronous lessons. Lecturers' and students' orientation and training on administrative and academic issues, AERC's eLibrary, LMS and associated digital resources were conducted over several weeks in June 2024 by the AERC team. A new enhancement to the teaching and learning environment was the incorporation of Class for Zoom into the online platform, enabling a more versatile and interactive

learning experience that closely mimics the physical, face-to-face academic environment. Mr. Emmanuel Clemot, a seasoned expert in the field of educational technology, conducted several specialised sessions on Class for Zoom for the CMAP and CPP visiting lecturers/professors in readiness for this year's virtual JFE. This was followed by pilot testing of the online classes before the JFE began on July 1, 2024.

The CMAP-CPP JFE 2024 was officially opened on 8 July 2024 by the AERC Executive Director, Prof. Victor Murinde. Also in attendance was the CMAP-CPP Academic Advisory Board Chairperson, Prof. Beatrice Mkenda from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, who presided over the award of the AERC Academic Advisory Board Prize for the best performing Masters student in the CMAP JFE 2023 to Miss Ritah Ahumuza, a female student from Makerere University. Prof. Mkenda also awarded the AERC Academic

Advisory Board Prize to Mr. Prince Kwabena Opoku, a PhD student from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, who had emerged as the best student in the CPP Class of 2022.

The virtual CMAP JFE commenced on 1 July 2024 and is scheduled to end on 11 October 2024. A total of 109 students drawn from 9 public universities (Makerere University, University of Botswana, University of Cape Coast, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Malawi, University of Namibia, National University of Lesotho, University of Zambia and University of Zimbabwe) are participating in the virtual CMAP JFE 2024. In terms of gender, 41 (38%) of the 109 students in the CMAP JFE 2024 are female. In percentage terms, this is the same proportion of female students that participated in the programme in 2023 and 2022 but slightly lower than the 43% recorded in 2020.





Distribution of Students by University and Gender - CMAP JFE 2024

	University	Female	Male	Totals	Female %	Male %
1	Botswana	3	3	6	50.0	50.0
2	Cape Coast	2	15	17	11.8	88.2
3	Lesotho	13	4	17	76.5	23.5
4	Kwame Nkrumah	2	9	11	18.2	81.2
5	Makerere	3	6	9	33.3	66.7
6	Malawi	7	13	20	35.0	65.0
7	Namibia	6	3	9	66.7	33.3
8	Zambia	1	11	12	8.3	91.7
9	Zimbabwe	4	4	8	50.0	50.0
	Totals	41	68	109	37.6	62.4

The CPP JFE, now in its 20th edition, commenced on 8 July 2024 and will end on 8 November 2024. A total of 37 PhD students are in attendance.

The students are drawn from 8 CPP network universities (Abomey-Calavi in Benin; Cape Town in South Africa; Dar es Salaam in Tanzania; Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Cote d'Ivoire; Nairobi in Kenya; Benin and Ibadan in Nigeria; and Yaoundé II in Cameroon) and 2 non-CPP universities from Ghana (Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)). In terms of gender, 16% (6 out of the 37) of the students in this year's CPP JFE are women, a significant drop from the 50% and 32% recorded in 2023 and 2022, respectively. The drop is largely attributable to the low enrolment of women in the 2 non-CPP universities, Cape Coast and KNUST, both in Ghana.



Distribution of Students by University and Gender - CPP JFE 2024

	University	Gender		Totals	Female %	Male %
		Female	Male			
1	Abomey-Calavi	0	1	1	0.0	100.0
2	Benin	1	1	2	50.0	50.0
3	Cape Coast	1	14	15	6.7	93.3
4	Cape Town	0	4	4	0.0	100.0
5	Dar es Salaam	0	1	1	0.0	100.0
6	Felix Houphouet-Boigny	1	1	2	50.0	50.0
7	Ibadan	0	1	1	0.0	100
8	Kwame Nkrumah	0	7	7	0.0	100
9	Nairobi	1	0	1	100.0	0.0
10	Yaoundé II	2	1	3	66.7	33.3
	Total	6	31	37	16.2	83.8

There are inconsistencies in the attainment of gender equality across the CMAP and CPP universities. Whereas the award of scholarships is within the control of AERC, and progress towards attaining gender parity has been significantly realised, student enrolment at the respective universities is not. This implies that every effort towards realising gender equality in student enrolment should be in close partnership with the network universities.

AERC ROUND-UP



Policy Analysis for Sustainable and Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets-Pashfarm

The Policy Analysis for Sustainable and Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets (PASHFARM) project is one of the AERC's flagship projects, with twenty (20) research teams spread over eighteen (18) Sub-Saharan African (SAA) countries. These countries are faced with many public health challenges, including the consumption of poor diets by households. The key question of the project is how to make nutritious foods available, accessible, safe and affordable to low-income consumers. The retail market food environment influences consumers' dietary preferences, food choices and nutritional outcomes. However, in Africa, most consumers have inadequate access to nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables, animal-source foods, and biofortified foods (iron-rich beans and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, among others). Gendered barriers also limit consumers from accessing and consuming nutritious and healthy foods. Therefore, the PASHFARM project



African Economic Research Consortium Supports Mng'aro Initiative with Vital Donations to Vulnerable Households in Lucky Summer

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) recently demonstrated its commitment to community support and social responsibility through a generous donation to the Mng'aro Initiative, a community-based support project in Lucky Summer. This initiative, aimed at uplifting vulnerable households in the area, received a significant boost from AERC's contributions, which included essential items such as foodstuffs, toiletries, baby care products, and more.

The Mng'aro Initiative has been a beacon of hope for many families in Lucky Summer, a neighbourhood plagued by economic challenges and social vulnerabilities. By focusing on providing necessities, the initiative tirelessly works to improve the living conditions of the most affected households. AERC's involvement has not only provided immediate relief but has also highlighted the importance of collective efforts in addressing community needs.

"Our mission at AERC extends beyond research and economic analysis; it includes fostering sustainable development and supporting the communities that form the backbone of our society," said Ms. Esther Mbaka, Manager HR at AERC. "We are honoured to support the Mng'aro Initiative and hope that our contributions will make a tangible difference in the lives of those in need."

Mng'aro Initiative's CEO, Mr. Sam Omoll, expressed his appreciation for AERC's support, noting the positive impact it will have on the community. "This donation comes at a crucial time when many families are struggling to make ends meet," he said. "AERC's generosity will go a long way in providing relief and bringing hope to those who need it most. We are incredibly grateful for their support."

As the donations are distributed to households across Lucky Summer, the immediate benefits are evident. Families receiving these essential items can now focus on other pressing needs, secure in the knowledge that their basic necessities are met. This contribution not only alleviates immediate hardships but also promotes a sense of solidarity and support within the community.

The recent donation by AERC to the Mng'aro Initiative is a significant step towards enhancing the quality of life for many families in Lucky Summer. It reinforces the importance of community support initiatives and the critical role that organisations play in promoting social welfare. AERC's contributions are not just acts of charity; they are investments in the future of the communities it serves.

To find out more about Mng'aro Initiative, visit their website: <https://mngaromtaani.org/>

DIGITIZATION

Promoting Stakeholder Collaboration – Alumni Digital Platform

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) has developed a collaborating and mentoring alumni platform that seeks to promote engagement and reach within its vast network. This platform aims to create lasting impacts and foster a sense of belonging among our alumni, serving as a dynamic hub connecting past members, fostering collaboration, and nurturing ongoing engagement.

The Alumni platform deployment aligns with AERC's digital strategy for 2020-2025, which focuses on transforming AERC's available technologies to develop, maintain, and improve visibility and stakeholder engagement.

The collaboration tool features proactive sharing of knowledge and expertise while bridging the gap between policy recommendations and implementation among AERC's young and old stakeholders. The platform will also reduce the time, effort, and resources required to manage the Alumni network, improve data security, and create a single communication platform with all the essential network management tools.

The platform has several functions, including:

- Networking: An alumni portal provides a platform for AERC network members to connect and build a professional network. This network can help alumni

to access job opportunities, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities. The AERC can leverage this network to create a community of economic policy researchers in Africa and promote knowledge sharing and collaboration.

- Career development: An alumni portal can provide career development resources such as job listings, professional development opportunities, and career advice. These resources can help alumni improve their skills and stay up to date with the latest trends and developments in the field of economic policy research.
- Knowledge sharing: An alumni portal is a platform for sharing research findings, publications, and other intellectual contributions. Alumni can share their research with the AERC community, which can contribute to the development

of new ideas and solutions for economic policy challenges in Africa.

- Alumni engagement: An alumni portal can help the AERC to stay in touch with its former students and engage them in the organisation's activities. Alumni can be invited to participate in conferences, seminars, and other events where they can share their knowledge and experiences with current students.

Fundraising: An alumni portal can also serve as a fundraising platform for the AERC. Alumni can donate to the organisation and contribute to its mission of promoting economic policy research and training in Africa.

The portal will provide collated data to be able to obtain critical information like the number of AERC alumni engaged in relevant policy formulation and research within policy-making institutions and the number of Collaborative Masters Programme (CMAP), Collaborative Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics (CMAAE) and Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP) alumni produced with competencies to conduct economic policy research and graduate training.

The system is now fully implemented, and the IT Unit is collecting feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. It can be accessed from <https://alumni.aercafrica.org>.

The Alumni platform deployment aligns with AERC's digital strategy for 2020-2025, which focuses on transforming AERC's available technologies to develop, maintain, and improve visibility and stakeholder engagement.



AERC INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

AERC Internship Programme

The AERC is committed to ensuring it gives internship opportunities to recent postgraduates. The objective of the AERC Internship Programme is to develop and prepare recent postgraduates to take up employment opportunities that come up in research, policymaking and capacity-building institutions. The Internship Programme also provides participants with an excellent opportunity to acquire workplace experience, expand knowledge, refine career goals and build professional networks, mentors and contacts. The interns will, in return, support the research, capacity building and policy outreach agenda of AERC. The pool of interns will provide the AERC with potential candidates for job opportunities that may arise in the future. The Internship Programme is for a duration of 3 to 6 months, after which the candidates are released to pursue opportunities in the wider job market.

AERC Young Professional Programme

The AERC Young Professionals Programme (YPP) aims to nurture young researchers in economics and public policy who have just completed a PhD degree in economics. The YPP is a six-month (renewable once) programme opportunity for the AERC to nurture future leaders. We attract highly qualified and motivated professionals and provide an opportunity to sharpen their skills and experiences for a productive and rewarding career path in economic research. Through the YPP, the AERC ensures continuity and excellence in the management of its research work. The pool of Young Professionals provides the AERC with potential candidates for job opportunities that may arise in the future.



AERC at the Annual General Meetings of the Eastern and Southern Africa Trade and Development Bank (TDB)

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) recently participated at the Eastern and Southern Africa Trade and Development Bank (TDB) Annual General Meetings. This TDB AGM was hosted by the Republic of Mozambique, through the Ministry of Economy and Finance and was held in Maputo, Mozambique on July 29-30, 2024.

The official Opening of this meeting was presided over by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique, H.E. Dr. Adriano Afonso Maleiane, who delivered the keynote address, while Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank Group, made remarks virtually. The President of the TDB, Mr. Admassu Tadesse, expressed appreciation to all the Governors and their delegations for participation and presented results of outcome for the financial year 2023.

This meeting also saw the election of the new TDB Group Chairperson, H.E. Ernesto Max Elias Tonela, Minister of Economy and Finance of the Republic of Mozambique. He takes over from the outgoing Chairperson, H.E. Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u, the former Minister of Finance and Planning of the Republic of Kenya. Prof. Victor Murinde, Executive Director of the AERC represented the Consortium at the meetings. The AERC has since 2019 been a shareholder of the TDB, participating in the annual general meetings hosted in different locations.

With the TDB AGM theme focused on Fostering Sustainable Green and Inclusive Future with a Focus on Financial Energy and Food Security, the Governors and their Delegations were engaged in a panel discussion on "Synergy, Creativity and Agility in DFI Collaboration".



The President of the TDB, Mr. Admassu Tadesse, expressed appreciation to all the Governors and their delegations for participation and presented results of outcome for the financial year 2023.

On the sidelines of the TDB AGM, Prof. Murinde engaged the TDB President, Mr. Admassu Tadesse in discussions geared towards deepening the collaboration between the AERC and TDB. Among the issues discussed were securing a new home for AERC at the TDB Building in Nairobi and leveraging on AERC's extensive experience in building research capacity to develop and run short-term executive trainings at the TDB Academy. The AERC will be following-up on these collaborative opportunities over the next few months.

Prof. Murinde was accompanied by three AERC staff – Dr. Tom Kimani, Lead Manager,

Training Programmes, Ms. Lydiah Auma, Strategic Partnerships Lead and Ms. Anna Owino, Personal Assistant to the Executive Director.

At the backdrop of the TDB AGM in Maputo, the AERC team held a monitoring mission to the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo on 31 July 2024. The focus of the mission was to meet and interact with the university administrative staff, teaching faculty and students of the Department of Economics and Agricultural Development, with a view of sensitizing them about AERC's research and training programmes.

As the AERC seeks to expand its reach to universities in Lusophone countries, the Eduardo Mondlane University has been identified as a significant partner in realizing this goal. The expected key outcome of this engagement will be the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by the AERC Executive Director, Prof. Victor Murinde and Prof. Manuel Guilherme Júnior, Eduardo Mondlane University Rector to establish a framework for future collaboration between the two institutions.



Webinar on China-Africa Trade: On the road to FOCAC

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) in collaboration with The Boston University Global Development Policy Center (GDP Center) and the Africa-China Reporting Project recently hosted a capacity building informative Webinar on China-Africa Trade, Finance and Foreign Direct Investment, on the road to Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The Webinar registered 225 participants including policy makers, journalists, researchers and professionals from various fields.

The Webinar took place on Wednesday, August 7, 2024, and discussion were basically on China-Africa trade, finance and FDI, on the road to the next FOCAC. During the discussion, researchers and data analysts shared the key findings from the China-Africa Trade report. The report was shared in advance with the attendees to review prior to attending the Webinar in order to present any questions or comments during the session.

Speakers in this very productive Webinar included Lucas Engel a Data Analyst at Global China Initiative, Boston University Global Development Policy Center, Dr. Charles Owino, Publications Manager, African Economic Research Consortium, Dr. Dianah Ngui Muchai, Collaborative Research Manager, African Economic Research Consortium and Bongiwe Tutu, Project Coordinator, Africa-China Reporting Project, Wits University.

The GDP Center and the African Economic Research Consortium recently published a New Report (2024), which analyses 22 years of China-Africa trade, finance and FDI data (2000-2022), to evaluate trends, reveal gaps and identify pathways for China's support to Africa's energy access and transition amidst economic challenges and energy

opportunities. This report formed the basis for discussion in the Webinar.

Over the past three decades, China-Africa economic engagement has deepened across trade, development finance and foreign direct investment (FDI), contributing to African countries' development and bringing economic benefits, but also some environmental risks. The report finds that past economic engagement has helped African countries overcome infrastructure bottlenecks but has also replicated trade patterns where Africa exchanges its primary resources for finished goods.

China's historic economic relationship with Africa positions it as a contributor to African sustainable development, a topic that will no doubt feature prominently at the upcoming Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in September 2024.

This meeting discussed possible avenues for collaboration, which include joint development of research and working paper series, book volumes,

Some of the pertinent questions that will be asked among others include: If China and African countries intend to tackle current development objectives like energy access and transition at the FOCAC, what forms of finance and which industries are promising targets for future cooperation?

The Boston University Global Development Policy Center manages a suite of interactive databases that collectively track hundreds of billions of dollars in Chinese loans and investment to a variety of sectors, including energy and other infrastructure development. This databases provide transparent information to aid research, education, policymaking, journalism and accountability with regards to China's overseas development finance and projects around the world.

The AERC on the other hand is a leader in policy-oriented economic research in the continent. The Consortium was established in 1988 as a public not-for-profit organization devoted to building capacity for economic policy research into problems pertinent to the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa. As a network it builds capacity through three primary components: research, graduate training in economics, and communications and policy outreach.







Fare Thee Well



“Prof. Mohamed S. Mukras: A Towering Don and Accredited Authority in Mathematical Economics has passed away!”

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) is mourning Professor Mohamed S. Mukras, a top scholar, a reputed academician and one of the leading authorities on economics.

“As a specialist in the field of Mathematical Economics, Prof. Mukras authored numerous books in the field of Mathematics and Economics, which are regarded highly. His books are officially used as syllabus, teaching tools and referential materials in many universities worldwide,” said Prof. Victor Murinde, AERC Executive Director on learning of his passing on.

Some of the publications to his name that were produced with the support of the AERC include “Mathematical Methods for Economics: Tools and Applications” published in 2008, “Graduate Training in Economics with Particular Reference to Anglophone Africa (except Nigeria)” published in 1991, “The State of Graduate Training in Economics in Eastern and Southern Africa” published in 1990, and “Graduate Training in Economics for Africans: A Joint Report”, published in 1990.

“I am indebted to the AERC for providing me with a financial grant to meet some of the costs of preparation for the manuscript. Their assistance together with what I spent in the preparation of the script went long way in reducing the cost of production and consequently has made the book affordable to majority of students,” said Prof. Mukras during the launched of the book he authored titled “Mathematical Methods for Economics: Tools and Applications,” which was supported by AERC.

His articles, publications and academic works are held in high esteem worldwide. Some of the books by M. S. Mukras are: “Mathematical Methods for Economics”, “Elementary Econometrics: Theory, Application and Policy”, and “Elementary Econometrics: Theory, Application and Policy” (a solutions manual). His main specialization was Mathematical Economics, Quantitative Methods and Econometrics.

Prof. Mukras was a revered figure worldwide and widely respected as an architect of Economic Affairs, Public Policy and Fiscal Planning. He drafted and formulated policies

for the running of governments, international organizations, public institutions, and top institutions of higher learning.

He taught at the University of Toronto before joining the University of Nairobi where he lectured for sixteen years, six as the chairman of the Department of Economics. He further taught at the University of Botswana for fifteen years, then four years as the head of Department at Moi University.

He later worked as a professor at the following Institutions of higher learnings: Moi University (2007-2010), University of Botswana (1993-2007) and Maseno University (1992-1993). He was also an external examiner of the following institutions: University of Zimbabwe, University of Zambia, University of Addis Ababa, University of Swaziland, University of Botswana and Makerere University.

Prof. Mohamed S. Mukras was furthermore the Board Chair of Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) for a period of three (3) years. In addition, he served as Board Chair of the following corporations: MINET ICDC Insurance Brokers; Member of the Capital Markets Authority, Member of the Government Insurance Advisory Board, and Director of Planning in the Ministry of Planning and National Development (Kenya).

Professor Mohamed S. Mukras was born in Zanzibar and received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, B.Phil., in Economics from the University of Nairobi, and master’s degree in economics from the University of Toronto.

Fare Thee Well



He served as a professor at the University of Dar es Salaam from the year 2007 to the time of his untimely death.

Delphin was a member of several policy-making Boards in Tanzania and internationally.

Prof. Delphin Rwegasira, former Executive Director of AERC has passed on

Prof. Delphin Rwegasira, former Executive Director of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) has passed on. He held the position of Executive Director at AERC from 1998 until 2002. As Executive Director, Prof. Rwegasira is credited with the successful initiation of the Collaborative Masters Programme (CMAP) and the Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP) in response to a retroactive decline in external support and opportunities for graduate training in Economics in Africa.

Prof. Rwegasira received his PhD from Harvard University, USA as the culmination of remarkable academic performance in Economics at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, from the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania.

He served as a professor at the University of Dar es Salaam from the year 2007 to the time

of his untimely death. Delphin was a member of several policy-making Boards in Tanzania and internationally. He was formerly holder of Mwalimu Nyerere Professorial Chair in Development, UDSM; Director of Development Policy for the African Development Bank and Senior Advisor at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He was also an advisor and consultant to governments, regional bodies, multilateral institutions, as well as international and non-governmental organizations.

Prof. Rwegasira published extensively in local and international journals as well as contributed chapters in books, research, and discussion papers. He had a wealth of experience in research; graduate training; and a keen sense of appreciation of the challenges of implementing the Consortium's programmes in an evolving continent.

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