

AERC INSIGHT

The African Economic Research Consortium



Alumni Focus

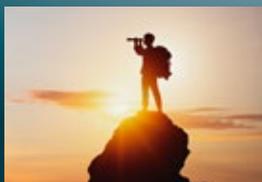
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Note from the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

The AERC Insight is the official newsletter of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). It aims to keep you informed about the activities, people, and frontier publications of this large network of economists, academics, and researchers.

The carefully curated content will help you stay constantly on top of our news and understand how AERC is bringing change and impact across the continent.

As you may know, we have in the recent past made important decisions about streamlining our brand portfolio, now featuring an improved website and more impactful social media dissemination. And our purpose is to refresh the network with insightful news as well as make a difference, even as we continue to invest in partnerships with our stakeholders across the globe.

A central focus for this quarter is to look at some of our current and former students that have benefitted from the schemes and programmes offered by AERC. We wanted their first-hand testimonials on how the AERC had impacted their academic and professional horizons, and how they are bringing these skills and knowledge into the policy sphere. Additionally, we are developing a discussion platform for AERC alumni.

In this edition of the AERC Insight, we also share proceedings of the 56th June 2022, Biannual Research Workshop on the theme, "Poverty, Growth, Redistribution,



Our strategy continues to be underpinned by global goals and specific context-based targets as outlined in some of the articles here that will enable us to measure our progress toward reaching our vision namely, sustained development in sub-Saharan Africa grounded in sound economic management and an informed society.

and Social Inclusion in Times of Covid-19 Pandemic in Africa". It is important to note that in sub-Saharan Africa, we are constantly at risk of being pushed back into extreme poverty during economic downturns and other external shocks. The pandemic has worsened the situation for many countries, and without steps to address these disparities, the risks this trend poses will continue to grow. African governments must therefore adopt a pro-growth poverty reduction strategy as a key policy element to achieve sustainable poverty reduction. This conclusion generated from the frontier work by the AERC shows that growth significantly reduces poverty and supplemented by targeted social protection programs will flatten inequality in the long run. We also give insights into a roundtable discussion on the theme, "Modelling Kenya's future" emanating from the Kenya Country Study: Current Path and Scenario Analysis Report.

Other events included in this issue are Admission of the Third Francophone University into the AERC CPP Programme; Induction of former AERC Executive Director, Prof. Lemma Senbet as AIB Fellow; How AERC is Staying on Top of Cybersecurity Threats; AERC Alumni narratives; Summer Master Class on Research Methods; Blended Learning; AERC Thematic and Collaborative Research Projects and Workshops, among other activities.

Our strategy continues to be underpinned by global goals and specific context-based targets as outlined in some of the articles here. They will enable us to measure our progress toward reaching our vision, namely, sustained development in sub-Saharan Africa, grounded in sound economic management and an informed society. I do hope that we have hit on a few of your favourites reads in this latest issue!

Welcome!

Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u

Executive Director, AERC

56th Bi-Annual Research Conference June 2022

A Pro-growth Poverty Reduction Strategy is a Primer for



African governments must adopt a pro-growth poverty reduction strategy as a key policy element to achieve sustainable poverty reduction in the post-pandemic economic recovery agenda.

Dr. Kisu Simwaka, while speaking on behalf of Dr. Wilson Banda, the Governor Reserve Bank of Malawi, said that most African economies were vulnerable to external shocks and the Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated the situation, widening the poverty gap hence the need for support to cushion households with limited financial resources.

“In sub-Saharan Africa, we are constantly at risk of being pushed back into extreme poverty during economic downturns and other external shocks. The pandemic had worsened the situation for many countries,

and without steps to address these disparities, the risks this trend poses will continue to grow,” Dr. Simwaka said.

A similar opinion was shared by Dr. Jane Kiringai, Chairperson of the Commission for Revenue Allocation in Kenya: “We have to adopt a multiplicity of economic instruments, and the policy mix adopted by each state will be country-specific, depending on their growth levels.”

During the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) 56th Biannual Research Workshop June 2022

, delegates, including policymakers, researchers, academics, non-state actors, and economists, examined how Covid-19 had affected

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the dynamics of poverty and growth redistribution, as well as social inclusion in Africa.

In his presentation, based on the Kenyan case study on poverty reduction through growth, redistribution, and social inclusion in times of Covid-19 pandemic, Prof. Germano Mwabu of the University of Nairobi noted that as African countries emerge from the impact of the pandemic, the pro-growth policies to consider must lead to lower poverty levels in the long run, as well as benefit the poorest 40% of the population.

He proposes economic policies that trigger the virtuous spiral, including universal cash transfers to the poor; social protection; investments in human capital and social infrastructure; participation in wage and self-employment; and inclusive business models that promote partnerships between large and small enterprises.

“The findings from Kenya justify the adoption of a pro-growth policy package as the centre of any poverty reduction strategy and pro-poor measures that complement such a package by offsetting potential short-run increases in poverty,” Prof. Mwabu remarked.

In his remarks, Prof. Leonard Wantchekon of Princeton University noted that the post-

pandemic strategy should be anchored in inclusive growth and broader access to economic opportunities.

“The support for achieving inclusive growth in developing countries should include investment in infrastructure to achieve high sustainable economic progress, connect the poor to markets, and increase their access to basic productive assets,” Prof. Wantchekon said.

Despite the extraordinary gains made in living standards over the past two decades, hundreds of millions of Africans are still excluded from the benefits of rapid economic growth. The AERC envisions an inclusive continent where all share the region’s gains and opportunities. Unfortunately, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in Africa.

The AERC Executive Director, Prof. Njuguna Ndung’u, said that the strong growth would significantly reduce poverty in Africa. Still, it has to be supplemented by targeted social protection programmes that will flatten inequality in the long term and create social inclusion.

The pandemic, he said, had been quite devastating in African economies. The post-Covid-19 economic recovery strategy will focus on how these issues can be managed. That is how we can accelerate growth that can reduce poverty, and social inclusion, among other constraints in the development discourse.

“A pro-growth poverty reduction strategy is a critical pillar in this development discourse and the future of Africa’s economic recovery. This is different from the pro-poor growth strategy that has been a pillar in the last several decades,” Prof. Njuguna said.

While presenting on the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on the labour market in Ghana, UNUWIDER Research Associate Dr. Simone Schotte, noted that the lockdown measures had an immediate effect on the labour market, causing a substantial decline in employment.

“Workers in informal self-employment were most affected by restrictions with a nationwide impact. Despite the current remarkable recovery in employment, the pandemic had a persistent nationwide effect that may have exacerbated pre-existing earnings inequalities,” Dr. Schotte noted.

While revisiting poverty trends and the role of social protection systems in Africa during



the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr. Kibrom Abay, Country Programme Leader and Research Fellow at IFPRI, noted that the pandemic is a strong reminder for African countries to diversify their economies to withstand future pandemics. He also stated that although the



A pro-growth poverty reduction strategy is a critical pillar in this development discourse and the future of Africa’s economic recovery. This is different from the pro-poor growth strategy that has been a pillar in the last several decades,” Prof. Ndung’u said.

number of social protection programmes in Africa had increased, their reach remained limited. These programmes cover only a small share of the population.

“The continued challenges remind us of the need to reinforce social protection programmes to protect the vulnerable households, as social protection appears to be the most popular instrument reinforced either through increasing the size of transfers or expanding the number of beneficiaries,” Dr. Kibrom emphasised.

The plenary was chaired by Prof. Finn Tarp of the University of Copenhagen. Dignitaries gracing the occasion included Dr. Denny Kalyalya, the Governor, Bank of Zambia; Dr. Jane Kiringai, Chairperson, Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA), Kenya; Prof. Leonard Wantchekon of Princeton University; and Dr. Rose Ngugi, Executive Director, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA).

The conference brought together over 300 high-level policymakers, researchers, media representatives, economists, academics, and non-state actors in a lively mix of speeches, presentations, plenary, and concurrent sessions.

Modelling Kenya's Future: A Roundtable Discussion



The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), in collaboration with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), hosted a roundtable discussion on the theme, “*Modelling Kenya’s future*”, emanating from the Kenya Country Study: Current Path and Scenario Analysis Report.

This seminar was held on August 18, 2022, in Nairobi, Kenya. During the official opening session, welcome remarks and introductions was made by Prof. Njuguna Ndung’u, Executive Director, AERC. The opening perspectives was by Ms Pamla Gopaul, a Policy Officer, from AUDA-NEPAD, while the background and purpose of the study was given by Dr Jakkie Cilliers, Head, African Futures and Innovation, ISS.

In his opening address, Prof. Njuguna Ndung’u noted that Kenya’s progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been remarkable as compared with the rest of Africa. “These 17 Goals encapsulate the whole spectrum of economic transformation. The question

we examine today is, will Kenya sustain this progress in the next 30 years?”

Without aggressive interventions, Kenya is unlikely to achieve its targets of becoming an industrialising middle-income country providing a high-quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030. Thus, rigorous, and targeted socio-

Kenya’s progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been remarkable as compared with the rest of Africa.”

Prof. Ndung’u said.

economic policy interventions need to be undertaken to improve the country’s current development trajectory.

Participants were treated to presentations and discussions during this meeting, on various topics, including the *International Futures (IFs) Forecasting Tool*; *Human Capital (demographics, health, and education)*; *Economy, Poverty, Energy/Carbon Emissions*; *Governance and Government Finance*; and *Impact of Selected Sectoral Scenarios (stability, human capital, agriculture, manufacturing, leapfrogging, free trade, financial flows, governance)*.

The Current Path analysis as prescribed in the report reveals that Kenya may not achieve most of the SDG target on human and economic development, as well as its vision of transitioning into an industrialising middle-income country providing a high-quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030. However, with the right set of policy interventions, the country can advance in human and economic development by 2043.

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The implementation of the eight (8) sectoral interventions mentioned in the report can raise Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita to US\$10,990, to be an upper middle-income country by 2043. Likewise, the country can reduce its extreme poverty rate substantially from the 64.6% in 2019 to only 6.5% of the population by 2043.

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The report observes that Kenya faces significant development challenges. Corruption, population growth, infrastructure deficit, human capital bottlenecks, rising public debts, and limited economic diversification are some of the key factors impeding the country's development progress. The Current Path analysis has revealed that Kenya has made progress in recent years and is forecast to improve its economic and human development outcomes going forward.

The report further notes that the Current Path forecast from the International Futures (IFs) forecasting platform is a dynamic scenario that imitates the continuation of current policies and environmental conditions. It is therefore

in congruence with historical patterns and produces a series of dynamic forecasts endogenised in relationships across crucial global systems. The report is divided into sections that address demographics, health, education, infrastructure, economy, poverty, and climate change/energy. The sectorial scenarios show potential improvements in governance and stability, demographics and health, agriculture, education, manufacturing, free trade, financial flows, and infrastructure, and evaluate the impact of the various scenarios on economic growth, poverty, and inequality, as well as carbon emissions.

For the analysis, two country groups were used to gauge Kenya's historical and future progress. As Kenya is a lower middle-

income country, the study compares it to other African lower middle-income groups. It also occasionally compares Kenya's performance to other East African countries.

The ISS conducts long-term forecasting on Africa to understand the emerging opportunities and challenges for the continent. It undertakes long-term thematic, country, and regional studies on Africa with the aim of providing decision-makers with forward-thinking policy analysis to plan key development pathways.

This event was sponsored by the Governments of the Netherlands, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, with additional support from the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD). The AERC will be upgrading the Kenyan geographic report into a mini-country report. The scope of the assignment is to produce, publish and widely disseminate a long-term forecast report depicting Kenya's development trajectory using the IFs forecasting tool.

AERC Admits the Third Francophone University into the CPP

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) has signed an MOU with the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin. The agreement effectively launches the University's admission into the Collaborative PhD Programme as a Non-Host Degree Awarding University.



The AERC Director of Training, Prof. Théophile Azomahou, spearheaded the signing, with the University represented by the Vice-Rector in Charge of Co-operations, Partnerships and Professional Integration, Prof. Nelly C. Kelome.

The University of Abomey-Calavi joins the CPP as the third University from the Francophone region. This decision was informed by the need to expand the inclusion of more Francophone universities into CPP, and is in line with the AERC 2020-2025 strategic plan.

The signing was witnessed by the University of Abomey-Calavi Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management, Prof. Denis Acclassato, and Prof. Augustine Chabossou, the Deputy Director of the Doctoral School of Economics and Management, among other faculty members.

The Faculty of Economics and Management has enjoyed years of partnerships with AERC, and boasts of six alumni of the CPP.

Subsequently, Prof. Théophile led the AERC team in training the newly admitted University on the CPP and financial modalities for effective implementation, and wrapped the day with a Q&A session with postgraduate students at the University.

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Former AERC Executive Director Lemma Senbet Inducted as AIB Fellow

MarylandSmith's Professor Lemma W. Senbet has been inducted as a Fellow of the Academy of International Business (AIB) for his career-long distinguished scholarship and professional service at the interface of finance and international business.

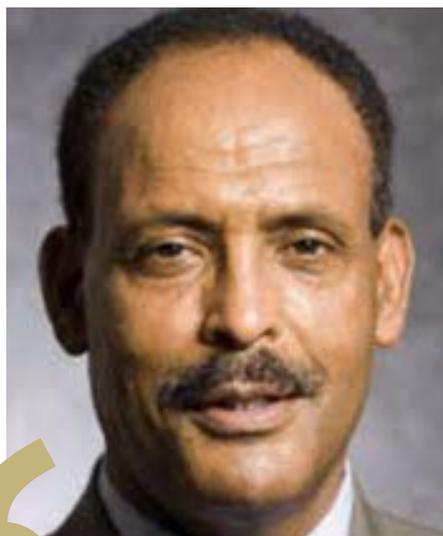
The selection further recognises Senbet, the William E. Mayer Chair Professor of Finance at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, as a distinguished scholar in interdisciplinary research that spans international finance, corporate finance, finance for development, as well as economic policy research and outreach, involving particularly Africa.

In nominating Senbet, AIB Fellow and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) Alain Verbeke, cited his key accomplishments of distinction, including the Smith Professor's tenure as JIBS Editor of Finance. "Many of the finance articles that JIBS has published in recent years have brought an entirely new dimension to the field of [international business] – pushing for strong conceptualisation and high standards of empirical rigour and leading to the upgrading of the journal in its entirety. This has put JIBS on the radar screen of world-class scholars outside of the core field."

Senbet, also former Executive Editor of Financial Management, the flagship journal of Financial Management Association, "has

come from Ethiopia to reach the heights of the finance profession in academia," added Verbeke, a professor of international business strategy, who holds the McCaig Research Chair in Management at the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business.

Co-nominator/AIB Fellow Donald Lessard of MIT echoed Senbet's lifetime outstanding scholarship. In addition, professor Lessard expounded on Senbet's connection to his home country of Ethiopia and Africa at large. "I most admire and envy Lemma's continued deep engagement with Ethiopia and Africa at large," said Lessard, Epoch Foundation



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Professor of International Management and Professor of Systems Engineering, Emeritus at MIT. "He's involved in policy; he's involved in mentoring new professionals. He's very much engaged in connecting worlds of scholarship here and worlds of scholarship there."

The AIB Fellow recognition comes in addition to numerous others in the finance profession, Senbet has achieved over the years. To name a couple, he has been elected twice as Director of the American Finance Association, and is a past President of the Western Finance Association. In 2006, he was inducted Fellow of the Financial Management Association International for his career-long distinguished scholarship.

On a policy front, Senbet was appointed in 2021 to a newly created Independent Council of Economic Advisors (ICEA) by the Ethiopian Prime Minister. This followed his five-year service (2013-2018 - on leave from Maryland) as Executive Director/CEO of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the oldest economic research and training network serving the continent of Africa.

Recently, as part of a delegation strategising the transformation of the US-Africa trade programme, he discussed this issue with senior Congressional staff of the House Ways and Means Committee. He has also advised the World Bank, IMF, UN, and various agencies on issues of financial sector reforms and development in Africa. And, he is a member of Brookings AGI Distinguished Advisory Group, and serves on the Advisory Panel of the G20 Compact with Africa.

Source: <https://www.rhsmith.umd.edu/news/smiths-lemma-senbet-inducted-aib-fellow>



The Green Transitions

Authors Workshop, Italy

The 'Green Transitions Authors Workshop' organised by The Brookings at The Bellagio Centre (Italy) on June 13-17, 2022, gathered experts in the field to discuss 'The Green Transition Imperative and Implications for Developing Countries'.

The event featured a volume advancing developing country voices for low-carbon economic success. The key question is: what new economic narratives and global actions can help catalyse progress toward inclusive green growth in emerging markets and developing economies?

This target requires supporting and elevating case study examples that reframe existing discourse from one

of simply reducing emissions to one that points to a bold vision for a just, equitable, green, and prosperous sustainable development path for developing economies. The AERC's contribution focused on the challenges and opportunities of climate change in East Africa, and was co-authored by the AERC Executive Director, Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u, and AERC Director of Training, Prof. Théophile Azomahou.

How AERC is Staying on Top of Cybersecurity Threats

The story of the boy who cried wolf is well told within the IT cybersecurity context. In the 1970's, Bob Thomas created one among the first computer viruses called Creeper. This virus could move across a network, locate a computer on the network, transfer itself to the computer, start printing a file, display a custom message on the screen and then start all over again.

Until the creation of the Creeper, IT security specialists seemed to welcome a new world of cyber threats by crying foul on non-existent threats, but as time has proved, the regular cries finally brought in a fox of viruses that now flood the IT ecosystem.

Not too long ago, the only security measures found within common office spaces were mean-looking guards carrying *rungus* (clubs) and humongous padlocks on the doors of data centres. As believed at the time, the biggest threat was the theft of computer hardware and the likelihood of a rodent chewing up the data/power cables. Through technological advancement, security threats have now evolved from a physical scope to a logical one. Common cybersecurity threats include malware, social engineering, denial of service attacks, and phishing, to mention but a few.

Organisations such as AERC understand that threats in cyberspace exist, and it's no longer business as usual in the world of Information Technology. There's no longer space or time to watch the paint dry, as new threats continue to emerge, demanding a new security coating within seconds and sometimes milliseconds. A dynamic approach to



Not too long ago, the only security measures found within common office spaces were mean looking guards with *rungus* (clubs) and humongous padlocks on the doors of data centres. As time had us believe, the biggest threat then was computer hardware being stolen and the likelihood of a rodent chewing up the data/power cables.

these threats has necessitated new technologies to ensure the safety of organisation data, systems, networks, and human resources.

The African Economic Research Consortium understands the importance of security, having been a victim of several cybersecurity threats. This has served as a learning and investment lesson in the organisation's ever-changing world.

AERC has embarked on implementing SMART cybersecurity solutions such as the XDR (extended detection and response). The XDR is a new threat detection and response approach that provides holistic protection against cyberattacks, unauthorised access, and misuse of resources. AERC has also engaged external security experts to annually run vulnerability assessments and penetration tests. This is to regularly check its environment, providing foolproof measures in case of a threat or an attack. This and other measures have positioned AERC as an innovative and IT-enabled Think Tank as it seeks to implement its mandate of capacity building within sub-Saharan Africa.

There are no longer just mean guards with *rungus*, but mostly biometrics, multifactor authentication, and CCTVs. We are no longer scared of rodents in the server room as technology has provided for redundancy in hardware and applications. Security will continue to form great conversations within AERC like the aroma of roasted coffee reaching and stimulating the olfactory epithelium.

Dr. Saidu Swaray

I am currently the first and only Sierra Leonean to benefit from all the three AERC sponsorship schemes to pursue the CMAP, CPP Bridge Fellowship Programme and the CPP.

1. Tell us about your connection to AERC.

I am a proud alumnus and beneficiary of the AERC capacity building strides for post conflict and fragile states. I am currently the first and only Sierra Leonean to benefit from all the three AERC sponsorship schemes to pursue the CMAP, CPP Bridge Fellowship Programme and the CPP. I did the external defense of my Ph.D. thesis on *“The Effectiveness of Monetary Policy in a Small Developing Open Economy: The case of Sierra Leone”* on December 15, 2021. I am currently awaiting Senate approval of my result and graduation once the nationwide Academic Staff Union of Universities’ (ASUU) indefinite strike is suspended.

2. In what way did your time at AERC prepare you for your current role at the Bank of Sierra Leone?

The AERC capacity building programme has built my analytical and research skills, as well as my understanding and articulation of critical policy issues that are geared towards the formulation and implementation of a monetary policy at the Bank of Sierra Leone.



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My experience during the AERC programme was fantastic, especially in terms of the opportunities and enabling environment that were created for me throughout the duration of my programme (CMAP, CPP Bridge and CPP). I had the opportunity to build a good research network that is currently helping me in my work at the Bank of Sierra Leone.

pandemic will continue to pose serious risks for both fiscal and monetary policy formulation and implementation, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This crisis, if not checked, will continue to undermine growth trajectories of vulnerable countries like Sierra Leone. The lingering effects of the pandemic on developing economies, the effects of the Russian-Ukraine crisis on commodity prices, high freight charges and disruption of global supply chain will continue to exacerbate the already deplorable economic conditions in African countries.

4. How would you describe your experience during the AERC programme?

It was fantastic, especially in terms of the opportunities and enabling environment that was created for me throughout the duration of my programme (CMAP, CPP Bridge and CPP). I had the opportunity to build a good research network that is currently helping me in my work at the Bank of Sierra Leone.

5. Your contribution to the academia is immense. Highlight some of your works.

❖ Swaray, S. (2022). Stability of the Money Demand Function Revisited: Evidence from Sierra Leone. *International Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Sciences*, 10 (3), pp. 122-133. Doi: 10.11648/j.ijefm.20221003.15.

❖ Swaray, S. (2022). The Transmission Channel of Monetary Policy to the

Real Economy Revisited: Evidence from Sierra Leone. *Applied Economics and Finance*, 9 (3), pp. 21-42. Doi:10.11114/aef.v9i3.5649.

❖ Mansaray, M. & Swaray, S. (2013): Financial Liberation, Monetary Policy and Money Demand in Sierra Leone. *West African Journal of Monetary and Economic Integration*, 12 (2), 63-90.

Completed Unpublished Papers:

❖ Swaray, S. (2022). Openness and Monetary Policy in Small Developing Economies: The Case of Sierra Leone. *Journal of Economic Policy Researches*, ID1059125. (Status-Under Revision).

Working Paper and Special Research Bulletin:

❖ Swaray, S., Bangura, Y. & Kabba, O. (2022). An Asymmetric Approach to Exchange Rate Pass-Through to Domestic Prices in Sierra Leone. Bank of Sierra Leone Working Paper Series, Research and Statistics Department. (Status-Under Review by the Director of Research and Statistics Department).

❖ Swaray, S. (2022). Seigniorage Revenue and Inflation Tax in Sierra Leone. The Bank of Sierra Leone Special Research and Statistics Bulletin. (Status-Ongoing).

6. You've worked at the Bank of Sierra Leone for 10 years, what next for you in terms of career?

My dream is to continue to serve the Bank of Sierra Leone as a lead policy analyst and researcher, and to become one of the top notch policymakers in a not too distant future.

7. Long after you finished your programme at AERC, how do you continue contributing to the development of the network?

I will continue to be an active member of the thematic research network of the AERC, and contribute positively towards policy issues of global relevance.

3. You are an ardent fiscal analyst with a strong Econometric background. What are your thoughts on the global financial crisis post pandemic?

The global financial crisis post

Vivien Talam: My CMAAE Experience

1. What's your name and what are you currently doing?

My name is Vivien Jepkorir Talam. I am currently a full-time student at Egerton University. I am working on completing my research proposal. The lecturer's strike at Egerton University slowed down my progress, but hopefully, I will be done by the end of September, then collect data and be done with the project early next year.

2. In detail, how was your CMAAE experience?

I loved being a CMAAE student. The first semester was not very challenging because we had the usual four months or so to take our courses and exams. The real challenge for me was in second semester. When the lecturers went on strike in late 2020, it delayed the first semester's completion, so after the end of semester exams, we realised that we only had about eight weeks to commence the SFSC programme. Therefore, the department decided that we would take the second semester courses and exams within the two months. It was not an easy thing for me. I had to be on campus by 7a.m. and had classes running until 6p.m. This forced me to do my personal studies at night. Still, I think the pressure worked well for me because we did not have to juggle the SFSC and second semester classes like I saw some of our colleagues from other universities do.

I was disappointed that we did not physically go to Pretoria University, South Africa, for the third semester. I would have loved to have the experience of being in another country and physically meeting my colleagues from other universities. Still, the Covid-19 challenge gave me the experience of taking online classes for the first time. However, I could not attend



my first two classes on the blackboard because the class link did not appear on my portal. I had a very rough time explaining to Prof Sheryl Hendriks why I was attending class through another student's portal. Later, Valiant explained that the link did not appear because I had my time set in Australian time. So the link could only appear at 9a.m. Australian time, but after that, I did not

One thing I realised about the SFSC programme is that it is not as classwork-oriented as the courses we had at our university. It is more practical.

have any more challenges.

I specialised in Policy Analysis and took Food Security Analysis, Agricultural Policy Analysis, and Agricultural Marketing Analysis. The classes were engaging and required each student to be attentive to what we were being taught in class and what was happening around us. As a result, I began to see the relevance of the courses to what the agricultural sector in Africa is facing, and it allowed me to think more critically about some of the decisions made on behalf of the sector and their impact on farmers, consumers and the country.

Online classes also mean that you are mainly on your own. Therefore, I had to push myself to study, do my assignments on time, and attend every class. One thing I realised about the SFSC programme is that it is not as classwork-oriented as the courses we had at our university. It is more practical. Despite being in a class setting, it requires one to have an open mind and take what is learned in class in the light of what we see happening in our communities and countries. Once I learned to make this comparison, my studying became more enjoyable. I could participate in class discussions with confidence and excel in my exams.

Furthermore, I got the opportunity to take an extra course (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Level One). This course further fired my interest in bringing tangible solutions to the agricultural sector through policy.

Online classes offered one major challenge - typing our exams and submitting them on time. However, it gave me an advantage over my peers because I can type quickly. This allowed me to answer all the questions in an exam and always submit them on time.

The biggest challenge, however, was holding discussion groups online. Getting

the whole group to cooperate and be on time for an assignment was a challenge, especially because some countries had network issues, and some students had ongoing classes in their respective universities.

3. How did you get to be part of the programme?

I graduated from Egerton University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in Economics and Statistics, and was in employment up to January 2020. However, I wanted to further my studies in an area that allowed me to be more resourceful in the agricultural sector. Therefore, I applied to join Egerton University for an MSc in Agricultural Economics. My class was supposed to have six students, but when classes commenced in September 2020, only two of us turned up. Therefore, the chairperson of the Department of Agribusiness and Agricultural Economics department, Prof. Patience Mushenga, moved the two of us to the CMAAE programme. I was lucky to be part of an elite programme like CMAAE.

4. You received some top awards for your participation in the programme. How does it feel to get recognition for exemplary performance? When starting the programme, did you see yourself emerging top student?

It's hard to put my feelings in words, but I must say that it was a great honour to receive the top award as the best performing student in the CMAAE Shared Facility for Specialisation and Electives (SFSE) 2021 programme. I am deeply honoured for the recognition, and I'm proud of myself for the achievement. When the programme began, my class had a little chat with Prof. Mshenga. She encouraged us to work hard, spend more time on our studies and push ourselves to perform better. She pointed out that the class comprised of the society's top cream and asked everyone what grade they graduated with, and after hearing what grades others had, I could only say, "I am the least in the class." Therefore, I never saw myself performing better than any member of my class, let alone the entire group at SFSE. Again, the

other eight members of my class were recent graduates, and I, on the one hand, had been away from school for a while, and had children and a family to think about besides my academics. However, I promised myself that I would give my best. Regardless of the results I got, I knew it was going to be my best.

5. What motivates you in Academia? Do you see yourself still active in Academia in the next 5 years?

Before I say what motivated my academic journey, let me begin from way back. I have always been a bright student right from primary school. I had always known that I wanted to be referred to as a doctor (Ph.D.) since I was 10. It all began when I attended a family friend's graduation at Egerton University when I was in class three. I noticed that the people at the podium wore different attire. I asked my dad why that was the case, and he explained it to me in simple terms. He said those people were lecturers and had studied to the 'end of education'. So I told him, "I will also study to the 'end of education' and become a lecturer." That being said, I did well in primary school, went to one of the top schools in Kenya (Sing'ore Girls High School), and got an A-. I was excited when I was admitted to Egerton University for my undergraduate programme, but things did not go as planned. I fell into depression during my first year of study. Because I did not get the help I needed on time, the situation dragged on for longer than necessary, negatively affecting my performance and delaying my transition to graduate studies.

I completed my course and went to "hustle." After five years of employment,

I must say that I am grateful to my department at the university for ensuring that we completed all the units and examinations that were supposed to be offered at Egerton, just before the SFSE programme. Therefore, I was able to concentrate on the programme entirely.

I felt I had a dream to fulfill. Besides being in the private sector, I thought I wasn't making the impact I wanted in society. I was looking for the thrill of acquiring new knowledge and had a passion for passing the knowledge to others. I was also interested in creating solutions to our society's problems, especially food security issues. And this could only be achieved if I went back to class to gain more knowledge, skills, and a name that allowed me to be heard. Therefore, the desire to become not only an academician, but also a researcher has motivated me to do my best in my academics.

In addition, following my not very good performance in undergraduate studies, I took my master's studies as an opportunity to redeem myself, prove that I am a good student, and increase my chances of going further. After completing my master's, I hope to do my Ph.D. immediately and take an active role in research and policy development. So, yes, I will still be in the world of academia five years from now.

6. How were you able to balance your schooling at Egerton University and manage to perform exceptionally well in the SFSE programme?

I must say that I am grateful to my department at the university for ensuring that we completed all the units and examinations that were supposed to be offered at Egerton, just before the SFSE programme. Therefore, I was able to concentrate on the programme entirely.

7. Word of advice for students who aspire to be part of the CMAAE programmes in the near future?

I highly recommend this programme to any student who wants exposure on how the agricultural sector works, in terms of the challenges faced by African countries, why we are not doing as well as we should, why Western countries are doing better than us, and what are the solutions to our problems. This course will make you relevant to the current changes in the agricultural sector and give you the skills you need to become a functional researcher, academician, and policy expert, and bring solutions to issues faced by the agricultural sector.

Events



Scholastica Odhiambo, AERC Research Manager, informed the audience that the Covid-19 on Livelihoods in Africa Project is based on the premise that different communities have experienced different impacts of Covid-19 containment measures based on pre-existing socio-economic and political inequalities and inequities. She challenged the participants to brainstorm on mechanisms that could be put in place to mainstream the participation of women in Africa to strengthen decision-making for increased productivity in agriculture and resultant food security, given the primary challenges.

Peter Kamalingin, Director of Oxfam Pan Africa Programme, emphasised that overcoming gender inequality is critical in freeing the continent from hunger and malnutrition. He noted that women are essential actors across agri-food systems and vital contributors to agricultural and rural development. He called upon member states to act now to transform agri-food systems and centre women as part of this transformation process for better production, nutrition, environment, and life for all.

Yavi Madurai, a representative from African Union ECOSOCC, expressed eagerness to move forward with the discussion towards finding solutions and empowering women to take up key roles in global trade. Oueratou Ouedraogo, the National Coordinator of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance in Burkina Faso (PACJA), on her part, highlighted how conflict destroys food systems and causes loss of assets.

The panel discussion involved Dr. Simon Manda, a social and economic researcher in the Department of Economic Studies at the University of Zambia, Joselyn Bigirwa, a gender and social inclusion specialist, and Chimwemwe Fabiano, Women's Political Leadership Lead at Akina Mama wa Afrika. Lingalireni Mihowa, the gender lead Oxfam Southern Africa, moderated the discussion. The panel emphasised the importance of Regional Economic Communities in mainstreaming women's land rights and equality in agriculture and food systems.

AERC, Oxfam International and ECOSOCC Convene High-Level Dialogue on

Gender Inequality and Food Systems in Africa

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), in partnership with Oxfam International and the African Union Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), convened a High-level Dialogue on Gender Inequality and Food Systems in Lusaka, Zambia, on July 13, 2022.

The dialogue was informed by the outcomes of the Gendered Impact of Covid-19 on Livelihoods in Africa, a study done across five countries, including Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia. The meeting sought to discuss gender and resilient food systems, and the nexus of food security and Gender-Based Violence.

Participants in this forum included representatives from the AU Member States, the African Union Commission (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional and Grassroots Women's Rights Organisations (WROs), as well as Feminist

activists, thought leaders, members of think tanks across the region, and academics.

The dialogue involved expert, political and technical panel discussants who proposed practical recommendations for stakeholders working in the fields of Gender Justice and Food Security.

During the opening session, Dr.

Overcoming gender inequality is critical in freeing the continent from hunger and malnutrition.

- Peter Kamalingin said.



African Union 4th Mid-Year Coordination Summit

On July 11, 2022, the AERC was invited to a panel discussion on “Time Poverty: Unpaid Care and Domestic Work Impact on Food Production, Nutrition, and women Economic Empowerment” organised by OXFAM in partnership with Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC). The discussion was held at Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, Zambia.

The panel discussion was part of the 4th Hybrid strategic engagement with AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Partners, under the theme: “Advancing Women’s Access to Economic Resources to Build Our Continent’s Resilience in Nutrition”.

The event provided a platform to highlight the contributions of women and girls in ending hunger and malnutrition, and supporting socio-economic development, and how to seal gaps in the strategic engagement of women and girls in the advancement of socio-economic development.

NESG, AERC Hold Workshop on Access to Medical Services During Covid-19 Lockdown

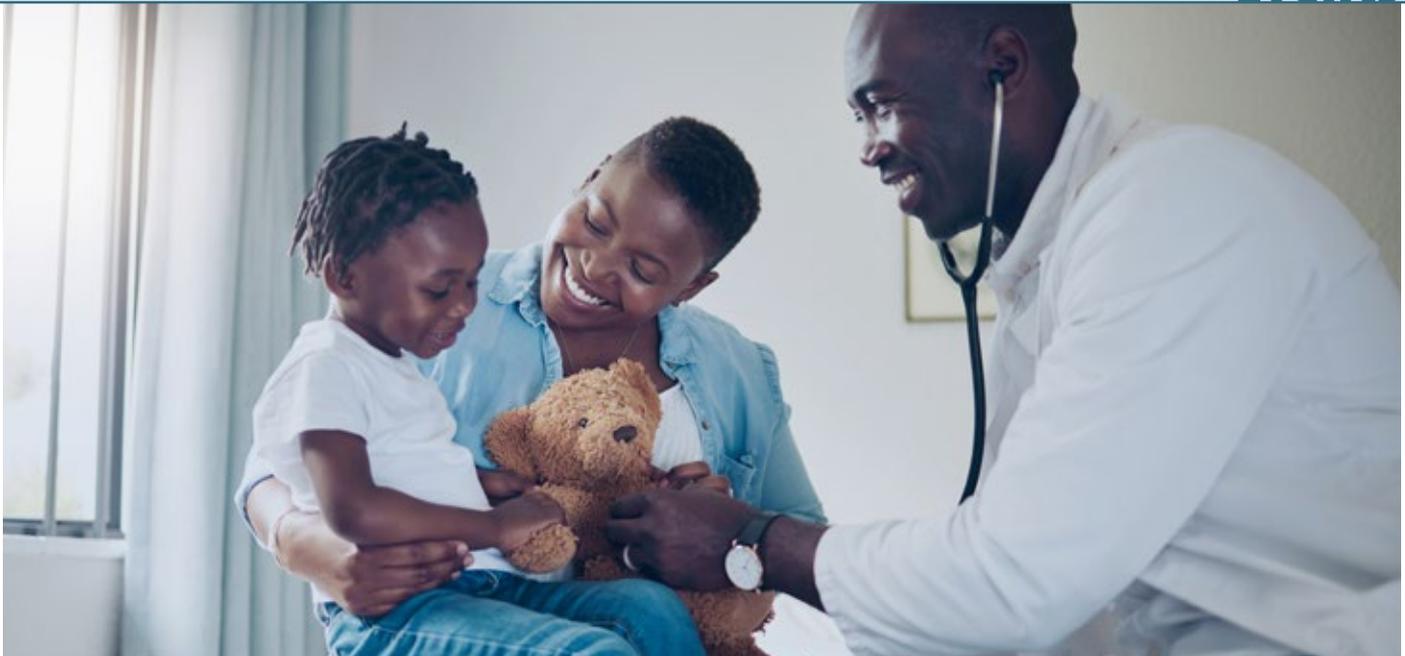
The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), in conjunction with the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), and with the support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), held a dissemination workshop with the theme “Gender differentials in access to medical services during Covid-19 lockdown: Insights from Nigeria”.

The AERC has conducted research in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia. The workshop aimed at cascading the research findings in the Nigerian space to policymakers and key stakeholders to drive policy implementation in Nigeria. In her opening remarks, the Research Manager, AERC, Ms. Dianah Mukwate Ngui, said the project targets the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on gender and creating gender-oriented, transformative, and sensitive policies.

She added that the research further aims to use analytical evidence to build the capacity of researchers and

In her opening remarks, the Research Manager, AERC, Ms. Dianah Mukwate Ngui, said the project targets the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on gender and creating gender-oriented, transformative, and sensitive policies.





institutions, build a network of stakeholders and develop a body of evidence that will reinforce collaboration while identifying the various options that will ensure equitable and sustainable policies.

Dr. Ololade Adewole of the National Centre For Technology Management, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, during her presentation of the findings of the “*Gender differentials in access to medical services during Covid-19 lockdown: Insights from Nigeria*”, said that the female gender requires more health services than male counterparts. Also, a higher percentage of the unemployed and uneducated females required maternal health services than their male counterparts, even though males tend to have greater access to health services than the female gender.

Furthermore, Dr. Adewole stated that certain factors such as low access to healthcare services, poverty, fear, lack of information, the distance from home to the healthcare facility, and lack of transportation, contributed to hindering people from accessing sexual reproductive health services during the lockdown. “Mobile health clinics, public awareness programmes, adoption of telemedicine and home-based delivery healthcare, provision of social assistant products, creating special consideration to women and encouraging the use of social media platforms through

the provision of subsidised data charges and internet-based counselling should be included in policies as means of empowering people, especially women, to close the gender gap in access to healthcare services,” she stated.

During the panel discussion, the Commissioner for Health in Lagos State, Professor Akin Abayomi, revealed that the outreach programmes of the Lagos State Government focused on family health, maternal and child health, silent diseases, and dental and hearing impairments.

He noted that the majority of health cadence in Lagos were women, with

“ Mobile health clinics, public awareness programmes, adoption of telemedicine and home-based delivery healthcare, provision of social assistant products, creating special consideration to women and encouraging the use of social media platforms through the provision of subsidised data charges and internet-based counselling should be included in policies as means of empowering people, especially women and to close the gender gap in access to healthcare services.

- Dr. Ololade Adewole

the state medical workforce having more females in the qualified medical groups.

Ms. Peggy Imoniovu, Programme Manager of Safe Care, representing the Nigeria Country Director, Pharmaccess Foundation, Njide Ndili, said that initiatives such as the national cash transfer programme helped free up money for citizens and reduced the amount of money spent on healthcare. On his part, Founding Partner, Health Systems Consult, and Facilitator, Health Policy Commission of the NESG, Dr. Nkata Chuku, stressed the need to know the people services are being designed for, the demographics and the prevalence of ailments being targeted, to effectively influence uptake in policy design strategies.

The Assistant Director of the Policy Innovation Centre at the NESG, Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu, stated that many factors, such as access to health facilities, the attitude of healthcare workers, and a lack of youth-friendly and user-friendly services, all contributed to limiting access to medical services. She also noted that Income disparity, skewed against females, had a direct implication for accessing health services, considering that women did a lot of the spending in the home, which inadvertently reduced the cash left for health services.

Summer Master Class on Research Methods



African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) held a two-week summer lecture and training on research methods. The course was conducted by Professors James Robinson and Maria Angelica Bautista of the University of Chicago.

This hybrid training took place from June 13 to June 24, 2022, in Nairobi. The total number of participants was 23, including researchers, Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP) students, and Think Tanks. The attendees learnt the critical steps required for carrying out high-quality research. The training was live-streamed through the AERC YouTube channel.

The intensive and interactive lectures provided a platform for developing some canonical approaches to empirical research in social science, illustrating them with cutting-edge research using African materials. Emphasis was placed on the importance of initially identifying a

compelling question from the real world, fieldwork, qualitative studies or noticing anomalous variation in an interesting outcome. Other research areas covered during the summer master class included moving towards research hypothesis, new and exciting research areas on Africa, and exploiting the uniqueness of exciting new research on Africa and its use in understanding development challenges and potential in Africa.

The attendees learnt the critical steps required for carrying out high-quality research.



AERC Attends GIMAC Panel Discussion on Time Poverty

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) participated in a panel discussion on “Time Poverty: Unpaid Care and Domestic Work Impact on Food Production, Nutrition, and Women Economic Empowerment,” organised by OXFAM in partnership with Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC).

The event took place at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, Zambia, on July 11, 2022. Dr. Scholastica Odhiambo, AERC Research Manager, and Lancer Wao, AERC Communications and Publications Assistant, represented the AERC at the event. The discussion, moderated by Ruth Oloo, OXFAM International, was based on connecting the care economy to nutrition. The panelists were Meseret Ali, Programme Manager, Network of Ethiopian Women Association (NEWA), Dr. Jacqueline Mosomi researcher, the University of Capetown, and Esther Adelusi, coordinator of Gender Equality and Research at Africa Leadership Forum.

Focusing on time poverty during a crisis such as conflicts and drought, Meseret Ali appealed to stakeholders to support frameworks that promoted land sharing without compromising land ownership among women. She also called upon governments to go beyond land registration and focus on how to support women to get full benefits from their land resources. Furthermore, Ali noted that governments needed to take time to think deeply about post-certification agenda so that women can derive full benefits from their land resources and support women groups that amplify women’s voices on peace and security.

Dr. Jacqueline Mosomi, shared insights drawn from the outcomes of research on the gendered impact of Covid-19 conducted by OXFAM in partnership with AERC with

generous support from International Development Research Centre (IDRC). She said that Covid-19 affected the re-entry of women into the workforce because of the intersectionality of

“ Governments needed to take time to think deeply about post-certification agenda so that women can derive full benefits from their land resources and support women groups that amplify women’s voices on peace and security. - Masereta Ali

problems affecting women. Also, Mosomi emphasised the need to analyse occupational segregation because it contributes to the pay gap rooted in the assumption that women should do care work.

Additionally, Esther Adelusi explained how paid, and unpaid care work was among the drivers of poverty by pointing out the impact on different classes of women along the social strata. Adelusi said that care work was the core driver of time poverty. It is because, regardless of the position of women on the social ladder, they are affected because they lack the luxury of time to actively participate in spaces where decisions about land, selling farm produce, and nutrition are made. She highlighted the importance of women’s voices in leadership and decision-making around nutrition and food production at all levels.

The discussants called upon governments to support the creation of gender-transformative strategies that address gender inequalities in care work. This will ensure that development activities such as planning are evidence-based, showing which sectors require more attention. Also, they highlighted the importance of universal childcare to ensure that more funds are channelled towards childcare institutions to recognise, reduce, and redistribute care burden and care work.



Digital Transformation in the Delivery of Graduate Training at JFE and

The virtual JFE and SFSE are being delivered both synchronously and asynchronously using the AERC Learning Management System (LMS), complemented by the Zoom communication platform and the AERC eLibrary. CMAAE students are also utilising the University of Pretoria’s online platform (ClickUp) alongside the AERC LMS. These digital platforms are being complemented by a variety of video-conferencing and communication tools, including Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, and Blackboard Collaborate, among others. Additionally, students and lecturers have access to both AERC’s and UP’s online libraries for textbooks, journals, and other reference materials.

The AERC Online Library

The AERC eLibrary recently benefitted from a comprehensive technical and content upgrade, not only to cater for the growing demand for online learning, but also with a view to increase access, value, and utility, as well as to offer a more seamless user-experience cutting across the AERC Training and Research networks. The process included a background upgrade of the library management and repository system in 2020, with a view to making the system more technically robust. This was followed by incorporation of new features in 2021, such as My Library on Fingertips (MyLOFT) mobile

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application, which allows both online and offline access to textbooks and other electronic resources available in the AERC eLibrary. Another addition was the Urkund anti-plagiarism software. The third phase involved integrating all these features with the online Learning Management System, such that any user who logs into the LMS could easily navigate to the eLibrary/MyLOFT, AERC Research Publications and other electronic resources without exiting the platform.

Other improvements focused on increasing the menu and quality of resources available to users. Key among these were additional subscriptions to the American Economic Association and Elsevier ScienceDirect journal and eBook databases, to supplement the over 50 other existing journals and related e-resources subscribed under the Kenya Libraries and Information Services Consortium (KLISC). The upgrade also involved the integration of the eLibrary with the AERC Learning Management System (LMS) to facilitate easier navigation across the two platforms and improve access to the available resources. Users are expected to immensely benefit from these enhancements in the AERC eLibrary.

My Library on Fingertips – MyLOFT

MyLOFT is an acronym for My Library on Fingertips. It is a mobile application with web access capabilities through a browser. It enhances access to the latest journal articles, databases and e-books subscribed by AERC, and facilitates remote (off-campus) and off-line access to these electronic resources. Further, it allows users to seamlessly access, organise, share and sync e-content between various devices, while multitasking using the web app. As of July 2022, there were over 470 registered users accessing MyLOFT, with resources from Jstor.org being the most downloaded over the last six months. As shown in Table 1, we have subscribed to 24 main databases which provide access to more than 500 journals and more than 16,000 eBooks. To register and access these peer-reviewed journal databases, please click on this link: [AERC's MyLOFT Registration](#) or send a request to eResources@aercafrica.org.

Table 1: AERC Subscribed Databases in



MyLOFT

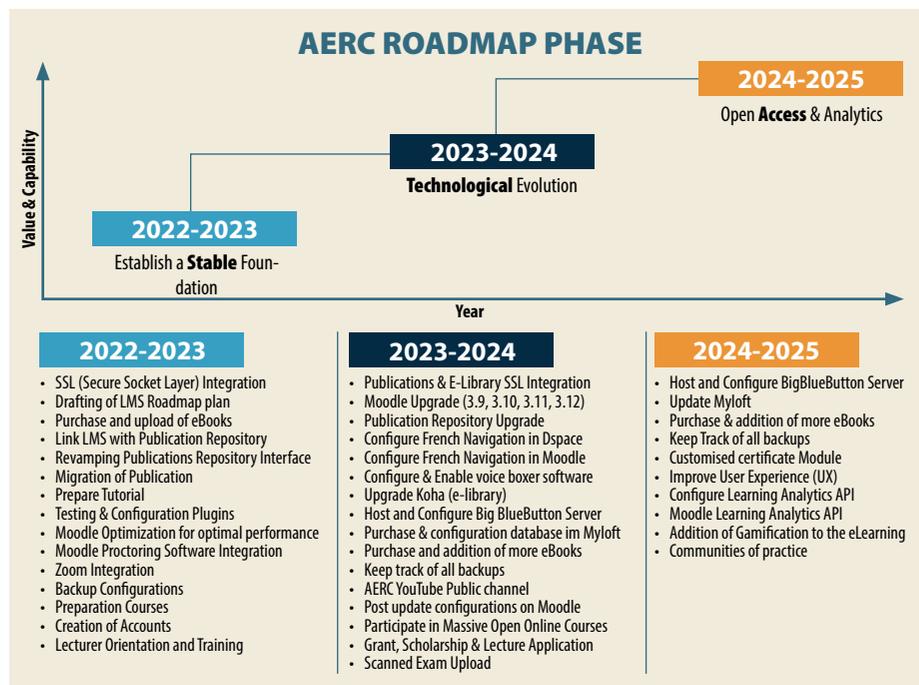
No.	Database Title	Publisher
1.	Taylor and Francis eBooks	Taylor & Francis
2.	American Chemical Society (ACS)	American Chemical Society
3.	Sage Research Methods	SAGE Publications
4.	LexisNexis	RELX Group
5.	ProQuest eBook Central	ProQuest
6.	IWA Publishing	IWA Publishing
7.	ScienceDirect	Elsevier
8.	American Economic Association	American Economic Association
9.	Elgar Online	Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
10.	Project Euclid	Project Euclid
11.	Mathematical Sciences Publishers Journal	Mathematical Sciences Publishers
12.	OpenEdition	OpenEdition
13.	OECD eLibrary	OECD
14.	Project Muse	Johns Hopkins University Press
15.	University of Chicago Press Journals	University of Chicago Press
16.	HSTalks - Online Lectures by Leading World Experts	Henry Stewart Publications
17.	IEEE Xplore Digital Library	IEEE
18.	JSTOR	JSTOR
19.	The Royal Society Publishing	The Royal Society
20.	Duke University Press	Duke University Press
21.	EBSCOhost	EBSCO
22.	Emerald	Emerald
23.	Oxford Academic Journals	Oxford University Press
24.	Taylor & Francis Online	Taylor & Francis

Blended Learning: A Roadmap on AERC's Vision for Delivery of Graduate Training in Economics

Blended learning is a pedagogical approach combining online and face-to-face learning, and incorporating a range of learning materials, resources, types of assessments, and in-class activities to enhance the learning process.

With the Covid-19 crisis gradually receding or becoming more manageable, and drawing on valuable lessons learnt during the implementation of a virtual or online JFE/SFSE between 2020 and 2022, the AERC is ready to embark on a new journey that embraces both face-to-face and online delivery modalities, leveraging the digital technologies and resources that it has invested in so far. To this end, it is envisaged that a blended CPP JFE and CMAAE SFSE will be implemented with effect from 2023, to serve as an initial, pilot phase for implementing this hybrid delivery method. In the interim, the CMAP JFE, which usually has the highest student enrolments amongst the three graduate programmes will continue being implemented virtually but with the possibility of a blended modality in the second phase, in 2024-2025.

From a technical standpoint, the roadmap for blended learning will be implemented in three phases. The first phase will focus on creating a stable infrastructure and getting the best value



of existing systems. The second year will improve IT infrastructure, harmonise the systems and improve the user experience. The third year will focus on data analytics and machine learning to improve the prediction ability of the Learning Management System.

Blended learning is not just about replicating face-to-face time online.

Blended learning is not just about replicating face-to-face time online; the aim is to improve student experience with support from carefully selected digital tools and resources, including an eLibrary, Learning Management System, eBooks and eJournals.

The aim is to improve student experience with support from carefully selected digital tools and resources, including an eLibrary, Learning Management System, eBooks and eJournals. Other features will also be improved, such as integrating Zoom with a voice boxer for translation to cater for French-speaking students and lecturers, as well as incorporation of some useful features of the *BigBlueButton*, which is an open-source platform for online education. Urkund anti-plagiarism software has been integrated into the eLearning platform. Once assignments have been submitted in the eLearning platform by the students, lecturers perform a similarity check on them before grading the assignments. The communication in and out of the AERC LMS will also be improved by adding forums, chats, advanced course notifications to email students when

lecturers upload content, among others. Additionally, the mobile capability will be enhanced through an e-learning app. This will be done with security in mind by adding and enabling unique login plugins and limiting the number of devices a user can log in simultaneously. The desired high-level view of systems and services of the LMS is captured in the Figure below.

The technical enhancements and management of AERC's LMS to more effectively support the rolling out of blended learning, will be done under the following four major systems and services focus areas:

- **Managing Content** – AERC has various software that help manage content. These include Learning Management System, Knowledge

Repository, MyLOFT, AERC Portal and Library Management System. Currently, a Training Management System is under development to supplement the existing platforms.

• **Managing Communication and**

A few challenges such as Internet connectivity and power outages, online fatigue, and copyright issues of content created, and change resistance, will be anticipated in applying the roadmap. The implementation of a combination of face-to-face and online teaching will, to a large extent, address some of these challenges.

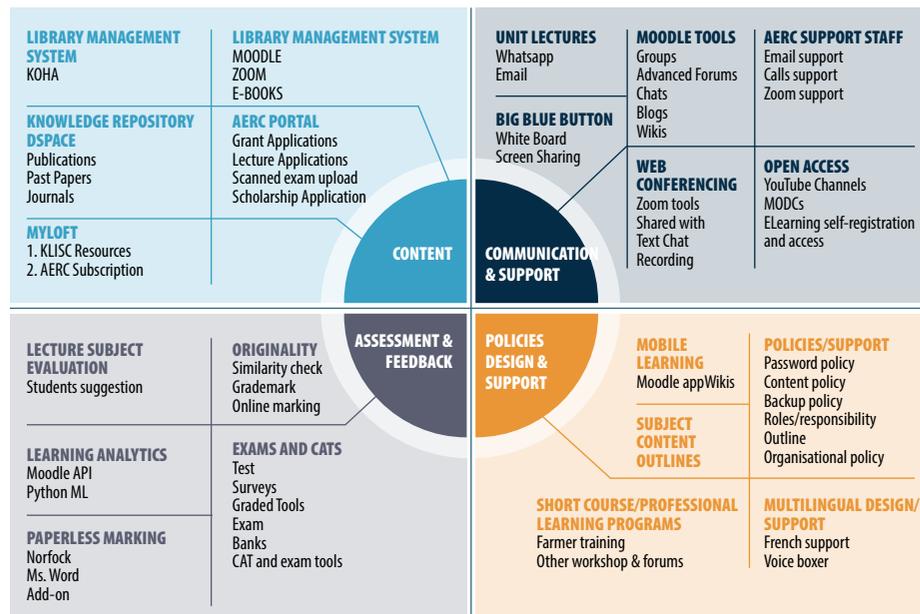
Support – AERC will improve the communication within the Learning Management System as well as offline communication.

- **Policies Design and Support** – Policies that enhance use of the Blended Learning Management system will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are relevant and enhance effective learning.
- **Assessment and Feedback** – Various technologies and services will be used to enhance feedback from students, lecturers and other stakeholders. Technology such as Norfoc add-on for paperless marking, and more use of Turnitin/Urkund anti-plagiarism software, will be encouraged. Machine Learning Models will be used as the engine for analytics in the LMS, by the third year of implementation.

Beyond the CMAP, CPP and, CMAAE core and elective courses, the menu of course offerings on the LMS continues to be widened in order to cater for the diverse needs of the AERC global network of individuals and institutions. Short, specialised courses such as *Farmer Retooling Workshops, Lecturers Retooling Workshops, LMS User Orientation*, and other training modules, have been added to the LMS. Learning analytics to determine student behaviour and predict performance based on how they interact with the platform will also be included later in the year.

A few challenges such as Internet connectivity and power outages, online fatigue, and copyright issues of content created, and change resistance, will be anticipated in applying the roadmap. The implementation of a combination of face-to-face and online teaching will, to a large extent, address some of these challenges. However, the AERC will continually explore and apply other appropriate interventions. Currently, online learning is generally working well, and this roadmap is expected to steer AERC and our partners to more efficient, cost-effective, and scalable long-term learning. The AERC Online Learning Management System, integrated with the eLibrary and other associated digital resources, is earmarked as a flagship project of AERC's Training Programme. It is hoped that the platform will offer all users a great learning experience.

HIGH LEVEL VIEW OF SYSTEMS AND SERVICES IN AERC BLENDED LEARNING





Collaborative Research Programme

A Policy Brief Training Workshop

A policy brief hybrid workshop was held on May 3 - 5, 2022, at Sarova Panafric Hotel, Nairobi. The workshop, attended by 55 participants (44 in-person, 11 online), aimed at equipping researchers with techniques to distil policy briefs from their completed Collaborative Research Projects. This would support communicative policy findings from research. The researchers were drawn from three collaborative projects, namely:

- ❑ Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Livelihoods in Africa funded by IDRC.
- ❑ Inclusion Finance in Fragile and

Post-Conflict States in Africa, funded by IDRC.

- ❑ Climate Change and Development in Africa funded by NORAD.

The workshop was opened by Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u, the Executive Director of AERC. During the workshop, Mr. Maurizio M. Gazzola, Chief, Policy, Strategic Solutions and Governance, United Nations, Vienna, Austria, gave his policy advice on Managing the Expectation of Policymakers to Maximize the Impact of Policy Briefs on Covid-19 and Livelihood; while Dr. Fola Ayorinde, Senior Portfolio Management Specialist, Green Climate Fund, Songdo,

South Korea, shared on the Role of Policy Briefs in Communicating Research on Climate Change and Inclusive Finance. The training was conducted by Prof. Adelegan Joseph, the Global Circular Economy Lead for the United Nations Technology Innovation Lab Programme, located in Espoo, Finland, and Dr. Eldah Onsomu, an Economist and Principal Policy Analyst in the field of public policy research and analysis, based at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA). By the end of the training period, the participants acquired competencies in:

- ❑ Communicating research to maximise its uptake and impact.
- ❑ Understanding the policy processes, policymakers' needs and the role of policy briefs.
- ❑ Understanding the role of social media in communicating research and how to engage on social media platforms.
- ❑ Producing policy briefs.



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BMGF-AERC

The Human Capital Development

Policy Reflection and review meeting:

Through a generous support by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, AERC conducted a scoping (framework) research on “Human Capital Development in Africa” with a view to improve generation and management of knowledge and address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems. In order to discuss gaps in the critical policy issues in Human Capital Development in Africa, a policy reflection and review meeting for Framework Authors and Policy makers was held on July 25, 2022, at Trade Mark Hotel in Nairobi. The opening remarks were made by Mr. Simon K. Chelugui, Cabinet Secretary for Labour and Social Protection. This meeting brought together 22 key stakeholders who have important roles to play in shaping new research findings, paving new policy directions, and initiating innovative practices in the areas of human capital development.

Master Class Workshop on Advanced Research Methods: A Hybrid Master Class Workshop on Advanced Research Methods for the Human Capital Development in Africa Project for Institutional and Individual Researchers was held on July 26-28, 2022, at the Trademark Hotel in Nairobi. The Master class, aimed at training researchers on how to write a high impact, high citation, “Bayesian shock” paper. The class was attended by 49 participants (29 in-person, 20 online). The class was conducted by Prof. Yaw Nyarko, Professor of Economics at New York University (NYU) and the Director of NYU Africa House, the Centre for Technology and Economic Development (CTED), and Co-



Above: Labour and Social Protection Cabinet Secretary Simon Chelugui sharing opening remarks.
Left: A section of the policy makers.



Director of the Development Research Institute (DRI); Professor James Robinson, University Professor, University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy; and Prof. Lant Pritchett, RISE Research Director at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford.

The goal to digitalise AERC’s administrative operations and programme delivery was highlighted by the 2020-2025 digital strategies with the IT department identifying key technology processes, systems and operations whose capacity to implement and improve would lead to achievement of various key strategic objectives.



Workshops for **Collaborative** Research Projects

SIDA-AERC Addressing Health Financing Vulnerabilities in Africa Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic Project

This project aims to examine the multidimensional impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, starting from the macroeconomic tremors it has already caused, and tracing them to the household and individual levels, with a focus on the health and healthcare of poor and vulnerable populations. The implementation of the project is being carried out in two phases: framework research followed by country case studies. The country case studies will be utilised to understand the underlying differences in care innovations across countries, and to get insights into better management of the Covid-19 pandemic in light of country-specific health care infrastructure and health financing policies. The Framework Papers Phase Final Review workshop was held on May 9 -10, 2022, with six papers awaiting publication. The country case study phase kicked off on May 23-24, 2022. Sixteen papers were presented out of which 12 were selected for grants award.

BMGF-AERC Financial Inclusion and Market Development in EAC Economies

The study aims at detailing financial inclusion and market development in East African that can be used to advance knowledge and drive policy for SSA economies. In addition, the project aims at characterising financial market developments as well as electronic payments interoperability, for lessons that can guide policy drive. The project prioritises studies on the following East African Community Economies- Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda held on May 25-26, 2022. To have researchers incorporate gender analysis by explicitly employing gender-sensitive analytical framework in their studies, the AERC held the gender analysis and mainstreaming workshop for the BMGF-AERC Financial Inclusion and Market Development in EAC Economies, on July 12-14, 2022, in Kigali, Rwanda. The workshop was opened by Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u, the Executive Director, AERC. The workshop, conducted by Prof. (Mrs.) Olatundun J. Adelegan of Aalto University School of Business in Espoo, Finland, was attended by 26 participants.



NORAD-AERC Climate Change and Economic Development in Africa (CCEDA)

The CCEDA project supported by NORAD seeks to substantially enhance the capacity of African governments to confront development challenges in a 21st century context, characterised by significant environmental challenges and imperatives. The ultimate goal is to radically improve the capability of the continent (and its policy makers) to confront climate and environmental change, and leverage the opportunities they present, as it confronts its development challenges. The final review for the 14 Country Case Studies Papers was held virtually on May 16-17, 2022. The papers are under review for a publication in a journal.

NORAD-AERC Re-Examining the Growth, Poverty, and Inequality Relationships in Africa:

This collaborative research examines how the growth-poverty-inequality nexus in sub-Saharan Africa is affected by redistributive policies and strategies. The project seeks to generate new evidence on the nature and design of pro-growth poverty reduction policies and interventions in sub-Saharan Africa, with a view to inform policy on inclusive and sustained growth in the region. The second phase of the inception workshop for the Country Case Studies was held on June 13 -14, 2022.

AERC participated in AU Summit ECOSSOC and GIMAC policy engagement workshops from July 11-13, 2022. The sessions were based on IDRC-AERC-OXFAM Covid-19 and Livelihoods in Africa.

<https://aercafrica.org/aerc-oxfam-international-and-ecosocc-convene-high-level-dialogue-on-gender-inequality-and-food-systems-in-africa/>

The other input for AU Summit has a write up on GIMAC.

In-Country Dissemination Workshops

The country case studies phase for the **several** collaborative research projects are almost complete and were disseminated in the respective countries in collaboration with institutions/Think Tanks based in those countries.

IDRC-AERC-OXFAM - Social and Economic Response and Recovery from Covid-19 Project: Funded by IDRC, this project seeks to conduct quality policy research using novel and innovative approaches, including data collection methods, on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on livelihoods in selected African countries with special emphasis on vulnerable groups who bear the brunt disproportionately, economically, physiologically and emotionally. Out of the six country case studies carried out, the following papers were disseminated.

Dates	Paper Title	Institution
June 24	Gendered Poverty, Socio-economic and Health Effects of COVID-19 in Kenya	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
July 21 2022	Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Livelihoods: Wellbeing, Livelihoods and Gender Relations in Zambia	Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTDB)
June 28	Gender Differentials in Access to Medical Services during COVID-19 Lock-Down: Insights from Nigeria	Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)
29 June 2022	Gendered impacts of COVID-19 on income, coping strategies and food stockpiling: the case of Ethiopia	Ethiopia Policy Studies Institute (PSI)

IDRC-AERC- Inclusive Finance in Fragile and Post Conflict States Project: Funded by IDRC, the overall objective of the

project is to enhance the capacity of researchers and policy actors in fragile and post-conflict countries to formulate appropriate evidence-based economic policies and sound economic management for successful reconstruction and sustainable development. In addition to building capacity for research, a collaborative research project on growth in fragile states that will create awareness and a knowledge base that is useful to policy makers in these countries was carried out in 10 countries out of which the following were disseminated during this period.

Dates	Paper Title	Institution
June 24	A Gendered Analysis of the Impact of Financial Inclusion on Poverty in Burundi	Centre Universitaire de Recherche pour le Développement Economique et Social (CURDES)
July 1, 2022	Inclusive Finance for Women and Youths in Fragile States: Lessons from SADC	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Analyses et Politiques Economiques (CERAPE)
July 14, 2022	Informality and Financing of Small and Medium Enterprises in Eswatini	Eswatini Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre (ESEPARC)
July 15, 2022	Inclusive Finance for Women and Youths in Fragile States: Lessons from SADC	Eduardo Mondlane University

NORAD-AERC- Climate Change and Economic Development in Africa (CCEDA): This collaborative research project funded by NORAD seeks to substantially enhance the capacity of African

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governments to confront development challenges in a 21st century context, characterised by significant environmental challenges and imperatives. The project will help policy makers and other actors to better understand the impacts of climate change on growth and to better inform policies on building and strengthening resilience (climate proofing) of sub-Saharan African countries to ensure sustainability of growth and development. Out of the 14 completed papers under the country case study phase, the following were disseminated during the period.

Dates	Paper Title	Institution
July 21, 2022	Attitude et valorisation de la qualite de l'air en milieu urbain africain dans un contexte de changement climatique: cas de Dakar Senegal.	Consortium pour la recherche économique et sociale (CRES)
July 26, 2022	Climate Variability, Internal Migration and Household Welfare Among Agricultural Households in Tanzania.	Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organisation (STIPRO)
29 June, 2022	Climate-smart agriculture, welfare, and income risk management in Ethiopia: Exploring impacts and option for scaling up.	Ethiopia Policy Studies Institute (PSI)

The project will help policy makers and other actors to better understand the impacts of climate change on growth and to better inform policies on building and strengthening resilience (climate proofing) of sub-Saharan African countries to ensure sustainability of growth and development.

AERC Report on Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Training Workshop

1 About the AERC Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Training

The AERC Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Workshop was held July 12 - 14, 2022, at Lemigo Hotel, in Kigali, Rwanda. The training was conducted on site. Each day had three sessions, that is, two morning and one afternoon session, with each session running for three hours. The training-workshop was attended by 26 researchers drawn from AERC collaborative project on Financial Inclusion and Market Development in East African Community Economies.

The training sessions were quite interactive and included lectures, tutorials, and exercises, to train the researchers on gender analysis and how to mainstream gender in their research. The components of the workshop included: lectures on theory and practice of gender analysis and mainstreaming in research, especially in financial inclusion and the policy process; lectures on gender analysis, and policy and advocacy; qualitative and quantitative research methodology; tutorials and exercises to improve researchers' work in progress reports; tutorials on STATA statistical software to estimate gender studies and interpret the

results; mentorship for research teams during the workshop on mainstreaming gender in their work in progress reports; and continuous monitoring of the workshop outcome. The participants were able to participate in both pre-training and post-training evaluations.

2 An Overview of Pre-Training Survey

The pre-training survey was completed by 19 respondents. Among all the participants, at least 95 percent had not undertaken a Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Training before. In terms of understanding and rating of policy brief writing proficiency, majority (79%) of the respondents' rating was 3 out of 5, with 5% of them rating themselves above 3/5. About 84% of the participants indicated that the Gender component was one of the key variables for their research. Majority of the participants (95%) indicated that their expectations for the training were to learn new skills and put them into use. Some participants (5%) indicated that they needed to reinforce existing skills in gender analysis and mainstreaming.

3 Structure of training delivery

The training was

Figure 1: Have you taken a Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming training before?

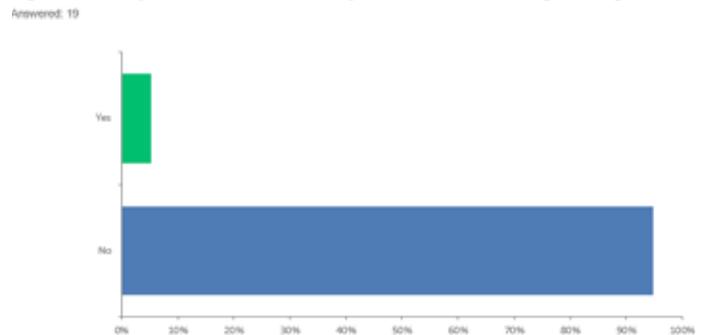


Figure 2: Gender analysis proficiency rating (in scale of 1 to 5)

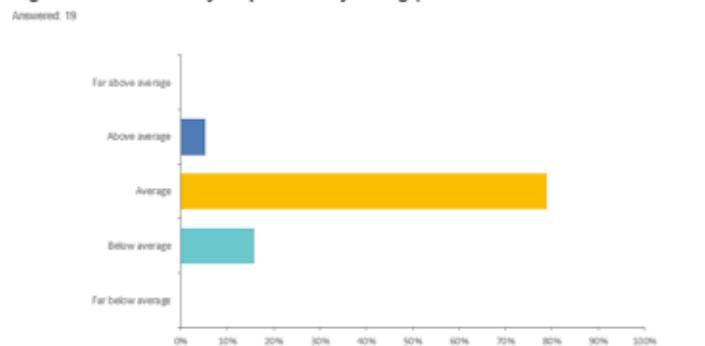
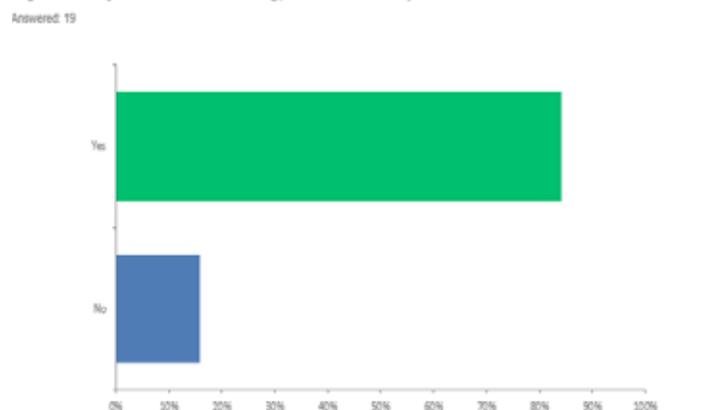


Figure 3: In your research writing, is Gender component one of the variables?



delivered through six modules namely:

- ❑ **Module 1:** Introduction and Expectations from the Workshop on Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming.
- ❑ **Module 2:** Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming in Research & Policy process, Theory of Change.
- ❑ **Module 3:** Theory of Gender and Gender Mainstreaming in Research and Advocacy 1.
- ❑ **Module 4:** Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming in Financial Inclusion & Policy Process, Quantitative Research 1.
- ❑ **Module 5:** Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming in Financial Inclusion & Policy Process, Quantitative research 2.
- ❑ **Module 6:** Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming in Financial Inclusion & Policy Process, Qualitative Research 1&2 and Practical Exercises.

Deliverables

At the end of the training:

- i. The participants developed competencies in gender theories, analysis and gender mainstreaming in research and the policy process, and are able to incorporate gender analysis in their research, not just by translating research into policy accessible knowledge products, but also through policy

The participants were introduced to how to prepare a Theory of Change and were given some templates and they were able to develop a theory of change for a development project on women empowerment.

influencing and advocacy.

- ii. The participants were introduced to how to prepare a Theory of Change and were given some templates. They were able to develop a theory of change for a development project on women empowerment.
- iii. Research teams were mentored on how they would mainstream gender and gender analysis in their current AERC research studies and future research.
- iv. Each research team submitted how they would mainstream gender and gender analysis in their current AERC research, made presentations to the rest of the participants and obtained feedback.

4 Post-Training Evaluation Survey

The post-training evaluation was done in two parts. Post training evaluation done on-site and off-site. During the post-training evaluation on-site, the response rate was 100% (26 participants responded to the survey). All the participants (100%) rated the gender training as excellent and indicated that their expectations were highly met at the workshop, and that they had acquired gender analysis and mainstreaming skills that would enhance the quality of their research. The online post-evaluation survey is ongoing.



Training Department West Africa Mission



A team from the training department was on a monitoring mission in Cameroon (l'université de Yaoundé II) and l'université Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal. Included in the mission were 3 members from the AAB, led by the Chair, Dr. Beatrice Mkenda, Prof. Ogunkola, and Prof. Aka Brou.

During the mission, an aide memoire was signed by the AERC and the Dean.

The team also paid a courtesy call to the Rector of the university, met with the faculty members, toured the university facilities, met with PhD students (including CPP) and conducted financial assessment, among other monitoring activities.

Talent News

New staff



Emmanuel Mose Mogire
IT Specialist

Emmanuel Mose Mogire has joined AERC as an IT Specialist, starting Thursday September 1, 2022. He joins us from Safaricom, where he worked as a Lead Engineer. He is skilled in network support integration, network design, vendor and MSP management, with a strong understanding of network security, data centres and service management.

Emmanuel holds a Bachelor of Science in Telecommunications and IT from Kenyatta University, and is currently pursuing a Master of Communication Management by eLearning, from the University of Rwanda and United Kingdom Telecommunication Academy. In addition, he has various IT related certifications, including ITIL, CCNA, CCNP, CFOT, MCSA, CFOS/H, etc.

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