

Human Capital Development in Africa



Senior Policy Seminar XXV

AFRICAN ECONOMIC RESEARCH CONSORTIUM
CONSORTIUM POUR LA RECHERCHE ÉCONOMIQUE EN AFRIQUE

Bringing Rigour and Evidence to Economic Policy Making in Africa

Human Capital Development in Africa

AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXV,
Virtual Meeting
March 30, 2023

Seminar Report

African Economic Research Consortium
Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique
P.O. Box 62882 City Square
Nairobi 00200, Kenya
Middle East Bank Towers, 3rd Floor, Jakaya Kikwete Road
Tel: (254-20) 273-4150
Fax: (254-20) 273-4173

www.aercafrica.org

About African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

African Economic Research Consortium, established in 1988, is a premier capacity building institution in the advancement of research and training to inform economic policies in sub-Saharan Africa. It is one of the most active Research and Capacity Building Institutions (RCBIs) in the world, with a focus on Africa. AERC's mission rests on two premises: First, that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy. Second, that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed cadre of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research. AERC builds that cadre through a programme that has three primary components: research, training, and policy outreach. The organization has now emerged as a premier capacity building network institution integrating high quality economic policy research, postgraduate training, and policy outreach within a vast network of researchers, universities, and policy makers across Africa and beyond. AERC has increasingly received global acclaim for its quality products and services and is ranked highly among global development think tanks.



Human Capital Development in Africa – AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXV, Virtual Meeting, March 30, 2023, Seminar Report

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Abbreviations

ACET	African Center for Economic Transformation
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
CGE	General Equilibrium
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Central Statistical Office
CTF	Clean Technology Fund
EGH	Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIC	Growth Incidence Curves
GNI	Gross National Income
HCA	Human Capital Accumulation
HCD	Human Capital Development
H.E.	His Excellency
HRH	Her Royal Highness
ICT	Information, and Communication Technology
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares estimator
P&I	Poverty and Inequality
PFM	Public Finance Management
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
RCBIs	Research and Capacity Building Institutions
RCTs	Randomized Control Trials
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDM	Service Delivery Management
SDS	Service Delivery System
SMS	Short Message Services
SPS	Senior Policy Seminar
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TFP	Total Factor Productivity
UIS	Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
VAR	Vector autoregressive
WB	World Bank
WDI	World Development Indicators
WHO	World Health Organization
WTP	Willingness to Pay

Preface

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) convenes Senior policy seminars to provide high level African policy makers the opportunity to come together to dialogue on the results of research conducted by AERC and its affiliates, exchange policy experiences and interact with the researchers in an atmosphere of peers. The themes of these seminars are selected based on topicality and contemporary interest to African policy making.

AERC Senior policy seminars are forums where policy makers and researchers engage in uninterrupted deliberations on a set of important issues considered significant to policy making in Africa. The seminar format insulates the policy makers from pressures related to their responsibilities and thus creates an environment for lively professional discourse on the selected issue. Aside from the specific aims of bringing researchers and policy makers together, the seminars are directly useful to AERC because they help identify research imperatives crucial to transforming Africa. They also improve prospects for policy involvement of the researchers and enhance AERC's visibility in the policy community. Consequently, they serve to highlight the growing capacity in the region for policy research and, overall, provide important feedback to AERC for its research and training programs.

Exchange of country-specific experiences is particularly important in these seminars. The policy makers are normally identified for their interest in policy research issues and the level of seniority of the policy makers is generally high, leading to detailed discussions. Researchers are reasonably well balanced between Anglophone and Francophone, and attendance by Francophone policy makers is always encouraged. Policy makers report that they have found their experiences in the seminars very useful. The information exchanged helps them update their knowledge on current research and sieve out issues that are relevant to their duties. Some have even been embarrassed to find that during negotiations with international financial institutions, they have agreed to certain policies without understanding the full implications of the policy package. Seminars of this kind, while not intended or able to make the policy maker an economist, nevertheless afford the opportunity of considering the wider ramifications of their policy decisions.

AERC is hugely indebted to Mr. Eliud Owalo, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communications and Digital Economy, Kenya, who was the guest of honour at the official opening of the Seminar where he delivered a keynote speech. The welcoming remarks were by Prof. Théophile Azomahou, Acting Executive Director, AERC. The conference was also graced by Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u, Cabinet Secretary, National Treasury and Economic Planning, Kenya; Bangasi J. Bakosoo, Minister for Public Service and Human Resource Development, South Sudan; Kobygda Larba Issa, Ministry of Economy, Finance and Development, Burkina Faso; Dr. Wilson T. Banda, Governor, Reserve Bank of Malawi; Issa-Toure Salahaddine, Speaker of the National Assembly, Togo; Dr. Kerfalla Yansane, Ambassador of Guinea to the USA and Former Minister for Mining and Geology; and Dr. Kheswar Jankee, Ambassador of Mauritius in Russia. Other special guests were Dr. Donald Kaberuka, former President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Her Royal Highness, Queen Nozizwe Mulela, Kingdom of Eswatini among other high level policy makers. A summary of those present included five ministers, three ambassadors, a Governor of a central bank, a permanent secretary, a queen,

and four former ministers. This hybrid conference attracted a total of 603 participants (131 physical participants and 472 online) drawn from 43 countries across Africa. A total number of 1,909 registered online to participate in the event.

The conference featured four presentations by thought leaders on the theme Human Capital Development in Africa. Human capital—the education, skills, and health of people — plays a pivotal role in the transformation of African economies.

Session One focussed on A Lifecycle, Economy-Wide Framework for Human Capital in Africa and was presented by Prof. Lant Pritchett, Harvard University, USA. This session was chaired by Hon. Bangasi J. Bakosoo, Minister for Public Service and Human Resource Development, South Sudan. The paper was discussed by Dr. Adam Mugume, Executive Director, Bank of Uganda. Session Two discussed Human Capital Investments and Economic Growth in Africa and was presented by Prof. Jere R. Behrman, Department of Economics, University of Pennsylvania, USA. This session chair was Dr. Kheswar Jankee, Ambassador, Embassy of Mauritius in Russia and the paper was discussed by Dr. Sherillyn Raga, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), UK.

The Third Session was on Human Capital Accumulation in Africa: Drivers, Consequences, and Way forward. This session was chaired by Kobygda Larba Issa, Ministry of Economy, Finance and Development, Burkina Faso. The paper was presented by Prof. Germano Mwabu, Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, Kenya. The discussant for the paper was Prof. Olu Ajakaiye from African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building, Nigeria. The fourth paper was on Education in Africa: Career Progressions, Gaps in Learning Outcomes and Responding to the Learning Crisis. This session was chaired by Dr. Wilson T. Banda, Governor, Reserve Bank of Malawi. The paper was presented by Prof. Adrienne Lucas and Dr. Gerald Ipapa from Lerner College of Business and Economics, University of Delaware, USA. This paper was discussed by Dr. Elizabeth Nanziri, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. The presenters presented high-quality papers, and the participants were very active, thus enabling us to produce the seminar's policy recommendations that were shared as a communiqué with African policy makers including those who did not find time to take part in this important event.

We are grateful to all those who made the seminar a great success. Special thanks to Dr. Dianah Muchai, Manager, Research; Dr. Scholastica Odhiambo and Prof. Théophile Azomahou, Director of Training, who made valuable inputs into the preparation and implementation of the seminar. In equal measure, AERC appreciates the hard work of Senvy Maistry, Chief Communications Officer; Dr. Charles Owino, Publications Manager; Joel Mathia, ICT Administrator, and Lancer Wao, Communications and Publications Assistant in organizing the event. AERC also acknowledges with thanks Dr. Tom Kimani, Manager Training and Dr. Mark Korir, Manager Training, for their role as rapporteurs, as well as Pamela Kilwake, Sheila Lyaga, Hellen Muthoni, Margaret Mwangi, Natalie Chaponda and Jackson Ng'ang'a, who assisted with logistics. To these individuals, and the many others who were involved in one way or another, AERC extends its heartfelt appreciation.

Prof. Dominique Njinkeu
Executive Director (Interim)
African Economic Research Consortium

Human Capital Development in Africa

Introduction

Human capital—the education, skills, and health of people — plays a pivotal role in the transformation of African economies. Sub-Saharan Africa scores the lowest of all the world’s regions on the World Bank’s Human Capital Index (about 0.40), a measurement of how well countries invest in the next generation of workers (World Bank, 2020). This is despite the fact that access to sources of human capital in Africa, although still low, has increased significantly over the past two decades (Leonard, 2022). More households have access to health care, more students are enrolled, and families have access to more tools for improving the quality of their life. However, the goal of human capital, quality of life still lags significantly behind even in other developing countries, especially considering the substantial gains in access. Africa’s low human capital can be explained by three interlinked factors, namely: survival, school, and health.

Human capital is critical for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in Africa. Investment in human beings for improved social and economic outcomes in future – through education and training, learning and experience, or health interventions – is vital in shaping future income and productivity. Developing human capital in Africa, therefore, requires a massive and coordinated effort to strengthen the quantity, efficiency, and impact of investments in people. There is need to facilitate regional and country-owned policy reforms, action plans and cross-country learning in four key areas:

- ✓ Expanding effective government investment in social services.
- ✓ Introducing reforms and innovation to improve service delivery.
- ✓ Committing to equity and inclusiveness.
- ✓ Addressing fertility and gender issues to harness a demographic dividend.

Enhancing the capacity of African governments to make policy decisions that will confront the challenges of building human capital for accelerated inclusive development in a 21st century context is fundamental to improving the capability of the continent (and its policy makers) to address the key constraints on human capital accumulation. Over the last three years, the AERC, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), has implemented several activities under the “Building Policy Research Institutions to Support Human Capital” Programme. Key components of the programme are:

- Capacity building for policy-oriented economic research undertaken within the AERC research capacity building program;

- Institutional partnerships;
- Technical skills enhancement workshops;
- Research fellowships with national think tanks and international research centres of excellence;
- Policy outreach and research dissemination; and
- One collaborative research project on human capital development in Africa

The collaborative research project on ‘Human Capital Development in Africa’ sought to generate evidence on the challenges of building human capital for accelerated inclusive development as well as address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDM). In addition, this collaborative research project sought to provide policy reforms that would enable Africa’s young people to grow up with optimal health and equipped with the right skills to compete in the digitizing global economy. The project involved both framework papers and country case studies.

The framework papers sought to investigate broad, and crosscutting issues around human capital development to improve the capability of the continent (and its policy makers) to confront human capital development challenges, and leverage the opportunities they present, as it confronts its development challenges. The country case studies sought to inform policy makers and development practitioners on human capital development in Africa from the viewpoint of individual countries and/or sub-regions (or group of countries).

To assist policy makers and other actors improve generation and management of knowledge on Africa’s human capital and address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDS), the AERC intends to disseminate the findings from the above studies to senior African policy makers through its flagship dissemination vehicle, the “Senior Policy Seminar” (SPS).

Opening Session

Official Opening Session

Session chair:	H. E. Dr. Kerfalla Yansane , Ambassador of Guinea to the USA and Former Minister for Mining and Geology
Welcome remarks:	Prof. Théophile Azomahou , Ag. Executive Director, AERC
Opening remarks:	Mr. Dan Peters , Advisor, Global Policy and Advocacy, BMGF
Official Opening & Keynote:	Hon. Eliud Owalo , Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information Communications and Digital Economy

The Master of Ceremony for the day, Dr. Charles Owino-Manager, Publications, AERC-called the meeting to order, welcomed the participants, and then took them through the programme for the AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXV. He then invited Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u, Executive Director, AERC, to continue with the rest of the programme.

Welcome Remarks by Prof. Théophile Azomahou, Ag. Executive Director, AERC

*Honourable Ministers,
Governors of Central Banks,
Permanent Secretaries,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
The Queen of Eswatini,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Let me welcome all of you to this AERC Senior Policy Seminar on Human Capital Development in Africa. Even though AERC has convened many other events in Nairobi, this is the first of our to-date 25th Senior Policy Seminars to be hosted physically beyond the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. Our custom has always been to involve high ranking African policy makers in seminars such as this. The urgency and importance of this theme are well reflected by that target audience, on the one hand, and on the other, by the profile of Nairobi which hosts some of the United Nations agencies.

At the outset of this seminar, ladies, and gentlemen, permit me on your behalf to thank the Kenyan government, being AERC's host country. We are particularly honoured to have with us today respected government officials, including ministers and permanent secretaries from Kenya as well as from other African countries, who have taken time off their busy schedules to participate in this conference.

Our appreciation would be incomplete without due recognition of the authors and presenters of the papers that will be presented and discussed here. They have researched diligently for long hours to explore all aspects of human capital development, as well as looked at the options and opportunities for developing and managing this valuable resource. I am thankful to you all for your enthusiasm and availability to participate in this seminar.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the next two days we are looking forward to an objective evaluation of the role of human capital with a view to spelling out a proactive stance for African policy makers, particularly because human capital plays a pivotal role in the transformation of economies. That sub-Saharan Africa scores the lowest of all the world's regions on the World Bank's Human Capital Index, a measurement of how well countries invest in the next generation of workers is not something to be proud of.

We all know that low investments in human capital impinges on growth rates of income. Such interrelations consequently imply a vicious circle of development. Poor countries have considerable discretion over how much to invest in education and health. Since independence, Africa has achieved a rapid growth of some aspects of human capital - particularly in the expansion of education - despite starting from a low level of income. The expansion of the human capital stock has not been matched by a commensurate rise in physical capital. The result has been low growth of incomes and low returns to the educational investment.

There is a plethora of research on human capital and its contribution towards the economic wellbeing and technological advancement. Human capital accumulation through educational advancement plays a crucial role in growth and development. Investment in education has positive effect on economic growth with varying magnitude on developed and developing countries. Investment in higher education combined with advancement in technology facilitates nations to grow faster. Human capital and economic growth have been measured in different studies using different techniques. And according to some of these studies as you will witness in the presentations, the impact of different level of education has different impact on growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Human capital has been considered the significant factor of economic growth and development. But, unless there is technological innovation, economic growth cannot be achieved. The endogenous growth theory holds that the human capital is the separate strong factor of production and education, however, knowledge-based economy has its spillover and multiplier effect, which leads to economic development.

Due to health and education deficiencies, employees' decreased labor input is a significant factor in poverty in many countries. Thus, increasing investment in human capital is an attractive method for enhancing revenue. It takes a long time though to develop a new worker, and it takes much longer for workers who were subjected to inferior human capital investments during their adolescence to leave the labour force.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The role of governments is key to expanding the skillsets and education levels of a country's population. Some governments are actively involved in improving human capital by offering higher education to people at no cost. These governments have realized that the knowledge people gain through education helps develop an economy and boost economic growth. Workers with more education or better skills tend to have higher earnings, which, in turn, increases economic growth through additional consumer spending.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You may well ask what is the relationship between this compelling issue and AERC? I don't think we have indeed come late into this fray, because our traditional mandate has been much broader – to build overall capacity for economic policy making in sub-Saharan Africa. But it is important to keep in mind that nearly all the impacts of human capital development – in Africa and elsewhere – are exacerbated by inappropriate policy choices, often those taking a short-sighted view of what is best for some view of economic development.

Under that broader mandate, the African Economic Research Consortium is marking 35 years of leadership in policy-oriented economic research in the continent. This Senior Policy Seminar might also be thought of as addressing a very crucial African problem, particularly as we seek the insights of policy makers into this pressing issue.

AERC 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. We do this through two main programmes: research and postgraduate training. Our research Programme uses a flexible approach that allows us to improve the technical skills of local researchers as we determine regional research priorities and strengthen national institutions concerned with economic policy research. Our Training Programme augments the pool of economic researchers in sub-Saharan Africa by supporting collaborative graduate programmes in economics – at both master's and PhD levels – as well as improving the capacities of departments of economics in local public universities. The networking aspects of the programmes foster closer ties between researchers and policy makers across the continent, akin to what we will be witnessing throughout this seminar.

Ladies and gentlemen,

AERC Senior Policy Seminars are annual events that have addressed an array of topics relevant to Africa's policy agenda. Last year's seminar, for example, considered Climate Change and Economic Development in Africa. Other seminars have discussed the following topics: The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies; Agriculture and Food Policies for Better Nutrition Outcomes in Africa; Fragility of Growth in African Economies; Governance and Pro-poor Growth; How to Finance Pro-poor Growth; Poverty, Growth, and

Institutions; Financial Sector Reforms; Fiscal Policy; Revenue Mobilization; and the Macroeconomic Policy Framework for Poverty Reduction. The seminars are intended to inform policy makers about the latest developments in policy research, provide a forum for sharing experiences, and promote a closer relationship between researchers and policy makers.

AERC's programmes receive financial support from bilateral governments, multilateral institutions, and private foundations. While I am proud to say that most African countries are active participants in AERC's activities and provide the much-needed moral and in-kind support, we would encourage your greater financial participation, for which you will be hearing from us soon.

As we look forward to what promises to be an informative and successful conference, I encourage you all to participate to the fullest, particularly in the discussions that will emanate from the presentations as we proceed.

I thank you!!!

Remarks by Mr. Dan Peters, Advisor, Global Policy & Advocacy, BMGF

Honourable Ministers,

Governors of Central Banks,

Permanent Secretaries,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Guests,

All Protocols Observed,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thrilled to be part of this year's African Economic Research Consortium's Senior Policy Seminar, the 25th in the series. It is great to listen to some of the amazing research that has come out of the important project. Over the last three years, the AERC, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), has implemented several activities under the "Building Policy Research Institutions to Support Human Capital" Programme.

The key components of this programme include capacity building for policy-oriented economic research undertaken within the AERC research capacity building programme; institutional partnerships; technical skills enhancement workshops; research fellowships with national think tanks and international research centres of excellence; policy outreach and research dissemination as well as collaborative research project on human capital development in Africa.

The Collaborative research project on ‘Human Capital Development in Africa’ sought to generate evidence on the challenges of building human capital for accelerated inclusive development as well as address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDM). In addition, this collaborative research project focused on policy reforms that would enable Africa’s young people to grow up with optimal health and equipped with the right skills to compete in the digitizing global economy.

I know that this project involved both framework papers and country case studies. And the framework papers investigated broad, and crosscutting issues around human capital development to improve the capability of the continent (and its policy makers) to confront human capital development challenges, and leverage the opportunities they present, as it confronts its development challenges. While the country case studies sought to inform policy makers and development practitioners on human capital development in Africa from the viewpoint of individual countries and/or sub-regions (or group of countries). All the outputs are meant to be put into policy to shape programme development across Africa countries moving forward.

To assist policy makers and other actors improve generation and management of knowledge on Africa’s human capital and address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDS), I know that the AERC main intention is to disseminate the findings from all these studies to senior African policy-makers through its flagship dissemination vehicle, which is this Senior Policy Seminar plus other events. I look forward to successful deliberations.

I thank you!

Keynote Speech by Hon. Eliud Owalo, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information Communications & Digital Economy

Honourable Ministers

Central Bank Governors

Members of Parliament

Ambassadors

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Special Advisors to Heads of State

The Executive Director of the African Economic Research Consortium

Heads of Academic and Research Institutions

Members of the Research Community

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst today and to be one to preside over the formal opening ceremony of this special event. It is the twenty fifth Senior Policy Seminar of the African Economic Research Consortium. Such memorable event provides a timely opportunity for African policy makers and scholars to address the opportunities and challenges in sight with regard to Africa's development.

But first of all, I would like to express my profound appreciation to the seminar organizers for choosing Nairobi as the venue for this very important meeting. It is my great pleasure to welcome each one of you to our beautiful country, with the sincere hope that your stay will be pleasant and productive.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The theme of the twenty fifth Senior Policy Seminar, 'Human Capital Development in Africa' is relevant in Kenya and the rest of Africa. We all know that sub-Saharan Africa scores the lowest of all the world's regions on Human Capital Index. Coupled with the fact that Africa has the fastest growing and most youthful population in the world, the continent faces demographic challenges as its population of young people continue to increase.

That human capital is critical for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in Africa cannot therefore be gain-said. Human capital affects economic growth, but also helps to develop an economy by expanding the knowledge and skills of its people. The level of economic growth driven by consumer spending and business investment determines the amount of skilled labour needed. Thus, investing in workers has had a track record of creating better employment conditions in economies throughout the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Protecting, improving, and increasing investment in our human capital is fundamental to achieving the structural transformation of our economies. We should therefore be committed to closing the human capital development gap in the continent. This will of course involve significant investments to strengthen social safety nets and food security, as well as increased spending on education, including creating Centres of Excellence. In health, we need to make substantial investments to address shocks such as pandemics while improving the quality of services provided to populations and national data collection systems that will track progress in human capital.

In most countries, human capital determines the rate of development, economic, technological, and scientific progress and this leads to more innovations in the areas of production and other related activities. We all know that innovation leads to more growth, and in turn human capital creates the ability to absorb new technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am aware, that the mission of AERC is to strengthen local capacity for guiding public policymaking and this requires the availability of qualified and proactive professional

economists who need to remain independent and objective in dealing with such matters. As a way of meeting its objective, AERC offers opportunities for African economists and researchers to carry out research and to network with their counterparts in other regions as a way of developing their skills in academic and policymaking institutions in African countries.

Evidently, the importance of local capacity and research arising from local realities cannot be over-emphasized. Too often decisions on policy and the future of Africa have been based on information from other continents. By building local capacity, AERC is taking a lead in identifying factors that will contribute to growth and poverty reduction to address the problems our economies face in ways that make sense for us in the continent, with a view of a brighter future for our people.

Over the years, AERC has amassed a wealth of knowledge through its research activities. In this regard, I commend AERC for devoting time and resources to share this knowledge, particularly the policy research findings with policy makers and economists in the continent once every year through the Senior Policy Seminars.

I know that previous seminars have addressed various key issues like governance; macroeconomic policies; financial sector reforms, regional integration; fragility of growth; agriculture and food policies; Covid-19 and its implications for African economies among others, but what is very significant is that these seminars have informed policy makers about the latest developments in economic policy research, provided a forum for sharing of experiences, and promoted a closer relationship between researchers and policy makers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to know that this seminar will be graced by the participation of senior policy makers representing over forty African countries. Amongst these high-ranking government officials are ministers, governors of central banks, permanent secretaries, ambassadors, a queen, and special advisers to heads of state. Evidently, the seminar will be a haven of fruitful discussions as you all exchange knowledge, experiences, and ideas in your deliberations over the next two days. The outcome, I believe will consist of policy implications and recommendations of policy actions that will guide the continent to a bright and fruitful future.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank the AERC once again as the conveners of this very important meeting, and the researchers and participating policy makers for making time to share and exchange experiences on human capital development in the continent. As you participate in shaping the future of our economies and our people, I do wish you all very fruitful deliberations and look forward with great anticipation to receiving the conclusions of your discussions.

With these few remarks, ladies, and gentlemen, it is my great honour and pleasure to declare this twenty fifth Senior Policy Seminar officially opened!!

Session 1

A Life-Cycle, Economy-Wide Framework for Human Capital in Africa

Session chair:	Hon. Bangasi J. Bakosoo , <i>Minister for Public Service & Human Resource Development, South Sudan</i>
Presenters:	Prof. Lant Pritchett , <i>Harvard University, USA</i>
Discussant:	Dr. Adam Mugume , <i>Executive Director, Bank of Uganda</i>

This overall work has three parts. Part I argues that the existing paradigm in discussions of the acquisition of human capital has been focused on the drive to universal schooling and expanding access and grade attainment. This focus has been quite successful. The expansion of schooling in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) over the last decades has been impressively rapid in percentage growth terms much faster than other regions of the world, because SSA at political independence began far behind most other regions. However, the paradigm needs to shift as “invest in human capital”—which implicitly focuses on the acquisition of valued skills—has mostly been treated as equivalent of “spend on school” and this conceptual elision has produced very mixed results on learning and the creation of cognitive skills, which were, and are, taken to be an important goal of schooling.

This segment therefore focuses on some facts about schooling and learning with an emphasis on both the question of whether (i) “sub-Saharan Africa” has been distinctive as a region and (ii) the heterogeneity across SSA both in sub-regions and across countries. The conclusion is that there needs to be a shift away from the crude “accumulationist” model of “invest in human capital” as exclusively (i) more years spent in school and (ii) more spent on school. “Invest” in human capital must mean (i) acquisition of valued skills, capabilities, dispositions and (ii) effective spending. This implies three major changes in the research paradigm: (i) stop using “year of schooling” as the major “outcome” to be pursued, (ii) stop using a naïve “education production function” to evaluate impact of inputs towards a systems approach and (iii) as part of that, work towards a more realistic positive model of the politics of learning.

Part II proposes a life-cycle approach as an overall framing of the issue of human capital in Africa. In this life-cycle approach we propose two basic periods, one the “accumulation” phase and two the “utilization” phase. The accumulation phase divides the period of “conception/birth to adulthood” into sub-periods and transitions (e.g., first 1000 days, starting school, primary to secondary) decisions that affect human capital accumulation. This raises a distinctive set of questions in each period. The second basic period is of “human capital utilization (and continued acquisition) which is, in the jargon of economists, the much longer period of human life from “youth-to-adulthood to old age/Cap T.” This section starts with the “school to work” transition and the very tricky and differential across individuals in the “blend” or transitional ages from say, age 15 to 25 and onward into career paths, job transitions, etc. What is very different about these periods (and their sub-periods) is to a large extent to “policy and programmatic” tools and levers for improving outcomes and their modes of engagement and contact with the child and the relative mix of engagement in three broad classes of “institutions” (either “social”, “state/government” and “economic.”)

In particular, a human capital in Africa project should acknowledge the very important role in human capital of the overall ways in which the capabilities and competencies that augment human capital is gained when young (and these are across the array of both “soft” and “hard” skills, competencies, values, dispositions, attitudes, traits) are then how these individual capabilities are embedded productively (or not) in various roles as adults: parents, community leaders, citizens, workers, entrepreneurs, political leaders, thought leaders, etc. That is, “Human Capital in Africa” should include both how human capital is formed, developed, and created in Africa but also how that human capital is deployed, further shaped, and utilized in Africa to allow individuals to promote their well-being, that of their families, communities, cities, regions, and countries.

Part Three addresses the “utilization” of human capital. Part One is primarily about the acquisition of capabilities in youth and in particular acquisition of cognitive skills in formal K-12 schooling. Part Two extends that to include both before K-12 and also after. The argument is that the challenges Africa faces are at least as much in “utilization” as in the “accumulation” phase and, without improvements in the “utilization”—how productively labor and human capital are deployed in the economy—further progress in accumulation might be of limited value (if not, one might fret, counter-productive).

This in turn suggests a shift in the research away from the simple “accumulationist” views of human capital as represented by a simple aggregates of “factors” of “capital” and “human capital” in growth models like the Solow/Swann model and expand research into the connections between measures and types of human capital and the deeper determinants of the evolution of economic productivity. We cannot ignore that the main reason human capital is low in Africa is because the human capital is embedded in people who work in Africa.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time for research into human capital in Africa. The reigning paradigm for the last 50 years or so in global education has been to conflate “invest in human capital” with “spend on school.” This has brought about the paradox of the combination of very rapid expansion in the access, enrollment, and grade attainment and hence much more schooling, but with generally low (and, on new evidence, secularly falling) levels of learning.

The paradigm has shifted so that it is increasingly recognized that the future of “invest in human capital” has to focus on the creation of valued skills (and these skills are of personal, community, social and economic value; this is not reducing learning to only what is valued instrumentally in a market while in school. This shift in the overall paradigm requires shifts in the priorities for research about basic schooling and education and we have outlined three: (i) a shift to the use of “output” and “outcome” measures that are not just “time served” but “human capital gained”; (ii) away from an attention on proximate determinants, particularly “thin inputs” to the system level, to put attention on the “why” and “how” and the realities of implementation, how the proximate determinants of the proximate determinants structure endogenous choices and outcomes; and (iii) to an explicit consideration of the politics of learning and an explicit rejection of the naïve use of “normative as positive” as a basis for “policy recommendations” and the formation of better models of why governments do what they do in the domain of basic education.

Session 2

Human Capital Investments and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa: Fertility, Early Life Human Capital, and Schooling Investments

Session chair:	H. E. Dr. Kheswar Jankee , <i>Ambassador, Embassy of Mauritius in Russia</i>
Presenter:	Prof. Jere R. Behrman , <i>Department of Economics, University of Pennsylvania, USA</i>
Discussant:	Dr. Sherillyn Raga , <i>Overseas Development Institute (ODI), UK</i>

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is exceptional among the major world regions with regard to its experiences on human capital and human fertility, which has important implications for economic growth. Schooling is the form of human capital on which empirical literature has focused most. Schooling progress in SSA has lagged behind other world regions, and SSA now comes in last place in average schooling attainment (Barro and Lee, 2013). SSA also lags in terms of most other human-capital indicators. SSA is the only major region with a total fertility rate (TFR) in excess of four children per woman, the result of later and slower fertility declines (UNDESA, 2019). Largely due to this high fertility, the UN projects that it will become the world's most populous region by the end of the century. Within the standard quantity-quality fertility model, SSA's exceptionalism in terms of human capital investments and in terms of human fertility are not independent, but likely to be interconnected.

A major contribution of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) collaborative research project on human capital and growth in Africa is to adopt a much broader view than many previous studies on what constitutes human capital and what are the channels through which human capital might work. This paper summarizes two of the project's papers that adopt aspects of this broader perspective and the implications for policies with respect to some important components of how human capital might affect economic growth in SSA: "Fertility Change and Human Capital Growth in Africa" by Tom Vogl (2021) and "Early Life Human Capital Investments in SSA" by Jere R. Behrman and Claudia Vazquez (Behrman and Vazquez, 2021).

Vogl's paper seeks to document recent fertility and human capital, in particular schooling trends in SSA, shed light on their interlinkages, and identify key questions for their future trajectories, starting with the framework of the quality-quantity fertility model. Within an aggregated production function increased human capital for women may impact output growth by reducing the number of labourers in the children's generation and increasing their human capital with multiple impacts on growth.

Behrman and Vazquez (2021) focus on early life human capital investments in the pre-school lifecycle stage, which are particularly important because of the rapid physical and neurological developments that occur in this lifecycle stage that lay the foundation for and often have critical dynamic complementarities with subsequent human capital investments in the school ages and beyond (Black et al., 2021; Ritcher et al., 2019; Black et al., 2017; Engle et al., 2011; Cunha et al., 2010 and Heckman, 2006). Support for early life human capital development needs to be multidimensional, as recognized explicitly in the WHO/UNICEF (Black et al., 2021; and WHO/UNICEF, 2018).

Nurturing Care Framework, with its five (5) components pertaining to: learning, health, nutrition, responsive interactions, and safety and security. This support in early life typically comes primarily from families, but increasingly with children's ages in interaction with broader environments, institutions, and policies (Black et al., 2021). Currently, however, ~250 million children under five (5) years of age in Low-and-Middle Income Countries (LMICs), including over 116 million in SSA, are estimated to be at risk of not developing their potential because of inadequate support for their development (Black et al., 2017; Ritcher et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2016).

The Behrman and Vazquez (2021) article focuses on three general dimensions of support for human capital development of SSA children in this critical pre-school lifecycle stage: nurturing care through age five, nutrition through age five but particularly before age two, and pre-primary programmes generally for ages three to five. These are not the only dimensions of support for children in this lifecycle stage, but they encompass three important dimensions of such support for which a fair amount of evidence exists in LMICs generally, and for which more research is needed for SSA.

Early life human capital, such as nutritional and cognitive and socioemotional development in the first years of life, has been increasingly emphasized as critical for human capital development, with impacts on economic growth when the children become adults through the multiple channels in the aggregate production function.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Improving data collection and administrative records: To understand what the situation is regarding fertility, early life human capital investments and schooling in SSA and what are likely to be high priority policy areas, good data are essential. Some important characteristics of good data include: representativeness (either covering the whole relevant population or representative subsamples of the relevant population); timeliness so that problems can be investigated or addressed without great delays; coverage of individual, familial and service-provider characteristics (including the quality of services);

covering data on costs and those necessary to estimate impacts; and, for some purposes, longitudinal data in which individuals and/or service providers are followed to ascertain dynamic patterns and results. There are costs, of course, for collecting high-quality data. But the potential gains in terms of better understanding and better policy designs are considerable. Such data are likely to have substantial public-goods components that would lead to inefficient data collection if left to private markets, so that public-sector support is likely to be essential for assuring adequate collection of such data.

Allocate resources to early life and fertility-related investments that reflect the apparently relatively high rates of return to those investments: Based on the reviews and the COI estimates above, there are some potentially high-return investments in reproductive health and early life that merit serious consideration in SSA, including in fertility regulation, pre-and-post natal maternal and infant care, early life nutrition, early life stimulation and nurturing care, and pre-primary programmes. Though the evidence is limited, it is perceived that such private investments are constrained by imperfections in capital and information markets that are particularly severe for poorer members of society. Thus, such investments may be desirable both from an efficiency and a pro-poor distributional perspective, and from a human rights perspective. It would seem that the expected rates of return in many cases are likely to be high in comparison with many alternative uses of resources. But it is important that good examples from other contexts not be followed blindly, but that they be adapted to the particular contexts of particular SSA countries and be carefully monitored and evaluated, perhaps on pilot project basis through sequentially randomly rolling-out new programmes and adjusting or abandoning them if monitoring and evaluation suggests that is appropriate. The focus on improving access should not neglect the dimensions of quality and equity. While Vogl (2021) does not present estimates of the returns to investments to enhance fertility control and women's schooling, the associations that he presents suggest that the rates of returns to such investments might be fairly high, and therefore consideration should be given to whether such investments might be warranted in addition to investments in early life human capital.

Lessen or eliminate barriers to females exploiting their full potential: Formal or informal barriers to women exploiting their full potential in education, labour markets and other activities are likely to reduce incentives to reduce fertility and to invest in females' human capital in early life and thereafter. Therefore reducing, or better yet, eliminating such barriers is likely to lead to greater productivity, greater efficiency, and greater equality, in part through inducing reduced fertility and in part through inducing more investments in females' human capital over their life course.

Coordination across sectors and stakeholders: Reproductive health and early childhood development are multidimensional by nature and services from different sectors need to be integrated and well-coordinated. However, in many countries, relevant functions are allocated to different ministries, such as for health, education, and welfare. Inadequate coordination is likely to lead to inefficiencies since different relevant decisions are made by different individuals facing different constraints. Therefore, coordinating mechanisms may need to be developed, such as inter-ministerial committees focusing on child

development broadly and with high-level political mandates. If the programme is at scale, coordination between different levels of government is also important, as some functions typically fall to the national government (for example, the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms and guidelines, monitoring, and evaluation) and others remain in local administrations (provision of services, hiring and training staff). Budget stability and programme institutionalization (for example by law or other norms) are critical for the coordination schemes to consolidate and evolve successfully.

Incentives for good decisions by governmental officials and individuals in private entities: Governments and other entities in economies are large, complicated institutions with multiple decision makers facing varied constraints. Therefore, it is important that the processes in which these institutions and the individuals in them make decisions are as transparent as possible. Also, it is important that these institutions and the individuals in them face incentives, whether in monetary form or in terms of recognition or in terms of longer-run access to resources, to enhance the achievement of societies' objectives to increase welfare by enhancing efficiency and obtaining distributional goals.

Session 3

Human Capital Accumulation in Africa: Drivers, Consequences, and Way Forward

Session chair:	Hon. Kobygda Larba Issa , Ministry of Economy, Finance and Development, Burkina Faso
Presenter:	Prof. Germano Mwabu , <i>Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, Kenya</i>
Discussant:	Prof. Olu Ajakaiye , <i>African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building, Nigeria</i>

The Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region has a young population and most people in the labor force are working, but poor (Fields, 2000). The poorer African nations lag behind in the formation of human capital, which in this paper is restricted to the accumulation of health and education stocks. The wage returns to job experience are generally low in SSA, suggesting that workers in the region do not benefit as much from the on-the-job-training as in comparable regions, such as Latin America and South Asia. Some studies suggest that education human capital, enhanced by technology or technical knowledge (Papadavid et al., 2021) are key to growth in SSA. In a similar vein, Behrman et al. (2017), demonstrate that higher wages and agricultural incomes are driven by accumulation of education capital rather than by nutrition or physical strength (*brawn*), while also showing that child health improves labor productivity in adult life but via its effects on schooling and learning.

The determinants and effects of human capital accumulation (HCA) are well studied (see, e.g., Schultz and Strauss, 2008). However, little is known about latent constraints to HCA, such as the intention-action gaps and wedges. Equally lacking is evidence on policies to address these hidden constraints (Leonard, 2021). Furthermore, systematic information regarding effects of HCA on inequality and shared prosperity has been documented only in a few countries in SSA (Epo et al., 2021) but the mechanisms behind the effects generally remain unknown. The paper makes a small step towards addressing these issues, especially in the formation of education and health human capital in sub-Saharan Africa drawing mainly on recent AERC research (Pritchett, 2021), Lucas (2023), and on a small number of studies outside the AERC work (see, e.g., Pritchett, 2001; Schultz and Strauss, 2008).

Takeaways

The health index for the five Sub-Saharan African countries in the Epo et al. (2021) study is 78% of its upper bound. Interestingly, for SSA as a whole, the life expectancy in the region in 2021 was 60.1 years or about 71% of the upper bound, i.e., 85 years (UNDP, 2022). However, achievements in the area of education are less impressive. The education enrollment ratio for the five-country sample during the period, 1970-90, was 26% of its upper bound (Epo et al., 2021). Again, the SSA as a whole (based on the Barro-Lee dataset) the region's schooling level for the period – 1960-85 – averaged 2.67 years (Pritchett, 2001) relative to a maximum of 15-18 years. By 2021, schooling in SSA had nearly doubled to six years, but this amounted to a mere 33.3% of its upper bound (UNDP, 2022). Thus, SSA region has a long way to go before reaching its education capital frontier, which currently, is the number of years it takes an individual to obtain a master's degree. The distance is even longer, if learning achievements are considered.

Foreign direct investments are strong drivers of both health and education stocks in Sub-Saharan Africa. The association between schooling and learning in the region is low but positive. On this point, it is demonstrated that “broadly, countries with more quantity of schooling also have more learning, but the relationship is not purely linear. Some countries deliver more learning for each additional year of education”. And globally, Singapore has the highest return to a year of schooling, while Kenya has the highest return in the African region.

Health service utilization improves health (reduces probability of sickness reporting in the general population), but not in all countries (Mwabu, 2022). Household survey datasets show a strong positive correlation between human capital formation and household income, but this evidence is based on a tiny sample of countries. The wage share of human capital in Sub-Saharan Africa is 26-38% relative to a share of 62-73% in developed economies (Pritchett, 2001), which indicates that the contribution of human capital to growth in SSA is far below its potential. Human capital accumulation is not enough for initiation and sustainability of high growth rates in Africa. In addition, complementary inputs, and incentives to stimulate full utilization of the available capital are needed.

The effects of equalization of human capital on poverty, inequality and shared prosperity are mixed but this evidence comes from a small and selective sample of countries. Under-performance of citizens and policymakers in human capital accumulation and in its utilization can be addressed using nudges, peer-based supervision, and short message service (SMS) – an electronic nudge. These kinds of nudges complement effort and other inputs in the production of human capital, especially in the restoration of health (Wagstaff et al., 2019) and in the recapturing of previous levels of learning, particularly after its erosion by pandemics and climate shocks.

The productivity of health and education systems are probably constrained more by motivation, supervision, and management problems than by lack of skilled staff or facilities. Moreover, policy mechanisms to ensure that health and education systems are equitable and fair in the process of accumulating human capital are lacking. As

a consequence, any high-quality services offered by these systems are generally inaccessible by the poor. There is little evidence in SSA on how these issues can be addressed.

In using foreign direct investment to accumulate human capital in Africa, account should be taken of the fact that the benefits of this investment critically depend on structures of national economies. The type of the investment inflow also determines the form of human capital accumulated. Spending on human capital accumulation should be guided by a return to schooling, e.g., learning, and by a return to health-service provision, e.g., a cure or prevention of illness or disease.

Managers of health and education systems need to develop nudging mechanisms to help both service providers and service users to cope with self-control problems as they engage in human capital formation activities. Nudges should be used to complement or supplement managerial, supervisory, and administrative tools, e.g., smoking bans, school rules, and financial incentives that can be used to make a difference in people's lives by implementing even small aspects of the existing government policies (Halpern, 2016). The designs of nudges for the top policy makers are complicated because these actors do not have supervisors, but the designs or nudges could be in-built into political processes through which they are appointed or into institutional structures under which they work.

In a plenary discussion of this paper, Professor Olu Ajakaiye distilled the takeaways from it in respect of the design and implementation of effective education and health policies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and highlighted the following:

- Firstly, human capital comprises the knowledge, learning and skills acquired via education, training, culture, and socialization, plus the health capital that people accumulate through better nutrition, quality medical care, routine vaccinations, ability to control disease pandemics, and engagement in good lifestyles.
- Secondly, utilization of the available human capital stocks, complemented by other factors of production enables individuals to realize their human potential as productive members of society, and thus helps them move towards the WHO's (1948) notion of health as a proxy for 'complete physical, mental and social well-being'.
- Consequently, there is need for African policy makers to:
 - Intensify and sustain provision of quality, affordable, accessible, and equitable healthcare services.
 - Improve the quality of primary education to maximize learning for each year of schooling.
 - Significantly increase primary and tertiary education attainments in order to meet the high-skill requirements for national and continental development agenda 2063 for a prosperous Africa, characterized by inclusive and sustainable high rate of growth.

- Increase availability of schools to enhance schooling in the general population, especially since schooling and learning are generally positively correlated (Pritchett, 2021; Lucas, 2023), and also since, availability promotes enrollment (Foster and Rosenzweig, 1996).
- However, the realization of the above potential benefits is not automatic, as a lot depends on the structure of African economies, ample and decent employment opportunities, especially for the youth, and an enabling environment for efficient and effective utilization of all the factors of production, not just the human capital.
- In particular, there is need to:
 - Seriously consider and address micro-level and workplace constraints to human capital formation.
 - Implement system-wide and economy-wide policies for ensuring that human capital development is targeted at meeting existing and emerging needs in all population deciles and geographic regions.
 - Implement demand driven human capital development strategies to ensure that the accumulated stock is efficaciously utilized and that its production is both cost-effective and equitable.
- Finally, although foreign direct investment has been shown to be an important driver of human capital accumulation in Africa, success in this area critically depends on:
 - Suitable local content activities and policies.
 - Well negotiated profit repatriation policies and practices.
 - Appropriate legal and institutional frameworks which protect all stakeholders.
 - Articulate and enforceable labor and property laws.
 - Peaceful and business friendly local environment.

Session 4

Education in Africa: Career Progressions, Gaps in Learning Outcomes, and Responding to the Learning Crisis

Session chair: **Dr. Wilson T. Banda**, Governor, Reserve Bank of Malawi
Presenters: **Prof. Adrienne Lucas & Dr. Gerald Ipapa**, Lerner College of Business & Economics, University of Delaware, USA
Discussant: **Dr. Elizabeth Nanziri**, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

Schooling and the development of human capital are essential contributions both to individuals' livelihoods and country-wide economic growth and development. In the mid-1990s, sub-Saharan Africa had a crisis of low enrollment rates with only 54% of primary school aged students in school in the lower- and middle-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The lack of schooling access, i.e., schooling quantity, has been replaced by a crisis of learning quality. As barriers to schooling have fallen, the primary school net enrollment rate is now over 80% (UNESCO 2019). Yet, in many cases schools are continuing to fail the children they are supposed to be serving by not imparting them with adequate knowledge to be successful. As an example, in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda about three-quarters of grade three students cannot read a simple sentence (World Bank 2018). This "learning crisis" of students being in school but not learning is acute. The scale of this problem was recognized and codified in Goal number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals' focus on "quality education" and not just number of years of schooling.

Gaps in Learning Outcomes

One of the challenges in understanding how to increase quality education is understanding the extent of the problem. Data on years of completed schooling are readily available across countries. A much more complicated issue is measuring actual learning. A second challenge is to understand the potential differences between what is stated in policy and what happens in practice. In "Two Big Gaps in the Supply of Human Capital," Noam Angrist and Stefan Dercon (AD henceforth) tackle both the quantity-quality gap (the difference between the time spent in school and the amount of knowledge learned) and the policy-practice gap (the difference between the policies as stated by the ministries of education and the actual services received by households).

The quantity-quality gap codifies that schooling and learning are not the same. Just because a child completes a year of school, that child might not have learned all the necessary competencies. Comparable data on the quantity of schooling, i.e., years of education, across countries are readily available from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS). The data on learning outcomes are more sparse. Angrist et al. (2021) harmonized data collected by twelve separate international tests from 2000 to 2017 across 164 countries – the country with the most coverage has data for only 10 years and some countries, e.g., Ethiopia, only have data for one year over the entire time span.

The schooling system that delivers the highest quality is Singapore. Within Africa, the country that has the highest learning return for each year of schooling is Kenya. The difference between the quality of schooling and the quantity of learning is the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. This difference can be thought of as the efficiency of the schooling sector – the amount of learning that students acquire for each year spent in school. When adjusted for learning acquired, the 8.2 median years of expected schooling in sub-Saharan Africa decreases by 3.3 full years to 4.9 years, a decrease of over 40%. In other words, children in sub-Saharan Africa are only getting about 60 percent of the learning that they should for each year that they spend in school.

The differences between countries within sub-Saharan Africa are wider for years of schooling than they are for LAYS, reflecting different levels of learning efficiency across countries within the same region. Broadly, countries with a greater quantity of schooling also have more learning but the relationship is not purely linear. Some countries deliver more learning for each additional year of education. Ghana, Indonesia, and Vietnam all have average expected attainment of about 12 years of schooling, yet their students score very differently on a common test, demonstrating differences in learning across the three countries. Ghana scores below what is considered minimum achievement. Vietnam scores over two standard deviations higher. Indonesia scores between the two. Other countries with test scores like Ghana's report about five years of schooling compared to Ghana's 12. At the same level of test scores as Indonesia are countries with expected years of schooling as low as 7 and as high as 13. Vietnam has test scores that are more like countries with 14 years of expected schooling.

Key Policy Messages

Across the three papers, a few key themes emerged.

1. Any solution to increase low student achievement needs to take a system-wide approach.
2. Solutions will need to involve not just the teachers and students but include stakeholders all the way up to the national level decision-makers.
3. Because of lack of systematic data collection, the full extent of the problem and any within and between country differences are unknown.
4. Data collection elucidated the learning crisis – better data collection on other actors in the system are needed to understand existing limitations and potential solutions.
5. Once collected, data also needs to be shared in meaningful ways to incite action.

Session 5

High Level Policy Panel

Session chair:

Her Royal Highness (HRH), Queen Nozizwe Mulela,
Kingdom of Eswatini

Panellists:

- **Dr. Rose Ngugi**, *Executive Director, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, (KIPPRA)*
- **Dr. Martha Muhwezi**, *Executive Director, FAWE*
- **Ms. Barbra Barungi**, *Managing Partner, Imara Africa*
- **H. E. Dr. Kheswar Jankee**, *Ambassador, Embassy of Mauritius in Russia*
- **Hon. Issa-Toure Salahaddine**, *Speaker of the National Assembly, Togo*
- **Prof. Ahoure Alban Alphonse E.** *Directeur, Centre for Economic and Social Research (CAPEC)*

Senior African Policy Makers Reaffirm the Critical Role of Human Capital for Development in Africa

At a Senior Policy Seminar held in Nairobi, Kenya on 29-30 March 2023, and hosted by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) focusing on the theme, “Human Capital Development in Africa,” senior policy makers from around the African continent adopted a declaration as an affirmation of their strong commitment to supporting human capital development for enhanced transformation of African economies.

Declaration

Nairobi, March 30, 2023

We African Senior Policy Makers assembled at the AERC Senior Policy Seminar,

Affirming that human capital—the education, skills, culture, gender, and health of a people—is crucial for development in African countries and—plays a pivotal role in the transformation of African economies,

Recognizing that sub-Saharan Africa scores the lowest of all the world’s regions on the World Bank’s Human Capital Index, a measurement of how well countries invest in the next generation of workers,

Further recognizing that there is improved households access to health care, school enrolment and amenities and tools to enhance quality of life, however, the goal of human capital and quality of life still lags significantly behind,

Commending that even though access to sources of human capital in Africa is still low, it has increased significantly over the past two decades,

Noting that human capital development is critical for building sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth in Africa, and that investment in human beings for improved social and economic outcomes in future – through quality education, health care nutrition, jobs, and skills – is vital to ending extreme poverty and creating more inclusive societies,

Further noting that developing human capital in Africa requires a massive and coordinated effort to strengthen the quantity, efficiency, and impact of investments in

people. Thus, the need to facilitate regional and country-owned policy reforms, action plans and cross-country learning,

Mindful of the reality of key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDM),

Also mindful of the need to address policy reforms that would enable Africa's young people to grow up with optimal health and equipped with the right skills to compete in the digital global economy,

Appreciating the urgent need for human capital development policy reforms and institutional innovation to overcome these obstacles, with an emphasis on stronger implementation,

Acknowledging the importance of tackling problems related to human capital development and how to improve the capability of the continent and its policy makers to confront human capital development challenges, and leverage the opportunities they present, as it confronts its development challenges,

Recommendations

1. **Affirm** to assist policy makers and other actors to improve generation and management of knowledge on Africa's human capital to address key constraints on human capital accumulation, and respond effectively to these challenges,
2. **Command** the critical role of African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and its partner institutions, in capacity building for promoting evidence-based policies as well as generating the knowledge basis for decision making on such key economic policy issues as human capital,
3. **Take note** of the multiple overlapping global crises – including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-induced natural disasters, and regional armed conflicts, which have underscored the need to protect and bolster human capital in the overarching effort to save lives, promote well-being, and safeguard future productivity,
4. **Confirm** to the leveraging of technology and innovations in projects to further develop human capital as well as support policy reforms to overcome legal and regulatory constraints,
5. **Further Confirm** to undertake consultations within our own Governments, both national and sub-national, to explore the scope for advancing research to strengthen the knowledge base and the demand side of human capital,
6. **Call for** renewed efforts towards the implementation of the Abidjan Declaration of July 15, 2021, that established three priorities for Africa: (i) human capital improvement, (ii) job creation through private sector development policies, and (iii) economic recovery.

ANNEX A

Seminar Papers

- Session 1: ***A Lifecycle, Economy-Wide Framework for Human Capital in Africa***
by **Prof. Lant Pritchett**, Harvard University, USA
- Session 2: ***Human Capital Investments and Economic Growth in Africa*** by
Prof. Jere R. Behrman, Department of Economics, University of Pennsylvania, USA
- Session 3: ***Human Capital Accumulation in Africa: Drivers, Consequences, and Way forward*** by **Prof. Germano Mwabu**, Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, Kenya
- Session 5: ***Education in Africa: Career Progressions, Gaps in Learning Outcomes and Responding to the Learning Crisis*** by **Prof. Adrienne Lucas & Dr. Gerald Ipapa**, Lerner College of Business & Economics, University of Delaware, USA

ANNEX B

Seminar Participants

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
1	Fraciah Kagu	FKagu@fawe.org	F	FAWE	Director	Kenya
2	Umar Aminu Hussain	uahussaini.eco@buk.edu.ng	M	Bayero University, Kano	Lecturer	Nigeria
3	Wasiu Adekunle	wasiuademola10@gmail.com	M	The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)	Economist	Nigeria
4	Engdawork Mekonnen	engdaworkmekonnen@gmail. com	M	Addis Ababa Housing Development Corporation	Director	Ethiopia
5	Tiruwork liyew	tirliyew@yahoo.com	F	Ethiopian chamber of commerce	manager	Ethiopia
6	Hughes Dimka	hdimka@hopewell.com.ng	M	Hopewell Solutions Services	Project research	Nigeria
7	Refileo Tlali	tlali.rifilo17@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Lesotho
8	Gonche Girma	gonchegirma90@gmail.com	M	Ethiopian Forestry Development	Researcher	Ethiopia
9	Samuel Oyeke	samueloyeke@yahoo.com	M	JOUST	Lecturer	Kenya
10	Kambo Martial Atse	raje.c.edu@gmail.com	M	African Network of Young Researchers	Coordinator	Cote d'Ivoire

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
11	William Brafu-Insaidoo	winsaidoo@ucc.edu.gh	M	University of Cape Coast	Lecturer	Ghana
12	Josua Kevin Foto Mbo	josuekevinf@gmail.com	M	Ministere de l'enseignement supérieur	Cadre suparieur	Cameroon
13	Eric Ioal Fofiri Nzossie	fofiri_eric@yahoo.fr	M	Université de Ngaoundara / Ministre de l'Environnement	Enseignant-chercheur	Cameroon
14	Benoit Malan	malanben@yahoo.fr	M	IUA - Abidjan	Assistant Professor	Côte d'Ivoire
15	Ernest Molua	emolua@yahoo.com	M	Centre for Independent Development Research, Cameroon	Professor	Cameroon
16	Marius Achi	achimarius0@gmail.com	M	Blommfield Investment Corporation	Senior Economist	Congo, Democratic Republic of the
17	William Ekere	wekere@gmail.com	M	Makerere	Researcher	Uganda
18	Jeanne Gertrude Manda	jmandayasse@gmail.com	F	CERAPE	Chercheuse	Congo
19	Malicha Hargesa	malichahargesa@gmail.com	M	Borana University	Registrar and Alumni Directorate	Poland
20	Fred Amonya	Fred.Amonya@btinternet.com	M	Lyciar	Advisor	United Kingdom
21	Molly Oggoo	mollyoggoz@gmail.com	F	Institute for Law and Environmental Governance	Programme officer	Kenya
22	Aboubacry Kane	aboubacry1.kane@ucad.edu.sn	M	Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar	Researcher	Senegal

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
23	Herbert Wamalwa	wnyukuri@uonbi.ac.ke	M	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Kenya
24	Jonathan Omuchesi	anganij@gmail.com	M	The Catholic University of Eastern Africa	Lecturer	Kenya
25	Sorel Viessoh	smvisssoh@gmail.com	M	MAEP	Service Etudes et Statistique	Benin
26	Stacy Wambua	stacynwambua@gmail.com	F	Managelytical	Founder	Kenya
27	Christelle Akpo	akpochristelle@yahoo.fr	F	UFHB	Researcher	Benin
28	Martha Muhwezi	MMuhwezi@fawe.org	F	FAWE	Senior Researchers	Kenya
19	Marietta Mpingasa	mmpingasa@gmail.com	F	Reserve Bank of Malawi	Senior Economist	Malawi
30	Masentile Lekhoaba	nkoanealways@gmail.com	F	Government Ministry	Director	Lesotho
31	Pascal Ikechukwu	saintinopasca@gmail.com	M	Greatness electrical store	Manager	Nigeria
32	Yidnekhachew Jember	yember5@gmail.com	M	Woldia University	School Dean	Ethiopia
33	Jackie Karatunga	jackiekaratunga@ugandabankers.org	F	Uganda Bankers' Association	Research Analyst	Uganda
34	Christian Aboua	christy.aboua@yahoo.fr	M	CIRE Unit for the Analysis of Economic Policies CAPEC	Researcher	Ghana
35	Sodiq Abdulazeel	a.osodiq@gmail.com	M	GT Bank Nigeria	Director	Nigeria
36	Coumba Ka	coumbaka01@gmail.com	M	Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar	Doctorante	Senegal
37	Afionia Mbuthia	nyambura.afionia@ku.ac.ke	F	Kenyatta university	Lecturer	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
38	Michael Nyong	nyongmike@gmail.com	M	Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar	Researcher	Senegal
39	Jacob Nunoo	jacob.nunoo@ucc.edu.gh	M	University of Cape Coast	Lecturer	Ghana
40	Rael Onyango	r.aonyango@vunl.nl	F	Vrije Universiteit /Maastricht University	Research fellow	Kenya
41	Uchi Dominic	dominicuchi@gmail.com	M	Federal University Dutse, Nigeria	Researcher	Nigeria
42	Faith Iyoha	faith.iyoha@nesgroup.org	F	The Nigerian Economic Summit Group	Economist	Nigeria
43	Bhupendra Kumar	drbkradhe@gmail.com	M	Debre Tabor University Ethiopia	Professor	United Kingdom
44	Paul Okwi	pokwi@idrc.ca	M	IDRC	Senior Programme Specialist	Kenya
45	Kwabena Nkansah Darfor	kdarfor@ucc.edu.gh	F	University of Cape Coast	Lecturer/Researcher	Ghana
46	Rachel Njowe	rachelnjowe@gmail.com	F	University of Yaoundé II	Lecturer	Cameroon
47	Temesgen Hirko	teme.hirko@gmail.com	F	Addis Ababa University	Researcher	Ethiopia
48	Madina Guloba	mguloba@epicug.org	F	Economic Policy Research Centre	Senior Research Fellow	Uganda
49	Fuad Mohamed Abdullahi	fuaad.mcf@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation-Somalia	Head section of Research	Somalia
50	Nato Joe	jacobnato84@gmail.com	M	KIPRA	Research	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
51	Kelvin Kamunye	kamunyekariuki@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Kenya
52	Kumilachew Alamerie Mele	kalamerie@gmail.com	M	Policy Studies Institute	Researcher	France
53	Catherine Khakasa	ckkhakasa2@gmail.com	F	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Kenya
54	Martin Mandalu	mpmandalu@yahoo.com	M	Stella Maris Mtwara University College	Senior Lecturer	Tanzania
55	Idongesit Udoh	aidy8udoh@gmail.com	M	University of ibadan	Researcher	Nigeria
56	Assimou Gande	assimioug@gmail.com	M	Federal University of Technology,	Researcher	Nigeria
57	Abdulfatai Adedeffi	adedejabdulfatai@gmail.com	M	Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa	Research Associate	Nigeria
58	Michael Pasara	mtpasara@gmail.com	M	University of Zimbabwe	Snr Lecturer	Zimbabwe
59	Adane K. Bezzabih	dnhkassie@yahoo.com	M	Policy Studies Institute	Senior Researcher	Ethiopia
60	Denise Gisale Megnigan	megnigang@yahoo.fr	F	Institut Universitaire de Technologie FOTSO Victor	Enseignant	Cameroon
61	Zaitun Sunusi Bakabe	zaitunsunusi@gmail.com	F	Federal University Gashua	Graduate Assistant	Nigeria
62	Olanike Ojo	ojonikky@yahoo.com	F	Federal University of Technology	Senior Lecturer	Nigeria
63	Ewura Ewusie	ewura.ewusie@ucc.edu.gh	F	University of Cape Coast, Ghana	Lecturer	Ghana
64	Linet Arisa	arisalinet14@gmail.com	F	The Youth Enterprise Development Fund	Head of Market Support and Linkages	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
65	Kwizerwa Thierry	thiekwi@yahoo.fr	M	University of Burundi	Researcher	Burundi
66	Kajumba Mary Muheruzi	mkajumba@eprcug.org	F	EPRC	Research Associate	Uganda
67	Maria Mdachi	mtdachi@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Finance	Director	Tanzania
68	Lambert Rusoke	lambertrusoke@gmail.com	M	Uganda Revenue Authority	Risk Analyst	Kenya
69	Adrian Njoroge	annjoroge1@gmail.com	M	Self	Consultant	Kenya
70	Grace Kumchulesi	gracek78@yahoo.co.uk	F	National Planning Commission	Director for Development Planning	Malawi
71	John Gathiaka	gathiaka@uonbi.ac.ke	M	University of Nairobi	Senior Lecturer	Kenya
72	Chipo Mukonza	chiponyam@gmail.com	M	University of Stellenbosch	Senior Lecturer	South Africa
73	Alpha Oumar DIALLO	alphadjiguel@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Guinea
74	Vivianne Ngugi	vngugi@gmail.com	F	Margaret Kenyatta Institute, Kenya School of Government	Director, Public Communications	Kenya
75	Birtukan Asmare	woss2009@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Ethiopia
76	Mamadou Laye Ndoye	layebouder@hotmail.fr	M	Cheikh Anta Diop University	Lecturer	Senegal
77	Elamien Mohamed	elamienhassan@hotmail.com	M	Ministry of Agriculture	Advisor	Sudan
78	Kalo Julienne Millogo	millogokalejulienne@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Finance	Director	Burkina Faso
79	Christine Alupo	calupo@bou.orug	F	Bank of Uganda	Director	Uganda
80	Jean-Pierre memang ango	memangjeanpierre@yahoo.fr	M	University of Yaounde II-Soa	Researcher	Cameroon

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
81	Olabisi Olaniran-Akinyele	oluwasekemisemilore@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Nigeria
82	Zerihun Melaku	Zermel57@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Planning and Development	Team Leader	Italy
83	Neme Nalewazou Braly	natacha.braly@gmail.com	F	United Nations Development Programme	Director	Togo
84	Eseosa Sowemimo	eseosaid@gmail.com	F	University of Benin	Lecturer	Nigeria
85	Deborah Ayebare	deborahayebare@npa.go.ug	F	National Planning Authority	Director	Uganda
86	Paul Owino	Paulotung@gmail.com	M	International Conference on the Great Lakes Regio	Director Economic Development and Regio	Burundi
87	Patrice Ongono	Ongonopatrick@yahoo.fr	M	University of Yaounde II	Lecturer researcher	Cameroon
88	Dagmawe Menelek	dagmawemelekl@gmail.com	M	University of Warsaw	Professor	Poland
89	Japheth Aviti	jawiti@ionbi.ac.ke	M	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Kenya
90	Worku Alemayehu	walemayehu@gmail.com	M	Tohoku University	Professor	Japan
91	Patrick Mafabi	kyambij@gmail.com	M	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology	Head Planning and Statistics	Uganda
92	John Kobiss	kobiss13@yahoo.fr	M	Ministere de l'économie des finances et de la prospective	Directeur	Mali
93	James Peprah	jpeprah@ucc.edu.gh	M	University of Cape Coast	Dean	Ghana
94	Ibrahim Abba	ibab20032002@yahoo.fr	M	Ministry of ICT	Director	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
95	Roberto Tibana	tibanairj@gmail.com	M	Analiticar-RJT	Founder	Mozambique
96	Gnoudentho Silue	silgnouduen@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Cote d'Ivoire
97	Seth Avusuglo	sethavusuglo@gmail.com	M	University of Ghana, Department of Economics	Researcher	Ghana
98	Yasin Temam	yasintemam5@gmail.com	M	Haramaya University	Lecturer	Ethiopia
99	Mohammed Yelwa	yelwamhmm@gmail.com	M	University of Benin, Nigeria	Lecturer	Nigeria
100	George Oyuke	georgeoyuke060226@daystar. ac.ke	M	Daystar University	MSc Economics Student	Kenya
101	Yonas Bahta	Bahtay@ufs.ac.za	M	University of the Free State	Professor	South Africa
112	Bernadette Dia Kamgnia	bdkamgnia@gmail.com	F	CAPEC	Senior Researcher	France
113	Joseph Reja Gladys	waiwaireja@gmail.com	F	University of Nairobi	PhD student	Kenya
114	Kenneth Leonard	kenneth@umd.edu	M	University of Maryland	Professor	United States
115	Philippe Kpenou	isotispk@gmail.com	M	ISORIS, Investment Banking & Management Consulting	Managing Partner	France
116	Uzochukwu Ikeagu	uzoikeagu@gmail.com	M	Enugu state University science and technology	Researcher	Nigeria
117	Rodatine Flore Monney	r.monney@gmail.com	F	University of Benin	Researcher	Cote d'Ivoire
118	Dakpoula DA	dakpouleda@hotmail.fr	M	Universite Norbert Zongo	Researcher	Burkina Faso
119	Wonders Ebimotimimowei	drwondersng@gmail.com	M	UNCTAD	Nigerian Focal Point	Nigeria
120	Alihasen Yacob	debiisoalihasen28@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Ethiopia

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
121	Barthalamy Biao	barthbiao@gmail.com	M	Université Africaine de Développement Coopératif	Recteur	Benin
122	Pascaline Njungoh Fozao	pascalineza@gmail.com	F	University of Yaounde II	Researcher	Cameroon
123	Helen Filreyohannes	helenfilreyohannes@gmail. com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Ethiopia
124	Ithiel Munyaradzi Maveser	mavesere@gmail.com	M	University of Zimbabwe	Senior Lecturer	Zimbabwe
125	Grace Mwangi	gewmwangi@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Education	Director	Kenya
126	Rebecca Meki	mekirebecca@gmail.com	F	National Government of Kenya	Economist	Kenya
127	Rashid Atugonza	kanugisarashid@gmail.com	M	Education policy Review Commission	Research Analyst	Uganda
128	Mouhamadou Bamba Di sn	Bamba.diop@economie.gouv. sn	F	Ministry of Economy	General Manager	Senegal
129	Celestino Delo	celestinodeo@gmail.com	M	Angola Institute of Public Policy	Director	Angola
130	Ewi A	aewinyu@yahoo.com	F	UN	PMER	Kenya
131	Irangabiye Pitie Nessy Ro	prossirang@gmail.com	M	CCEM	Digital Product Manager	Burundi
132	Mongo Lugendo	frangeansala@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Congo
133	Idowu Kolawole	kolawoleid@gmail.com	M	Institute of Economic Research of Africa (IERA)	Senior Researcher	Botswana

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
134	Dieynaba NIASS	dielynabaniass2102@gmail.com	F	University of Cheikh Anta DIOP	Ph.D	Senegal
135	Aenia Nkalinga Pondo	eniacosme@gmail.com	F	Assembly of Republic of Mozambique and Eduardo Mondlane	Advisor	Mozambique
136	John Masasabi	masasabi.john@ku.ac.ke	M	Kenyatta University	Senior Lecturer & Formerly the Ag Director	Kenya
137	Mwimba Chewe	mwimbachewewe235@yahoo.com	F	University of Zambia	Lecturer	Zambia
138	Birhan kebede	birhan27@yahoo.com	M	Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics	Senior Researcher	Ethiopia
139	Beatrice Omo-Ikirodah	bomolikirodah@gmail.com	F	University of Benin, Nigeria	Lecturer II	Nigeria
140	Abiodun Olusola Omotayo	omotayoabiodun777@gmail.com	M	Northwest University	Senior Lecturer	South Africa
141	Jeremiah Olu	OluJerry1@gmail.com	M	University of Benin	Professor	Nigeria
142	Hamdeeya Yenzoo Abdulai	hamdeeya.abdulai@upsamail.edu.gh	F	University of Professional Studies	Lecturer	Ghana
143	Hannington Musimenta	hannington.musimenta@npa.go.ug	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Uganda

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
144	Ted Diebo	dieboted@yahoo.fr	M	UREC/CERAPE/CRAED/UWB	RESEARCHER - LECTURER	Congo, Democratic Republic of the
145	Farayola Charles	walecharless@gmail.com	M	Agricultural And Rural Management Institute	Head of General Management Division	Nigeria
146	Dale Mudenda	Dalemu7@gmail.com	M	University of Zambia	Lecturer	Zambia
147	Temitope Olalude	faronbitemitope@gmail.com	F	University of Ibadan	Doctoral candidate	Nigeria
148	Khemil Gobin	kgobin@edgeconsultingltd.com	M	The Edge Consulting	Director	Mauritius
149	Pitso Tsense	tsense@yahoo.co.uk	M	Food Management Unit	Deputy Director	Lesotho
150	Etse Yawo Dzakpa	etseyawo.dzakpa@ucad.edu.sn	M	WASCAL-UCAD	Lecturer	Senegal
151	Atwiiine U.G.A	atwiinefrank99@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Energy and mineral development Uganda	Research Assistant	Uganda
152	Sagire Wambura	wsmarwa.tz@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Finance	Director	Tanzania
153	Joseph Manzyera	manzverajoseph@gmail.com	M	University of Ghana	PhD Candidate	Zimbabwe
154	Mosobalaje Olaitan	balogunrisikat2013@gmail.com	M	University of Benin	Senior Lecturer	Nigeria
155	Mariama Sow	hadjakesso@gmail.com	F	IPAR	Researcher	Senegal

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
156	Obare James	james.obare@students.uonbi.ac.ke	M	University of Nairobi	Graduate student	Kenya
157	Martin Gideon	martinmulwa12@gmail.com	M	UN	economist	Kenya
158	Hezbon Awiti	akelloawitti@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Kenya
159	William Clifford Fety	fetyclifford@gmail.com	M	Egerton University	Researcher	Madagascar
160	Tadie Abate	tadm21@gmail.com	M	University of Gondar	Researcher and Lecturer	Ethiopia
161	Amos Ndiritu	ctechhub@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Kenya
162	Saheed Olayiwola	saheedolayiwola@yahoo.com	M	Federal University of Technology Akure	Senior lecturer	Nigeria
163	Abena Asomaning	abenaana@yahoo.co.uk	F	Ministry of Finance	Director	Ghana
164	josephine Umurerwa	j.umurerwa@brd.rw	F	Development Bank of Rwanda	Knowledge management and Technical	Rwanda
165	Bo Sjö	bo.sjo@liu.se	M	Ljusköping University	Associate Professor	Sweden
166	Medy Moatshe	mimoatshe@gov.bw	F	Ministry of Finance	Deputy Director	Botswana
167	Orapeling Matschediso	matshedisovaniila@gmail.com	M	University of Johannesburg	Master's Student	South Africa
168	Tsegaye Tadesse Mokonon	tsetad47@gmail.com	M	Fayaa integrated Development Organization (FIDO)	Program Manager	Kenya
169	Gadisa Muleta	gadisamuleta@gmail.com	M	Ethiopian Institute of Agriculture Research	Researcher	Ethiopia

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
170	Getahun Abebe Tewlute	getahunabebe08@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Ethiopia
171	Marcos Miguel	macamiguel3@gmail.com	M	Mozambique Revenue Authority	Legal Advisor	India
172	Stanley Ngugi	skriges@gmail.com	M	Ministry of ICT	Director	Kenya
173	Dominic Anarigide	anarigidedomy@gmail.com	M	University of Business and Integrated Development Studies	Researcher	Ghana
174	John Oko	makoukopey@gmail.com	M	Afrimonomics	Director	Kenya
175	Abbi Kedir	a.m.kedir@sheffield.ac.uk	M	University of Sheffield, UK	Associate Professor	United Kingdom
176	Weru Macharia	weru@realtimetranslatorsltd.com	M	Interpreter	Interpreter	Kenya
177	Kiamma Kariuki Bud	bukkiama83@gmail.com	M	WBC	Director	Kenya
178	Foday Kamara	fodaykamson@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Senior Economist	Kenya
179	Kefaa Simiyu	keffasimiyu@students.uonbi.ac.ke	M	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Kenya
180	Oloade Adewole	ololadegrace@yahoo.com	F	National Centre for Technology Management	Researcher	Nigeria
181	Yousoof Bouzir	yousefbouzir@gmail.com	M	JKUAT	Lecturer	Kenya
182	Daniel Dlamini	dlaminidv@uniswa.sz		Central Bank	Director	Eswatini
183	Sufian Abdel-Gadir	sufian@squ.edu.om	M	Sultan Qaboos University	Associate Professor in Economics	Oman

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
184	Isaac Kimunio	kimunio.isaac@ku.ac.ke	M	Kenyatta University	Lecturer	Kenya
185	Victor Murinde	vm10@soas.ac.uk	M	SOAS University of London	AXA Professor in Global Finance	UK
186	Marandtravy Marandtravy	naimacf@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Madagascar
187	Jacques Hakizimana	hakizimahajacques46@gmail.com	M	Universite Marien Ngouabi	Lecturer	Congo
188	Edward Batte Sennoga	edward.sennoga@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Kenya
189	Sarah Edewor	saradowe@yahoo.co.uk	F	University of Ibadan	Lecturer	Nigeria
190	Elmi Samatar	samatar2020@hotmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Ethiopia
191	Crispus Owiti	chris.owiti@gmail.com	M	Judicial Service Commission	Senior Legal Researcher	Kenya
192	Jorgen Levin	jorgen.levin@nai.uu.se	M	The Nordic Africa Institute	Senior Researcher	Sweden
193	Emilio Munene Gachoki	emiliomunene50@gmail.com	M	Equity Bank Kenya	Macroeconomic Modelling Analyst	Kenya
194	Pokou Edouard Abou	abou-pokou@ujlg.edu.ci	M	Universite Jean Lorougnon Guede	Lecturer	Cote d'Ivoire
195	S. Jamuna	jamunajelifones@gmail.com	F	Rashtriya Raksha University	Principal Investigator	India
196	Germano Mwabu	gmwabu@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Professor	Kenya
197	Abdillahi Nedif Muse	nadiif_98@hotmail.com	M	Jigjiga University	Research Director	Ethiopia
198	Scholastica Odhiambo	sodhiambo@aercfrica.org	F	AERC	Manager of Research	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
199	Elias Abebe	eliasaharbu@gmail.com	M	Harbu Microfinance Institution S.Co.	Senior Expert, Planning & Business Develo	Ethiopia
200	Dr FD Amonya	Fred.Amonya@lyciar.com	M	University of Oxford	Senior Researcher	United Kingdom
201	Dorcas Asaah Peprah	Dapeprah@gmail.com	F	University of Ghana	Lecturer	Ghana
202	Desalegn T	desalegn1813@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Ethiopia
203	Ariel Herbert Fambeu	afambeu@yahoo.fr	M	University of Douala	Researcher	Kenya
204	Elvis Kiptoo	elviskiptoo@gmail.com	M	KIPPRRA	Policy Analyst YP	Kenya
205	Eliphas Gitonga	gitonga.eliphas@ku.ac.ke	M	Kenyatta University	Lecturer	Kenya
206	Dieu-Donno N'guessan	dieu.nguessan@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Cote d'Ivoire
207	Eric Loglo	ericloglo5@gmail.com	M	University of Cape Coast	Mphil Economics Lecturer	Ghana
208	Abdifatah Osman	Saalaxsh100@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Education	Director	Somalia
209	Purity Njiguna	njugunapurity@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	Principal Economist	Kenya
210	Benjamin Wanger	wangerextra@gmail.com	M	Nile University of Nigeria	Researcher	Nigeria
211	Justina Chivanga	justinachivanga@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Agriculture	Senior Plant Health Inspector	Zambia
212	Andoh Regis Vianney Ya	regisyap@gmail.com	M	CREMIDE/UFHB	Researcher	Cote d'Ivoire
213	Frederick Koskei	koskeifik@gmail.com	M	County Government of Bomet	Assistant Director	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
214	chepchumba chumo	chumbiin@gmail.com	F	Moi university	Lecturer	Kenya
215	Younous Fozoudine Tap	younousndam13@gmail.com	F	University of Yaoundé II	Professor	Cameroon
216	Porto Bazie	portobazie@gmail.com	M	Centre da Etudes, de Documentation et de Recherche ©	University Thomas Sankara	Burkina Faso
217	Getachew Wollie	getachewwollie53@gmail.com	M	Samara University	Lecturer and researcher	Ethiopia
218	Youssouf Ngachili Njikam	ngachlinjikamyousouf@gmail.com	M	University of Yaounde II	Lecturer	Cameroon
219	Sarah Anyanwu	sarahanyanwu2003@yahoo.com	F	University of Benin	Senior Lecturer	Nigeria
220	Grace Mudzingwa	gracemudzingwa@gmail.com	F	Parliament of Zimbabwe	Monitoring and Evaluation	Zimbabwe
221	Mohammed Amidu	mamidu@ug.edu.gh	M	University of Ghana Business School	Professor of Accounting and Finance	Ghana
222	Damien Dieudonna	damienmededj@gmail.com	M	Centre de Formation et de Recherche en matière Popul	Directeur	Benin
223	Fernando Lichucha	fllichucha@gmail.com	M	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane	Dean	Mozambique
224	Puseletso Nkaki	Nkakip@gmail.com	F	Government	Economic planner	Lesotho
225	Ayebiogbon Dodo Akakp	dodoakakpo10@gmail.com	M	AIA/Bureau d'Etudes et de Recherche- Action pour l'Econom	Student / Researcher	Togo

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
226	Lungile Ginindza	lunglenr@gmail.com	F	Ministry of Agriculture	Agricultural Economist	South Africa
227	BRHANE TESEMA	brienbe@gmail.com	M	National Bank of Ethiopia	Research Officer II	Ethiopia
228	Magda Kaszyka Wilson	mwilson@uj.ac.za	F	University of Johannesburg	Senior Lecturer	Kenya
229	Astride Claudel Nijepue No	claudeln17@yahoo.com	M	University of douala	Ph.D Student	Cameroon
230	Flore DIBI	florelibi@gmail.com	F	UniversitÃ© Félix Houphouët-Boigny d'Abidjan	PhD student	Senegal
231	Edward Gar	gartayedward2013@gmail.com	M	University of Cape Coast	Ghana	Ghana
232	Rhane Guyanne Tetia MB	tethiamboungou@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Director	Congo
233	Zegeye Tessema	ziselam@gmail.com	M	Warsaw University	Researcher	Poland
234	Abigail Iyilade	iyladeabigail@gmail.com	F	ARMTI	Director	Kenya
235	Austin Mwange	austin.mwange@unizaz.zm	M	University of Zambia	Lecturer	Zambia
236	Lerato Mothae	lmothaellilian@gmail.com	F	AERC network	Lecturer	Lesotho
237	Bernard GIBET	bernardgibet146@gmail.com	M	The national treasury	Principal Economist	Kenya
238	Ajay Shankar Singh	asingh@uniswa.sz	M	University of Eswatini	Senior Lecturer	Eswatini
239	Ousmane Balogoun	balogounousmane@gmail.com	M	Realtime Translators LTD	Freelance conference interpreter	Kenya
240	Racheal Nabasiye	rachealhildah22@gmail.com	F	Makerere University	Researcher	Uganda
241	Pouirketa Rita Nikiema	ritanikiema@yahoo.fr	F	University Norbert Zongo	Lecturer-Researcher	Burkina Faso

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
242	Mercy Ayilo	amercykentrone@gmail.com	F	UPENN	Librarian	Kenya
243	Patrick Mutimba	patrick.mutimba@mefmi.org	M	MEFMi	Director	Zimbabwe
244	Kimathi Ikiao	kimathi@pliutus.co.ke	M	Investment Services	Principal	Kenya
245	Jedidah Wangeci	wangecijid@gmail.com	F	University of Nairobi	Researcher	Kenya
246	alo teb	aloeb@gmail.com	F	United Nations	PMER	Kenya
247	Alelign Ademe Mengistu	ademe@uniswa.sz	M	University of Eswatini	Senior Lecturer	Eswatini
248	Vesall Nourani	vnoaurani@uChicago.edu	M	UChicago	Faculty	USA
249	Jashinto Genye	Cefad2014busy@gmail.com	M	Center for Alternative Development	Executive Director	South Sudan
250	Gouranga Das	dasgouranga@gmail.com	M	Hanyang University, South Korea	Professor of Economics	South Korea
251	Dieusait Mmenga Adolphe	adolphemmenga@gmail.com	M	Universite Officielle de Bulavu	Lecturer	Congo DRC
252	Ousmane Doucoure	doucmane@gmail.com	M	University of Bamako	Researcher	Mali
253	Dianah Ngui Muchai	dianah.muchai@aercafrica.org	F	AERC	Research Manager	Kenya
254	Paul Mpuga	pmpuga@gmail.com	M	AfDB	Chief County Economist	Cote d'Ivoire
255	Clemence Chiduwac	chiduwac@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance and economic Development	Deputy Minister	Zimbabwe

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
256	Gihad Hagar	gehads@hotmail.com	F	MoARS	General Director Economics Ethiopia	Ethiopia
257	Maxwell Agbenorhevi	magbenorhevi@yahoo.com	M	Independent Consultant	Agricultural policy Expert	Mali
258	Calvin Otieno	Calvin_otieno@gmail.com	M	Kenyatta University	Post graduate Student	Kenya
259	Tukur Dahiru	tukurdahiru2012@gmail.com	M	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	Professor	Nigeria
260	Dolibe Tchapo	rosedotchapo@gmail.com	F	Universite de Kara	Chercheur	Chad
261	Abdulwasiu Abdulraheem	abdultaheemabdulwasiu63@gmail.co	M	University of Ibadan	Postgraduate Student	Nigeria
262	Adade A.	adadeik@gmail.com	M	Gifro	Researcher	Mali
263	Yao Agbreno	stanislas0045@yahoo.fr	M	Universite Mohatma Gandhi (UMG)	Vice-Recteur	Ghana
264	Serifa Morou	semorou@yahoo.com	F	Ministere des affaires sociales	Direction de la planification Mali	Ethiopia
265	Abdouli Kabir	elhadj.akabir@yahoo.com	M	Ministere des droits de l'homme	Chef division des statistiques	Burkina Faso
266	Stephen Daniel	progressstev@gmail.com	M	Nigerian Economic Summit Group	Associate	Nigeria

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
267	Abubakar Farah	abuumo448@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Researcher	Kenya
268	Dagmawit Bekele Bereda	dagmawitb2@gmail.com	F	Policy Studies Institute	Researcher	Ethiopia
269	Adjiaratou Diakher Djanko	diakherdianko92@gmail.com	F	Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar	Rseearcher	Senegal
270	Johnson Owaro	johson.owaro@gmail.com	M	Office of the Prime Minister	Regional Programme Coordinator	Ethiopia
271	Arthur Odima	arthur.odima@gmail.com	M	Competition Authority of Kenya	Senior Policy Analyst	Kenya
272	Seajn Muller	seanm@uj.ac.za	M	University of Johannesburg	Senior Research Fellow	South Africa
273	Dimaviyya Eugene Compa	cdimaviyya@yahoo.fr	M	Centre Etudes, de Documentation et de Recherche	Dassasgo, Ouagadougou	Benin
274	Hiwot Tadesse	hiwot.tadesse@traide.org	F	TRAIDE Ethiopia	Trade & Investment project officer	Ethiopia
275	Mariraguha Faustin	mariraguhafaustin@yahoo.fr	M	National Bank of Rwanda	Senior Economist	Rwanda
276	N'Faly Toure	touraly58@gmail.com	M	United Bank for Africa	Head Compliance	Togo
277	Senay Alemu	Senayhalemu@gmail.com	M	Tigray external affairs office	Officer	Ethiopia
278	Manuela Tonga	ndjakwamanuela@gmail.com	F	University of Dschang	Researcher	Cameroon
279	Abdisalan Salat	kabdisalan8@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Kenya
280	Bernadette Dia Kamgnia	assistanciat@capec-ci.org	F	CAPEC	Senior Researcher	Cote d'Ivoire
281	Eunice Wevetti	yunibosco@gmail.com	F	Kenya School of Government	Research Fellow	Kenya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
282	Tussle Misheck Mundowa	tusmun93@gmail.com	M	University of Cape Town	Researcher	South Africa
283	Francis Kinuthia	kanoute.kf@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Researcher	Kenya
284	Alieu Gibba	agibba@utg.edu.gm	M	University of The Gambia	Senior Lecturer Gambia	Gambia
285	Khalid Ismail	Khalid2012wise@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning	Economist	Uganda
286	Mosa Mapiloko	mapilokosala101@gmail.com	F	National University of Lesotho	Researcher	Lesotho
287	Eshetu Tesfaye	eshe384@gmail.com	M	Senior Lecturer, Jinka University	HOD of Computer Science	Ethiopia
288	Mark Okowa	mokowa@lmu.ac.ke	M	Tom Mboya University	Lecturer	Kenya
289	Ibrahim Mohammed	ibrahimohammedgombe08@gmail.co	M	Al-qalam University Katsina	Lecturer	Nigeria
290	Grace Ongile	grace.ongile@gmail.com	F	Siaya County Government	Economic Advisor	Kenya
291	Samuel Oyieke	soyieke@jouust.ac.ke	M	Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology	Lecturer	Kenya
292	Sethunyiwe Oitsile	sethunyiwe@hotmail.com	M	National University of Lesotho	Researcher	Lesotho
293	Pamela Madududu	madududup@gmail.com	F	Ghent University	Researchers	Belgium
294	Fiennasah Akem	fiennasah@yahoo.com	F	University of Dschang Cameroon	Student	Cameroon

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
295	Late Lawson	late@essa-africa.org	M	ESSA	Research Manager	United Kingdom
296	Godfrey Ojeka	Ofanaojeka2018@gmail.com	M	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria	Student	Nigeria
297	Derrick Kapolo	derrickapolo@gmail.com	M	Farmers Union of Malawi	Head of Agribusiness	Malawi
298	Mayamiko Kakwera	mkakwera@luanar.ac.mw	M	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Researcher	Malawi
299	Atinkugn Assefa Belete	Atinkugn20@gmail.com	M	Samara University, College of Business and Economics, Depa	Lecturer and Researcher	Ethiopia
300	Wellington Jah	jahwellington3@gmail.com	M	WATAF	Consultant	Ethiopia
301	Wegayehu Fitawek	wegbogale@gmail.com	F	University of Pretoria	Lecturer	Ethiopia
302	Delali Tunyo	delali.tunyo@stu.ucc.edu.gh	F	University of Cape Coast	PhD student	Ghana
303	Birhanu Argaw Embiale	bireargaw2011@gmail.com	M	Bonga University	lecturer	Ethiopia
304	Furi Temesgen	temefur@gmail.com	M	wallaga university	Assistant professor	Ethiopia
305	Martha Naikumi	naikumimartha@gmail.com	F	NA	Policy Analyst	Kenya
306	Lemma Zemedu Seifu	zemedul@gmail.com	M	EIAR	Senior researcher	Addis Ababa
307	Melain Modeste Senou	senoumod@gmail.com	M	ACEIR	Researcher	Abomey Calavi
308	Bright Wlekesa	wekesabright@gmail.com	M	Egerton University	Lecturer	Nairobi

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
309	Festus Cheruiyot	kipkorircheruiyot13@gmail.com	M	The University of Eldoret	Actuarial Scientist	Eldoret
310	Steve Mbollo	stevembollo@yahoo.fr	M	Ministry of Economy	Director	Washington DC
311	Habtamu Demessie	ruhe215@gmail.com	M	University of Ibadan	Researcher	Ibadan, Nigeria
312	Abdoulaye Ndiaye	andilaye@povertyactionlab.org	M	J-PAL Africa	Senior Policy Associate	Nairobi
313	Muna Shifa	mshifa2011@gmail.com	F	SAIDRU	Senior Researcher	Cape Town
314	Ogeto Mohammed	mamiye2012@gmail.com	M	Haramaya University, Ethiopia	Assistant Professor	Dire Dawa
315	Wasiu Akintunde	wasiludabajideakintunde@gmail.com	M	Centre for Study Economics of Africa	Researcher	Abuja
316	Richard Foti	richard.foti@gsu.ac.zw	M	Gwanda State University	Lecturer	Masvingo
317	Abera Ejara	aberagirma25@gmail.com	M	Wolkite University	Lecturer	Adis Ababa
318	Thomas Bwire	tbwire@comesa.int	M	COMESA	Senior Economist	NBO
319	Lwanga Elizabeth Nanziri	elizabethn@usb.ac.za	F	Stellenbosch University Business School	Senior Lecturer - Development Finance	Cape Town
320	Joel Kasasa	joelkasasa8@gmail.com	M	Wassha incorporation	Director	RUKWA
321	Bolaji Olaniyi	olaniyibolaji95@gmail.com	M	BOS Farms	Founder	Ibiye/ Lagos
322	Mitelo Subakanya	Mitelo.subakanya@gmail.com	F	IAPRI	Research Associate	Lusaka

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
323	Fredrick Mwabili	archydrinobill@gmail.com	M	Coast Development Authority	Economist	Mombasa
324	Themoi Demsoi	demsouthemoi@yahoo.fr	M	Universite	Enseignant	Ndjamana
325	Marian Gina	dagumaryaml@gmail.com	F	NDMA	Researcher	Nairobi
326	Economist Eddy	eddyedwardgich17@gmail.com	M	University of the People	Researcher	Nairobi
327	Esther Adimi	esther.ogouniyadimi@gmail.com	F	Lardes	Chercheur	Cotonou
328	Kasule Samuel	skasule56@gmail.com	M	National Planning Authority	Senior Planner Education and Skills Development	Kampala
329	Hoth Tot Chany	htotchany@gmail.com	M	IMF Res Rep Office	Economist	Juba
340	Robert Dauda Korsu	rdkorsu@yahoo.co.uk	M	Bank of Sierra Leone	Director, Research and Statistics, Bank of Sierra Leone.	Freetown
341	Kahindil Garama	kahindigharama127@gmail.com	M	Egerton University	Monitoring and Evaluation	Malindi
342	Abdirisak Abdirahman	abdirisak.mulukhtar@outlook.com	M	Parliamentary Budget Office-Somali federal Parliament	Fiscal Analyst	Mogadishu
343	Edward Kadozi	edward.kadozi@cdpafrika.org	M	Center for Development Policy	Founder and President	Kigali
344	Yusra Ramadhan	Yussy6748@gmail.com	F	Greenbeltwholesalers	Chief Auditor	Mombasa

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
345	Amaka Metu	agnetu@gmail.com	F	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	Reader	awka
346	Mandela Wilson	mandelawilson31@gmail.com	M	Media	Reporter	Nairobi
347	Ketulo Salipira	ketulosalipira@gmail.com	M	Cannabis Regulatory Authority	Director General	Lilongwe
348	Victor Bertrand Wamba	victorbertrandwamba@gmail.com	M	University of Yaounde I,	Researcher	Yaounde
349	Mahmoud Ali Mussa	malhmoudnz@gmail.com	M	Zanzibar Revenue Board	Research Officer	Zanzibar
350	Djibril Di	dfatoumbi@yahoo.fr	M	DGI	Analyst	Cotonou
351	Epaphras Ndikumana	epandikumana1982@gmail.com	M	Long Miles Coffee Project	Social and Environment Impact Manager	Bujumbura
352	Sherilyn Raga	s.raga@odi.org.uk	F	ODI	Research fellow	London
353	John Welkesa	jmasasabi61@gmail.com	M	Kenyatta University	Senior Lecturer	Nairobi
354	Abdoul Rachid Issoufou Do	rach_issooufou@yahoo.fr	M	University of Yaounde II, Soa	Researcher	Yaounde
355	Ukech Ujuere Kidi	ukech_kidi@gmail.com	M	University of Juba	Lecturer	Juba - South Sudan
356	Naomi Ngwira	Naomingwira@gmail.com	F	Malawi Government	Ambassador	Brussels
357	Kubrat Lawal	kubratkemi@gmail.com	F	University of Ilorin	Researcher	Ilorin
358	Dorika Jeremiah Mwamtam	mwamtambuluo@yahoo.co.uk	F	The University of Dodoma	Lecturer	Dodoma

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
359	Obumeme Azie	azienwafocha@gmail.com	M	Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation	Auditor	Enugu
360	Youqing Lin Ch	youqing.lin@graduateinstitute. ch	F	Graduate Institute of Geneva	Student	Geneve
361	David Khaoya	davidkhaoya@ thepalladiumgroup.co	M	Palladium	Project Country Director - Kenya	Nairobi
362	Gerald Ipapa	gipapa@udel.edu	M	University of Delaware	PhD Candidate	Newark
363	Khalid Khalid Sani	khalid.scapo@gmail.com	M	Bayero University kano	Researcher	Kano
364	Abdirisak Abdirahman	abdirisakmokhtar1@gmail. com	M	Somali Federal Parliament	Fiscal Analyst	Mogadishu
365	Patience Mususa	patience.mususa@nai.uu.se	F	The Nordic Africa Institute	Senior researcher	Uppsala
366	Nozizwe Mulela	zizwem@gmail.com	F	Eswatini Bank	Managing Director	Manzini
367	Marion Ouma	marion.ouma@nai.uu.se	F	Nordic Africa Institute	Postdoctoral Researcher	Uppsala
368	Moses Amagbor Johnson	mosesamagborjohnson@ gmail.com	M	Baruch Professional Services Ltd	Managing Director	Port Harcourt
369	Mac-Moses Isaiyah	dmac4max@gmail.com	M	Rivers State Agency for the control of HIV/AIDs	Head, Research Monitoring & Evaluation	Port Harcourt
370	Dr. Mos I.S	dmac4max@gmail.com	M	Rivers State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS	Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Head	Port Harcourt

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No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
371	Peter Junior Dotse	pjdots1@gmail.com	M	University of Ghana	Researcher	Scorpion-Tabora
372	Kenneth Kigundu	kigundukenneth@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	South Kinangop
373	Ann Waimiri	ann.waimiri@strathmore.edu	F	Strathmore University Business School	Research	Nairobi
374	Olumuyiwa Ynusa	yinusa2016@gmail.com	M	Olabisi Onabanjo University	Researcher	ago iwoye ogun state
375	Kheswar Jankee	ambassador.moscow2161@gmail.com	M	Embassy	Ambassador	Moscow
376	Francis Kaloi	kadipo.francis@embuni.ac.ke	M	University of Embu	Lecturer	Embu
377	Hafidh Hafidh	hafidh.h9@gmail.com	M	Zanzibar University	Research Coordinator	Zanzibar
378	Mohammed Yimer	muhamed_yimer@yahoo.com	M	Woldia University	Vice Dean of the College of Social Sciences	North Wollo
379	Wilson Neves	wcsneves@gmail.com	M	Universidade Católica de Angola	Professor	Luanda
380	Rosemary Atieno	ratieno@uonbi.ac.ke	F	University of Nairobi	Associate Professor	Nairobi
381	Nyasha Karasa Mpala	akneisha@gmail.com	F	Chinhoyi University of Technology	Lecturer	harare
382	Mohamed Nur Sharif	Sharifyare10@kdis.ac.kr	M	National Economic Council of Somalia	Macroeconomic Research Analyst	Mogadishu

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
383	Ahmed Mohamoud Moha	siyyasi114@gmail.com	M	Somalia Federal Parliament	Budget and Public Policy Analyst	Mogadishu
384	Mohamed Nur Sharif	Sharif@kdis.ac.kr	M	National Economic Council of Somalia	Macroeconomic Research Analyst	Mogadishu
385	Mbotidem Jackson	Mbotidemokon38@gmail.com	M	Policy Innovation Center	Coordination and Planning	Abuja
386	Sibusiso Maneli	mnlsib001@myuct.ac.za	M	Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance	Postgraduate	Cape Town
387	Tiruwork Girma Hailu	tiruworkgirma233@gmail.com	F	Jimma University	Lecturer	ADDISABABA
388	James Mutua	Kuljameson@gmail.com	M	RedCraft Fintech	Finance	Nairobi
389	Temeselew Woldetsadik M	temeselew2004@gmail.com	M	Wollo University	Lecturer	Dessie
390	Henry Edeh	edehhenrychukwuemeka@gmail.com	M	University of Nigeria	Researcher	Enugu
391	Matthew Adewumi	matolade@yahoo.co.uk	M	University of Ilorin	Professor	Ilorin
392	Dario Guambe	arestidesdario@gmail.com	M	EGPAF	Data Entry	Vilankulos, Mozambique
393	Kalu Enenike	kalu@uniswa.sz	M	University of Eswatini	Associate Professor	Kwakuseni
394	Stephen Juma	sjuma271@gmail.com	M	National Cohesion and Integration Commission	Program Officer	Nairobi
395	Tamirat Tsegaye	tametsagaye12@gmail.com	M	Haramaya University	Lecturer	Haramaya

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
396	Jackson Ndolo	ndologistics@gmail.com	M	KCA University	Senior Lecturer	Nairobi
397	Amb. Bashir Mustapha Yus	bashirmustaphayusuf@gmail.com	M	National Youth Council of Nigeria Taraba State Chapter	Deputy Chairman	Jalingo
398	Abiola Aina	alaina@acu.edu.ng	F	Ajayi Crowther University	Lecturer	Oyo State
399	Ismaila Okunoye	adeleye013@gmail.com	M	Fountain University, Osogbo	Lecturer	Osogbo
400	Haimanot Atinkut	hey.china@yahoo.com	M	University of Gondar	Teacher	Gondar
401	Medhin Hailu	medhin296@gmail.com	M	Ethiotelecom	Leadership training expert	Addis Ababa
402	Ian Katui	iankatui@gmail.com	M	Egerton University	Researcher	Iten
403	Kouakou Alain Serge	kkaserge@gmail.com	M	Universite alassane Ouattara	Researcher	Abidjan
404	Josephine Ndambuki	ndambukijn@hotmail.com	F	Egerton University	Lecturer	NAIROBI
405	Beru Lilako	geelilako@gmail.com	M	Advisory Centre for Trade and Investment	Director	Nairobi
406	Enerst Pako Betha	pakobetha93@gmail.com	M	Bank of Botswana	Portfolio Analyst	Gaborone
407	Anthonia Achike	anthonia.achike@unn.edu.ng	F	University of Nigeria nsukka	Professor/Director	Nsukka
408	Deyahi Meine	bdeyahi@yahoo.fr	M	Direction Generale de l'Emploi	Chef de Service	nouakchott
409	Eugene Owade	owadeeugene04@gmail.com	M	Sihana Advocates	Advocate Trainee & Legal Researcher	Kisumu
410	Omot Guon	omotokony1@gmail.com	M	National Curriculum Development Center	Director General	Juba

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
411	Omar Diouf	dioufomar824@gmail.com	M	UCAD	Director	Dakar
412	Mahlet Girma	Mahletgirma911@gmail.com	F	Limitless Youth	Founder	Addis Ababa
413	Bontle Marumoloa	bontleblm@gmail.com	F	Organisation and Leadership Development	President	Thamaga
414	Annstellah Maina	annstellahwanjiru@gmail.com	F	Frankfurt School of Finance and Management	Director	Nairobi
415	Gebregziabher Girmay	geregjirmay@gmail.com	M	Livestock Development Research Institute	Director, Socio-Economics Researcher	Addis Ababa
416	Onesmus David	muema@kfcb.go.ke	M	KFCB	Senior Economist	Nairobi
417	Adetomiwa Adesokan	toniwasegun@gmail.com	M	University of Ibadan	Student (Graduate Assistant)	Ibadan
418	Abednic Siambome	abednicoss@gmail.com	M	World Vision	Project Officer	Mudzi
419	Fekadu Beyene	keneefbk@gmail.com	M	Yes	Professor	Haramaya
420	Geoffrey Kilemba	gkilemba@gmail.com	M	ICPAK	Member	Mombasa
421	Million Haile	millionsilesi@gmail.com	M	Haramaya	Professor	Dire dawa
422	Nadjounoum Djimtoinga	djiptoingar@yahoo.fr	M	Commission de la Cemac	Directeur	N'Djaména
423	Abraham Deng	dengmagai2021@gmail.com	M	Local Company	Director	Wau
424	sabin Nendobe Dobah	sabin.nendobedobah@ucad.edu.sn	M	CREG Center	Economist	thiès
425	Amelie Zoungnana	amelie.zoungnana@yahoo.fr	F	University of Felix Houphouet Boigny	Researcher	Ouagadougou

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
426	Ndudi Osakwe	ndudi.osakwe@research.uwa.edu.au	M	University of Western Australia	Researcher	Crawley
427	awugten	awugtengebrehana@gmail.com	M	Haramaya University	Lecturer	Harar
428	Kelvin Muli	kelvinmuli57@gmail.com	M	Egerton University	Researcher	Nakuru
429	Peter Babyenda	peter.babyenda@mak.ac.ug	M	School of Economics, Makerere University	Lecturer	Kampala
430	Ashraf Mugala	mugala95@gmail.com	M	Makerere University	PhD Fellow	Kampala
431	Blessing Akinlosotu	adewestcoy2k4@yahoo.com	M	National Civil Society Council of Nigeria	Executive Director	Abuja
432	Chengkuac	chengkuac@gmail.com	M	University of International Business and Economic	PhD candidate	Juba
433	Jonathan Otim	otimjonathan9@gmail.com	M	Policy Analysis and Development Research Institute	Research Analyst	Kampala
434	Melkamu Workie Tadesse	melkecon2002@gmail.com	M	University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia	Lecturer, coordinator of grant awarded research	Gondar
435	Oluwatosin Adesina	regensoul85@gmail.com	M	Lead City University	Lecturer	Akute
436	kadiatu kamara Nicholas	kadiatuknicholas17@gmail.com	F	Fourah Bay College University of Sierra Leone	Electrical Engineer	Freetown
437	Francis Andoh	fandoh@ucc.edu.gh	M	University of Cape Coast	Senior Lecturer	Cape Coast

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
438	Muritala Oke	okkhemurry@gmail.com	M	National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies Kuru Jos N	Senior fellow	Jos
439	Mathieu Juliet Mpabe Bodj	mpabebodjongo@yahoo.fr	M	University of Dschang	Lecturer	Dschang
440	Issaya Marijani	marijanissaya@gmail.com	M	Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute	Research Assistant	Mufindi
441	Afrika Okello	afrikaokello@gmail.com	F	National Treasury	Officer	Nairobi
442	Abdirizak Ahmed OSman	cabdiciojol1@gmail.com	M	Islamic Relief Somalia	Business Development Officer	Hargeisa
443	Veroniceah Mwania	veronicamwania@gmail.com	F	Kenya Medical Research Institute	Qualitative Researcher	Nairobi
444	Firomsa Teshale	firo2010.a@gmail.com	M	Policy Study Institute	Researcher	Addis Ababa
445	Betty Nyaga	bettyndutanyaga@gmail.com	F	NSSF	Officer	Chuka
446	Nnamdi O Madiche	nmadiche@uo.k.ac.rw	M	University of Kigali	Professor of Entrepreneurial Marketing	Kigali
447	Imasiku Nyambe	imasikunyambe7@gmail.com	M	Southern African Institute for Policy and Research	Research Associate	Helsinki
448	Phionah Namuliira	phiemug@gmail.com	F	Makerere University	Part time-Lecturer	Kampala
449	Melkamu Girma Koricho	melkegirma@gmail.com	M	University Lecturer	Lecturer	Harar
450	Richard Mwale	rmwale215@gmail.com	M	Kabwe Skills	Vice Principal	Kabwe

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
451	Jean Alexis Mani	jeanalexismani@gmail.com	M	CAMERCAP-PARC	Consultant	Yaounde
452	Mary Mulli	mary.mulii@ubagroup.com	F	UBA BANK	Executive Director	Nairobi
453	Richard Singini	singinrichard@gmail.com	M	Michigan Stae University/ POISAT Project	Policy Research Analyst	Lilongwe
454	Ediom Udooh	ediomudoh@gmail.com	M	University of Calabar	Student	ABAK
455	Maslah M Abdi	masxalane@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Health Somalia	Senior Contract Management Specialist	Mogadishu
456	Angeline Mwadime	walugha@gmail.com	F	AERC	Accounts Assistant	Nairobi
457	Daniel Kogi	Daniel.Njiru@aercAfrica.org	M	AERC	KMA	Nairobi
458	Sehliselo Mpofu	Sehliselo.Mpofu@Mefmi.org	F	MACROECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT INSTITU	Director - Macroeconomic Management	Harare
459	Austin Chiumia	achiumia@rbm.mw	M	Reserve Bank of Malawi	Principal Economist, Financial and Fiscal Affairs	Lilongwe
460	Goolbar Aneel Hamza	goolBarh@gmail.com	M	Al Hisra International Trade Ltd	CEO	Chemin Grenier
461	Davis Ombane	ombanadedavis@gmail.com	M	Student of Economics	Student	Nairobi
462	Oluwakemi Okuwa	kemiokuwa@yahoo.co.uk	F	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research	Research Professor	IBADAN
463	Cerapis Nchinda mbognou	nchindacerapis@gmail.com	F	University of Dschang	Research student	Cameroon

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Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
464	Steffie Mboulou	steffie.mboulou@gmail.com	F	Universite Marien Ngouabi	Researcher	Brazzaville
465	Dr. Gideon Mukui	mukuidjeon@gmail.com	M	Government	Senior economist	Nairobi
466	Bakari Abubakar	advisor@frontier-isolutions.co.ke	M	Frontier Innovative Solutions	Lead Advisor	Nairobi
467	Nicholas Odhiambo	nmbaya99@yahoo.com	M	University of South Africa Head of Macroeconomic Policy Analysis (MPA)	Researcher	Pretoria
468	Gaston Beavogui	gaston20beavogui@gmail.com	M	UGLC	Researcher	Conakry
469	Abdoulaye Cisse	cisse@berkeley.edu	M	UC Berkeley	PhD Candidate	Albany
470	Semeni Ngozi	semeni.ngozi@gmail.com	F	University of Dares Salaam	Lecturer	Dares Salaam
471	Willis Oluoch-Kosura	willis.kosura@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Emeritus Professor	Nairobi
472	William Oile	oilewilly@gmail.com	M	Sequence Holdings Ltd	Managing Director	Kisumu
473	Chijii Ojukwu	chiji.ojukwu@apodgroup.org	M	Africa Projects Development Centre (APDC), Abuja	Managing Director	Abuja
474	Oyekunle Oyewo	ojerry2@gmail.com	M	Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria	Head of Department	Ibadan
475	Aniefiok Udo	aniefiok.benedict@gmail.com	M	Topfaith University	Faculty Dean	Uyo
476	Ambrose Ogwang	ambroseog@gmail.com	M	Economic Policy Research Centre EPRC	Professional	Kampala
477	Victoria Foye	vickieomod@yahoo.com	F	University of Ibadan	Lecturer	Ibadan
478	Gray Tembo	tembog.04@gmail.com	M	Nascency Global Impact Research and Consultancy	Director	Lusaka

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
479	Laura Balasa	lauranelima@uonbi.ac.ke	F	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Nairobi
480	Ertie Asmare	davitasmare2015@gmail.com	M	Amhara Agricultural Research Institute	Researcher	Bahir Dar
481	Ebrima Ceesay	Ceesayebrimak@utg.edu.gm	M	University of The Gambia	Lecturer	Serekunda
482	Dr. Antoine Karangwa	karantoine@yahoo.fr	M	University Of Rwanda	Kigali	
483	Nicoline Nwenushi Tumassa	pawedmailing@gmail.com	F	Civil Society Gender and Development Expert	Policy Analyst	Yaounde
484	Ntoubia Larissa	ngapmeniarissa@gmail.com	F	Foretia foundation	Research Assistant	Yaounde
485	Tafirenyika Sunde	sundee08@gmail.com	M	NUST, Namibia	Professor	Windhoek North
486	monjuh ruth masungong	ruthmonjuh@gmail.com	F	Ngoketunjia Cooperative credit union LTD	Cash Officer	Bamenda
487	Olutosin Otekunrin	otekunrin.olutosina@pgfunaab.edu.n	M	Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Niger	Researcher	Abeokuta
488	Novice Patrick Bakhe	novicebakhe@yahoo.fr	M	University of Douala	Lecturer	Douala
489	Thomas Junior Boums	jbounds@yahoo.com	M	University of Yaounde II	Researcher	Yaounde
490	Ruto Daniel	daniuto707@gmail.com	M	safina organization	director	Nairobi
491	Admit Zerihun	a.zerihun@afdb.org	M	African Development Bank	Senior Macroeconomist	Addis Ababa

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
492	Habtamu Alamayo Farada	halemayehu@mofed.gov.et	M	Ministry of Finance	Senior Program officer	Addis Ababa
493	Liben Liben	libenboru@gmail.com	M	Dilla University	Lecturer	Dilla
494	Belaynew Mulat	belaynewbirile98@gmail.com	M	Addis ababa university	Researcher	Addis Ababa
495	jedah ogweno	jnyaboe@gmail.com	F	kenyatta university	Researcher	nairobi
496	Metadef Fekad Malede	metadelfekad19@gmail.com	M	Research and Community service council	Lecturer	Injibara
497	Samuel Baaye	sbaaye29@gmail.com	M	United States Institute of Peace	Program Officer	Cheismford
498	Abiodun Akinyemi	akinyemiabiodun45@gmail.com	M	University of Lagos	Graduate	Yaba
499	Dawit Tessema	d.tessema@afdb.org	M	African Development Bank	Senior Economist	Washington D.C
500	Oninaina Raman	oninalnavalerie@gmail.com	F	CERED	Researcher	Antananarivo
501	Alain N'Ghauran	k.nghauran@afdb.org	M	AfDB	Consultant	Abidjan
502	Saheed Olayiwola	soolayiwola@gmail.com	M	Federal University of Technology, Akure	Senior Lecturer	Akure
503	kennedy Machira	kmachila30@gmail.com	M	Lilongwe university and Natural Resources	Head of Department	Lilongwe
504	Eunita Mutai	eunitamutai@gmail.com	F	KIPRA	Research assistant	Nakuru
505	Samson Katengeza	sankatengeza@gmail.com	M	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Director of Research and Outreach	Lilongwe

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
506	Zephaniah Ongaga	zephongaga@gmail.com	M	ILRI	Researcher	Nyansiongo
507	Anne Kamau	frekam@gmail.com	F	The National Treasury and Economic Planning	Advisor to Cabinet Secretary	Nairobi
508	Shiferaw Alayachew	shiferaw.alemu@wku.edu.et	M	Wolkite University, Ethiopia	Assistant Professor	Wolkite
509	Olusola Adeyinka	olusolaadeyinka2018@gmail.com	M	Development & Data Science Consultant Ltd Abuja	Data Analyst/ Economist	Lagos
510	Helen Retta	tadhela@yahoo.com	F	Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Associations	Manager, Research and Policy Analysis Division	Addis Ababa
511	Abubakar Muhammad Mok	abumoki@gmail.com	M	Office of the President	Commissioner	Kampala
512	Kunue Massally	mrkmassally2000@yahoo.com	M	SHALOM Inc.	Director	Paynesville
513	Kasango Michael Jackson	kasangomj@gmail.com	M	Bulamu Healthcare	HICE Program Officer	Kampala
514	Nathan Kanuma Taremwa	nk.taremwa@gmail.com	M	University of Rwanda	Academic Staff/ Lecturer	Kigali
515	Greg A.A	gphempill@yahoo.com	M	IDS	Senior Capacity Building Specialist	St Petersburg
516	Josephine Cherotich	cherrojosphine@gmail.com	F	The National Treasury	Economist	Nairobi
517	Nelson Joseph Kissanga	josephnelson0707@gmail.com	M	Mzumbe university	Researcher & Consultation, Department of Economic	Arusha

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
518	Peris Wachira	wachiraperis19@gmail.com	F	UCT	Researcher	Cape Town
519	Ibrahim Yussuf	Shafeiawil@gmail.com	M	United State International University Africa	Scholar	Nairobi
520	Ibrahim Kambaima	sahrkam@yahoo.com	M	University of Cape Town	Researcher	Cape Town
521	Adebayo Salami	adebayosalami2015@gmail.com	M	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria	Senior Lecturer	Ago-Iwoye
522	Yekin Ali	yaaqinil@gmail.com	M	Kotebe University of Education	Assistant Professor of Economics	Addis Ababa
523	Taye Beyene	tayebeeye@yahoo.co.uk	M	Adami Agricultural Research Center	Senior Researcher	Zeway
524	Yetunde Oladokun	yetunde.oladokun@gmail.com	F	Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria	Senior Research Scientist	Ibadan
525	Kennedy Kupeta	kkupeta@rbz.co.zw	M	Quasi Government	Principal Economist	Harare
526	Zewdie Baye	zewdieuylma@aaau.edu.et	M	Addis Ababa University	Researcher	Addis Ababa
527	Michael Rotich	mrotich@gmail.com	M	Eastern Africa Policy Centre	Executive Director	Nairobi
528	Sarah Ssewanyana	sssewanyana@eprcug.org	F	Economic Policy Research Centre	Executive Director	Kampala
529	Keith Hansen	khansen@worldbank.org	M	World Bank	Country Director	Nairobi
530	Joyce Kinabo	joyce_kinabo@yahoo.com	F	Sokoine university of agriculture	professor	Morogoro
531	Sylvester Hanciles	osmondhanciles@gmail.com	M	Retired Government Minister Education	Deputy Minister of Education	Freetown

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
532	Moses Fuseini	fmrnaim2010@gmail.com	M	SD Dombu University of Business	Lecturer	Accra
533	Sonia Essobmadje	sonia.essobmadje@un.org	F	ECA	Chief of section	Addis Ababa
534	Eyob bekele Juhar	Eyobjuhar@gmail.com	M	Ministry of mines	CEO, policy research and capacity building,	Addis ababa
535	Rumbiddzai Mhembere	rumbidzaigotorwa2502@gmail.com	F	University of Zimbabwe	AERC Masters student	Harare
536	Wondimu Ade	wondimuade123@gmail.com	M	Lecturer	Lecture	Wolaita Sodo
537	Omotuyole Ambali	tuyoleambali@gmail.com	M	University of Reading	Postdoc Researcher	Reading
538	Ivan Atwijkire	ivan@vantech-agric.com	M	Vantech Agri Solutions Limited	CEO and Founder	Kampala
539	Alhaji Jabbie	jabbidinho1990@gmail.com	M	Fourah Bay College University of Sierra Leone	Researcher	Freetown
540	Yakama Jones	yakamajones@economicresearchunit.	F	Ministry of Finance	Director of Research & HCD Focal Person	Freetown
541	Precious Zikhali	prehgababela@gmail.com	F	World Bank	Senior Economist	Nairobi
542	Rachel Strohm	rachel@socialpolicyinsights.org	F	Social Policy Insights	Director	Nairobi
543	Biru Dube	birugelgo@gmail.com	M	Jimma University	Researcher	Jimma
544	Sylvia Mwashi	mshindimwashi@gmail.com	F	Unisafe Health and Safety Consultancy ltd	Legal assistant	Nakuru

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
545	Paul Deng	mayomdekongor@gmail.com	M	NCB	Foreign Relations Manager	Juba
546	Segun Fasesan	segun.fasesan@gmail.com	M	NESG	Finance	Ikoyi
547	Bwire Moses	moses.bwire@abi.co.ug	M	aBi Finance Ltd	Investments Manager - Green Growth	Kampala
548	Dr. Bernadette Wanjala	bwanjala@strathmore.edu	F	Strathmore University	Faculty and Academic Lead	Nairobi
549	Wilson Wasike	wwwasike@gmail.com	M	The National Treasury	CIACA Embedded Advisor/Consultant	Nairobi
550	Nicholas Ozor	nozor@atpsnet.org	M	African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS)	Executive Director	Nairobi
551	Santo Agook Mayen	agoook211@gmail.com	M	Youth Economic Emancipation program	Founder	Nairobi
552	Enoch Aikins	eaikins@issafrica.org	M	Institute for Security Studies	Researcher	East Legon
553	C. Kamala Kaghoma	christkaghoma@yahoo.fr	M	UniversitÃ© Officielle de Bulavu	Professor	Bukavu
554	Anthony Ngororano	anthony.ngororano@undp.org	M	UNDP	Resident Representative	Nairobi
555	Faith Gabona Kadondi	faitngabona22@gmail.com	F	Mubs	Lecturer	Kampala
556	Seboka Alemu Gemechu G	genechuseboka.alemu@o365.u-szeg	M	University of Szeged	Researcher	Szeged

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
557	Musiliu Adewole	gold_soad@yahoo.com	M	Federal University of Technology, Akure	Senior Lecturer	Akure
558	Loudi Njoya	njoya.loudis@gmail.com	M	University of Dschang	Docteur/PhD	Douala
559	Ephrem Kayumba	ephremkay@gmail.com	M	KCB Bank Rwanda PLC	Records Manager	Kayonza
560	Fatiha Azarual	fatiha.azarual@um6p.ma	F	AIRESS	Researcher	rabat
561	Bheki Bhembe	bheki.bhembe@undp.org	M	UNDP	Economic Advisor	Nairobi
562	Saidu Bah	saidubah94@gmail.com	M	Njala University, Sierra Leone West Africa	Lecturer	Freetown
563	Foday Ibrahim Kappa	fikabba.52@gmail.com	M	Ministry of Finance	Senior Economist	Freetown
564	Zita Joaquim	zita.joaquim@correio.gov.mz	F	Ministry of Economic and Finance of Mozambique	Risk Analyst	Maputo
565	Tawanda Shenje	Teshenje@gmail.com	M	Independent Research	Researcher	Ottawa
566	Aderoju Oyefusi	aderoju.oyefusi@uniben.edu	M	University of Benin, Nigeria	Professor	Benin City
567	Gerahun Negewo	gechsenkora@gmail.com	M	Haramaya university	Assistant lecture	Adana
568	Dr. Innocent Opara	oparainnocent3@gmail.com	M	Qumet Institute	Lecturer	Abuja
569	Ibrahim Hussein Abdi	hussein3652@gmail.com	M	Jijiga University	Lecturer	Jijiga
570	Abel Paul	mahembeabel@gmail.com	M	Chama Cha Mapinduzi	Economist	Dodoma, Tanzania
571	Olusegun Jr Oguntimehin	Oguntimehin.sjr@hotmail.com	M	Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University	Research Assistant	Lagos

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
572	Donald Kaberuka	dr.kaberuka@gmail.com	M	Southbridge	Founder	Southbridge KIGALI
573	Habekiristos Beyene Haile	habekiristosbeyene@gmail.com	M	Ethiopian Statistics Service	Senior Statistician	Addis Ababa
574	Kingsley Chiagoro	kingsalc@gmail.com	M	Federal Ministry of Justice	Principal Data Processing Officer	FCT
575	Girma Melese	girmagbdr@yahoo.com	M	Amhara National Regional State Administrations	Former adviser of public relations	Bahir Dar
576	Dickson Wanglolo	dwanglolo@gmail.com	M	Inter University Council for East Africa	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Kampala
577	Ibsa Aliyu Usmane	ibsaaly2012@gmail.com	M	Haramaya University	Researcher	Dire Dawa
578	Abubakar Bagudo	abuhjao@gmail.com	M	University of Ibadan	Postgraduate Student	Alero
579	Kassim Mohammed	kassimmoh53@gmail.com	M	Haramaya University	Researcher	Haramaya
580	Ntoi Johannes Mphuthi	mp4mphuthi@gmail.com	M	National University of Lesotho	Researcher	Maseru
581	Carren Pindiriri	pindiriric@gmail.com	M	University of Zimbabwe	Senior lecturer	Harare
582	Kiprotich Rono	searskip@ymail.com	M	SDEAC	Integration Officer	Nairobi
583	Augusto Tavares	tavaresilva2003@gmail.com	M	University of Nairobi	Researcher	Nairobi
584	Kazeem Bakare	kazeemolaseojeumi@yahoo.com	M	pension Administrator	Fund Accountant	Abuja
585	Louis Kamano	louis_Kamano@yahoo.fr	M	Direction National de la PÃ¢che Continentale	Directeur National	Conakry

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
586	Olubukola Moronkola	olubukola.moronkola@gmail.com	F	NEITI	Energy Economist	Abuja
587	Charles Mugo Ciugu	ccigu@yahoo.com	M	Matengo Associates	Senior Consultant	Nairobi
588	Charles Owino	charles.owino@aercAfrica.org	M	AERC	Manager, Publications	Nairobi
589	Kevin Egwu Chukwuyioms	chukwuojims.kevin@funai.edu.ng	M	Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi	Lecturing	PMB 1010, Abakaliki
590	Hisham Hassan	hishamdr@yahoo.com	M	University of Khartoum	Professor	Khartoum
591	Araoye Olarinkoye Ajiboye	araoyeoajiboyer@futmminna.edu.ng	M	Federal University of Technology Minna.	Senior Lecturer/HOD	Minna.
592	James Fomba Sandy	jsandy@njala.edu.sl	M	University	Lecturer	Freetown
593	Joe Assoua	assoua.joe@gmail.com	M	University of Buea	Lecturer	Buea
594	Bah Mamadou Mouriny	bah.mamadoumouriny@gmail.com	F	AERC	CPP	Abidjan
595	Felix Onywogo	onywogo2017@gmail.com	M	Attachment	Researcher	Nairobi
596	Abera Beyu	abera.beyu@gmail.com	M	Cooperative Bank of Oromia	Corporate Strategy Officer	Addis Ababa
597	Yene Atanase	athanasema@yahoo.fr	M	University of Douala	Lecturer	Douala
598	Mugenzi Martin	marmugenzi@hotmail.com	M	University of Rwanda	Senior Lecturer	Huye
599	henri serge don-ding	sdonding@yahoo.fr	M	UCAC	Economist	Yaoundé

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
600	Patrick Dongue	donguendongo@yahoo.fr	M	Universite de Douala	Doctorant	Douala
601	Charles Olwamba	olwamba@gmail.com	M	Amref Health Africa	Director	Nairobi
602	Carolyne Mensire	mensirecarolyne@gmail.com	F	Lake Region Economic Bloc	Liaison Officer	Kisumu
603	Debela Alema	debelaalema019713@gmail.com	M	University	Lecturer	Nekemte
604	Senia Nhamo	nhamos@unisa.ac.za	F	University of South Africa	Associate Professor	Pretoria
605	Dennis Ondati	ondatidennis@gmail.com	M	Government	Sub-County Agribusiness Officer	Kisii
606	Lydia Herrera	lydiyaherrera@mailfoundry.com	M	Mailfoundry	Economist	Los Angeles
607	Oluwemi Alao	moraknet@gmail.com	M	University of Ibadan	Examinations Officer	Ibadan
608	Aboubacar Kaba	Klababoubacar@yahoo.fr	M	Guinæ Multiples Services	Cheurcheur	Conakry
609	Gladys Ahazia	ifyolivescon@gmail.com	F	Academic	Consultant	Imo state
610	Addisu Geberemichael	gebrmichaeladdisu@gmail.com	M	Am MSc Student of Development Economics	For the time being MSc Student	Hawassa
611	Matarr Njie	manjie@utg.edu.gm	M	University of the Gambia	Associate Professor	Serekunda
612	Mudeta Geleto	mudeta2006@yahoo.com	M	Africa Economic Consortium	Research	Negele
613	Damghane Oudanou	oudarose@gmail.com	F	University of Yaounde II	Researcher	Yaounde
614	Amadou Jallow	a.jallow@utg.edu.gm	M	University of The Gambia	Lecturer	Barjul
615	Sadou Diallo	donsadou1@gmail.com	M	Pan African University	Researcher	Yaounde

continued next page

Seminar Participants continued

No.	Full Name	Email	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Position	Country/ Region Name
616	Mortal Bangura	molicools1971@gmail.com	M	Bank of Sierra Leone	Director, Monetary Policy Department	Nigeria
617	Michael Odongo	odongomichael06@gmail.com	M	Kenyatta University	Graduate	Nango
618	Namanga Ngongi	namangangongi@yahoo.com	M	International Center for Evaluation and Development (ICED)	Board Chair	Buea, Cameroon
619	Benjamin Gawa	benjaminingawa94@gmail.com	M	Laboratoire de Recherche	Researcher	Parakou
620	Millicent Gitau	ciliakag@gmail.com	F	University of Nairobi	Lecturer	Nairobi
621	Clifton Jones	clifton.jones@mytwu.ca	M	Trinity Western University	Advisor on African Leadership and Innovation	Nelspruit
622	Stieve Pougoue	siewepougoueemile@gmail.com	M	University de Maroua	Associated Lecturer	Penka-michel
623	Joshua Ajetombi	jsegun2002@yahoo.com	M	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Ogbomoso Nigeria	Professor	Ogbomoso
624	Eshraga Mustfa	eshraga2008@hotmail.com	F	Federal Ministry of Health	Health economist	khartoum
625	Mbaigolmem Mbaliounda	mbaigolmem@yahoo.com	M	Ministere de l'environnement	Directeur	N'djamena

ANNEX C

Seminar Programme

**AERC Senior Policy Seminar (SPSXXV) Plenary Session on
“Human Capital Development in Africa”**

29–30 March 2023

Tuesday, 28 March 2023

16:00–20.00:00 Hrs

Registration

Wednesday, 29 March 2023

08:00 –10:30

Official Opening Session

Session chair:

H. E. Dr. Kerfalla Yansane, Ambassador of Guinea to the USA & Former Minister for Mining & Geology

Welcome remarks:

Prof. Théophile Azomahou, Ag. Executive Director, AERC

Opening remarks:

Mr. Dan Peters, Advisor, Global Policy & Advocacy, BMGF

Official Opening & Keynote: **Hon. Eliud Owalo**, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information Communications & Digital Economy

10:30 –11.00

Tea/Coffee Break

11:00 –12:30

Session 1:

A Lifecycle, Economy-Wide Framework for Human Capital in Africa

Session chair:

Hon. Bangasi J. Bakosoo, Minister for Public Service & Human Resource Development, South Sudan

Presenters:

Prof. Lant Pritchett, Harvard University, USA

Discussant:

Dr. Adam Mugume, Executive Director, Bank of Uganda

Floor Discussion

12:30 –14:00

Lunch Break

14:00 –15:30

Session 2:

Human Capital Investments and Economic Growth in Africa

Session chair:

H. E. Dr. Kheswar Jankee, Ambassador, Embassy of Mauritius in Russia

Presenter:

Prof. Jere R. Behrman, Department of Economics, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Discussant:

Dr. Sherillyn Raga, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), UK

Floor Discussion

15:30 –17:00

Session 3:

**Human Capital Accumulation in Africa:
Drivers, Consequences, and Way forward**

Session chair:

Hon. Kobygda Larba Issa, Ministere de l'Economie, des Finances et du Developpement, Burkina Faso

Presenter:

Prof. Germano Mwabu, Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Discussant:

Prof. Olu Ajakaiye, African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building, Nigeria

Floor Discussion

17:00 –17:30

Tea/Coffee Break

19:00 – 21:00

Cocktail Reception

Thursday, 30 March 2023

8:30 –10:00 **Session 4:**

**Education in Africa: Career Progressions,
Gaps in Learning Outcomes and
Responding to the Learning Crisis**

Session chair:

Dr. Wilson T. Banda, Governor, Reserve Bank of Malawi

Presenters:

Prof. Adrienne Lucas & Dr. Gerald Ipapa, Lerner College of Business & Economics, University of Delaware, USA

Discussant:

Dr. Elizabeth Nanziri, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

10:00 –10:30

Tea/Coffee Break

10:30 –12:30

Session 6:

Session chair:

Panellists:

Policy Roundtable

Her Royal Highness (HRH), Queen Nozizwe Mulela, Kingdom of Eswatini

- **Dr. Rose Ngugi**, Executive Director, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, (KIPPRA)
- **Dr. Martha Muhwezi**, Executive Director, FAWE
- **Ms. Barbra Barungi**, Managing Partner, Imara Africa
- **H. E. Dr. Kheswar Jankee**, Ambassador, Embassy of Mauritius in Russia
- **Hon. Issa-Toure Salahaddine**, Speaker of the National Assembly, Togo
- **Prof. Ahoure Alban Alphonse E.** Directeur, Centre for Economic and Social Research (CAPEC)

12:30 – 12:45

Session 7:

Session chair:

Conference Resolutions (Communiqué)

H. E. Dr. Kerfalla Yansane, Ambassador of Guinea to the USA & Former Minister for Mining & Geology

12:45 – 12:55

Vote of Thanks

13:00 –14:00

Lunch Break

19:00 – 21:00

Dinner



Mission

To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

The mission rests on two basic premises: that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy, and that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed group of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research.

Bringing Rigour and Evidence to Economic Policy Making in Africa

- Improve quality.
- Ensure Sustainability.
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www.linkedin.com/school/aercafrica/

Contact Us

African Economic Research Consortium
Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique
Middle East Bank Towers,
3rd Floor, Jakaya Kikwete Road
Nairobi 00200, Kenya
Tel: +254 (0) 20 273 4150
communications@aecrafica.org