



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRY CASE STUDIES THINKTANKS BASED IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

DATA GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA PHASE II

The Political Economy and Institutional Structure of Data Policy and Governance in Africa: Opportunities, Challenges and Risks

The scoping studies on data governance and sound policy in Africa phase I teased out the pertinent issues that have beleaguered the adoption and enforcement of data governance in Africa. Though there are existing efforts on data and privacy protection through legislation, and agreements by sub-Saharan African governments such as the African Union Malabo protocol, the adoption rates are quite low. The challenges faced by African governments in data policy and governance are cross-sectoral. For instance, critical socioeconomic data are collected in unreasonable time intervals, rarely available to inform policy on time, and are not accessible to researchers to conduct studies to build the stock of knowledge necessary to impact policy. In addition, there is massive feedback on the quality of data collected once analysis and policy advice is generated.

The scoping phase underscored the two characteristics of data in a broader sense: its production and availability in unlimited quantity, and usability without rivalry. These unique characteristics of data, coupled with the increasingly data-driven global economy, carry risks of enormous power imbalances, inequalities, and diverging development clubs. The source of unequal access and use stems from poor connectivity and access to broadband internet, lack of computing capacity and capability to store and harness big data, and a lack of regulatory systems to access data. Such trends impede the realization of the SDGs, the key objective or motto, which is 'leaving no one behind' and everything needing to be counted. The capacity and capability to analyze these diverse data to provide input to policy making process and the required reforms are also weak. The COVID-19 pandemic has produced variable lessons that also touch on data and data processing platforms. Noting these insights, the AERC recognizes the criticality of this topic, and now plans further engagement in the realm of data policy and data governance, the policy outcomes to be proposed, the appropriate frameworks and the institutionalization required in African economies.

The Call for Expressions of Interest for Phase II

Data governance in Africa economies faces a myriad of challenges. One instance is that socio-economic and other individual level data being are fragmented, scattered, and poorly organized, costing governments enormous resources and time to manage the economy. Important socio-economic surveys are designed and collected independently from each other, costing massive resources and at the same time limiting their significance for policy making. Other matters of concern are that most data governance studies are concentrated on privacy and security. There is much more that can be harnessed from the

extensive data available in the virtual world. Studies on how it can be tapped for societal and economic progression is of great importance to human society. Studies on who has access, cost of data and use of data evidence-based policy making are limited. While open data policies by some governments in SSA has made it easier to access data online, more interventions are needed for countries which are hoarding data and that can help generate or facilitate action that can lead to better social and economic policy outcomes. Most of the data governance and policy issues identified above are borne of weak capacity of the government as well as private sector to recognize the enormous potential data facilitates the advancement of society.

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), as part of its mission of bringing rigor and evidence to economic policymaking in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), calls for developing countries case studies proposals for **Think Tanks**. The collaborative project will foster frontier research on the political economy of data policy and governance in Africa.

Collaborative Think Tanks country case studies papers. The AERC will commission two country case studies conducted by national think tanks. The national think tanks are allowed to conduct comparative multi country study The country case studies will be based on the five themes:

- **Theme 1:** Benchmarking Africa against global best-practice on data policy and data governance.
- **Theme 2:** Identifying institutional structures for data policy and governance frameworks that can be replicated across Sub-Sahara African countries.
- **Theme 3:** Exploring data interoperability platforms in Africa, and related policy making opportunities and risks.
- **Theme 4:** Exploring gaps, priorities, and opportunities in digital revolution, digital technology, and the efficiency of data governance in Africa.
- **Theme 5:** Strengthen the prevailing weak cultural predispositions, data centrality, and governance – How users can start to see the link between using data to solve problems and innovation, and how they can act on fresh concepts and provide value in the process.

The country case studies will clearly articulate the pathways of data policy and governance impacting economic and policy outcomes in Africa. The study(ies) will also provide a basis for country-level engagements and sets of capacity building activities including hosting of useful training and capacity building events to harmonize data governance practices in Africa. The project is expected to realize country case studies papers with a focus on practical experience in data governance in African countries. The project will take into consideration the achievements, lesson learnt and challenges to improve the policy comprehension and actions of how data governance can be used as an agent of economic decision making, reforms and prosperity. The structure of the work will include leading think tank researchers producing high quality and context-rich country case studies that apply methods and techniques covered. The country case studies call aims to support capacity building of the researchers in think tanks. The output will used to influence of policy actions on entrenching of best practices of data governance systems through in country disseminations of the research findings. In additional, capacity building, peer-learning, high-level policy seminars, and practical policy toolkits will be used to augment, advocate, and amplify this work to key audiences, including regional organizations such as the African Union (AU).

The papers – whose terms of reference will be coined to cover salient aspects of data policy and governance across sub-regions and within specific countries – will be used for dialogue amongst policymakers and practitioners. Issues to be considered in the papers will include, but not limited, to:

- Mapping and documenting the existing data management, assessment of reforms and recommendation of policy action pathways for a balanced data policy and governance system.
- Assessing institutional structures for data policy and governance frameworks that can be replicated across Sub-Saharan African countries.
- An understanding of interface of data interoperability in terms of statistical output (digital and physical) merging for robust policy formulation.
- Identification of opportunities, challenges and risks of digital data and technology and how they can be harnessed to propagate economic prosperity and policy action in Africa.
- Establishing the cultural predispositions, data centrality, and governance and application of the data in research and innovation as well as value addition to the existing data structures available in sub-Saharan Africa.

Expression of Interest requirements

The Expression of Interest, including tables, figures, references, and annexes, should not exceed 5 pages with 1.5 spacing. It should contain the following.

- **A title** which reflects the main thrust of the proposed research project, preferably short, simple to understand and if possible inspiring.
- **An introduction** which shows the broad context of the study or motivation, research questions and their relevance, hypotheses or empirical approach including methods which, description of the data to be used and the expected contribution of the study to the literature.
- **A brief literature review** focusing on the seminal contributions that are the foundations to the issue and any work done in Africa including on the specific country concerned (if relevant). Organize the literature review thematically. Avoid splitting theoretical literature and empirical literature and focus on what previous literature accomplished, state the gaps, and indicate how your project intends to close that gap.
- **Empirical strategy or approach.** Motivate the specification of the empirical model and the econometric approach including the baseline model. Evoke how issues of endogeneity will be tackled and discuss likely robustness of results.
- **Data.** Present clearly and accurately the data relevant to answer the research question, its coverage and its source. If it is intended to carry out a survey (surveys are discouraged because of difficulties in design and obtaining positive answers), be specific about the selection of units to be surveyed (with a sample questionnaire, how it will be carried out. Present any stylized facts (trends, relationships, similarities, differences) on key variables/indicators to be used in the study.

Eligibility Requirements

Think tanks meeting the criteria highlighted below are encouraged to submit an expression of interest. However, the lead investigator must demonstrate, in hers/his CV, that they have:

- a strong publication record, especially in the project theme; and
- proven expertise in research related to political economy and institutional structures of data governance in Africa; and
- completed at least one AERC research project (either thematic or collaborative project); and/or
- participated in or finalized a research project on a relevant topic not necessarily funded by AERC.
- All applicants are required to attach their CVs in the submissions. Qualified women are especially encouraged to apply.

Submission Requirements and Key Dates

The submission **must** consist of an Expression of Interest and **the Think Tanks and researchers most recent credentials and Curriculum Vitae (CV) respectively** (the credentials and CVs should not

exceed **5 pages**, should highlight education levels, research experience, publications, and other information **relevant** to this call). Additionally, the biographical section of the CV must include the researcher's nationality, gender, and full contact details. Where the proposed study will involve more than one researcher, the CVs of all researchers must be included as part of the submission.

The think tanks should demonstrate expertise on the country/sector selected for the study, either through research/publications or team composition. All applicants are required to attach CVs in their submissions. Suitably qualified women are especially encouraged to apply.

The lead researcher from the think tank is responsible for ensuring that a **complete application** is submitted to the AERC. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Most selected projects will be building on the Phase I scoping papers available on the AERC website. Projects showing a strong interest in the policy implications of the research will receive greatest attention.

Project Timelines

The total duration of the study will be 18 months, and first drafts papers should be submitted within 6 months of the inception workshop. This call for Expressions of Interest is the first stage in the application process. Researchers who submit applications that meet the necessary criteria in this first stage will be invited to present their proposed papers in a workshop. Projects with the most potential will be granted up to USD\$ 10,000 to develop the framework papers (financing is available for up to 2 projects). The breakdown of the timeline is as follows:

- **Close of call period.** February 6, 2023: All proposals must be submitted by that date
- **Selection:** February 15, 2023 : Authors informed of selection process
- **Inception workshop** Around early March 2023, Virtual.
- **Mid-term review** : September 2023, Virtual.
- **Final workshop** : March 2024, Virtual.

Complete proposals should be submitted to:

- AERC Director of Research at cresearch@aercafrica.org with a copy to cmutanu@aercafrica.org
- The subject of your email should read "AERC-Data Governance in Africa Phase II-proposal submission: Phase II" with respective 'Theme' denoted as **Theme 1,....,5.**