



# **Think Tank-University Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa :**

*A Synthesis Report on 10 Country Studies*

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**PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICAN SOCIAL  
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## Think Tank-University Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa

### *A Synthesis Report on 10 Country Studies*

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Partnership for African Social & Governance Research  
P.O.Box76418-00508  
KMA Centre, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Mara Road, Upper Hill, Nairobi, Kenya  
Telephone: +254(0)202985000| +254(0)729111031  
Email:info@pasgr.org  
Website:www.pasgr.org

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## Key Concepts

Competition	Rivalry between two or more independent parties pursuing the same or similar objective. This can be positive or negative.
Consultancy	Advice on a specific policy or programme issue provided by an external specialist through a fee-for-service contract or sub-contract.
Education/Training	Delivery of structured learning in the form of courses, workshops and instructional materials. The terms education and training are used interchangeably.
Policy dialogue	Sharing of information with policy actors through conferences, workshops, seminars, reports, media, and various events.
Relationship	Collaboration between think tanks and universities in the use of each other's human, financial and/or infrastructural resources. The terms relationship and collaboration are used interchangeably.
Research	Investigation using scientific or empirical methodologies where data and findings are not subject to modifications by the funder
Think Tank	An organisation that generates policy-oriented research in social sciences with the aim of enabling public policy actors to make informed decisions
University	An institution of higher learning providing facilities for social science graduate teaching and research among others, and authorised to grant academic degrees

## List of Acronyms

AAU	Association of African Universities
ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DfID	Department for International Development
EEA	Ethiopian Economics Association
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre
ESRF	Economic and Social Research Foundation
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MISR	Makerere Institute for Social Research
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OSSREA	Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
PASGR	Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
SIDA	Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
REPOA	Research on Poverty Alleviation
TTI	Think Tank Initiative

## Executive Summary

Knowledge has become the driving force in current economy and the essential source of competitive advantage. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), there are a number of players involved in knowledge production and dissemination mainly through training and research. Although universities have traditionally played a primary role in leading and providing training and research in many SSA countries since post-colonial period, the emergence of think tanks on the global scene is changing the dynamics within which knowledge is generated at national, regional, and international levels. The politics of power, economic circumstances and external influences have shaped the emergence, growth and operations of both universities and think tanks in many countries. This has been further enhanced by the attainment of independence and introduction of structural adjustment programmes.

Literature reveals diverse relationships between think tanks and universities, ranging from short- and long-term, formal and informal, and institutional and individual need for collaboration in the interdisciplinary research landscape. Even with this knowledge, the relationship between think tanks and universities in SSA context is not fully explored. Universities and think tanks are thought to have both negative (competitive, or displacing) and positive (collaborative, complementary and mutually reinforcing) relationships. It is evident that think tanks influence graduate teaching and curricula, and universities build the capacity of think tank researchers. The interaction of these two institutions in the knowledge landscape to connect research and teaching and inform policy necessitates a deeper analysis of opportunities for more structured collaborations and complementarities. This paper details how think tanks and universities in SSA inter-relate and the factors that influence these relationships.

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) and the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) undertook a 10-country study to address the gap in literature and analysis by asking two overarching questions:

- What is the nature of relationships between think tanks and universities?
- What is the influence of partner or funding organizations on these relationships?

Based on these two questions the study examines:

- The types of relationships at institutional and individual levels (formal and informal), in four different areas: research, training/education, policy dialogue, and consultancy;
- The main drivers of the relationships taking into consideration the contexts in which universities and think tanks operate;
- The influence of key players in the relationships based on their characteristics;
- Key barriers to more effective relationships and how these can be overcome; and,
- Actions to foster better relationships between universities and think tanks.



The study used common survey tools and specific interview questions that involved a selected group of universities, think tanks and third-party organisations in 10 African countries: Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Findings of the study show that universities and think tanks bring different but complementary skills and resources, and need to understand their comparative advantages in a mutually beneficial agenda that recognizes clear roles for each institution or individual. The relationships between think tanks and universities are complex, involving diverse social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Collaborations appear to complement each other in research and training, but to a lesser extent in policy dialogue and consultancy. The distinction of whether collaboration is formal or informal, individual or institutional is often blurred. The process of working together usually begins as informal, ad-hoc or intermittent contacts between individuals, and later becomes more formal as the collaboration grows. Even where initial arrangements are formal and institutional, they are nourished and sustained by individuals researching and training together. A quest to optimise collaboration needs to embrace all these connections.

Motivations for collaboration by individuals range from the need to improve effectiveness and efficiency to the pursuit of individual interests, such as taking on an extra job in another institution in order to boost personal earnings/experience/status. Personal relationships are a catalyst for institutional trust. Commitment to delivery by all partners on agreed-upon goals and tasks is crucial to success.

There is great interest in collaboration between universities and think tanks, not only among the institutions themselves, and individuals working in them, but also among organisations that use and fund policy research, training, policy dialogue and consultancy. Potentially useful synergies include improved quality of research outputs and training, networking, increased visibility, monetary gains, and capacity enhancement.

Collaborations are sustainable when those involved have common and clear goals. There are also differences in operational modes, work ethics, ideologies, and management styles between universities and think tanks. Bureaucracy in universities tends to frustrate both university staff and think tanks when they try to set up collaborative relationships. The desire by the two types of institutions to influence the research agenda in their own favour can derail collaborative opportunities. This is because of the knowledge generation-policy influence nexus. University staff looks at generating knowledge and publication as key since this is what matters for their promotion at universities while think tanks look at informing policy as more important. Many times reaching a balance between knowledge generation and policy influence is a challenge that can affect potential collaboration.

Universities and think tanks need good communication strategies, transparency and good leadership to mutually benefit each other. Conspicuous gaps include lack of a skilled human resource to facilitate relationships; platforms which create spaces, opportunities and innovations

around which relationships can be fostered; and financial and technological resources for tools to support collaborations.

There are mixed responses across the countries assessed on the role donors play in supporting or facilitating think tank-university relations with some reporting that just a few donors make collaboration a pre-condition for funding. Considering that collaboration depends on stable funding, suggestions were made for donors including promotion of think tank-University collaboration in their call-for-proposals and in other funding streams, and facilitating meeting opportunities for universities and think tanks. There is need to support technical exchange of information through, journals containing research evidence of think tanks and universities. Donors, while paying attention to country specific contexts, can convene meetings that will help the two institutions explore the typology of different forms of research and consensus building on how to integrate policy and knowledge research.

This study underscores the need for strong collaboration between Universities and Think tanks as evidenced by lessons from the 10 study countries.

## 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that knowledge is an important instrument in Africa's development and its acquisition has been outlined as a priority that nations must invest in. Recent regional and global developments show that knowledge capacity is the greatest determinant of a country's entry to and effective participation in global competitiveness (Jegede, 2012). However, the leveraging of existing and new knowledge for development demands the presence of local teaching, research and innovative capacities as well as willingness to absorb and use policy-relevant research within governments. The research landscape is interdisciplinary, complex and sometimes requires collaborations between institutions as well as individuals. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), policy-relevant research is undertaken in a variety of institutional settings including:

- Universities;
- National (or sub-national) policy-research institutes (think tanks);
- National non-governmental organisations that may include various forms of civil society organisations and private sector bodies;
- Regional organizations such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union (AU), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF);
- Pan-African research institutions such as Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and, Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR);
- International research institutes and initiatives such as International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Growth Center (IGC), Department for International Development's research consortia, Brookings' Africa Growth Initiative, the Think Tank Initiative, Global Development Network (GDN), International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), and Japan International Cooperation Agency's Research Institute (JICA's Research Institute);
- International bodies such as the World Bank and other UN agencies; and,
- National government bodies ranging from Ministries to Central Banks and various agencies.

Although the range of institutions where research takes place is extensive, most policy-relevant research by Africans is conducted in universities and think tanks. The intellectual services, expertise and innovative capacities of think tanks and universities are needed to shape African future. As key players in knowledge generation in Africa, it is important to understand how these two institutions relate and the extent to which their relationships<sup>1</sup> incentivise or impede their role

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<sup>1</sup>The terms relationship and collaboration are used interchangeably in this report. The assumption is that a relationship or collaboration exists when think tanks and universities make use of each other's resources including human, financial and infrastructure.

and contribution, separately or together. This paper explores the nature and drivers of relationships between universities and think tanks in SSA.

Rather than starting with the relationship between the two institutions, this paper first focuses on how the political and economic environment has influenced the development and character of universities and think tanks in SSA. The literature recognises how the political context and the introduction of structural adjustment programmes in Africa have influenced the contribution of universities to policy-relevant research and the establishment of think tanks (Kimenyi and Datta, 2011; Mkandawire, 2000).

## **1.1 Higher Education in Africa**

A good understanding of the relationship between Universities and think tanks is not complete without an initial understanding of the history of higher education in Africa. Africa's higher education has undergone four major phases as described below and how these phases have influenced the development and current status of universities. Although we use the term phases to describe evolutionary trajectory, it should be noted that they did not occur simultaneously across various countries. In addition, it is important to note that political development in each country has not been linear, for example, some countries have experienced political reversals, such as transitions to autocratic rule after democratic reforms.

### ***African universities in the Colonial period (post-world war II)***

By 1900 much of Africa had been colonized by seven European powers: Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Italy with the most prominent powers being France and Britain. Some literature suggests that there were universities in Africa, mainly focusing on religious issues before the colonial rule, such as Sankore in Mali, Egypt's Al-Azhar and Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco before colonialism (Mthembu, 2004; Sawyerr 2004 & Teferra and Altbach, 2004); with a number of them like Fourah Bay College (1827), University of Cape Town (1829), University of Khartoum (1902), University of Cairo (1908), and Makerere university (1922) existing as technical colleges. Some of these became university colleges affiliated to Western universities during the colonial period. For example, Makerere university became a university college affiliated to University of London in 1949 offering courses leading to the general degrees of its then mother institution. With the establishment of the University of East Africa in June 29, 1963, Makerere University's special relationship with the University of London came to a close and degrees of the University of East Africa were instituted. The current Makerere University, University of Nairobi and University of Dar es Salaam constituted the University of East Africa.

Some of the universities established in the period soon after the Second World War by colonialists include universities of Ghana and Ibadan, which were created in 1948. In many African countries, universities were established either immediately before or within a decade after attaining political independence. As Mamdani (2011a) advances:

*Most colonies had no universities as they approached independence. When they became independent, just as sure as the national anthem, the national flag, and the national currency, a national university too became an obligatory sign of independence. The development of universities became a key nationalist demand.*

It is not surprising that by 1960, only 18 out of 48 countries of SSA had universities and colleges (Sawyerr, 2004). According to Teferra and Altbach (2004), the University of East Africa had just produced 99 graduates from the three East African countries with a population of 23 million in 1961. Lord Lugard, Britain's leading colonial administrator in Africa, could be heard saying that Britain must avoid the Indian disease in Africa; the development of an educated middle class, a group most likely to carry the virus of nationalism (Mamdani, 2011).

The colonial rule was characterized by the politics of external influence. Education within colonial regimes of power in Africa was limited for African populations, and was oriented towards inculcating obedience and conformity to the tenets of colonial administration, as well as to meeting the labour demands of the colonial system (Mhishi, 2012). According to Mazrui (2003):

*“The African university was conceived primarily as a transmission belt for Western high culture, rather than a workshop for the failure to contextualize standards and excellence for the needs of Africans and to ground the very process and agenda of learning and research in the local context”.*

Most of the African population remained marginal to the higher education system, except those who either went, or were sent to Western institutions in exile, or to meet the civil service demands of the imperial mission.

### ***Post-independence period***

In the 1960s and early 70s, African higher education entered into the era of post-colonial education. The immediate post-independent era saw higher education as a “public good” offering knowledge and social justice through fair access to knowledge resources, as well as offering a broad range of skills and capabilities through research to accelerate the continent's development (Sawyerr, 2004). Most African nations became independent and saw universities as a major part of post-colonial development. It was critical that these newly independent nations develop their human capacity to manage their resources and help reduce poverty among their people (Ngimwa, 2012).

During the post-colonial regime, more local universities were established while those that had affiliation with Western universities attained their own university status. For instance, on July 1, 1970, the University of East Africa was split into three independent universities: Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, and the University of Nairobi in Kenya. The steady expansion in universities was facilitated by the fact that governments sponsored the entire cost of establishing and developing infrastructure and facilities as well as running costs (Sawyerr, 2004). This included students tuition and in some cases student's stipend. In this era, universities were entirely state-driven. The challenge was that despite these

universities being independent of the former colonial administration's host universities, they continued to be modelled on the Western education system. As Mamdani stated in his address to students at Makerere University in 2011, the organization of knowledge production in the contemporary African university is everywhere based on a disciplinary mode developed in Western universities over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These have in some cases imposed rigid structures of knowledge acquisition and production.

Kariwo (2007) points out that after independence, African states perceived higher education as a vehicle for churning out post-colonial civil servants, as well as being in the service of the developmental state. The university became the centre of efforts for rallying a post-colonial, nationalist and Pan-African narrative that sought to restore a sense of pride and dignity to Africa and Africans and steep forms of knowledge research and teaching in Africa's past, and to garner recognition on the international stage. Mkandawire (2000) mentions that;

*The historical task of African nationalism was complete decolonization of the continent and national sovereignty, nation-building, economic and social development, democratization and regional co-operation. African intellectuals initially shared these objectives and were willing to submit themselves to the command of nationalist and developmental state, which they viewed as the "custodian" of the development process, with the university as an institution that had to train human resources for development.*

Politicians often solicited the views of academicians, while academicians often felt honoured to contribute to national policies (Rashid, 1994; Sawyerr, 2004). In the early years of post-colonialism, the relationship between the state and intellectuals was good. According to Bujra (1994), this was a remarkable period of general unity and agreement about goals and means. Rashid (1994) characterized it as:

*a period of mutual tolerance and amicable cooperation between the academic community and the policy making entities" and of "mutual accommodation and wilful cooperation" when "views of academics were solicited by the latter, while the former readily obliged and often took pride in being associated with the honour of contributing to the crafting of national policies and exposure to the limelight as a result thereof*

The good relationship between the state and intellectuals was short lived. Governments treated universities as parastatals and they undermined the academic freedom of university professors. The primary interest of government leaders was to consolidate power so that they maximize economic gains. Leaders did not encourage the development of an intellectual class, as they feared this would someday oppose their rule. Later, many governments moved to authoritarian rule and were relying on foreigners for technical expertise (Mkandawire, 2000). Some governments argued that the research by Africans was not relevant, meaning that it was not immediately usable in policy. In some cases, the relevance issue was spilled over to question the quality of the education process, with academics insisting on standards and governments insisting on relevance. Governments often insisted on applied research while having nothing to do with basic research. However as Mamdani puts it in his speech at Makerere University in

2011, “in a university there needs to be room for both applied (policy-oriented) and basic research”. Unlike applied research, which is preoccupied with making recommendations, basic research identifies and questions assumptions that drive the very process of knowledge production. Rashid (1994) summarises the experience in this period in the following manner:

*Beginning with the second half of the 1970s to date, readiness to solicit and use social science research for policy-making purposes has waned progressively and almost ceased to exist in certain areas. Indeed, the amicable relationship and attitude of mutual tolerance which characterized the interface between academia and bureaucracy in the immediate post-independence era has soured badly and has given way to increasingly strained relationships of suspicion, mistrust, antagonism and sterile lack of co-operation. The intellectuals’ response was to focus on consultancy-type work demanded by “civil society”.*

Similarly, Kimenyi and Datta (2011) observed:

*Immediately after independence, African politicians often sought the advice of academics, who played a key role in advancing mainly socialist ideas which dominated policy-making. This situation changed shortly after independence. Fearful of being opposed, politicians treated academics with suspicion and mistrust. Political space for academics soon disappeared. Funding for tertiary education and state- and university-affiliated research institutes was cut massively. Professors on occasion set up their own (foreign-funded) research organisations.*

Rashid (1994) and Kimenyi and Datta (2011) allude to governments resisting research input because it made policy measurable, and therefore accountable, an idea not popular in the political power. Given their underutilization in the public sector, African intellectuals turned to civil society organizations for the use of their research. However, policy makers still needed knowledge input that was not public, hence the establishment of regime-sponsored think tanks and reliance on foreign mentors. For example, Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere had a band of foreign “Fabian socialists”, Zambia’s Kenneth Kaunda enlisted John Hatch as a close intellectual associate and Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah surrounded himself with pan-Africanists such as George Padmore and W.E.B. Dubois (Mkandawire, 2000).

### ***African universities in the military rule***

During the period 1970s to late 80s, a large number of SSA countries were under military rule. Of the 53 independent Africa states, approximately 40 had been affected by the “coup d’etat” epidemic (Kieh, 2000). Despite the period for the military rule specified in this paper, it should be noted that there were military coups in a number of African countries as recently as 2009. The transition to military rule was often triggered by weaknesses in single party rule, which was marked with a variety of failures, including poor economic performance, denial of civil freedoms, wide spread corruption and failure to provide basic services to the majority of the population

(Kimenyi and Datta, 2011). These governments were ruled by decree resulting in disbanding of political parties, suspension of the constitution, and dissolution of the legislative assembly. This eliminated political institutional avenues for civic input into policy making (Anene, 1997).

The military rule was characterized by the politics of power in the state where a few individuals dominated decision-making. The military leader and military councils made policy decisions singularly. Funding to many universities and their research centres was curtailed, leaving higher education systems in ruin. Additionally, many intellectuals left their country or became inactive, leading to a significant brain drain and arguably reducing the quality of policy-making for future generations. There are intellectuals who opted to stand up and fight, but they ended up either in jail or dead. Consequently, universities became increasingly reliant on external support from foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller as well as agencies such as Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Sida) and the World Bank.

### ***Political and economic liberation***

The 1980s and 1990s saw many African countries fall into economic recession, and an increasing role for donor agencies. Sawyerr (2004) attributes the economic recession to a decline in the price of primary products and export volumes at the world trade in the 1980s and 1990s, the mishandling of exchange rates and external reserves, and huge external debts. This led to African countries depending heavily on foreign aid. As a result, there were adjustments in lending terms, debt scheduling, and debt forgiveness being attached to neoliberal economic reforms including privatisation of state-owned companies and trade liberalization, commonly known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

With SAPs deemed a failure in the early 1990s, donor policy demands focused on political reforms, including the establishment of democratic institutions (commonly known as good governance agenda) and improving efficiency, transparency and accountability of bureaucracies (Kimenyi and Datta, 2011). Political and economic liberalization led to transfer of power to local, regional and international spaces and actors.

There is no doubt that the numerous social and economic challenges that plagued Africa, beginning from the 1980s and the subsequent structural adjustments reforms undertaken by many African governments led to gross underfunding of higher education (Mkandawire, 2000). World Bank (2010) noted that economic liberalization led to freezing of staff salaries and recruitment in universities, eliminating expenditure on books and equipment, foregoing basic repair and maintenance, and reducing students' social aid and scholarships. The inability to offer competitive remuneration to intellectuals in public universities made it difficult for these universities to retain staff. Visser (2008) notes that one of the effects of low pay is brain drain where academics leave for places offering better opportunities. Low staff moral, brain drain and under financed research activities resulted in reduced output and minimal contribution of intellectuals to policymaking process in Africa.



According to estimates provided for 18 SSA countries, public spending on higher education drastically reduced from 12.2% of GDP per capita per student in 1975 to 7.3% in 1990 (World Bank, 2010). This was worsened by claims by the World Bank that higher education in Africa had lower returns than secondary and primary levels of education, signalling to donors the need to cut their support for university education. This motivated intellectuals at universities to return to the policy fold by setting up their own donor-funded research centres. Examples include the Development Policy Centre in Nigeria, the Economic and Social Research Foundation in Tanzania and the Centre for Policy Studies in South Africa.

In the face of continuing dwindling government provisions of funds to universities and higher education system as a whole, a number of changes started. Mamdani observed that a “market-driven model” currently dominates African universities. This has led to increased enrolments without necessarily adjusting the facilities to fit the big numbers. Privatization of higher education has been on going in a number of countries. Public universities have introduced cost-sharing schemes including parallel programmes of privately sponsored students. Partnerships and organizations that support higher education have been established. These include the Association of African Universities (AAU), the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA). An increasing number of private universities have been established in Africa to partly absorb the spill-over from the pool of fully qualified but unsuccessful applicants to the public institutions, and to offer a limited range of programmes which tend to be more market-driven. As of 2012, there were an estimated 800 universities and more than 1,500 institutions of higher learning in which the percentage of private universities was on the increase. Jegede (2012) indicates that in 1960 there were seven private universities on the continent; the number rose to 27 by 1990 and by 2006 the private higher education sector accounted for 22% of student enrolment. For example, Uganda had only Makerere University by 1960 but currently has 37, the first private university being established in 1988. By 1960, Nigeria had only 1 federal university (University College of Ibadan) but currently has 129 universities with the first private university established in 1998. Mozambique had only one university (Eduardo Mondlane) at the time of independence in 1975 but currently has 14. Table 1 shows the number of universities by country covered in this study.

Table 1: Number of universities in 10 Sub-Saharan Africa countries

Country	Public universities	Private universities	Total
Benin	3	7	10
Ethiopia	34	13	47
Kenya	31	36	67
Mozambique	14	12	26
Nigeria	42 Federal, 35 State	52	129
Uganda	7	30	37
Senegal	5	7	12
South Africa	23	1	24 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Kaplan (2008) states that there is a total of 24 well-known universities and 15 technical colleges in South Africa. However, Jegede (2012) reported that there are 23 public universities and 87 private institutions in South Africa with no mention of the actual number of private universities.

Tanzania	9	15	24
Zimbabwe	9	6	15

*Source:* Information from country reports that informed this synthesis paper

The indication is that by 2017 Africa could have more for-profit private universities than those established by government (World Bank, 2010). The student population in African universities was 9.3 million in 2006 and could be 20 million by 2015 (World Bank, 2010). Jegede (2012) ascribes parallel growth in private universities in Africa to the collapse of the monopoly of governments over tertiary education, deepening trends of liberalisation and privatisation, and the cutting of public expenditure on higher education.

The proliferation of private universities in Africa has created some challenges for both the private and public universities. For example, private universities mainly rely on part-time staff from public universities. The competition for the time of these intellectuals compromises the quality of content delivery and research; the latter also noted as a low priority in private Universities.

## **1.2 The History and Development of Think tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Just like universities, the politics of power and external influences have shaped the emergence, development and decline of think tanks in Africa. Think tanks are not a new phenomenon; they were first invented by governments in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as brain trust to solve particular policy problems (see Annex 1 for background on the origins and colloquial uses of the term think tank). In some countries, colonial administrators set up research institutions to help them govern, improve the lives of settler populations and expand the growth of export-oriented cash crops. These include: the West African Institute for Social and Economic Research established in 1950 in Nigeria. In East Africa, the British set up research institutions that focused on agriculture and livestock, to cater for their farming interests. These were mainly located within technical colleges or universities. As Rathgeber (1988) noted, colonial institutes took a highly focused approach, usually concentrating on agriculture and health, particularly on the needs of the settler populations and on the improvement of export oriented cash crops.

During the early years of independence, former colonial research institutes were reconfigured to promote growth and development at home while new governments invested considerable amount of money to expand state infrastructure, including research and development. During military rule, state-sponsored research institutes performed only legitimizing roles to avoid harsh consequences from ruling regimes. Worse still, in 1970s and 1980s, SAPs across SSA made financial support to research institutes difficult to obtain from government sources. This led to either scaling or shutting down of government research institutes. On one hand, many of government's functions including research were transferred to non-state actors, a situation that led to the proliferation of foreign funded independent think tanks. University research centres looked to institutional donors and foundations to provide financial support. On the other hand, many local experts in research centres left their countries or became inactive, leading to a

significant brain drain that compromised policy-making and ultimately forcing some of these centres to close down.

Kimenyi and Datta (2011) indicate that economic and political liberalization had considerable effects on the think tank landscape in SSA including:

- Proliferation of new think tanks in response to increased donor funding and a perception of an expanded space for civil society.
- Initially, there was a tendency by think tanks to prioritise policy issues related to political and economic liberalization, including trade, regional integration and good governance, and later poverty reduction and the millennium development goals (MDGs).
- Many think tanks received funding from the same donors that were lending to African governments with neoliberal conditionality. Think tanks were usually provided with funding to monitor and help improve government policy implementation, thus legitimizing donor positions and providing a mechanism for donors to hold recipient governments accountable. For example, the World Bank's ACBF played a key role in establishing think tanks in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda, to uphold the agenda of the Bretton Woods Institutions.
- Think tanks had to consider how their research findings interacted with overlapping and sometimes contradicting regional and international agreements and treaties.
- African think tanks were always competing for government influence with international institutions such as the World Bank and their research units.

The number of think tanks in SSA has increased overtime, especially since the millennium. Although the great expansion of think tanks in Africa did not happen until the late 1980s and early 1990s, think tanks have been in existence even before colonization. The first think tank in SSA was South African Institute of Race Relations established in 1929. The South African Institute of International Affairs established in 1934 followed. The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research and Centre for Development Studies were established in 1962 and 1969 respectively in Ghana. The Centre for Conflict Resolution and the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa were both established in 1968. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa in Senegal, Freedom Market Foundation in South Africa and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs were all established in early 1970s. By 2008, there were 424 think tanks in SSA and 554 in 2012. According to the Global Think-Tank Survey (2009), the top 25 think tanks in SSA were from South Africa, Senegal, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Nigeria.

McGann (2006) asserts that the growth in the number of think tanks has been driven by the transformative power of the information technology revolution; the end of national governments' monopoly on information; the increasing complexity and technical nature of policy problems; the increasing size of government; a crisis of confidence towards governments and elected officials; globalisation and the growth of state and non-state actors; and the need for timely and concise information and analysis "in the right form at the right time and in the right hands". Nathalie Delapalme of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and K.Y Amoako, the Founder and President of the African Center for Economic Transformation advance that it is strong economic growth that is

driving the creation of African think tanks in recent years. Amoako further identifies three phases in think tanks development in Africa:

First, as African countries gained independence in the late fifties and sixties, think tanks were established to help the nascent governments to build strong foundations of governance. After a few years of independence, the ruling elites started changing the rules of the game. During the 1970s, media space and opportunities to express thoughts that are not in line with the ruling elites were limited. There was growing suspicion and marginalization of think tanks and the fear that their growth in number might lead to threats and agitation for regime change. Second, the World Bank and IMF's Structural Adjustment programmes of the 1980s spurred the establishment of research institutions to measure the impact of African economies and propose policy responses. The final phase was driven by localized source of evidence that motivated African government to seek this information from locally based and run think tanks.

McGann and Johnson (2005) estimate that two-thirds of all existing think tanks globally were established since 1980, and in Africa most have emerged since the mid-1990s. As an indicator of their widespread presence, the 2012 Global Go to Think Tank Index<sup>3</sup> (McGann, 2013) undertook a review of more than 6,600 think tanks in 182 countries, of which 554 are located in SSA and 339 in the Middle East and North Africa. South Africa, with 84 think tanks, is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> globally among countries with the largest number. Other African countries with significant numbers of think tanks are Kenya 57, Nigeria 51, and Ghana 38. There has been a rapid increase in the number of think tanks in Africa in recent years, with an additional 250 identified in SSA, the Middle East and North Africa since the Global Go to Think Tank Index was first compiled in 2008. The percentage of the world's think tanks located within the African region increased, from 11.8% in 2008 to 16.5% in 2013. By 2013, 18 SSA countries had 10 or more think tanks each. These countries included Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Benin, Botswana, Mali and Rwanda. Table 2 shows the number of think tanks by country covered in this study.

Table 2: Number of think tanks in 10 Sub-Saharan Africa countries

Country	Number of think tanks	
	As per 2013 Global Go to Think Tanks Index Report	As per country reports
Benin	15	≥14
Ethiopia	25	23
Kenya	57	12
Mozambique	4	13
Nigeria	51	53
Uganda	29	28
Senegal	19	15
South Africa	88	84
Tanzania	16	15

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that there are limitations with the approach of the Global Go to Think Tanks that might influence the data and findings. Personal, regional, ideological and discipline biases may influence representation and the responses of those consulted for the Global Go to Think Tanks studies.

Zimbabwe	31	10
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Source: Information from country reports that informed this synthesis paper and Global Go to Think Tanks Index Report (2013)

There is a variation in the number of think tanks as reported by researchers who conducted the country studies that informed this thesis and the Global Go to Think Tank Index, with a huge variation noted in Kenya and no exact figure in Benin (Table 2). This could be as a result of the differences in the definition and categorisation of think tanks. It was interesting to note that during the dissemination workshops for the draft of this synthesis paper, it was not possible to arrive at an agreed definition of a think tank. This clearly shows the differences in the definition of think tanks. For instance, in the case of university-affiliated think tanks, some people consider these as part of the universities whereas others look at them as autonomous think tanks.

In addition, researchers focused on think tanks in social sciences that carry out research and engage policy actors whereas the Global go to think tanks uses a self-reporting approach to generate the number of think tanks in a country. For this study, the definition of think tank as provided to researchers was an organisation that generates policy-oriented research in social sciences with the aim of enabling public policy actors to make informed decisions. This could have contributed significantly to the differences in the number of think tanks between what was reported by researchers and the global go to think tank index. For the case of Kenya, the difference in the number of think tanks could be as a result of the high number of civil society organisations that might have participated in the Global Go to Think Tanks study but not necessarily qualifying as think tanks as per this study's definition.

### 1.3 Categories of think tanks

Just like the definition of think tanks, their categorisation is debatable. It is not the intention of this paper to compare numerous definitions of think tanks, but it is important to understand how different individuals and organisations perceive them in the realm of policy-focused research institutions. Rich (2004) defines think tanks as independent, non-interest-based, non-profit organisations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence the policy-making process. The Think Tank Initiative (2009) describes think tanks as independent non-governmental research organisations doing policy-relevant research. McGann (2012:22) argues that think tanks are:

*“public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions that generate policy-oriented research, analysis and advice on domestic and international issues that, in turn, enable both policy makers and the public at large to make informed decisions about public policy issues”.*

Policy-oriented research is common in all definitions of a think tank. For the purposes of this study, think tanks are defined as *“research organisations that generate policy-oriented research in social sciences with the aim of enabling public policy actors to make informed decisions”.*

While the work of think tanks and universities substantially overlap especially in research, they differ in their intended constituencies, motivation and values, leadership, mandates, methods of work, funding sources, and capacity. Think tanks may perform many roles; not all do the same things to the same extent. The character and role of think tanks is influenced by the political history and contemporary political environment in which they operate, the availability and interests of funders and donors, and the space available for policy engagement. Think tanks differ substantially in their operating styles, patterns of recruitment, aspirations to academic standards of objectivity and completeness in research, and in their engagement of policy makers, the press and the public (McGann, 2009a). Abelson (2002) observes that think tanks vary in terms of “specialization, research output and ideological orientation,” which may have an impact on the nature of their relationship with universities and other institutions. Abelson proposes a typology by which think tanks can be defined as: (1) universities without students, (2) government contractors, (3) advocacy think tanks, (4) legacy-based think tanks, and (5) policy clubs. McGann and Weaver (2000) use the first three categories, and add party think tanks, which Elliot et al (2005) argue adequately encompasses Abelson’s legacy-based think tanks and policy clubs. McGann (2009a) suggests six categories of think tanks as summarised in Table 3:

Table 3: Categories of think tanks

Category	Definition
Autonomous and independent	Independent from any one interest group or donor and autonomous in its operations irrespective of possible funding from government
Quasi independent	Autonomous from government but primarily funded by an interest group (union, religious group, etc), donor or contracting agency which has significant influence over the operations of the think tank
University affiliated	A policy research centre at a university
Political party affiliated	Formally affiliated with a political party
Government affiliated	A part of the structure of government
Quasi government	Funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but not a part of the formal structure of government

Source: McGann (2009a)

There is no standard categorisation of think tanks either globally or within Africa, and this study is not meant to suggest otherwise. However, it is clear that the typologies are based on their affiliations and the reasons for their establishment. In a 2008 article “*Not all think tanks are created equal*” Enrique Mendizabal observed that many think tanks are set up directly by donors; some are developed out of large and long-term donor-funded programmes; and others emerge around charismatic and influential personalities<sup>4</sup>. Drawing from a range of African examples, he noted that where project funding was abundant, think tanks had emerged in all shapes and forms – ranging from independent research centres and research centres within universities to issue-based organisations. This study recognises the differentiations, but fuses those with notable similarities to rationalise four categories:

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.odi.org.uk/opinion/2467-not-all-think-tanks-created-equal>

**University-affiliated think tanks:** These are policy research centres located at universities. They function like universities and have a principal mission to promote greater understanding of important social, economic and political issues (Abelson, 2002:18). They tend to hire academics (usually PhDs from universities – hence collaborating on human resource acquisition). They are usually assimilated into the university systems and structures of governance, financial management and succession but their researchers are rarely required to teach. There are exceptions, like the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR) in Uganda and the Institute of Development Studies in Kenya in which think tank personnel both teach and do research. University-affiliated think tanks tend to be tuned more to academia, and less to issues which policymakers and citizens might consider imperative.

**Government-affiliated think tanks:** These are distinguished by their funding sources, their clients, how they set their agenda, and the type of outputs they produce (Abelson, 2002; McGann & Weaver, 2000). Government exclusively funds them and in some cases they are part of government structures. They report to the funding agency rather than the public. As policy makers usually commission them, uptake of their research findings tends to be swifter, but the same closed loop might compromise autonomy, objectivity, and performance. Government affiliated think tanks are unlikely to “bite the hand that feeds them”. This might make collaboration uncomfortable for rigorously objective universities, and trust might be further undermined by competition for similar resources. Examples of government affiliated think tanks include Uganda’s Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Tanzania’s Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, and the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. Focus on a theme or set of themes is quite limited with this category of think tanks because their work is driven by what advice government wants.

**Independent think tanks:** These include what McGann (2009a) refers to as “autonomous and independent” and “quasi independent” as well as what Abelson (2002) refers to as “advocacy think tanks”. Independent think tanks tend to focus on short-term research they can quickly distribute to policy makers and the media. They typically may use a range of tools such as one-to-two-page briefing notes, in order to influence a current policy debate. Not unexpectedly, their relationship with universities is limited by this less “objective and balanced” study ethos (Abelson, 2002: 21). Examples of independent think tanks include Uganda’s Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), the Institute of Economic Affairs in Kenya and the Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA). Independent think tanks might operate within only one country (national) or extend to neighbouring countries (regional). Most relationships are aimed at satisfying the advocacy objectives of the think tank, with very limited investment in looking for alternative research paths or differing answers.

**Other affiliated think tanks:** These include think tanks operating as subsidiaries or associates of a national, regional or non-African body other than a university. They also include what McGann and Weaver (2000) refer to as party think tanks or McGann (2009a) calls political party affiliated.

## 1.4 Importance of understanding the relationship between universities and think tanks

Although universities have traditionally played a primary role in leading and undertaking research in many countries since post-colonial, the emergence of think tanks on the global scene is changing the dynamics within which knowledge is generated at national, regional, and international levels. As universities and think tanks proliferate in number and type, it becomes more difficult, and yet ever-more necessary, to understand the relationships between them that are mediated by diverse social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. The literature reveals a wide variety of relationships between think tanks and universities: short- and long-term, formal and informal, and institutional and individual. They may or may not involve resource sharing, collaborative activities (undertaking projects jointly), or the generation of shared outputs. Depending on the nature of the relationships, a number of factors may influence these, including the national context, the specific types of institutions, the institutions' areas of focus and strategies to achieve the goals, their ideological orientation, and the kinds of support one or both receive from funding organisations.

Universities and think tanks have emerged with differences in functions and in the perceptions of governments and external funders about their roles, goals and capabilities. What is emerging, as an overlap in the establishment of universities and think tanks is the idea of informing policy processes. Whether this and other factors lead to synergistic, competitive or uncooperative relationships between universities and think tanks remains unclear in the SSA context. The available literature is skewed towards think tank-university relations in North America and Europe, masking many possible experiences in Africa.

Better understanding of the relationship between universities and think tanks will help in capacity building in Africa, develop effective interventions, and identify how efforts to strengthen research in one environment can influence another. It will also encourage collaboration that can result in more policy-relevant research and better-trained researchers. It is expected that the findings of this study will help to:

- Improve mutual understanding of organisational interests, dynamics, and priorities;
- Consider opportunities, benefits and barriers associated with collaborations;
- Understand whether efforts to strengthen research or build capacity in one type of organisation influence the other; and,
- Dialogue on new or better ways for the two organisations to collaborate.

This paper addresses two overarching issues - the nature of relationships between think tanks and universities, and the influence on this relationship of partner or funding organisations. These questions were of particular concern to The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR)<sup>5</sup> and The Think Tank Initiative (TTI)<sup>6</sup> that support capacity development and institutional strengthening in SSA knowledge system.

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<sup>5</sup>PASGR is a not-for-profit pan-African organisation based in Nairobi, Kenya, that seeks to increase the capacity of African academic institutions and researchers to produce research that can inform social policy and governance. For more information about PASGR, refer to [www.pasgr.org](http://www.pasgr.org)



PASGR and TTI designed and undertook the study to ascertain:

- The type of relationships (both at institutional and individual levels, formal and informal), found between think tanks and universities in four different areas (research, training/education, policy dialogue and consultancy);
- The main drivers, motivations or underlying reasons for the relationships, and how these are mediated by objectives, operating contexts and individual circumstances;
- Characteristics of the key players in the relationships, and their influence;
- Key barriers to more effective relationships between think tanks and universities, and how these could be overcome; and,
- Improvements needed to foster better relationships between universities and think tanks with a view to achieving better capacity and policy outcomes.

Filling this knowledge gap is equally important to universities and think tanks, and also organisations supporting them directly and indirectly.<sup>7</sup> There are lessons to be learned from similar studies in South Asia and Latin America.

This paper is structured in eight sections. Following this introduction is a brief conceptual framework. Section 3 summarises the approach to the study and section 4 presents the big picture. Section 5 discusses the collaborative terrain for universities and think tanks while section 6 focuses on the levels and trends of collaborations. Section 7 presents key emerging issues and the paper ends with conclusions and recommendations in section 8.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

A common view is that the relationship between universities and think tanks in Africa is competitive, that think tanks have displaced universities as the locus of research activity, or indeed that the output of research in universities has declined while the output of research by think tanks has grown. Another common perception is of a one-way relationship: that universities are effective suppliers of human capacity to think tanks, providing graduates or teaching staff for employment or providing commissioned research to think tanks. Given the drivers of the development of think tanks and universities discussed earlier, their relationship may not be as simplistic as this.

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<sup>6</sup>TTI is a multi-donor programme dedicated to strengthening the capacity of independent policy research organisations in the developing world and managed by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). For more information about TTI, refer to <http://www.thinktankinitiative.org/>

<sup>7</sup>Direct support includes on-going core financing and/or broad organisational support. Indirect support includes time-limited activities such as research projects and/or professional development that may or may not have knock-on effects on the organisation as a whole.

Experience suggests that many relationships between think tanks and universities are complementary and can lead to positive outcomes including enhancing the function of the overall knowledge landscape. Key outcomes may include improved quality of outputs, capacity development, credibility of either organisation, and wider coverage or scope of research undertaken and outputs produced. In her thesis entitled “Exploring the Political Roles of Chinese Think Tanks: A Case Study of China’s Three Gorges Project” (2008), Li Na describes think tanks as a bridge between knowledge and power. She argues that think tanks “fill the space between the two, linking policy makers and academics, by conducting in-depth analysis of certain issues and presenting the research in easy-to-read, condensed form for policy makers to absorb” (McGann, 2005:12 quoted in Li Na) – the equivalent of Western “knowledge brokers”

Evidence from developed countries indicates that think tanks have a great role to play in influencing government policy making process because they have greater ability and capacity to rapidly disseminate evidence-based research outputs (Mendizabal, 2012). In SSA, there is an increasing recognition of think tanks as providing a solution to the paucity of critical research capacity that exists (e.g. Mbadlanyana et al 2011). An effective collaboration between these two institutional settings is essential for ensuring that researches undertaken by them feedback into the policy-making process. Such collaboration will not only maximize the impact of research on policy-making, but also accentuate the importance of these institutions. However, the extent to which such collaboration can be realised to support the policy making process in SSA countries may be affected by the kind of relations that exist between these important institutions.

Najam (2002) developed a model to explain different forms of relationships between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government within the policy arena to articulate and actualise certain goals. Najam states that on any given issue, the goals for NGOs and government will either be similar or not. Each of the two institutions will have certain preferences for the strategies or means they wish to employ in pursuing the goals, which will sometimes be similar, and at other times not. This is a similar situation with universities and think tanks relationships.

According to Najam (2002 – p7):

Institutional actors--governmental and nongovernmental--each pursue certain needs (goals) and have a preference for certain means (strategies). Floating within the policy stream they bump into one another in one of four possible combinations: a) seeking similar ends with similar means which is likely to lead to cooperation; b) seeking dissimilar ends with dissimilar means which leads to confrontation; c) seeking similar ends but preferring dissimilar means which is likely to lead to complementarities; or d) preferring similar means but for dissimilar ends leading to co-optation.

Najam refers to the above as the 4-Cs of government-third sector relationship. Najam further indicates that the fifth possibility is non-engagement or no relationship, a situation where the two institutions happen or choose not to bump into each other

within the policy stream due to substantive or strategic reasons. This fifth option was beyond Najam’s framework given that there was no relationship between the two institutions. Similarly, this is out of scope of this study.

Borrowing from Najam’s 4-Cs model, the likely relationship between think tanks and universities at both institutional and individual levels can be summarized as in Table 4.

Table 4: Possible relationships between think tanks and universities

Possible combinations of goals (ends) and means (strategies)	Possible relationship	Explanation of the relationships at both institutional and individual levels
Similar ends with similar means	Cooperation	A cooperative relationship is likely when, on a given issue, think tanks and universities not only share similar goals but also prefer similar strategies for achieving them (A convergence of preferred ends as well as means).
Dissimilar ends with dissimilar means	Confrontation	A confrontational relationship is likely when think tanks and universities consider each other’s goals and strategies to be antithetical to their own (Total divergence of preferred ends as well as means)
Similar ends but dissimilar means	Complementary	A complementary relationship is likely when think tanks and universities share similar goals but prefer different strategies (Divergent strategies but convergent goals).
Dissimilar ends but similar means	Co-optation	A co-optive relationship is likely when think tanks and universities share similar strategies but have different goals (divergent goals but convergent strategies). These kind of relationships are unstable and often transitory.

Source: Adapted from Najam (2002)

Just like the assumption made by Najam, neither think tanks nor universities are monolithic. One think tank can nurture different types of relations with a given university and vice versa based on the task. Similarly, different think tanks are likely to have different relationship with the same university and vice versa. The same think tank can have a cooperative relationship with one university and a confrontational with another. Relationships are unlikely to be a pure dichotomy of positive and negative. Regrettably, most of the literature neither gives a detailed analysis of the relationships nor suggests implications.

Existing formal and grey literature suggests relationships between universities and think tanks include joint and collaborative research, teaching and other capacity building; participation in national, regional and thematic networks and joint working groups; development of methodologies and conceptual and analytical frameworks; implementation of joint projects, including studies, dissemination workshops and conferences; writing and publication of academic and policy papers; and consultancy work. This study categorises these activities in four areas: Independent research<sup>8</sup>, training<sup>9</sup>, policy dialogue<sup>10</sup> and consultancy<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>Investigation using scientific or empirical methodologies where data and findings are not subject to modifications by the funder.

<sup>9</sup> The terms training and education are used interchangeably in this report. This is the delivery of structured learning in the form of courses, workshops and instructional materials.

Globally, the future points to applied research centres networking to carry out policy-relevant research. With less funding from traditional partners, there are pressures to plan for funds much more carefully and, consequently, there is need to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of applied research and the institutions doing it. Collaboration not only creates opportunities for funding, but also may strengthen research outputs and quality of teaching and policy engagement.

There are many drivers of the relationships between universities and think tanks. Medvetz (2012) discusses the on-going affiliation between the Hoover Institution in the U.S. with Stanford University, “which confers on the former the prestige of being part of one of the world’s great centres of higher learning”. The author suggests the relationship is in some ways driven by image considerations. On the other hand, McGann (2009b) observes that, in Italy, think tanks traditionally have a more academic bent, with a larger portion of their staff consisting of university professors. This suggests that think tanks in that country employ university academics to undertake research on their behalf – the structure is different but the reasons and results are the same.

There may only be a few instances where the relations between think tanks and universities are embedded in established structures and are guided by defined processes or sets of rules (as might be the case with university affiliated think tanks), yet Medvetz (2007) comments on the “hybrid” nature of intellectuals, arguing that “think tanks are structurally hybrid offspring of the more established institutions of academics, politics, business, and journalism”. In his specific reference to American think tanks, using arguments that could reasonably be applied to the African think tank-university landscape, Medvetz observes that:

*(...) the social space of think tanks is marked by a multi-level structural hybridity that extends from the individual policy expert to the organisation, and from the organisation to the broader system of relations in which think tanks are embedded.*

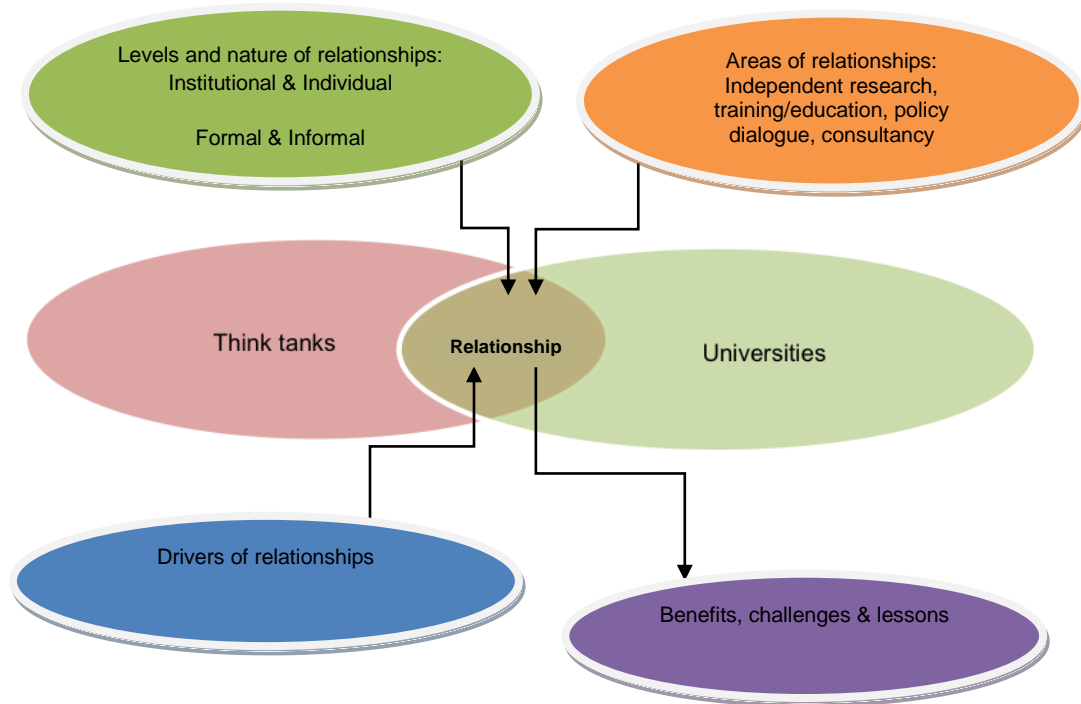
Medvetz adds: “policy researchers/experts within think tanks draw on four idioms – those of the scholar, the policy aide, the entrepreneur, and the journalist – to construct a mixed occupational identity”. Figure 1 provides a framework for understanding university-think tank relationships. It shows the nature and extent of relationships that may exist, and the enabling factors. The assumption is that a relations exists when think tanks and universities make use of each other’s human, financial and or infrastructural resources.

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<sup>10</sup>Sharing of information with policy actors through conferences, workshops, seminars, media events, briefing papers and various other publications.

<sup>11</sup>Advice on a specific policy or programme issue or subject typically provided in the form of a report to a client through a fee-for-service contract or sub-contract.

Figure 1: A framework for university-think tank relationship



Source: Author

As the figure depicts, relationships may exist at institutional and individual levels, and may be formal or informal. Relationships may be in any of the four main collaboration areas. There are many drivers of relationships including availability of funds, type of organisation and ideological alignment, need for recognition and expected benefits. In the process of the relationships both universities and think tanks get benefits, encounter challenges as well as learn lessons. This study was not intended to evaluate think tanks and universities in what they do but rather to understand the nature, extent and drivers of relationships.

### 3. Study Approach

This study used country case studies, literature review, and qualitative and quantitative methods. The study was framed around common survey tools and specific interview questions to selected universities and think tanks in 10 African countries namely: Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. A four-stage process was used:

- First, a review of documents from formal and grey literature provided information on the context, nature, and potential relationships between think tanks and universities - to deepen the understanding of existing relationships and to identify any patterns or key issues for follow-up during interviews.

- Second, the design of survey tools by country researchers and PASGR staff at a preparatory meeting in Nairobi in February 2013. There were five questionnaires for the following categories of respondents: heads of departments/research units at universities, heads of think tanks, individuals working at universities, individuals working at think tanks and country-based organisations (third party organisations that fund or use the outputs of universities and think tanks. The four questionnaires for think tanks and universities were pre-tested in two universities and two think tanks in Nairobi. The “third party” organisations included government ministries, civil society organisations, NGOs, media, government development agencies and locally based donors. The heads of departments/research units at universities and heads of think tanks provided an institutional view on the relations and drivers. Designing the tools took longer than anticipated, to make them equally acceptable and relevant to all 10 countries. A common data entry template for all the questionnaires was designed to analyse country-specific data.
- Third, interviews were held in selected think tanks and universities with individuals and institutional representatives. A total of 64 third party organisations were interviewed across the 10 countries as summarised in Annex 2. In addition to the interviews, there were focus group discussions (FGDs) with 18 senior staff from universities and think tanks following the post-MDG forum that was organized by PASGR in March 2013 in Nairobi. Participants for the FGDs were drawn from 12 universities and 6 think tanks in 8 African countries, as summarised in Annex 3.
- The fourth stage of the study sought perspectives on think tank-university relations from selected third party organisations, regional and international organisations that support capacity building of universities and/or think tanks in Africa. This was originally planned to be a survey monkey questionnaire but there was low response and as a result researchers arranged face-to-face interviews. A meeting on 18 March 2014 in Nairobi involving nine participants from eight donor organisations and government bodies was organised (see list of donors that participated in the meeting in Annex 4). This was followed by a findings sharing/validation workshop that involved 65 senior staff from universities and think tanks on 31 March and 1 April 2014 (see Annex 5). Lastly, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) organised a think tank university event on May 21-22, 2014 that involved over 80 participants from think tanks, universities, development partners and government. The aim of the meeting was to find synergies between Africa, Latin America and South Asia studies on the relationship between think tanks and universities.

### **3.1 Sampling**

Selection of study participants were based on a sample summarised in Table 5. The universities that this study focused on are those involved in social science graduate teaching and research in disciplines such as political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, governance and public policy. For purposes of this study, a university was defined as an institution of higher

learning providing facilities for social science graduate teaching and research, and authorised to grant academic degrees. It is from these universities that departments offering social science courses were selected and used as units of analysis. For comparability, think tanks selected are those involved in social science areas that would have something in common with the selected departments within universities. A total of 65 universities and 90 think tanks were sampled in the 10 countries. The data was merged for further analysis and writing of this synthesis report. Annex 2 provides a list of think tanks, universities and third party organisations covered by each country.

**Table 5: Sampling criteria of institutions and individual respondents**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Criteria for selection of institutions</b>	<b>Criteria for selecting individual respondents</b>
<b>Universities</b>	Must be legally established as a university and have accreditation	Head of department/research unit to respond to the institutional interviews
	Must be substantially engaged in social science and/or humanities research	Individual respondents must be lecturers or higher status
	Must be involved in policy engagement to some extent	Individual respondents must not be just administrators (however senior);they should also be actively involved in teaching and research
<b>Think tanks</b>	Must be actively engaged in policy research	Head of organisation to respond to the institutional interviews
	Must be participating in policy engagement activities	Individual respondents must be senior staff members involved in programme work such as research and policy engagement
	Involved in social sciences disciplines	Individual respondents must not be just administrators (however senior);they should also be actively involved in research and policy engagement

### 3.2 Descriptive statistics

There was a high representation of public universities (72%) of the total sample from the 10 countries (Table 6). This is not surprising given that postgraduate programmes in social science were a sampling requirement, and not many private universities in Africa currently offer postgraduate programmes. The private universities include those with and without religious affiliation. There is one local campus of a foreign university based in South Africa. A total of 223 university employees ranging from lecturer to professor were interviewed in their individual capacity. About 18% of university staff interviewed were women.

Table 6: Sampling of universities by country

Country	No. of universities in the country <sup>12</sup>	No. of Universities covered			No. of institutional interviews	No. of individual interviews
		Total	Public	Private		
South Africa	24	11	10	1	20	26
Mozambique	11	5	2	3	5	5
Zimbabwe	9	3	1	2	5	23
Nigeria	129	11	10	1	16	30
Senegal	12	3	3	0	15	30
Benin	10	4	2	2	8	19
Tanzania	24	5	4	1	9	20
Ethiopia	47	8	6	2	15	30
Uganda	37	6	4	2	9	24
Kenya	67	9	5	4	5	16
Total	370	65	47	18	107	223

Source: Information from country reports that informed this synthesis paper

99 think tanks were sampled (see table 7) of which a total of 133 of their employees were interviewed in their individual capacity. 21% of the interviewees were women. The low percentage of female interviewees in both think tanks and universities might be an indication of the low number of women in senior positions in both institutions. However, the study did not explore the gender aspect and therefore not able to make such a conclusion.

Table 7: Sampling of think tanks by country

Country	No. of think tanks in the country <sup>13</sup>	No. of think tanks covered	No. of institutional interviews	No. of individual interviews
South Africa	84	13	13	9
Mozambique	13	9	8	13
Zimbabwe	10	9	9	6
Nigeria	53	13	12	20
Senegal	15	10	10	20
Benin	14	6	6	15
Tanzania	15	5	5	9
Ethiopia	23	10	10	20
Uganda	28	9	9	14
Kenya	12	6	6	7
Total	267	90	88	133

Source: Information from country reports that informed this synthesis paper

<sup>12</sup>These numbers were provided by country researchers.

<sup>13</sup>The actual number of think tanks in most countries is not known since most register differently as NGOs, trusts, consultancies, or simply as not-for-profit organisations. This is mainly a definitional issue as highlighted earlier



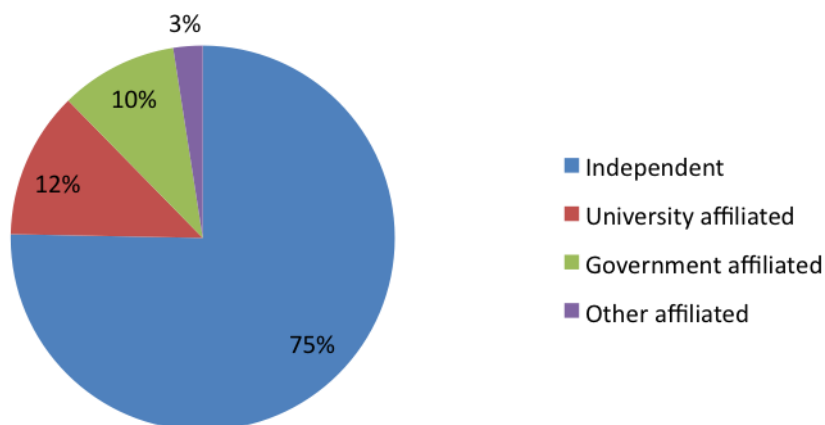
Table 8: Year of establishment of think tanks and universities

Year	Percentage of Think tanks	Percentage of Universities
<1960	3%	21%
1960-1980	9%	14%
1981-2000	43%	29%
2001-2012	45%	36%
Total	100	100

Source: Country data

About 21% of the universities and 3% of think tanks covered in this study were established before 1960 (see table 8) compared with 36% of the universities and 45% of the think tanks that have been established since 2001. This explains the low number of think tanks during the colonial era as compared to the period after 2001. Details of the organisational status of think tanks are provided in Figure 2. Of the entire think tanks included in this study, 75% are independent. Of the independent think tanks, 70% operate only within one country (national) and the rest are regional.

Figure 2: Organisational status of think tanks



Source: Information from country reports that informed this synthesis paper

Most think tanks and university units sampled in this study focus on economics-related issues (see table 9). A summary of country statistics is provided in Annex 6 (see tables A1 and A2). About 28% of all the university departments/units covered in this study focus on economic related issues as compared to 32% of think tanks. It should be noted that a higher percentage of think tanks, 17% and 16% focus on governance and public policy respectively as compared to 9% and 1% of the departments sampled from universities.

Table 9: Subject focus of think tanks and departments in universities (%)

Organisation/ status	Economics	Political science	Sociology	Anthropology	Governance	Public policy	Other
<b>Universities (all)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>
Public	27	17	15	3	9	1	27
Private	39	11	11	0	6	0	33
<b>Think Tanks (all)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>
Independent	33	7	5	0	20	21	15
University affiliated	30	10	10	0	0	0	50
Government affiliated	38	13	13	0	13	0	25
Other affiliated	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Source: Think tank-university relations study in Africa - country data*

#### 4. The big picture

The character and role of think tanks and universities in the countries of study is influenced by three major factors namely; the political history and contemporary political environment; the availability of funds and interests of funders/donors; and the space(s) available for policy engagement. It emerged from different countries in this study that the evolution of think tanks and universities has been largely influenced by the political landscape, with attainment of independence and introduction of structural adjustment programmes playing a key role in their evolution and increase. This is similar to what is indicated in Kimenyi and Datta (2011) as well as the experience in Peru and Columbia where the development of think tanks and universities is associated with phases of the country's political development (Mendizabal and Sample, 2009).

Similarly, funding is another key factor. In the light of diminishing public funding for tertiary education, most universities have introduced private financing schemes for the students that they recruit on one hand. On the other hand think tanks continue to be highly dependent on external sources for funding their programmes, which at times undermines their independence and the sustainability of their programmes. The different funding constraints among the two institutions have implications for the nature of interaction that is engendered. Specifically for think tanks, not only does accountability shift away from local constituents to donors but the high dependence on foreign funds also implies that domestic interests rarely inspire the think tanks' research and policy agenda. This has implications for interactions that take place between the two types of institutions.

The political environment that prevails in many countries today allows for the establishment and existence of academic, research and policy analysis institutions, including think tanks and universities. This may be viewed by some to be supportive of positive interactions between these two organisations. However, when it comes to interaction in the policy arena, the restriction of political spaces limits the interaction especially on issues of democratization, governance, human rights and accountability. In such instances the sensitivity of the issue/s that a think tank may be pursuing tends to determine the kind of policy space in which to engage, hence the kind of interaction that may happen between think tanks and universities. In this case,

the political environment defines the spaces and the issues on which think tanks and universities can interact.

#### ***4.1 Country differences and similarities***

From the countries' literature, there are a number of differences and similarities in the politics that inform the nature of relationships between universities and think tanks. The development of think tanks and universities seems to follow the same trend in the different countries covered. With an exception of Ethiopia, all the other countries have been colonised by Western countries. The effect of colonisation on the functioning of universities and establishment of think tanks seems to follow the same trend across countries. In addition, the effects of political and economic liberalisation on funding universities and think tanks are also similar in the different countries.

In Zimbabwe, political polarisation and economic decline had an impact on the relationship between universities and think tanks. For public universities, the economic challenges meant drastic cuts in national budget allocations and donor spending. Some think tanks closed while others downsized and started outsourcing some of their activities; some universities and think tanks pooled resources to survive. The polarised political environment resulted in think tanks and universities becoming wary and selective in terms of who they collaborated with. Relations and collaborations were restructured and realigned along political orientation and agenda.

Uganda's political environment is a key factor in the nature and trajectory of interactions between think tanks and universities. An examination of the country's political landscape reveals that considerable improvements were made in people and institutional freedoms in the post-1986 period, a sharp contrast to the period before which was marked with tyrannical regimes and economic collapse. During the 1990s the West viewed Uganda as a model country for other African nations. Uganda became one of the few African countries that at the time received a large proportion of foreign aid from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). A large proportion of donor support was used to support civil society and other not-for-profit institutions, including think tanks. In line with the dominant political ideology, those think tanks and civil society organizations that were committed to promoting liberal democracy and economic liberalism were the most popular with donors. The Economic Policy Research Centre at Makerere University, whose establishment was supported by the Africa Capacity Building Foundation, is a case in point.

However, since 2001, there have continued to be lingering concerns on the present regime's commitment to full democracy, and space(s) within which think tanks, CSOs and universities interact to influence policy have progressively been restricted. The freedom of the 1990s has been replaced with restricted political and civil rights, including intense monitoring and regulation, and limited freedom of speech and association. Think tanks are constrained when they want to hold policy events that may be considered non-supportive of the political regime. This also affects the way they collaborate with universities, especially those that are owned or funded by government. It also affects individuals in universities who may not wish to get in the ruling party's bad books by working with the "wrong" think tanks.

South Africa's expanded space for policy engagement offered opportunities for growth of think tanks and universities. While the apartheid/isolation era had significant negative impact on research and development, subsequent structural changes in the education systems led to strong national support from government. Today, the government of South Africa provides

subsidies to universities and think tanks expanding opportunities for research and strengthening development of applied research through linking the foci of technical colleges and universities. The government has also changed its policy to create research-intensive universities and strengthen science councils such as the Human Sciences Research Council. There have been major initiatives to reform universities and the role of think tanks. The reforms, incentives and extra research funding have opened more opportunities for collaboration between universities, between think tanks, and also between university departments and think tanks.

In Mozambique, the University of Eduardo Mondlane was dedicated to teaching while think tanks focused on research. There was little collaboration between the two in the pre-independence period. However, soon after independence in 1975, the Scientific Research Institute of Mozambique was integrated into Eduardo Mondlane University and consisted of five centres, namely: the Ecology Centre, the Centre for Basic Technology, the Centre for Communication Studies, the Centre for Scientific Communication and the Centre for African Studies. However, despite the fact that a number of think tanks emerged in the 1990s, there is a dearth of information regarding the funding of think tanks, their roles in public policy or their influence in decision making. The relationship between think tanks and other institutions is not clear. What is clear is that low wages at universities have driven staff to spend most of their time on consultancies, mainly run by donor supported think tanks, and less time on academic research and publications.

The history of think tanks in Kenya indicates that these institutions proliferated after independence in response to increased donor funding and a perception that space for civil society had expanded. At this time, CSOs were fronted as conduits for research and policy debates. There are also indications that CSOs were the pioneers of think tank idea in Kenya. Think tanks in Kenya provided the needed technocrats to fill crucial positions in government. After a collaborative decade with academic work and research, government initially tightened regulation of outspoken intellectuals critical of its systems, and formally criminalised competitive politics. Today, with multi-party politics restored and a new constitution, the Kenya government provides funding to some think tanks and universities, and its collaboration is relatively stronger than in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Uganda. To some extent, like in South Africa, the government of Kenya works closely with think tanks and universities on policy related research issues. Stakeholder consultation is mandatory, at least in process. Given the big number and active role of CSOs, it is likely that a number of CSOs were identified as think tanks in the global go think tank studies whereas this study did not consider them as think tanks.

In Tanzania, politicians often sought the advice of academics on policy in the period immediately after independence. The situation changed from late 1960s and 1970 as politicians fearful of being opposed treated academics with mistrust and suspicion. The political space for voices of dissent disappeared, and only foreign-funded academics could exercise autonomy. Structural adjustment made the use of independent research even more difficult and further constrained already limited government funding. Many researchers either left the country or became inactive while political patronage set the agenda for policy studies and research. Since

1990s, things have changed in Tanzania as more think tanks and universities have been opened and the space has been made friendlier.

Ethiopia followed the typical pattern seen in many other African countries even if it was not colonized like other countries. Academics were marginalised for fear that think tanks would agitate for regime change. The establishment of think tanks and their growth came later in the 1990s, when the government system changed from unitary to federal. Similarly, a number of universities have been established in Ethiopia in 2000s after the change in government from unitary to federal. Ethiopia's think tanks are - officially - either government-initiated or affiliated to civil society, which encourages discriminatory control. A recent proclamation on "charities and civil societies" cramped the activities and funding sources of most civil society affiliated think tanks. Civil society organisations are at liberty to carry out any research but must raise 90% of their total funds locally. This limits donor funding, influence and how much research and policy advocacy such organisations can do. In a way, it limits collaboration between think tanks and universities given that funding is very key in enhancing collaboration.

Before Senegal's independence in 1960, there was no research centre. To promote research in agronomy, the government in 1960 created the first think tank in Senegal. Western research centres mainly carried out research in economics and social sciences. A number of university-based think tanks emerged in Senegal from 2000 with Centre de Recherches Economiques Appliquées (CREA) being the first. Economic liberalization led to establishment of more think tanks within and outside universities in Senegal and currently there are 16. Like most of the countries in the study, research in Senegal mainly depends on external financial support. Collaboration is mainly between universities and university-based think tanks.

In Benin, the first university was created in 1970 (Université' Abomey Calavi) and today there are three public and seven private universities. The second public university (Université de Parakou) was created in 2001 and third was created in 2013. Contrary to the universities, several think tanks have emerged in Benin. The number of think tanks has grown rapidly to 15 in 2013, though there is little information on the evolution of think tanks in Benin and their relationship with universities. As is the case in Senegal, most research carried out by think tanks in Benin is highly dependent on external funding.

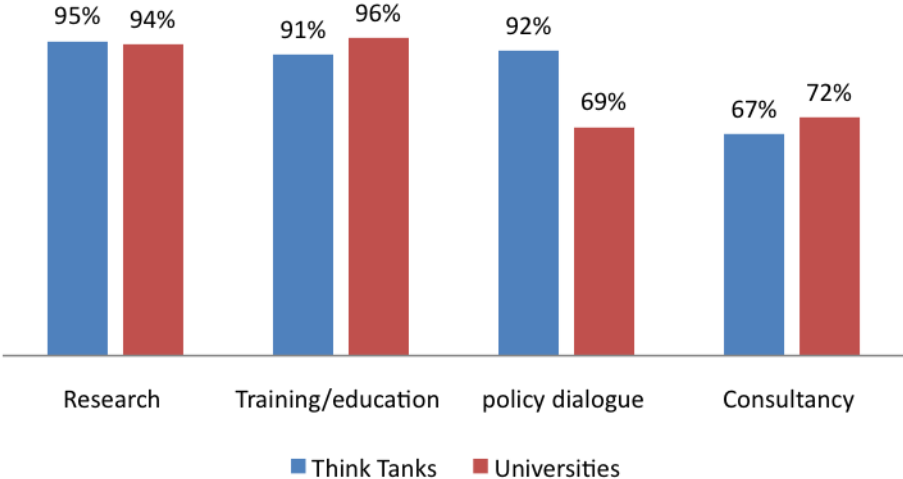
Nigeria's think tanks and universities are linked to the political landscape through four distinct phases: pre-independence, immediate post-independence (1960-1969), dictatorial military regimes, and from the early 1990s to the present. Prior to independence, there was no think tank and only one university – the University College of Ibadan. Immediately after independence, five institutions of university status and one think tank - The Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, set up in 1961 to serve as a foreign policy think tank for the country – were established. The dominance of ethnic and religious interests led to civil war in 1967, and culminated in a military dictatorship from 1970-1989. During this period – of poor governance and violence over issues of ethnicity, religion and resource control - the number of universities increased to 24 and think tanks to 5. In the following decade, increasing recognition of

democracy led to a transition from military to civilian regimes<sup>14</sup> through acceptance of civil society organisations and social and economic reforms, and full democracy returned in 1999. This phase marked a rapid proliferation of both think tanks and universities. Also, for the first time, the federal legislature passed into law the Higher Education Act 1999, which gave more powers to the National University Commission to register and approve private universities in Nigeria. A key feature is that each of the six geopolitical zones into which Nigeria is divided has at least one think tank or university. The period from 1990s to present has seen strong collaborations between think tanks and universities in Nigeria.

**4.2 Commonalities and differences in think tanks and universities**

Both think tanks and universities engage in research and training, and their areas of interest provide a common platform for dialogue and consultancy work as summarized in Figure 3. The figure shows that both universities and think tanks gave roughly equal time to training and research. Think tanks gave significantly more attention to policy dialogue. Universities allocated more time (72%) to consultancy than policy dialogue.

Figure 3: Ranking of areas of focus by think tanks and universities



Source: *Think tank-university relations study in Africa - country data*

There are country variations in the allocation of time by think tanks and universities to the different areas. Think tanks in South Africa are more involved in research, whereas those in Senegal are mostly engaged in training and education. In South Africa and Ethiopia, think tanks engage more in policy dialogue than those in Zimbabwe, where the focus is more on consultancy work to raise resources. Think tanks involved in training concentrate on capacity

<sup>14</sup> For example, the transition period was when the military head of state became the military president, and the legislative arm of the government comprised democratically elected civilians.

building workshops rather than degree programmes, with a few exceptions such as the Makerere Institute of Social Research, which runs a PhD programme. Think tanks mostly recruit graduates or academic staff from universities with close relationships illustrated in cases where think tanks are affiliated to universities.

On another note, universities focus primarily on specialized training at the highest levels in a wide range of disciplines. Think tanks tend to have a specific area of focus, although their staff may be recruited from different disciplines. All of them are involved in research with differing goals and methodologies. Universities tend to engage in academic research, which does not necessarily inform policy (Kaseke et al 1998). The objective is to identify and question assumptions that drive the process of knowledge production. Consequently, university research is perceived as theoretical, but more rigorous in its methodologies, fact-oriented and objective. Some academics produce parallel papers on the same issue, using academic jargon in one version and a more policy-friendly style in another. In social science in particular, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is criticized as arcane and divorced from real-world issues (Rukobo1990).

In contrast think tank research is associated with the goal to directly inform policy and policy change. Abelson (2002) sees the role of think tanks as influencing government policy by shaping the political dialogue. Distinction between academic and policy research has reduced prospects for collaboration, on the premise that academics are too technically hidebound to contribute to policy issues (Kaseke et al 1998). By implication, think tanks and policy-orientated research is less rigorous and objective. Yet such a viewpoint overlooks the fact that most researchers in think tanks are not only university graduates but also individuals who may have taught at universities or even still hold dual positions.

There are observed differences between think tanks and universities in the way they conduct their research activities but these should be assessed in light of the contributions they make to policy change and a country's advancement. Think tanks' recruitment of university graduates and/or academic staff enables them to engage in rigorous and objective or scientific research in the same way as universities. Equally, universities can engage in research that does inform policy and generate debate, with the potential to improve existing policies or formulate new ones. Rukobo (1990:40) explains the complementarities thus:

*“Basic research is the search and attempt to explain the notion and dynamics of the development of society. Policy research usually describes what is there, with the specific purpose of recommending action. There is no contradiction between the two.”*

Rukobo (1990:20) writes: *“Not only is the input of social sciences critical to informed policy and planning, it is also vital in implementation and evaluation.”* Indeed, increasing numbers of universities in Africa are moving towards engagement with issues that affect the communities in which they exist (see Rhoten and Calhoun, 2011). This enables universities and think tanks to participate in the same policy dialogues in ways that lead to complementarities rather than contradiction. Across the countries, it is clear that university staff try to understand the

background of the formation of any think tank, whose agenda is driving its activities and how individual interests fit into this before any collaboration.

Traditionally, universities are highly structured, often organised in specialised faculties, departments or subject units, and with rigid and bureaucratic hierarchies. One respondent observed:

*“Most universities are headed by a Vice-Chancellor who works as the executive head of the institution. In our own university (Makerere) there are two Deputy Vice Chancellors, one of whom is responsible for academic affairs while the other is responsible for finance and administration. If a decision needs to be made on a matter of an academic nature and the relevant Deputy Vice Chancellor is unavailable, one often has to wait until the relevant official is available before a decision is made” (A respondent from Makerere University).*

This contrasts with the think tank ethos of enterprise; dynamism and flexibility that makes them open to collaboration. The systematic approach of universities and the policy-savviness of think tanks could make collaboration between them challenging but once explored and established can also be very rewarding.

#### **4.3 Supporting organisations**

Supporting organizations comprise users of the knowledge generated by think tanks and universities, clients who commission specific research projects, and private foundations and international donors who provide funding for research and other activities. Donors, users and clients are varied. Several foreign bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors, and foreign-based institutions and foundations, including external think tanks and universities, have provided a range of support. The influence of donors on the character of think tanks and universities is noteworthy. Most donors have hitherto provided financial support to these two categories of institutions aimed at increasing their capacity in research, policy analysis and advocacy, but also in addressing issues of democratization, accountability, economic reform and the protection of human rights. Some of the international donors that fund think tanks and universities in Africa include: Rockefeller Foundation, the World Bank, Norwegian Government, DfiD, Ford Foundation, Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, Carnegie Corporation and the Think Tank Initiative among others.

Using Uganda as an example, in 2000, the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Bank gave US\$5m each to Makerere University’s “Capacity Building Programme to train for Decentralization”. Makerere also benefitted from a Swedish bi-lateral collaborative research programme of approximately US\$ 34 Million during the period 2000 – 2009. This financial support was aimed at strengthening research capacity of both Makerere and other public universities in Uganda, to enable them to compete in knowledge generation through training at PhD and Masters levels, while at the same time providing funds for competitive research<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See: <http://iatmak.mak.ac.ug/about/committee.htm>; [http://sida.mak.ac.ug/?page\\_id=124](http://sida.mak.ac.ug/?page_id=124).



In recent years, research at Makerere has been supported by the Norwegian Government on “Strategies to enhance girl-child retention and performance”; UK Department for International Development (DfID) and the British Council on “Capacity building for teachers in post-conflict areas”; the United States Agency for International Development on “Formative evaluation of UPHOLD education programme”; the International Finance Corporation and World Bank on “A baseline study for the financing of Uganda’s private sector”; the Carnegie Corporation for the Higher Education Research Network in Africa; and the International Refugee Committee on “Education rehabilitation in northern Uganda”.

Mbarara University of Science and Technology in Uganda has over the years also collaborated with both local and international partners, including government and donor agencies. These collaborations included areas of research, staff exchange, capacity building and infrastructural development support. Collaborations have specifically been documented with the Federal Republic of Cuba, the Netherlands Government, and the German Academic Exchange Programme, among others<sup>16</sup>

Donor institutions and consortia, such as the Democracy and Governance Facility, provide resources to think tanks and other civil society organisations in Uganda. The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and the Netherlands Government have also given key support to think tanks.

Financial support to universities and think tanks has been aimed at increasing research, analysis, communication and engagement capacity, to considerably increase their ability to respond appropriately to academic and policy needs. The support has been targeted at issues individual donors consider paramount. Donors constitute the most important influence on the character and role of these institutions in research. This is the experience in all countries except South Africa, where there is high level of independence in the way think tanks and universities operate. Collaboration between universities would be beneficial to donors given that they have common interests.

For the purposes of this study, supporting organisations are characterized as country-based donors, users and clients (third party organisations) or donor organisations (mainly foreign based) that support capacity building of the two institutions in different countries. Structured interviews were conducted with 64 third party organisations, of which 48% were users only, 32% were both funders and users of research outputs, and 20% were donors only (Tables 10 and 11).

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<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.must.ac.ug/research-innovation/our-partners-0>

**Table 10: Type of third party organisation**

Type of organisation	Percentage
Government ministry	17.2
Government agency	18.8
Local/national CSO	14.1
Private sector organisation	6.3
Media	6.3
Inter-governmental organisation	14.1
International NGO	15.6
Diplomatic mission	6.3
Other	1.6

Source: Country data

**Table11: Number of third party organisations by country**

Country	No. of third party organisations
South Africa	10
Mozambique	6
Zimbabwe	1
Nigeria	7
Senegal	7
Benin	7
Tanzania	5
Ethiopia	7
Uganda	7
Kenya	7
Total	64

Source: Country data

Table 12 provides a summary of the kind of support provided by third party organizations to think tanks and universities. The highest percentage of funding in both think tanks (44%) and universities (56%) is for policy research.

**Table 12: Support provided to Think tanks and universities by third party organisations**

Type of support	Think tanks (%)	Universities (%)
Core funding	11	4
Funding policy research	44	56
Funding degree programmes	0	18
Commissioning of consultancies	29	16
Infrastructure development/short term training	7	2
Other	9	4

Source: Country data

80% of third party organisations, advocated for greater collaboration between think tanks and universities in policy research, compared with 69% for training/education, 71% for policy dialogue and 65% for consultancy. This clearly shows that there is need for think tanks and universities to collaborate in almost all the areas with research and policy dialogue ranked highest by third party organizations.

The majority of third party organisations preferred research carried out by a team involving both universities and think tanks, and where mixed teams were not used, the majority favoured universities with an exception of Mozambique. Their reasons differed. Those who preferred a mixed team sought a complementary balance of theoretical and practical knowledge. Those who preferred universities sought higher quality research and those who preferred think tanks sought more practical research approaches.

The “complementarity” of mixed teams was also preferred for training; universities were better equipped and specialized with higher quality controls, while think tanks offered a more participatory approach.

Third party organizations preferred think tanks for policy dialogue, because they feel policy dialogue is more political and think tanks play an important role in politics; think tanks are better at organising policy debates than universities; think tanks are better equipped with policy information than universities; think tanks are more policy oriented than universities; and that think tanks are more current and practical than universities. Think tanks were also preferred for consultancy, because most think tanks are designed as consultancy institutions and they are seen to be dynamic and less bureaucratic.

Third party respondents favoured collaboration between universities and think tanks, but suggested areas for improvement to strengthen collaborations (Table 13).

Table13: Areas for improvement by think tanks, universities and supporting organisations

Universities	Think tanks	Supporting organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt modern analytical technologies</li> <li>• Enhance dissemination of research work</li> <li>• Increase research funding</li> <li>• Reduce the research bureaucracy</li> <li>• Take more practical oriented research rather than theoretical</li> <li>• Incorporate media aspects for dissemination of research results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve dissemination by incorporating a media strategy and publications</li> <li>• Increase research funding</li> <li>• Provide specialised inputs to public policy</li> <li>• Invest more in capacity building through internships and training seminars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support high impact research work-e.g. increase funding to specialised publications, funding to specific programmes of high interest</li> <li>• Reduce control of research organisations by simplifying funding bureaucracy</li> <li>• Promote collaboration between universities and think tanks</li> </ul>

Source: Country data

## 5. Collaborative terrain for universities and think tanks

### 5.1 Research

Collaboration in research embraces initiation, methodology development, implementation, and dissemination (including publication and policy dialogue). This is an expensive and time-consuming venture that requires considerable time commitment. Most heads of institutions note that universities’ heavy teaching loads leave their academics with little or no time to engage in research, and teaching and consultancy opportunities provide quick returns. One professor in Tanzania attributed this to the “commercialization of education”<sup>17</sup> following massive reductions in

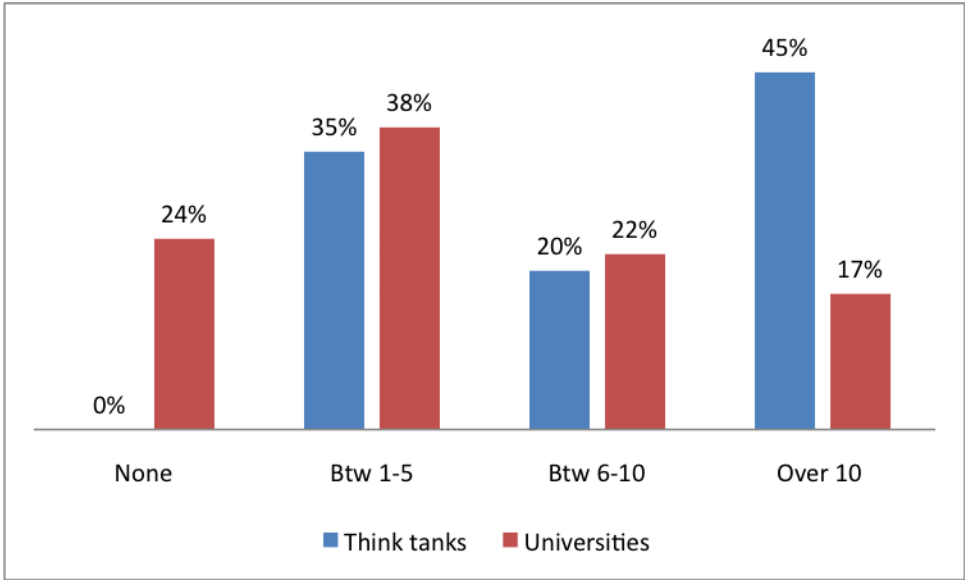
<sup>17</sup>This term was used to refer to the trend in universities in the past two decades where only those subjects that were deemed to be “attractive to students” or which were considered to be commercially viable were taught.

the public funding of universities. Yet all agree that research is the area with most potential for collaboration.

Previously, public universities benefited from generous research grants from government that were not tied to specific projects. Some donors would supplement government funding, giving universities the opportunity to carry out “knowledge generation” research. More recently, research activities in universities are seen to be donor driven, with (unmeasured) impacts on quality and collaboration.

In the past five years, 24% of universities interviewed had not carried out any research due to lack of funds while all think tanks had carried out at least one research project (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Research projects undertaken by University departments and think tanks in the past five years



Source: Country data

It is however worth noting that the figure above is not representative enough as the analysis does not take into consideration the scale of the reported research projects and the rigour of work that went into its execution. Significant differences across countries are summarized in Annex 6 (see Tables C1 and C2). Nigeria had the highest number of universities (81%) that did not undertake any research as institutions, and Senegal had the highest number of universities that undertook more than 10 research projects in the past five years.

As individuals, 92% of university staff had carried out research in the past five years in collaboration with government bodies and think tanks. Collaboration with think tanks exposes university staff to new research areas, provides extra income and opportunities to expand professional networks, as well as a channel to publish. As shown in Table 14, the majority of think tanks and universities used a mixed approach to research staffing. They employed both internal (employed directly by the institution) and external (employed by other institutions but who undertake contract work) as researchers.

**Table 14: Staff used to conduct research**

	Universities	Think tanks
Both internal and external	80%	64%
Internal	15%	35%
External	5%	1%

Source: Country data

Universities that used mostly a mixed approach were from South Africa and Senegal. Ethiopian universities mostly used the internal approach. The use of only internal staff was common in private universities, for lack of funding and networks for collaboration. A department head in Kenya noted:

*“Private universities do not receive research grants from government. Besides, our research scope is not so big as to require the participation of external people”.*

For think tanks, external employees are used to fill skills and experience gaps, harness existing collaborations and to add credibility. Across the 10 countries, Nigeria led in the think tanks that used mixed approach and Benin was the last in the list (Annex 6, see Table D1).

The main reasons universities hired external staff was to complement skills especially from think tank staff who better understand applied research. Among universities, the reasons for opting to use internal staff included lower cost, capacity building and quality control. A head of department from the University of Ibadan highlighted the tradition of “preserving the integrity and quality of teaching and research”. In contrast, a respondent from the African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building argued that working with external partners broadened real-life experience and improved quality and policy relevance. This contrast explains the bureaucracies within universities versus the liberalism in Think Tank organizations.

About 95% of think tanks have collaborated with at least one university in the past five years, compared with 70% of universities who have collaborated with at least one think tank. Both donor grants and institution’s internally generated funds are used to support collaboration in research. About 62% of universities felt that think tanks understood policy-oriented research. In PASGR’s workshop to share research findings, the majority of both think tank and university participants indicated that their involvement in research had increased substantially over the past five years. A higher percentage (55%) of individuals working in think tanks as compared to 10% of university staff receive management and financial support for research from their organisations. There was consensus on the variability of quality, relevance and presentation of research outputs produced by the two types of organisations, but the survey did not explore specific differences.

From the meetings held in Nairobi that involved senior staff from universities and think tanks to share the initial findings of this study, it was noted that think tanks conduct more policy-relevant research than universities. However, the contribution of university staff in producing policy relevant research through think tank organizations and on their own is unclear. It was noted that TTs have expertise in some areas but they lack capacity to address certain issues, in which case they approach universities to fill this gap through collaborative research. The drive to undertake policy and issue based research has led individual teaching staff to undertake research at the TTs while simultaneously maintaining teaching responsibilities at universities. In some cases, the nature of relationships between think tanks and universities is related to the history of the formation of TTs in relation to the status of universities.

During these findings sharing meetings, it was argued that universities' research products do in fact reach policy circles after some time. The only difference between universities and think tanks is their approach and the time it takes to inform policy. While universities tend to hold research dissemination meetings with policy actors, think tanks are perceived to carry out advocacy, which is viewed as more confrontational. The other notable difference between the two institutions is the audience targeting when disseminating research results. While universities write for a wider audience and with intentions to publish in referred journals, think tanks mainly write for policy actors with a focus on immediate policy influence. It was noted that despite the efforts researcher make to inform policy, it is difficult for actors outside government circles to influence policy. It might be interesting to carry out an evaluation of the influence of universities and think tanks on policymaking processes in Africa using research-based findings.

## 5.2 Training/Education

Comparative analysis shows that majority of universities and think tanks use both internal and external trainers (see table 15). About 75% of universities deliver training workshops in collaboration with think tanks and the relationship is reciprocal.

Table 15: Staff used to conduct training/education programmes

	Universities	Think tanks
Both internal and external	68%	71%
Internal only	26%	20%
External only	6%	9%

*Source: Country data*

Most universities lack the resources to employ enough teachers, especially since recent phenomenal growth in student numbers. They can also lack expertise in some areas, so they “out-source” some teaching – and training of trainers - to think tank researchers and analysts. University-based think tanks are routinely involved in teaching. Collaboration mainly happens in joint training workshops that are generally funded internally though sometimes with donors support. Governments, inter-governmental organisations and the private sector do not fund collaboration in training. There is bi-lateral consensus between think tanks and universities that collaboration improves the quality of training.

### 5.3 Policy dialogue

Policy dialogue is a core purpose of think tanks, though increasingly they collaborate with universities, particularly for dissemination of research or policy analysis findings. According to the Executive Director of MISR, conventional think tanks tend to have direct relationships with policy makers, with positive purpose despite the short-term (election-cycle) nature of policy-making.

*“While research tends to be long-term, policy making is short-term in nature. Usually, policy makers want quick answers (or perceptions) to even poorly framed problems. Research formulates questions more thoroughly, but the process can take too long to effectively contribute to policy dialogue. It also takes a while for researchers to acquire the particular skills needed to effectively contribute to policy dialogue”. Executive Director, MISR.*

This is where universities and think tanks need to collaborate to be able to take advantage of each other’s strength in terms of academic rigour and policy engagement focus. As one of the respondents in Kenya mentioned, *“good research needs academic rigour and has to inform policy either in the short or long run”*.

Most universities used the conference/workshop approach to policy dialogue and made minimal use of media events, briefing papers, round-table discussions, and breakfast meetings. Think tanks also used conferences and workshops more than round table discussions and media events. The use of both internal and external staff to carry out policy dialogue is common to both think tanks and universities (Table 16).

Table 16: Staff used to carry out policy dialogue

	Universities	Think tanks
Both internal and external	61%	76%
Internal only	25%	16%
External only	14%	8%

Source: Country data

Universities collaborate on policy dialogue mainly with other universities (64%), government bodies (60%), NGOs and advocacy organisations (52%) and to a lesser extent international organisations (43%) and think tanks (40%). Think tanks collaborate with a range of actors including government bodies (72%), NGOs and advocacy organisations (65%), other think tanks and research organisations (60%), members of the public (59%), media (58%), independent professional experts (56%), international organisations (54%), opinion leaders (54%) and to a lesser extent universities and inter-governmental bodies. The head of a think tank in Zimbabwe confirmed the survey findings of limited collaboration between think tanks and universities on policy dialogue:

*“My organization does not engage universities or individuals working in universities on policy dialogue. We engage retired but highly experienced people from international organisations and government, NGOs and advocacy organisations because they have vast experience in policy-related issues which we do not find in university individuals.”*

Almost all universities in the study (91%) had collaborated with at least one think tank on policy dialogue in the past five years, compared to 73% of think tanks that had collaborated with at least one university. Donors are the main funders of collaboration on policy dialogue. Universities recognise that think tanks add credibility, understanding and contacts to the policy dialogue process. However, think tanks do not see much value in collaborating with universities on policy dialogue.

The cross-cutting nature of issues handled by think tanks and universities could incentivise collaboration, but while universities in Kenya, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Senegal report a significant increase in collaboration on policy dialogue in the past five years, Nigerian universities have experienced a significant decrease, and universities in Uganda and Benin say the level of collaboration on policy dialogue has not changed over time. Half the university staff, interviewed had collaborated with think tanks on an individual basis on policy dialogue, and found it provided new research and network opportunities.

#### **5.4 Consultancy**

More think tanks than universities have delivered consultancies in the past five years. About 62% of the universities and 68% of think tanks have done at least one consultancy in that period. Of these, only 14% of universities and 32% of think tanks have had more than 10 consultancies. Both universities and think tanks use internal and external people to carry out consultancies (Table 17).

Table: Staff used to carry out consultancy

	Universities	Think tanks
Both internal and external	54%	81%
Internal only	44%	17%
External only	2%	2%

*Source: Country data*

Collaboration by universities on consultancy is mainly with NGOs, advocacy organisations, and individuals working in other universities, international organisations and, to a lesser extent, with individuals working in think tanks. Think tanks collaborated on consultancies mainly with individuals working in universities (89%), freelance consultants (75%), and individuals working in other think tanks (72%). Both think tanks and universities are confident that collaboration on consultancy improves the quality of reports. Despite this, there has been a decrease in collaboration on consultancy in the past five years. There was no clear explanation for this trend. However, during the findings sharing meeting in Nairobi, it was mentioned that there is a



possibility of under-reporting of consultancy especially where it constitutes “moonlighting<sup>18</sup>”. It was also mentioned that the increased teaching workload for university staff as a result of the introduction of private parallel programmes and private universities as well as the increasing research opportunities might explain the decrease in collaboration on consultancy.

### ***5.5 Human resources experiences and mobility***

There is no doubt that universities and think tanks compete for human resources especially at a higher level of education. A number of times professional staff work in both universities and think tanks, with one being a full-time position while the other part-time. University and think tank researchers and analysts share a wide number of experiences, formally and informally. When specific questions were posed to the two categories of professionals, think tank professionals readily acknowledged the collaborations while those in universities gave conflicting (and mostly contrary) views. It appears that for university researchers and analysts, participation in think tank activities is not something to be proud of; their primary objective is not always professional collaboration but additional income. For some there is a perception that think tank activities and work experience do not confer high enough status nor contribute substantially to the generation of knowledge. Others say they are so occupied with teaching that they cannot be away working on non-academic activities, and if they spent long periods away their subjects or scholar streams would suffer.

The issue of staff mobility between universities and think tanks is not very clear as professional staff engages in multiple employment in the form of moonlighting. A staff member often has full-time employment in one institution and part-time responsibilities in another. In some instances staff members are registered as full-time employees of more than one institution. The expansion of both universities and think tanks in the past two decades is partly to blame for academics, researchers or analysts taking on more than one job at a time, a practice some heads of departments blamed for the declining standards of teaching and research. This clearly shows that there is lack of enough professional staff to meet the demand in the two types of institutions.

Potential employees prefer to take on a full-time job with a university and seek part-time employment with a think tank, because universities tend to have more rigid and better-established systems, structures, benefits schemes and entrenched job security. University employees do not want to lose their promotion opportunities nor their social security benefits. Further, employment at a university gives “status” that improves the chances of freelance engagement.

There were mixed responses regarding competition between think tanks and universities. A vice chancellor at the findings sharing meeting cited competing interests for human resources. Think

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<sup>18</sup>Working at a secondary or another job in addition to one’s full-time job.

tanks take individuals' "time" away from universities. Some participants noted competition for human and financial resources in research projects using the "call-for-proposals" approach. Others argued that university employees seconded or contracted by think tanks help universities complete their research and outreach mandate. There was consensus that – in principle – "healthy" competition was beneficial.

## **6. Levels and trends of collaborations**

### ***6.1 Types and nature of collaboration***

There is marked difference of opinion on who starts collaborations. Think tanks reckon they initiate 90% of the collaborations in research and training, compared with 3% initiated by universities or departments and 7% by individuals working in universities. This was the trend in all 10 countries. However, universities estimate that think tanks initiate 38% of collaborations; university departments initiate 54%, and individuals working in think tanks 8%. In Kenya and Uganda, it was mentioned that universities are increasingly initiating collaboration on training, but not on research. Whether the training/research imbalance might explain the difference in perceptions was discussed during the findings sharing workshop and it was agreed that think tanks initiate most collaborations. Think tanks are enterprising and respond to research opportunities even when they do not have staff to do the work. They pitch to capture the funding, and then look for the people to do the research by initiating collaboration. The Dean of Gulu University asserted that:

*"Most times initiatives come from think tanks. We have not done enough to initiate research. We are too busy teaching. ...we need to open up...you cannot do research alone, we need others. The transfer of knowledge is important and sometimes academicians are far from reality".*

Some evidence suggests collaborations are mainly initiated at institutional level, but tend to be sustained by individuals once the formal institutional arrangements have been established. Contrasting sentiments were expressed by a head of department in Nigeria:

*"When think tanks search for collaborations, they contact individuals directly and do not inform the university officially. This is bound to happen even in instances where MoUs exist between the concerned institutions. It is possible that collaboration between individuals is preferred because it cuts out the long bureaucracy that the institutions tend to impose*

There was substantial evidence from think tanks that the trend of collaboration with universities had increased in the past five years, especially in research and training/education. Collaboration in research has increased between independent national think tanks and public universities. Universities, on the other hand, believe collaboration has significantly increased in all countries except South Africa, where there has been no change in the past five years. University

employees working with think tanks are predominant in Senegal, Benin and Zimbabwe, while institutional collaboration with think tanks is predominant in South Africa.

## **6.2 Drivers of collaborations**

A number of factors were mentioned as drivers of collaborations between think tanks and universities including: credibility, quality, financial, interest and ideologies, academic recognition, donor requirements in the call for proposals and the need to publish. Think tanks prefer to collaborate with university departments and individuals on research and training because universities have suitable researchers and add credibility and quality to activities. University departments tend to respond quickly to the needs of think tanks, and they are less expensive than private sector consultants. Think tanks strongly refute that university departments have financial resources to contribute, or that think tanks are pressured by research users and policy actors to involve universities in research activities.

Universities indicated that they collaborate in research because involving think tanks adds to the credibility and quality of research outputs, and that think tanks understand policy. They also indicated that think tanks have financial resources to contribute, and users of research, including policy actors, prefer research that is done jointly by both universities and think tanks.

The type of think tank and its ideological alignment also determines certain collaborations. For example, university affiliated think tanks tended to interact more on research with autonomous university research centres/units such as faculties or departments. Independent think tanks preferred to interact with university individuals who were aligned to the advocacy agenda of the think tank.

At the individual level, the drivers for relationships are many and complex. Some university staff seek to “tap into the consultancy opportunities that think tanks provide,” for additional income. Some find the process of publishing in think tanks easier than the rigid and drawn-out processes at universities. For individuals working in think tanks, academic recognition is a much-cherished value driving their relationship with universities. Although not explored explicitly in the survey, findings suggest that think tanks enlist the services of academics on their boards (formally and informally) to give academic credibility to their institutions. The Economic Policy Research Centre, a think tank in Uganda, has on its management board a Professor at Makerere University’s School of Women and Gender Studies, a Professor at Columbia University and the Executive Director of Makerere University Institute of Social Research. Most academics who serve on think tanks boards do so in their personal capacity. It is noteworthy that none of the universities in the study mentioned having any individuals from think tanks serving on their councils, senates or faculty boards. This might be because of the university management structure that limits membership of these boards to internal staff.

Donor priorities and requirements may in some cases drive relationships between think tanks and universities. Multiple beneficiary funding opportunities created by donors, such as those supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, are a secondary avenue for the interaction between

universities and think tanks. The Foundation's "Building Climate Change Resilience Initiative", for example, in addition to building climate change resilience among communities also contributes collaboration between universities, Regional Economic Communities, Government ministries and university researchers. Similarly, calls for-proposals that specify the need to have team members from both think tanks and universities encourage collaboration.

### **6.3 Features of successful collaborations**

Five factors were mentioned as key to successful collaborations between think tanks and universities.

- Having a shared and clear agenda or objectives, reconciling differences in interests and mandates;
- Funds to facilitate the process (not just the project) as a number of unanticipated expenditures might arise;
- Commitment to deliver and respect of timelines;
- Mutual respect and recognition for what each party can contribute; and,
- Organic links (either the think tank was established by university staff or most employees were formerly at the university) correlate with success.

There are some examples of good collaboration between universities and think tanks in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe which include:

- The collaborations between Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA) and several universities that included the running of workshops and conferences jointly. EEA has created a database of economic statistics that is updated every two or three years, which it has made available to these universities.
- In Uganda, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) has been involved in a successful collaboration with Makerere, Nkumba and Gulu Universities to develop a curriculum for teaching peace and conflict resolution funded by the British Council.
- In Zimbabwe, think tanks and universities cooperate closely to leverage each other's resources, including physical facilities, skills and funding opportunities. For example, one think tank executive director stated that they organize seminars for university graduates who have just completed their master's degree in economics to present their dissertation findings and focus on implications for policy issues. He described the seminars as having successfully helped the graduates to understand the relevance of academic work to policy.

### **6.4 Barriers to more effective collaborations**

The following barriers to more effective collaboration between think tanks and universities were mentioned:

- The absence of a deliberate and formal collaborative culture between the two types of institution results in mutual suspicion of motives (often political) and limited understanding of what either has to offer the other.

- While there are guidelines for collaboration between universities, there is a glaring absence of similar guidelines or frameworks (or funding structures) for collaboration between universities and think tanks. Both parties need an independent facilitator with a good understanding of partnership-building processes. The country studies show that formal collaborations established at institutional level are more sustainable and successful, but there is a need to sustain individual collaborations also. Whether individual or institutional collaborations are encouraged, there have to be incentives for both sides.
- Lack of financial resources, and/or different funding or time priorities
- Lack of established networks, enabling policy, innovative financial systems and proposal skills (especially at universities) to develop collaborative programmes. One executive director of a think tank in Zimbabwe asserted that intellectualism was no longer as strong as it used to be in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s - because university lecturers focused more on lucrative consultancy and less on research (see also a report by Sall et al, 2004).
- Unpredictable funding, affecting sustainability. In cases where there have been significant changes in donor priorities, this has created doubts in funding sustainability and hence limited collaborations especially where these were based on continued donor funding. For example, the funding agendas of many bilateral donors have increasingly shifted towards trade and investment. This shift presents new opportunities as well as challenges for universities and think tanks seeking donor funding for collaborative work.
- Universities are not configured to collaborate effectively with any external actors except other universities.

### ***6.5 Challenges and improvements needed to foster better collaborations***

The study reveals four overarching enablers, starting with *information and communication*. Neither universities nor think tanks are fully aware of the other parties' objectives, methods of work, binding constraints, or strategies. Universities need to establish an office that focuses on partnerships and networking. Internet facilities such as Skype and video conferencing can connect peers and allow those unable to travel long distances to have dialogue meetings and "virtual collaboration" between researchers, policy analysts and communication specialists. There is need to create platforms along which collaborations between think tanks and universities can be fostered.

The next challenge relates to *traditions and attitudes*. Studies showed a lot of mutual suspicion between universities and think tanks. Think tank professionals believe their approach to problem-solving, particularly in policy, is driven by real demand and not by theoretical considerations. Universities contended that their pursuit of academic rigour is a better approach to generation of knowledge and they criticize think tanks for skewing results in favour of pre-set

positions. Both points are valid, and collaboration such as jointly working on a research-to-policy project with each party applying its comparative advantage in delivery of holistic product – should be the solution to, not the victim of, current obstacles.

A third overarching challenge is *lack of resources*, especially human resources with the required skills to facilitate interactive processes. Collaboration also needs platforms around which it can be fostered. It needs financial resources and technological tools. Both formal and grey literature shows that external funding from donors goes through government mechanisms or international NGOs before it gets to either a think tank or university. Collaboration should come not only when one of the parties has secured funding, but in the search for funding itself. Think tanks and universities could partner/ share cost from the outset to combine strength and reduce risks. One professor at the University of Zimbabwe presented a funding problem and mentioned that even when funding is available, it is the donors who decide on the topics and this whole idea of ‘he who pays the piper calls the tune’ was detrimental to meaningful collaboration. Obamba and Mwema (2009) similarly make reference to power dynamics in research partnerships that are premised on asymmetrical resource flows and geopolitics.

The fourth challenge is maintaining *intellectual independence*. Think tanks are routinely faced with the challenge of simultaneously achieving and maintaining intellectual independence while finding resources to “keep them in business”. Their main “customers” are either government or donor organisations, with a few private sector resources funding consultancy or commissioned assignments. The challenge is to satisfy funders without putting a vested-interest spin on policy analysis. This sometimes pushes away universities that might otherwise collaborate with think tanks that are not seen to be intellectually independent. The challenge of academic and intellectual independence is not limited to smaller or newer think tanks. Government-inspired or government-controlled think tanks such as Tanzania’s Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) and the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) have autonomy issues. Besides the considerable funding and contracts that ESRF and KIPPRA receive from their governments and other donors, their establishments were in the first place dependent on the less-than-neutral World Bank purse through ACBF.

## **7. Key emerging issues**

It is evident that think tanks and universities in SSA complement each other mainly in research and training and less in policy dialogue and consultancy. The studies have generated a wide range of emerging issues, the most crucial being:

- The high level of bureaucracy in universities that tends to frustrate all involved in collaborative relationships, slowing things down and creating conflicts in work ethics, ideologies, and management styles. Think tanks move faster, and have private sector/entrepreneurial systems and procedures that make it difficult for them to work with non-profit and inward-looking university departments.
- Academics are sometimes seen to be out of touch with reality and have poor understanding of the policy process, even though they want to influence policy through

their research results. Their excuse is “protecting academic rigour and independence”, which think tanks often view as old-fashioned. Think tanks also believe that “by sticking to what they call academic rigour, universities frequently miss the key point that policy making (and hence policy research) is inherently a political process.”

- Although the majority of collaborations are informal, the difference between formal and informal relationships is not always clear.
- The predominant university/think tank relationship is between individuals at universities and think tanks as institutions. Even where think tanks agree to formally collaborate with universities as institutions, they often digress to individuals with whom they either have personal relationships or “like minds” on certain issues.
- The increasing teaching load in universities, especially where the same lecturers are teaching in more than one university, has severely time-limited senior university staff's ability to do research work or be involved in collaborative projects with think tanks or other organizations.
- The desire by either a think tank or a university to influence the research agenda in their own favour can derail a collaborative opportunity. This was the case with both independent and government affiliated think tanks, whose interests are mainly donor driven.
- Universities do not attach much value to policy engagement, and give emphasis to providing a report that best satisfies scientific publication and promotion.
- The lack of a deliberate and formalised collaborative culture is as great an impediment as lack of funds, or lack of partnership/relationship skills.
- Physical proximity does not necessarily increase collaboration; rather there seems to be more collaboration between universities and think tanks established by former university professors, even if they are far apart.

Despite the challenges, both think tanks and universities recognise that collaboration is likely to produce a win-win situation through different but complementary sets of skills and resources. Collaboration builds synergies and enables participants to tap expertise. The systematic approach of universities and the policy-savviness of think tanks could make collaboration between them especially rewarding. These views are also reflected in Obamba and Mwema's (2009: 349) observation:

*“Research partnerships can promote knowledge production and sharing; stimulate the pooling of financial and high-level human resources across boundaries; and create synergies and complementarities among the diverse participants for mutual benefit.”*

There was also emphasis on the growing movement towards multi-disciplinary approaches by people from different fields to produce more balanced content for academia and/or policy. If people with different strengths in terms of methodological orientation, writing skills and practical expertise collaborate, a more wholesome product will result. Shared common interests are necessary, and defining clear agenda and roles is essential.

Third party organisations were strongly in favour of collaboration in research, training and policy dialogue to a larger extent than consultancy to maximise quality, credibility, capacity building, and complementarities, and to minimise duplication. In a resource-scarce environment such as Africa, universities and think tanks cannot afford the luxury of insularity. There is need to optimize the use of available resources by encouraging synergy and collaboration. These collaborative initiatives ought to be responsive to national development priorities of a given country. To achieve this, both universities and think tanks should have strong institutionally based consultative mechanisms.

It came out strongly in the studies that there is lack of adequate skilled human capacity in both universities and think tanks in Africa. Given the fact that think tanks offer higher remuneration than universities, they are able to attract a number of experienced researchers from universities, though mainly on part-time basis. Poor resources and remuneration in universities contributes significantly to the survival of think tanks in Africa if and only if there are well trained and experienced staff at the universities that think tanks can engage. Universities are better able to engage with think tanks when they have well-trained and experienced staff, and vice versa. It was clear from the findings in different countries that the long-run survival of think tanks depends on well-trained and experienced university staff that think tanks can engage for their research and short-term training programmes.

The following key questions emerged as areas for further assessment to clarify issues highlighted in this study:

- What are the intra-institutional relationships among universities and think tanks and how can these be strengthened?
- What is the quality of research in universities and think tanks?
- What is the capacity of universities and think tanks to carry out quality and policy-relevant research?
- To what extent does research inform policy in Africa and what can be done to strengthen this link? How much is basic and applied research supporting policy making in Africa?
- Does the level of financial resource availability in universities determine the nature and level of collaboration with think tanks?

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Relationships between think tanks and universities both at the institutional and individual levels are numerous, but they tend to be unstructured, tenuous, and *ad hoc*. For instance, university officials have played key roles in setting up and leading think tanks. Think tank staff teach in universities and think tanks help improve the link between academic research and policy dialogue. These relationships are mediated by many factors, including motivation, politics, and type of organisation. Specifically, motivations for collaboration range from the need to improve effectiveness and efficiency, to the pursuit of individual interests such as taking on an extra job in another institution in order to boost personal earnings. However, country-specific political conditions influence how think tanks operate, especially those involved in advocacy, and this



deters university involvement. The type of think tank (university affiliated, independent or government affiliated) and university (public or private) also affects the level of collaboration.

These many differences can move from being a problem to being an opportunity, if only they can be viewed in terms of comparative advantages and complementary strengths.

### **Encouraging Positive collaboration**

Collaboration may be spurred by building teaching partnerships between universities and think tanks. Graduate schools could incorporate adjunct teachers drawn from think tanks, not only to tap new skills but also to build linkages. Kenya's Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) currently trains researchers from universities in policy analysis and research. Furthermore, Kenyan policy requires that think tanks must be involved in university curriculum development. Such good practices ought to be shared/considered widely.

Most think tanks, university departments - and individuals in these institutions - have worked together, and the level of collaboration has generally been increasing over the past five years. Collaborations are easier to start through informal personal relationships between individuals than through formal institutional arrangements. Even where initial personal connections are institutionalised, the ultimately formal arrangements are nourished and sustained by person-to-person relationships. Informal personal relationships act as a catalyst in building trust necessary in forming and nurturing formal collaboration.

Universities, think tanks, their people, and third party organisations all have considerable interest in collaborations. Mainly their different funding models and priorities inhibit joint action, but there is strong recognition of the benefits of harnessing synergies, exploring opportunities, sharing costs, and improving the quality of research outputs and training.

The most fundamental ingredient for success is the clear definition of roles and agreement on a mutually beneficial agenda. Formal MoUs are crucial in setting out goals, commitment to delivery, and assignment of tasks. Think tanks' most immediate proposition to universities could be to repackage their research to reach policymakers and wider audiences, and both parties need to explore forms of collaboration that need little or no financial support.

### **Moving Towards Sustainability**

Sustainability remains a particularly key concern for think tanks. Universities, especially those that are public, enjoy funding support from governments and bring in significant fees from tuition and other services they provide. This is not the case with think tanks. However, it is important to note that while universities enjoy these revenue streams, a larger proportion tends to be used to meet recurrent costs, leaving universities with insufficient resources to support research.

To insure their sustainability, universities and think tanks need to consider taking several measures. Because of their weak resource base, think tanks have tended to be more dynamic and entrepreneurial in order to survive. For instance, many find that they have to be flexible and ready to move from one focus to the other fairly quickly if they are to survive. Much as

universities tend to have a stronger resource, they should become more entrepreneurial in their approach to mobilizing resources so that they can have surplus resources to carry out research, which tends to be underfunded. Universities could for instance use the idle infrastructure more effectively. One way, would be to hire out their conference facilities to think tanks in order to generate money and increase collaboration. Joint planning and execution of conferences is another potential area for collaboration between universities and think tanks that stands to bring in high returns. The two entities ought also to consider how they can develop new, innovative products that raise their profile and at the same time earn them some income.

Despite the above, there is the challenge of instilling the highest possible standards of accountability in financial management. To insure their sustainability and credibility, universities and think tanks should pay close attention to how they manage resources provided to them by funding organisations, with the highest levels of accountability and transparency. The imposition of austerity measures in many countries in the North has stemmed the flow of reliable streams of international donor funding support. New conditionalities for receiving donor funding, in particular heightened demands for accountability and value-for-money, are making it harder for universities and think tanks to access donor funding. Donors also prioritize high standards of research and timeliness, which universities and think tanks seeking their funding ought to take into account.

### **Removing and Reducing Constraints and Barriers to positive relationships**

Certain shortages prevent the development of positive relationships; these include a lack of human resources with the required skills to facilitate partnership; absence of platforms which create spaces, opportunities, and innovations around which relationship can be fostered; and limited financial resources for the tools that support collaboration.

Barriers also sometimes arise because of a lack of awareness of the value of collaboration. Neither universities nor think tanks are fully aware of the other parties' objectives, methods of work, binding constraints, or strategies. The first remedy must be better information and communication. Challenges of traditions, attitudes and trust deter collaborations. Only by working together will these issues be resolved. Consequently, all parties need to seek practical and holistic collaborative opportunities, such as jointly working on a research-to-policy process, with each party contributing its comparative advantage.

Different countries may need different prescriptions, as may different disciplinary fields. For instance, Tanzanian universities involved in agricultural research seem to collaborate much more than their Kenyan counterparts. The roots of these variations deserve further study.

The crowding out of research in public universities is attributed to increasing teaching loads and the economic advantage of teaching and consultancy rather than working with think tanks on research. The time and effort spent by university researchers in consultancy work may be under-reported in this study, either because their consultancy work constitutes moonlighting, or they prefer to present consultancy outputs as research.

While elaborate national strategies exist for universities in much of Africa, there is a complete absence of strategies for think tanks. There is need to include governments, capacity strengthening institutions and donors in the think tank/university collaboration conversation given the role they play in both types of institutions in different countries. To attract and sustain interest and buy-in, universities and think tanks themselves, need to convince governments, capacity strengthening institutions and donors of the pay offs. Further study is warranted on where governments, capacity strengthening institutions and donors already understand and invest in collaborations, and why.

Organic institutional collaboration has not worked so well, perhaps because the financial rewards are not delivered to the individuals who do the work. Institutional collaboration (formal) will collapse if it is in conflict with individual self-interest (informal). A middle ground that presents a win-win environment is needed to encourage both formal and informal approaches, which take into account the unique needs of individual researchers, the needs of research institutions as well as those of donors. Both think tanks and universities appear to understand well their respective motivations, and the purposes they seek to meet either through working independently or through collaborative effort. They are certainly best placed to navigate the delicate balances that characterise their relationships with each other and with the other actors in the wider knowledge system. Development assistance can provide much-needed support to nurture positive and complementary relationships, but great care and sensitivity is needed to avoid distorting the complex relations that exist.

Donor agendas may also sometimes distort think tank and university relationships if the two do not manage such a relationship well. There is an erroneous view that most think tanks are “donor-driven”. Many think tanks have clear mandates, which they pursue in spite of the availability (or lack thereof) of funding from donors. Perhaps the question is more about looking into ways of getting donors to prioritize the issues that affect Africa so that they can better align their funding to the needs of the continent and its institutions. Donor agendas have tended to be anchored on the policy frameworks of specific sectors and the broader national development agenda of both the donor and recipient countries. It is necessary for universities and think tanks to link their plans to these forces without necessarily imagining that this makes their research donor-driven.

These studies have revealed a knowledge gap in ways that the above constraints and barriers have already been addressed and overcome. There would be real value in creating a knowledge platform that harnesses best practices for collaboration between the two institutions and demonstrates how these relationships can play out in positive ways. Best practices of university-think tank collaborations from other parts of the world can be harnessed. African universities and think tanks operate in a globalized world in which there is stiff competition. More actors are involved in research today, among them research consulting firms with global reach, which are performing cutting-edge research and mobilizing high quality human resources to deliver the research. Indeed, when governments require long-term, complex research projects to be undertaken, they call upon international institutions. Think tanks and universities need to think innovatively about how best they can compete internationally. Collaboration among the

two entities as well as with other actors, such as private sector corporations, can help them to better meet the needs of an ever-more demanding market.

### **Think Tanks and Universities in Partnership to Link Quality Research to Policy Influence**

Though this study did not assess the quality of research outputs produced by universities and think tanks, the dissemination meeting in Nairobi raised concerns about the need to strengthen the quality of research outputs. It was noted that not enough has been done in this area because of lack of capacity, limited resources and heavy teaching responsibilities for academics. This calls for creative thinking to build more sustainable infrastructure for research in African institutions.

Neither basic nor applied social science research seems to be contributing sufficiently to the formulation of public policy in Africa. Consequently, there is room for both universities and think tanks, which are already collaborating in a number of countries, to leverage on each other strengths in order to make stronger impacts on public policy. The challenge, it would appear, is for both institutions to design approaches that will make their influence be felt more strongly in policymaking processes. This entails inquiring into the key drivers of the policymaking process and how policy change actually happens. This could be an area of future research.

The relationship between think tanks and universities should not be over generalized because think tanks have varied conceptual definitions. There is also very little distinction between universities and university affiliated think tanks resulting in university affiliated think tanks to function more or less like universities. Besides, some forms of collaboration may be promising, while others simply cannot work. It does not necessarily mean that all think tanks should work with universities. There is also need to be careful about generalizing that universities tend to be poor at mobilizing resources for research because there are examples of university researchers who have been able to attract several large research grants for their institutions.

Universities and think tanks as well as their donors need to understand research processes, protocols and utilization in order to cultivate sustainable or long-term collaborations, particularly in research. In conclusion, think tanks and universities can collaborate in a number of ways including:

- Joint short-term interactive training programmes in different areas
- Creating knowledge sharing platforms such as joint journal or book publications as well as periodic conferences to share research findings from both organisations
- Student internship in think tanks
- Sabbatical for university staff in think tanks
- Joint customised courses for people in government
- Formalising supervision of students and teaching in universities by think tank staff
- Strategic involvement of think tanks in curriculum design for relevant courses at the universities
- Joint research projects and policy discussions/engagement

## **Recommendations for Specific Roles and Contribution that Promote Effective Collaboration**

Universities, think tanks as well as funding organisations have a role to play in promoting long term and sustainable collaborations. This report suggests the following recommendations:

### ***Universities***

1. University-think tank collaboration stands to be enhanced where there is a fundamental shift in the mindset of university staff and how their institutions operate. University leaders ought to encourage frank discussions with their lecturers about their engagement in external collaborative initiatives, with a view to ensuring there is mutual recognition of each side's interests. They ought to look into ways of supporting individual-level collaborations, which tend to characterize interactions between universities and think tanks, to flourish because these so-called informal interactions are important building blocks of successful formal institutional collaborations.
2. Universities need to recognize the importance of research. A university can incentivize its staff to actively seek research grants and share the funds with the institution. One example of incentives is reduction of teaching load. The issue of teaching load is of major concern in many countries given the increasing number of students, which does not match with the number of staff. In addition, universities need to provide sabbatical leave to their staff to give them time to do research with think tanks. They should increase the autonomy of research units within universities to enable them create more interactions with think tanks.
3. University-based researchers need to be encouraged to compete for research funding. This can be done by requiring that part of their employment's key accountabilities is to bid for grants for joint research with think tanks and other external actors. If such incentives exist, what needs to be agreed upon is the revenue-sharing framework between researchers and universities. Universities in some countries are experiencing difficulties in attracting and keeping academics because think tanks, which are more flexible and tend to offer better terms of pay, poach their staff. Encouraging the involvement of university staff in research with think tanks and providing them with time to do research might help universities to retain senior staff and in a way encourage collaboration.
4. Given that universities are seen to be strong in research methodology issues, they should consider running short-term research skills enhancement courses that will involve both universities and think tanks.
5. Universities should value policy papers and influencing policy in the same way they value academic papers.

6. Although it would be difficult to achieve, universities need to critically reflect on the options for addressing the bureaucracy that is associated with their operations, as it tends to hinder collaboration with think tanks.

### ***Think tanks***

1. Think tanks should organise events focusing on the areas where they have comparative advantage. This can include how and when to engage policy actors in the research process as well as how to write short but precise reports for policy actors. In order for this to be useful, both think tanks and universities need to appreciate the considerations and processes for good research. The events can as well include customised interactive sessions that will involve policy actors working in government, private sector and universities.
2. Instead of think tanks bringing in senior staff from universities to work on specific projects as their only focus, they can broaden their responsibilities to include mentoring young researchers in think tanks. This will of course be an additional role that will require more time and resources.

### ***Funding organisations***

1. Donors need to understand that the optimal sustainability situation is to see the growth of both universities and think tanks and therefore equal attention needs to be paid to the development of both entities. There is need for donors to pay attention to strengthening human resources in both institutions especially research skills, creating platforms for the two institutions to interact frequently, share information, and providing financial resources required to facilitate collaborations and learning from other regions.
2. There are severe capacity problems in many African universities and think tanks and funding organisations could play a useful role in helping to address these capacity gaps. Many think tanks and universities need capacity building support for emerging researchers as well as more senior researchers. Donors should support a medium of technical exchange and sharing of ideas between universities and thinks tanks, such as a journal containing research evidence of TTs and universities working together. There is need to support activities such as joint short term training programmes and conferences where both organisations share research findings and come up with joint reports such as a book, attachments of university staff to think tanks and student internships in think tanks.
3. There is need to find ways of motivating the private sector and African governments to fund research in TTs and universities as a way of building capacity. In addition, there is need for African governments to create an environment (legal or otherwise) that facilitates collaboration between universities and TTs. For example, one of the ways the South African government is trying to address the research capacity challenge is by creating research chairs in the different universities through the National Research Foundation. Under this arrangement, a professor of significant standing in a particular

field joins a research institution and supervises or coordinates its research activities and in a way mentors other researchers.

4. Funding organisations have to reduce wastage by finding ways of minimizing duplication among themselves. Much as realizing this in practice would be a challenge as donors tend to have different and often changing interests, it would be advantageous if donors tried to align their interests as much as possible in ways that support collaboration between the two entities.
5. Donors should design calls-for-proposals that require applicants to form consortia in order to promote collaboration, which in turn promotes sustainability. Donors can play a significant role by making collaboration a pre-condition for funding. However, funding organisations ought to take into account the fact that there will be some situations where universities and think tanks will compete for resources, and others where they will prefer to combine and collaborate. Funding structures and conditionality should be flexibly responsive to this dynamic. Donors need to be proactive in identifying areas where alliances between universities and think tanks are beneficial, and tailor their country-specific funding accordingly. Awareness of what each party can offer in terms of knowledge, skills, and resources creates a more conducive environment for collaboration.
6. Donor funding mechanisms ought to be responsive to the fact that self-interest partly drives individual researchers to collaborate with either universities or think tanks. Funding models should carefully look at both individual and institutional direct as well as indirect gains from the collaborations.
7. Longer-term funding with focused priorities and emphasis on accountability, value for money and sustainability should be provided to think tanks and universities. This will help create long-term collaborations between the two institutions.

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## **Annex 1: Background to the broader concept of think tanks**

**Origins:** The history of universities stretches back a thousand years. Think tanks are relatively recent –first invented by governments in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century specifically as brains trusts to solve particular policy problems (only). They were called “Brain Boxes” before the term “Think Tank” – which describes so well what they are and what they do...and how – was widely adopted about 70 years ago.

The term “think tank” is now used colloquially and universally to mean any group of people who gather to brainstorm on a particular issue for a specific purpose. Members are chosen for their know-how – a blend of experience, wisdom, imagination, and technical knowledge. Their task is usually to solve a problem or to come up with ideas. They have a strategic brief on what is wanted, but otherwise a blue sky mandate on how to seek the answer. The name think tank is a clue to the usual and expected methodology: brainstorming – sometimes accompanied by external fact-finding, sometimes followed by cross checks and validation.

The scope of contexts and subjects for think tanks is unlimited, and can range from reviewing the by-laws of a sports club to rebranding a company, or designing a presidential election campaign, or planning a military invasion.

The term think tank in this synthesis is born of that genre but refers only and specifically to **policy focussed research institutions** in the sense used and understood by scholars and policy-makers, and as defined in the list of key concepts at the beginning of this paper. While these are a much evolved and very particular and formalised type of think tank, also known as policy institutes, in which the perspiration of research is as important as the inspiration of ideas, it is useful to understand their background because the modern versions contain at least some of the original genetic material, which also still influences popular perceptions.

**Evolution:** Initially, most think tanks were ad hoc assemblies set up to tackle short term (often military) exigencies, and disbanded when that particular work was done. Early institutional (and therefore long-term) examples include the Fabian Society, the Carnegie Endowment, the Brookings Institution and others – all characterised by their focus on singular political/policy issues. Indeed, despite massive recent proliferation and diversification, they most frequently manifest as “policy institutes”. Many now undertake or contract research (sometimes in an academic style). Many regard advocacy as their primary purpose. None pursue knowledge for its own sake

**Advanced Dictionary:** a body of experts providing advice and ideas on specific political or economic problems.

**Colloquial perceptions:** For non-academics, the reflex distinctions between universities and the broad spectrum of think tanks might include:

- Universities are academically driven
- Think tanks are politically and commercially driven
- Universities teach. They create and nurture expertise.
- Think Tanks don't. They identify and harness expertise.
- Universities are research institutions and often much else besides
- Think Tanks are Brains Trusts and often nothing else besides
- Universities use one method/system – to tackle any issue
- Think tanks use any method/system – to tackle one issue
- Universities deal in facts and statistical probabilities, and inform policy with robust scientific evidence.
- Think Tanks deal in ideas and blue-sky possibilities, and inform policy with strategic opinions/advice.
- Universities rigorously investigate, usually what is inside the box
- Think tanks brainstorm, often outside the box
- Universities measure and are measured by scientific research outputs. Work can be good even if nothing external results.
- Think tanks measure and are measured by policy outcomes. Work is good only if something external results.
- Universities often conduct “push” research, on what policy makers should worry about
- Think Tanks only conduct “pull” research, on what policy makers do worry about.

While not all those examples apply or translate to the policy institute type, they do illustrate public perception of the manifold and ostensibly diametric differences between universities and think tanks, and also demonstrate the common ground they stand on and how intrinsically inter-related they are: a classic example of two sides of the same coin.

In the policy institute context, a cynical but not unrealistic view is that “tame” think tanks are convenient to unenlightened governments, because their findings can be kept confidential or, when those findings are politically agreeable, they can be cited as “professional” and “expert” and “research-based”. If they are politically awkward, they can be dismissed as “unscientific”.

Collaboration between rigorously scientific universities and policy-savvy and intellectually rebellious think tanks can therefore be complementary to both institutions, but threatening to some political environments.

**Annex 2: Universities, think tanks and third party organisations covered by country**

Country	University	Think Tank	Third party	
Benin	Université d'Abomey Calavi (UAC) Centre d'Etudes, de Formation et de Recherches en Développement (CEFRED) Centre de Recherche d'Economie Appliquée et de Management (CREAM) Centr de Droit Administratif et de l'Administration Territoriale (CEDAT) Centre de Droit Constitutionnel (CDC) Laboratoire de Sociologie, Anthropologie et d'Études Africaines Centre de formation et de recherche en matière de population(CEFORP) Laboratoire de Sociologie et de Vulgarisation Rurales (LVSR) Laboratoire d'Etudes sur la Pauvreté et la performance de l'Agriculture (LEEPA)	Institut de recherche empirique en économie politique (IREEP)	Fraternité (groupe de presse) Office des radios et télévisions du Bénin (ORTB) L'Observatoire pour une Nouvelle Afrique (Ona-Ong) Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement (PNUD) Bénin Direction Générale des Affaires Economiques (Ministère des finances) Handicap International, Programme TOGO-BENIN Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (Campus Numérique Cotonou)	
	Université de Parakou (UP) FDSP/UP Faculté de Droit et Science Politique Faculté des Lettres,Arts et Sciences Humaines	Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL)		
	Université de Parakou Département : Economie et Sociologie Rurales (ESR)	L'Institut national de recherche agricole du Bénin (INRAB)		
	Université de Sciences Appliquées et de Management (USAM) Institut de Droit, Sciences Politiques et Sociales (IDPS)	Observatoire du Changement Social (OCS)		
	HOUDEGBE North American University Benin (HNAUB) Rév. Dr Léon Sullivan School of Business Administration and Economics	Institut National pour la Formation et la Recherche en Education INFREE		Cellule d'Analyses Politiques de Développement de l'Assemblée (CAPAN) Centre de Riz pour l'Afrique ADRAO/WARDA Centre International d'Eco-Développement Intégré CECODI Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique INSAE Centre Panafricain de Prospective Sociale/Institut Albert TEVOEDJRE
		Cellule d'Analyses Politiques de Développement de l'Assemblée (CAPAN)		
		Centre de Riz pour l'Afrique ADRAO/WARDA		
		Centre International d'Eco-Développement Intégré CECODI		
		Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique INSAE		
	Centre Panafricain de Prospective Sociale/Institut Albert TEVOEDJRE			
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa University Political Science and International Relations Department of economics Public Administration and Development management	Ethiopian Development Research Institute	Federal Sport Commission Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Ministry of Education Ministry of Finance & Economic Development Ministry of Women, Children & Youth Affairs Norwegian Church	
	Ethiopian Civil Service University Institute of Public Management and Development Studies Institute of Federalism and Legal Studies	The Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development		
	Hawassa University	Ethiopian Economics Association		

	School of Governance and Development Studies Department of Economics		Aid-Ethiopia Public Financial Enterprise Agency
	Adama University Department of Management Department of Economics	Forum for Social Studies	
	Ambo University Department of Economics Department of Management	Association of Ethiopian Micro Finance Institute	
	Debire Birhan University Department of Management Department of Sociology	Inter-Africa Group	
	Unity University Research and Publication Office	Environmental Economic Policy Forum for Ethiopia	
	Saint Marry University College Research and Knowledge Management office	Poverty Action Network Ethiopia	
		Network of Ethiopian Women Association	
		Research Center for Development and Education	
Kenya	Egerton University Economics Agricultural economics	Institute of Development Studies (UoN)	African Research and Resource Forum (ARRF) Kenya Market Trust (KMT) Kisumu Medical and Educational Trust (KMET) National Research, Training and Communications (NARTRAC) PATH Radio Lake Victoria
	Jeramogi Oginga Ondiga University of Science and Technology Board of Postgraduate Studies	Tegemeo Institute	
	Maseno University Literary and Communication Studies School of Development and Strategic Studies	Institute of Regional Integration and Development	
	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Research	Center for Multi-Party Democracy	
	Kenya Methodist University Health Systems Management and Medicine Education	Institute of Economic Affairs (Kenya)	
	Strathmore University School of Economics	African Centre for Economic Growth	
	Catholic University Research	OSIENALA	
Mozambique	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane Departamento de Antropologia	Centro de Estudos Africanos (CEA)	Rede Came CESC Fórum Mulher ADE Justa Paz Conselho Cristão de Mocambique
	Universidade Pedagógica Departamento de Sociologia e Antropologia	Centro de Estudos Estratégicos Internacionais (CEEI)	
	Universidade São Tomás de Moçambique (USTM) Departamento Sociologia e Administração Pública	Instituto de Investigações sócio-cultural – ARPAC	
	Universidade - A Politécnica – Departamento de Ciências Sociais e da Linguagem	Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos (IESE)	
		Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP)	
		Government and Development Institute GDI	
Centro de Estudos Sociais Aquino de Bragança (CESAB)			
	Associação Centro de Estudos do Ensino Superior e Desenvolvimento (CESD)		

Nigeria	Bayero University Kano Department of Political Science	African Heritage Institution (formerly African institute for Applied Economics)	World Bank (Country Office) National Population Commission Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry National Planning Commission Centre for International Private Enterprise National Orientation Agency Nigeria Governors Forum	
	University of Ibadan Department of Agric. Economic Department of Political Science	Centre for Population and Environmental Development		
	Obafemi Awolowo University, Department of Economics Department of Demography & Statistics Department of Sociology	Nigeria Economic Summit Group		
	Ekiti State University Department of Sociology	African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building		
	University of Nigeria Nsukka Dept of Agric Economics	Nigeria Institute for International Affairs		
	University of Lagos Faculty of Social Science Dept of Political science	Centre for Research and Documentation		
	Ahmadu Bello University Dept of Political Science	Centre for Democratic Development Research & Training		
	University of Uyo Dept of Economics	Aminu Kano centre for Democratic Research and Training		
	University of Calabar University Research Working Group	Centre for Public Policy Alternative		
	Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University Faculty of Social science	Centre for Sustainable Development		
	Covenant University College of Development Studies	Centre for petroleum, energy economics and law		
		Institute for Development, University of Nigeria, Nsukka		
	Senegal	University of Dakar (UCAD) Centre de Recherches Economiques Appliquées (CREA) Centre de Recherches et de Formation sur le Développement Economique et Social (CREFDES) Laboratoire de recherche sur les transformations économiques et sociales au Sénégal (LARTES) Laboratoire Genre et Recherche Scientifique Laboratoire de Sociologie, d'Anthropologie et de Psychologie (LASAP) Laboratoire Dynamique Territoriale et Santé (DTS) Institut de Formation et de Recherches en Population, Développement et Santé de la Reproduction (IFRPDSR) Institut de Santé et de Développement (ISD) Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes et de Documentation sur les Institutions et Législations Africaines (CREDILA) Laboratoire de Droit de l'Environnement et de la Santé (LDES) Laboratoire d'Etudes Juridiques et Politiques (LEJPO)		Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR)
University of Thiès Centre de Recherches en Economie et		Centre d'Etudes de Politiques pour le Développement (CEPOD)		



	Finance Appliquées de Thiès (CREFAT)		
	University of Saint-Louis (UGB) Laboratoire de Recherches Economiques de Saint-Louis (LARES) Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes et de Recherche de la Vallée (CIERVAL) Equipe de Recherches sur les mutations du Rural Sahélien	Bureau d'Analyse Macroéconomique (BAME)	
		Consortium pour la Recherche Economique et Sociale (CRES)	
		Centre de Recherches sur les Politiques Sociales (CREPOS)	
		Direction de la Prévision et des Etudes Economiques (DPEE)	
		Centre National de Recherches Agricoles de Bambey (CNRA)	
		Institut de Technologie Alimentaire (ITA)	
		Direction de l'Appui au Secteur Privé (DASP)	
		Centre de Recherches Agricoles de Saint-Louis (CRA)	
Uganda	Makerere University Social Work Social Administration Gender and Women Studies Economics Mass Communication	Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC)	National Council for Science and Technology The Secretariat for Social Protection under Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development Uganda Media Centre National Planning Authority Office of the Prime Minister Ministry of Health - Malaria Control Division Ministry of Health - Reproductive Health Division.
	Uganda Martyrs University Faculty of Business Administration and Management	Advocates Coalition for Development and Development (ACODE)	
	Uganda Christian University Faculty of Social Sciences	African Institute (AISRGD)	
	Kyambogo University	Centre for Basic Research	
	Mbarara University of Science and Technology	Policy Analysis and Development Research Institute (PADRI)	
	Gulu University	Community Development Resource Network (CDRN)	
		HEPS-Uganda	
		Development Research and Training (DRT)	
South Africa	University of the Western Cape Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies Governance	South African Institute for International Affairs	European Union - RSA Office Freidrich Ebert Stiftung Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria Andrew Mellon Foundation - RSA Office UK Department for International Development (DFID) - RSA Office Department of Trade and Industry, South Africa GIZ - RSA Office National Research
	University of Cape Town Sociology Economics Social work	Human Sciences Research Council	
	<b>Witwatersrand University</b> Sociology Institute for Social Development Centre for Migration Studies Psychology	Economic Research Southern Africa	
	<b>North West University</b> Public Management Governance studies	Data-First, University of Cape Town	

	<b>Tshwane University of Technology</b> Public Health	Council for Scientific Research of South Africa	Foundation (NRF) Department of Environmental Affairs
	<b>University of South Stellenbosch</b> Economics Public Administration	Studies in Poverty & Inequality Institute (SPII)	
	<b>University of Johannesburg</b> Political Science Economics	Institute for Global Dialogue	
	Monash University School of Social Sciences Economics	Consultancy Africa	
		Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa	
		Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa	
		Solidarity Research Institute	
		Peggassys Consultancy (Pvt) Ltd	
		Centre for Education Policy Development	
		Democracy Development Program	
		South African Institute for International Affairs	
	Endangered Wildlife Trust		
	Studies in Poverty & Inequality Institute (SPII)		
Tanzania	<b>University of Dar es Salaam</b> Development Studies Sociology	Policy Research for Development (REPOA)	African Capacity Building Foundation BEST- AC Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology DANIDA –Tanzania SIDA-Tanzania
	<b>University of Dodoma</b> Development Studies	Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)	
	<b>St. John University</b> Development Studies	Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organization (STIPRO)	
	<b>Mzumbe University</b> Administrative Studies	Ifakara Health Institute	
		University of Dar es Salaam Gender Centre	
		Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP)	
Zimbabwe	<b>University of Zimbabwe</b> <b>Centre for Applied Social Science (CASS)</b> Political Science Rural and Urban Planning funded by the British Council,	Institute of Environmental Studies	Ministry of Local Government
		Zimbabwe Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU)	
	<b>Africa University</b> <b>Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities</b>	Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRIZ)	
		Municipal Development Partnership (MDP)	
		Institute of Water and Sanitation Development	
		Trade and Development Studies Centre (TRADES)	
	Urban and Local Authorities		

### Annex 3: Universities and think tanks involved in Focus Group Discussions

	Name of Organisation	Country	Type of Organisation
1.	Center for the Study of the Economies of Africa	Nigeria	Think Tank
2.	Research on Poverty Alleviation	Tanzania	Think Tank
3.	Centre for Population and Environmental Development	Nigeria	Think Tank
4.	Economic and Social Research Foundation	Tanzania	Think Tank
5.	Ethiopian Economics Association	Ethiopia	Think Tank
6.	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research	Rwanda	Think Tank
7.	University of Ghana	Ghana	University
8.	The Open University of Tanzania	Tanzania	University
9.	Egerton University	Kenya	University
10.	Makerere University	Uganda	University
11.	University of Nairobi	Kenya	University
12.	University of Ibadan	Nigeria	University
13.	Ethiopian Civil Service University	Ethiopia	University
14.	Uganda Martyrs University	Uganda	University
15.	University of Dar es Salaam	Tanzania	University
16.	Uganda Christian University	Uganda	University
17.	University of Jos	Nigeria	University
18.	University of Botswana	Botswana	University

March 2013

Note: Rwanda and Botswana were not among the ten countries selected for the study but joined the FGDs given that they were present at the post-MDG forum in Nairobi

### Annex 4: Donors involved in findings sharing meeting

March, 2014

	Name of Organisation
1.	German Academic Exchange Service
2.	International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
3.	African Economic Research Consortium
4.	The Netherlands Embassy
5.	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
6.	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations
7.	Australian High Commission
8.	Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA)

Note: With an exception of OSSREA, the rest of the organizations are based in Nairobi

**Annex 5: Universities and think tanks involved in findings sharing workshop**

March, 2014

Country	Name of University	Name of Think Tank
Benin	Université d' Abomey Calavi	Institut National pour la Formation et la Recherche en Education (INFREE)
	Université de Parakou	Centr de Droit Administratif et de l'Administration Territoriale (CEDAT)
		Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL)
		Centre for Research in Applied Economics and Management
Ethiopia	Ethiopian Civil Service University	The Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute
	Addis Ababa University	
Kenya	Maseno University	Institute of Development Studies
	Moi University	Tegemeo Institute
	Baraton university	The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)
	Nairobi University	Institute of Economic Affairs
	Egerton University	OSIENALA (Friends of Lake Victoria)
	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology	
	Eldoret University	
Mozambique	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane	Associação Centro de Estudos do Ensino Superior e Desenvolvimento (CESD)
	Pedagogic University	
	Universidade Sao Tomas de Mocambique (USTM)	
Nigeria	Ekiti State University	The National Institute of Science Education and Research
	University of Uyo	Initiative for Public Policy Analysis
	University of Nigeria	
	University of Ibadan	
	Obafemi Awolowo University	
	Bayero University Kano	
Senegal	University of Dakar	Centre de Recherches en Economie et Finance Appliquées de Thiès (CREFAT)
		Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR)
South Africa	University of Pretoria	South African Institute of International Affairs
	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
Tanzania	University of Dar es Salaam	Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)
	University of Dodoma	Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organization (STIPRO)
	Sokoine University of Agriculture	
Uganda	Uganda Martyrs University	African Institute for Strategic Research, Governance & Development (AISRGD)
	Makerere University	Advocates Coalition for Development and Development (ACODE)
	Kabale University	Centre for Basic Research
	Uganda Christian University	Policy Analysis and Development Research Institute (PADRI)
Zimbabwe	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Democracy Institute
	Women's University in Africa	Zimbabwe Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU)
		Trade and Development Studies Centre (TRADES)
Total	33 Universities	27 Think Tanks

## Annex6: Country statistics

**Table A1: Subject focus of departments/research units by country**

Country	Economics	Political	Sociology	Anthropology	Governance	Public policy	Other
Kenya	40	0	20	0	0	0	40
Uganda	33	11	11	11	0	11	22
Tanzania	11	33	11	0	0	0	45
Ethiopia	29	7	7	0	21	0	36
Senegal	40	13	7	0	0	0	40
Nigeria	19	38	25	13	0	0	6
Benin	63	13	0	0	0	0	25
Mozambique	0	50	50	0	0	0	0
Zimbabwe	25	0	25	0	0	0	50
South Africa	20	15	20	0	30	0	15
Average	28	17	15	3	9	1	27

**Table A2: Subject focus of think tanks by country**

Country	Economics	Political	Sociology	Anthropology	Governance	Public policy	Other
Kenya	0	0	17	0	50	17	17
Uganda	33	0	33	0	11	11	11
Tanzania	20	0	0	0	0	40	40
Ethiopia	30	10	0	0	10	50	0
Senegal	60	0	0	0	0	0	40
Nigeria	17	25	0	0	0	25	33
Benin	50	17	0	0	0	0	33
Mozambique	25	13	25	0	25	13	0
Zimbabwe	50	0	0	0	25	0	25
South Africa	31	0	0	8	46	8	8
Average	32	7	7	1	17	16	20

**Table B: Status of think tanks by country**

Country	Independent National	Independent Regional	University affiliated	Other affiliates	Private sector	Government body
Kenya	33	33	33	0	0	0
Uganda	67	11	11	0	11	0
Tanzania	60	20	20	0	0	0
Ethiopia	50	10	10	10	0	20
Senegal	40	30	0	10	0	20
Nigeria	58	0	33	0	0	8
Benin	17	67	0	0	17	0
Mozambique	75	13	0	0	0	13
Zimbabwe	50	38	13	0	0	0
South Africa	40	30	10	0	0	20
Average	51	22	12	2	2	10

**Table C1: Number of research projects undertaken by University departments/research units by country in the last 5 years**

Country	0	None	1-5	6-10	Over 10
Kenya	0	20	80	0	0
Uganda	0	0	22	44	33
Tanzania	0	44	33	11	11
Ethiopia	7	7	33	20	33
Senegal	0	7	40	13	40
Nigeria	0	81	19	0	0
Benin	0	25	63	0	13
Mozambique	0	0	50	50	0
Zimbabwe	0	14	43	29	14
South Africa	0	5	40	50	5
Total	1	23	38	22	17

**Table C2: Number of research projects undertaken by think tanks in the last 5 years**

Country	1-5	6-10	Over 10
Kenya	33	0	67
Uganda	44	44	11
Tanzania	40	0	60
Ethiopia	20	10	70
Senegal	11	11	78
Nigeria	45	36	18
Benin	50	0	50
Mozambique	50	13	38
Zimbabwe	50	13	38
South Africa	23	38	38
Total	35	20	45

**Table D1: Researchers used to carry out research by think tanks by country**

Country	Internal	External	Both internal & external
Uganda	11	0	89
Tanzania	20	0	80
Ethiopia	20	10	70
Senegal	25	0	75
Nigeria	0	9	91
Benin	25	25	50
Mozambique	0	14	86
Zimbabwe	13	0	88
South Africa	23	0	77
Total	15	5	80

**Table D2: Researchers used to carry out research by universities by country**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>	<b>Both internal &amp; external</b>
Uganda	56	0	44
Tanzania	20	0	80
Ethiopia	71	0	29
Senegal	17	0	83
Nigeria	75	0	25
Benin	0	17	83
Mozambique	50	0	50
Zimbabwe	0	0	100
South Africa	30	0	70
Total	35	1	63