



# **African Researchers and Decision-makers**

## **Building Synergy for Development**

Edited by  
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**Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa**  
**International Development Research Centre**

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The **Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa** (CODESRIA) is an independent organisation whose principal objectives are to facilitate research, promote research-based publishing and create multiple forums geared towards the exchange of views and information among African researchers. All these are aimed at reducing the fragmentation of research in the continent through the creation of thematic research networks that cut across linguistic and regional boundaries.

Canada's **International Development Research Centre** (IDRC) is one of the world's leading institutions in the generation and application of new knowledge to meet the challenges of international development. For nearly 40 years, IDRC has worked in close collaboration with researchers from the developing world to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.

# Contents

<b>List of Boxes</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Abbreviations and Acronyms</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Contributors</b> .....	<b>xv</b>

## **Introduction**

<b>Why Reflect on Synergy between Researchers and Decision-makers in West and Central Africa?</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Research that Contributes to Development and Influences Public Policy .....	<b>2</b>
Pragmatic Reflection in the West and Central African Context .....	<b>12</b>

## **Chapter I**

<b>A Complex and Multifaceted Collaboration, Often Difficult to Implement</b> .....	<b>15</b>
1. Marked Compartmentalization .....	<b>15</b>
2. Communication and Information: Often Inappropriate Due to a Climate of Mistrust .....	<b>24</b>
3. Inconsistency in Public Policies on Research and Insufficient Collaboration between Researchers and Decision-makers .....	<b>32</b>

## **Chapter II**

<b>Experiences and Initiatives that Promote Collaboration between Researchers and Decision-makers</b> .....	<b>41</b>
1. Democratization Processes and Attempts to Harmonize Research Policies at the Institutional Level .....	<b>41</b>

2. Diversification among Actors Engaged in Knowledge Management and Sharing ..... 47
3. Information, Communication and Promotion of Research Outputs ..... 56

### **Chapter III**

#### **Recommendations to Improve Dialogue between Researchers and Decision-makers ..... 65**

1. Creating and Strengthening Strategic Alliances between Researchers, Decision-makers and Civil Society ..... 65
2. Enhancing Accessibility and Use of Research Outputs ..... 68
3. Adopting Legislative and Budgetary Measures to Adapt Operational Procedures of Universities and Research Centres to the Demands of Decision-makers and Researchers ..... 70
4. Defining a Concerted Action Platform for Researchers, Decision-makers and Civil Society to Formulate Research Priorities and Actions ..... 73

#### **Notes ..... 75**

#### **References ..... 77**

## List of Boxes

Experience of MIMAP-Senegal .....	11
Series of Meetings on Relations between Researchers and Decision-makers .....	14
Experiences in the Agricultural Sector in Senegal .....	17
Desertification and Development .....	18
Differences between Consultancy and Research.....	22
State of Research on Maternal and Neonatal Mortality in Benin .....	23
Do Decision-makers Use Research Findings? .....	26
Decision-makers' Complaints Regarding Researchers .....	29
Researchers' Complaints Regarding Decision-makers .....	30
Sources of Research Funding .....	35
The Siwaa Programme in Mali .....	43
ROCARE's Support to the Ministry of Basic Education in Organizing the 'Ségou Perspectives' Meeting .....	52
Extension of Cassava Cultivation in Burkina Faso .....	53
A Study on Corruption in the Senegalese Healthcare System .....	55
Role of ISRA's Macroeconomic Analysis Bureau (BAME) in Senegal .....	59
Progress Achieved by the 'Forest Resource' Programme in Mali .....	64



## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACS	Association des chercheurs sénégalais (Senegalese Researchers' Association)
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AGIR	Amélioration de la gestion des institutions de recherches au Sahel (Programme to Improve the Management of Research Institutions in the Sahel)
AMCES	Association des oeuvres médicales privées confessionnelles et sociales au Bénin (Association of Private Confessional Medical and Social Work in Benin)
ANSSP	Aceh Nias Settlements Support Programme (UN-Habitat)
AREB	Atelier de recherche sur l'éducation au Burkina (Research Workshop on Education in Burkina Faso)
ASAFE	Association pour le soutien et l'appui à la femme entrepreneur (Association for Support to Women Entrepreneurs, Cameroon)
BAME	Bureau d'analyses macroéconomiques de l'ISRA (Macroeconomic Analysis Bureau, Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute)
CAP 21	Convergence autour du Président pour le 21 <sup>ème</sup> siècle (Convergence of Actions around the President of the Republic for the 21st Century, Senegal)
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CESAG	Centre africain d'études supérieures en gestion (African Centre for Higher Studies in Management, Dakar, Senegal)
CIA	Cercle des intellectuels de l'alternance (Circle of Intellectuals of the Newly Elected Government, Senegal)
CMDT	Compagnie malienne pour le développement des textiles (Malian Textile Development Company)
CNCR	Cadre national de concertation des ruraux (National Rural Consultation Framework, Senegal)
CRAES	Conseil de la République pour les affaires économiques et sociales (National Council for Economic and Social Affairs, Senegal)

CREA	Centre de recherches économiques appliquées (Applied Economics Research Centre, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal)
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Ghana
DAPS	Direction de l'analyse, de la prévision et des statistiques (Department of Studies, Forecasts and Statistics of the MAEH, Senegal)
DNM	Direction nationale de la météorologie (National Meteorological Organisation, Mali)
DRSPR	Division de recherche sur les systèmes de production rurale (Rural Production Systems Research Division, Mali)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FASAF	Network for Family and Schooling in Africa
FNRAA	Fonds national de recherche agricole et agro-alimentaire (National Agricultural and Agrifood Research Fund, Senegal)
FONAENF	Fonds pour l'alphabétisation et l'éducation non formelle (Fund for Literacy and Nonformal Education, Burkina Faso)
FRSIT	Forum national de la recherche scientifique et des innovations technologiques (National Forum for Scientific Research and Technological Innovation, Burkina Faso)
GTI	Groupe technique interservice (Interdepartmental Technical Group, Mali)
IDA	International Development Association of the World Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
INERA	Institut de l'environnement et des recherches agricoles (Institute of Environmental and Agricultural Research, Burkina Faso)
INIIT	International Institute of Information Technology, Ghana
ISRA	Institut sénégalais de recherches agricoles (Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute)
ITA	Institut de technologie alimentaire (Food Technology Institute, Senegal)



JNP	Journée nationale du paysan (National Farmers' Day, Burkina Faso)
LOASP	Loi d'orientation agro-sylvo-pastorale (Agro-sylvo-pastoral Act, Senegal)
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
MAEH	Ministère de l'agriculture, de l'élevage et de l'hydraulique (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Production and Hydraulics, Senegal)
MIMAP	Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (IDRC research programme)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (United Kingdom)
PACD	Promotion d'une agriculture compétitive et durable (Promotion of Competitive and Sustainable Agriculture, French Cooperation)
PASEC	Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la Conférence des ministres de l'éducation des pays ayant le français en partage (Education Systems Analysis Programme of the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-speaking Countries)
PBA	Programme-Based Approach
PDEF	Programme décennal de l'éducation et de la formation (Ten-year Education and Training Programme, Senegal)
POBA	Plan opérationnel budgétaire annuel (Annual Operational Budget Plan)
PPMEH	Projet de promotion des petites et moyennes entreprises horticoles (Project for the Promotion of Small Horticultural Businesses, Canadian Cooperation)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSAOP	Programme de services agricoles et organisations de producteurs (Agricultural Services and Producer Organizations Project)
RAPID	Research and Policy In Development (ODI Programme)
R&D	Research and Development
ROCARE / ERNWACA	Réseau ouest et centre africain de recherche en éducation (Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa)

RPBPD	Réseau des parlementaires béninois pour la population et le développement (Beninese Parliamentarians Network on Population and Development)
RPMM	Réseau des parlementaires sur la mortalité maternelle (Parliamentarians Network on Maternal Mortality, Benin)
STC	Scientific and Technical Committees
Syfia	Network of 9 news agencies with an interest in Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDEA	Private Italian foundation involved in health and education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office of IDRC

## Foreword

Development policies in our African countries can only be sustainable if they are grounded in local realities. Such policies should lead to actions and solutions that are suitable, sustainable and culturally acceptable, not only within the African environment generally but also in the immediate communities for whom they are intended. Very often, actions carried out by bilateral and multilateral donors are founded on studies conducted by international experts specially mobilised for that purpose. Thus, most of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) required by the World Bank to give countries access to debt reduction mechanisms are written by outside experts called in by the Bank. Only a handful of countries have been able to turn in “homegrown” PRSPs. And yet, there is no lack of national experts who could have provided the States with the necessary data to prepare papers more closely connected with their national realities.

Unfortunately, in West and Central Africa, researchers and decision-makers rarely make fine bedfellows. Despite quality research conducted by national researchers, policy decisions are most often informed by advice from abroad. This observation, which is quite widely shared, prompted certain members of the Council of Regional Advisors\* to ask the following question of the regional office of the International Development Research Centre in Dakar (IDRC) during a meeting in 2003: How can the Centre, whose mission is to promote development by supporting research, stimulate use of research findings

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\* The Council of Regional Advisors was set up in 2001 by the IDRC West and Central Africa Regional Office to support it in its reflection on emerging problems in the sub-region. The Council comprises ten experts whose areas of competency correspond to IDRC's four main programme areas. Advisors are chosen on the basis of their individual expertise and mastery of African development issues as well as their ability to influence policy. Some twenty advisors have served on the Council since 2001. Their selection has been carefully balanced in terms of expertise, language, gender and nationality.

with a view to policy-making that is both effective and relevant in the specific context of West and Central Africa?

While the question is not a new one, IDRC has decided to address it pragmatically and concretely for this region of Africa where it supports numerous researchers and research institutes. Thus, the aim was not to enlist brilliant analysts to make a study on the issue, but rather to find a formula that makes it possible to directly question the actors involved in an organised manner, while stimulating cross-reflection with a view to finding solutions.

Supported by its Regional Advisors, the Centre brought together researchers and decision-makers from various countries in the subregion in the framework of a three-year series of meetings, running from June 2004 to January 2007. The aim was to compare viewpoints and conduct joint reflection on obstacles to effective dialogue, and to propose innovative and sustainable solutions to overcome those obstacles. To better define the problem, the meetings mobilised decision-makers (politicians, civil society, local elected representatives, traditional and religious leaders) and researchers having a specific field or country in common.

In organising the series of meetings, IDRC was able to rely on the personal commitment of the Regional Advisors in each of the countries involved, as well as on the methodological support of the programme administrators at the IDRC regional office in Dakar. Programming, coordination and supervision of the series were ensured by Gilles Forget, Regional Director, and Jérôme Gérard, Regional Research Officer at the Centre.

An innovative approach allowed IDRC to explore various methodologies for the organisation of the meetings, and to take account of various approaches and concerns inherent in each context, while leaving considerable space for learning. With the exception of the first workshop, a pioneering undertaking in many ways that was organized in Senegal, the meetings between researchers and decision-makers were locally designed and steered by national organization committees set up and led by the assigned Regional Advisor in the country concerned.



The common goal of the meetings was to arrive at a better understanding of why decision-making is only rarely informed by national research findings, no matter the country or research subject involved. The conclusions of all six workshops revealed several causes including a lack of dialogue between the two groups, across countries and research fields.

Almost unanimously, researchers and decision-makers in all six countries pointed out how the lack of dialogue, synergy and collaboration between the two groups negatively impacted the development of their area of activity. That is why, in at least four of the national workshops, participants suggested solutions to help stimulate synergy and dialogue between researchers and decision-makers. To formulate concrete actions, follow-up groups took account of examples where researchers and decision-makers built bridges to ensure effective use of research findings to shape policies.

Beyond these national dynamics, the main objective of IDRC in organising the series of meetings was to define concrete elements to enable the Centre to better understand the complexity of the problem in the context of the subregion in order to enhance synergy between researchers and decision-makers. Using available elements of comparison, the Centre and its Regional Advisors organised the production of an analytical synthesis of all of the outputs and conclusions of the workshop series. The first step in the process was a participatory exercise focusing on the development of a detailed and consistent outline capturing everything that had been understood and learned in the course of the meeting series. Prepared by Jérôme Gérard with support from Senegalese socio-anthropologist Abdou Ndao, a detailed framework for the analytical synthesis was commented, amended and validated by the Regional Advisors in a meeting in Dakar in July 2007.

Based on this consensual work, Abdoulaye Ndiaye, Regional Advisor for Senegal, drafted the synthesis manuscript. Section after section, the Regional Advisors discussed and commented the document online, leading up to a final collective revision and validation carried out in April 2008 during a meeting held in Abidjan. The chief drafter was thus able to finalise the text of the publication, which was then translated into English and revised in both languages. In publishing this book, the Centre wished to ensure that a wide audience in West and Central Africa could easily access the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop series on synergy between researchers and decision-makers.

Much remains to be done to promote the use of African research findings by decision-makers (in the broad sense) in West and Central Africa. The three-year series of workshops for researchers and decision-makers held in the subregion was an important step. The recommendations put forward by the follow-up committees in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Benin are encouraging.



With this publication, IDRC hopes that Africa will further enhance its ability to pragmatically and effectively use its intellectual resources to design and plan for its future. IDRC will continue to work to promote the use of quality African research in policy-making.

Gilles Forget  
IDRC Regional Director, 2001 - 2008

## Contributors

### Contributors to the Series of Meetings on Relations between Researchers and Decision-makers

The meeting series was organised in the framework of the Council of Regional Advisors of the IDRC Regional Office for West and Central Africa (WARO) in Dakar.

More specifically, the first workshop in the series, which took place in Senegal, on agriculture (29 – 30 June 2004), was designed by **Jérôme Gérard** and **Innocent Butaré** of IDRC (WARO) with the support of the Regional Advisors of Senegal: **Abdoulaye Ndiaye**, Director of Agir-Promouvoir and international consultant, **Colonel Mbareck Diop**, Director of APAVE-Sahel and former advisor to the President of the Republic, and **Mamoudou Touré**, former Director, IMF Africa Department, and former Minister of the Economy and Finance. The workshop was organised with the support of **Masse Lo**, Director of the LEAD-Afrique francophone programme.

The workshop in Ouagadougou on education (27 – 28 January 2005) was designed and organised by Regional Advisor **Alice Tiendrébéogo**, General Director of *Fonds pour l'alphabétisation et l'éducation non formelle* (FONAENF) in Burkina Faso and former Minister of Basic Education of Burkina Faso. She received support from **Joachim Tankoano**, information technology advisor to the Prime Minister and also an IDRC Regional Advisor for Burkina Faso, and **Alioune Camara**, Senior Programme Specialist at IDRC Dakar.

The roundtable in Accra on private entrepreneurship (6 – 7 July 2005) was organised by the Regional Advisor in Ghana, **Clement Dzidonu**, Chairman and Senior Researcher at the International Institute of Information Technology (INIIT) in Accra, with the support of **Kafui Dansou**, Partnership Officer, IDRC Dakar.

The Bamako forum on drought and desertification (8 – 9 February 2006) was prepared by **Mama Konaté**, Director of the National Meteorological Organisation (DNM) of Mali and IDRC Regional Advisor, with support from **Innocent Butaré**, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC Dakar.

The Yaoundé symposium on governance (21 – 22 June 2006) was organised by Regional Advisor for Cameroon, **Gisèle Yitamben**, Chair of *Association pour le soutien et l'appui à la femme entrepreneur* (ASAFE), with support from **Elias Ayuk**, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC Dakar.

The Cotonou symposium on maternal and neonatal mortality (16 – 17 January 2007) was organised by the Regional Advisor for Benin, **Marina Massougboji**, cardiologist, Professor at the Faculty of Health Science of Benin and former Minister of Health, with support from **Ernest Dabiré**, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC Dakar.

### **Contributors to the book** *African Researchers and Decision-makers*

The manuscript of the analytical synthesis of the series of meetings between researchers and decision-makers was drafted in French by **Abdoulaye Ndiaye**, IDRC Regional Advisor for Senegal.

The text was revised, commented and amended, by electronic means and in meetings, by the Regional Advisors sitting on the Council in 2007 and 2008, who are:

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The English translation was the work of Mme **Carole Small-Diop** (Senegal) and the editorial revision was carried out in French by Dr. **Charles Becker** (Senegal) and in English by Dr. **Shekou Sesay** (Sierra Leone).

The entire process of the production of this publication was coordinated and supervised by **Catherine Cherrier Daffé** and **Jérôme Gérard**, respectively Executive and Research Assistant and Research Officer at the IDRC West and Central Africa Regional Office.





# Introduction

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## Why Reflect on Synergy Between Researchers and Decision-makers in West and Central Africa?

Research is a fundamental element in the national development process. It plays a key role in every sector: economic, scientific, technical, social and cultural.

In the light of the above, IDRC supports projects designed to strengthen research capacities whose objectives focus on:

- consolidating specific policy initiatives – to promote equity for the poor, the environment and natural resource management, as well as information and communication technology;
- enabling under-represented groups to participate in decision-making;
- creating coalitions to support specific policy initiatives; and
- contributing to the dissemination of information.

The experience of IDRC in development research has enabled it to highlight the real potential of research to:

- influence public policy in various ways, for example, by increasing the resources available for policy development, impacting on existing policies or broadening the scope of policies;
- promote the emergence of new ideas and skills for their dissemination, and develop new talents to conduct issues-based research and studies. Thus, research can improve the institutional framework for policy development;
- introduce new ideas to the larger thematic orientation, ensure that knowledge is provided to decision-makers in a user-friendly form, and promote proactive dialogue between researchers and decision-makers. Research can thus improve the intellectual framework surrounding policy-making;

- influence, in certain instances, public policy directly. This can lead to changes in programmes, organisations and legal instruments.

### **Research that Contributes to Development and Influences Public Policy**

The relationship between researchers and decision-makers has been the focus of considerable literature, reflecting mainly the concerns of numerous institutions whose mission is to promote development research. This literature aims at explaining how research can influence policy-makers and how policy-makers can use research.

Initially, one might think that the relationship is direct, in that good research should be relevant and accessible to decision-makers just as good rational policy should be based on relevant research findings. Yet, the reality is far from this ideal vision. Research has pointed to a series of reasons explaining the complexity of the relationship between researchers and decision-makers (Stone, Maxwell and Keating 2001), which include:

- limited access to data and studies affecting both decision-makers and researchers;
- frequent lack of appropriate research policy to deal with major public issues;
- weak researcher understanding of the decision-making process, the issues and their role in that process;
- researchers' lack of will to disseminate research findings;
- disconnection from the beneficiaries of research, which may be the fault of researchers or decision-makers, or both;
- decision-makers' lack of awareness of the existence of relevant research;
- red tape, which hinders ownership and effective use of research outputs;
- governments' inability to recognize and use research findings, mainly due to insufficient human and financial resources;
- the problem may be perceived as not just a matter of research having occasional impact on decision-makers, but as a more profound issue with socio-political, economic and cultural overtones. This may raise the issue of the relevance of research and the choice of topics, hence the adoption of a long-term perspective in which research may not demonstrate its immediate effectiveness, but rather only after many years;<sup>1</sup>

- the problem may also have its roots in the political system. In certain instances, the public authorities may challenge the validity of research findings or may even censure or control research for political and ideological reasons.

Taking note of the obstacles that inhibit the relationship between researchers and decision-makers, development organisations have taken initiatives aimed at increasing the influence of research on public policies.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI), with its Research And Policy In Development (RAPID) programme, and IDRC, through initiatives such as its strategic evaluation of the influence of research on public policies, have identified methodological orientations to enhance our understanding of the research-to-policy process.

ODI established the RAPID<sup>2</sup> programme on the principle that better use of research findings in public policy could save human lives, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. This programme has led to the development of an analytical framework (or matrix) comprising four considerations: (i) the political context; (ii) proof through research; (iii) links between communities, networks and other intermediaries (the media); and (iv) external influences (development partners). The programme is based on the hypothesis that the relationship between researchers and decision-makers is not linear, but a dynamic and multidimensional process. It aims at explaining why certain ideas circulating in research and policy circles are applied while others are not. For each of the four considerations, researchers must respond to three types of concerns: what they need to know, what they need to do and how to go about doing it. The considerations are as follows:

- (i) The political context defines key factors of influence linked to the state of civil and political liberties in a country, the level of political protest (expression of freedoms), institutional pressures, official attitudes, incentives and margins for manoeuvring, the historical context and power relations. According to the RAPID matrix, researchers should know the political decision-makers and the decision-making process including their needs in terms of new or innovative ideas; they should also identify sources of resistance and know the appropriate times when needs can be addressed in a more formal process. Researchers should then endeavour to enter into relationships with decision-makers, get to know their agenda and constraints, identify potential supporters

and opponents, and take advantage of every opportunity<sup>3</sup> to act and make their ideas prevail in the official decision-making process of authorities. Finally, they should work directly with political decision-makers, join commissions or working groups, ensure, if possible, that their research programmes are aligned with certain key political events, and devote sufficient time and resources to strengthening this relationship.

- (ii) Proof through research may be relevant to decision-makers if it is properly understood and if it is the focus of appropriate communication. Influence on decision-makers is greater where research findings can be used operationally, i.e. where they provide solutions to public policy problems. On the other hand, the way research findings are disseminated, the use of simple and accessible language to transmit messages and the choice of targets can be decisive in convincing political decision-makers. The idea, in this case, is to use marketing tools that focus on form to better get their messages across. This type of communication, focusing on the creation of dialogue between researchers and decision-makers, should be based more on interaction than on a linear approach.
- (iii) When researchers and political decision-makers appear to live in separate worlds, ties between them can be another decisive factor in the use of research findings by decision-makers. Researchers often fail to understand the reasons for resistance to change in policy matters where research has clearly demonstrated the need for change. Meanwhile, political decision-makers reproach most researchers for their inability to portray their research findings in simple, easily understood language and to ensure their accessibility and timely availability for policy decisions to be made. This relationship is therefore fundamental and even vital in sectors such as health, where some countries have verged on disaster because their governments did not see fit to apply disease prevention and control programmes whose relevance had been demonstrated by research.
- (iv) The relationship between researchers and decision-makers may be determined by external factors or by development partners whose research support policies are often designed outside of the beneficiary countries. For example, they may be influenced by new trends such as liberalization and democratization or support for NGOs. Many research topics on development are identi-

fied by the North and the ensuing research is also led by the North, a fact that raises issues of relevance and of beneficiary access to research findings. Northern funding of much of the research in southern countries also poses problems of ownership and legitimacy, not to mention massive use of external consultants to the detriment of local researchers.

The conditions described above are rarely aligned positively. While researchers can guarantee the credibility of their research findings and ensure that they communicate well with political decision-makers, they often have a limited ability to influence the political environment in which they work. Resource scarcity is another major limitation that forces researchers to make choices. By improving information and strategic choices, researchers can maximize their chances of influencing policy.

The notion that research should aim expressly at influencing public policy can be quite disturbing (Carden 2005), and some believe that scientific research should never be driven by external factors, but should remain free and unfettered. Others believe that it is perfectly legitimate, on the contrary, to conduct research motivated by hopes of improving the lot of mankind. However, conducting research to meet the needs of public policy-makers may involve risks: social science research, in particular, often produces apparently contradictory outcomes. As has been pointed out by educator Carol Weiss, "... since social scientists acknowledge the fragility of research in general and its time-and-situation-bound character, there are serious questions about what it is that we expect government officials to plug into their decisions."

IDRC has conducted a comprehensive internal review of its funded research in order to understand the influence it exerts on the policy-making process. This evaluation sought to determine how IDRC-supported research is put to practical use and how researchers channel ideas to decision-makers as well as how decision-makers gain access to the ideas they need.

Due to the diversity of its support, IDRC had not developed a common language to facilitate thorough reflection on these issues. For instance, "policy influence" did not necessarily mean the same thing to everyone. Thus, one goal of the strategic evaluation was to establish a common language and define terms by identifying the main factors that come into play in the application of research findings and the contexts within which IDRC-funded research exerted real

influence. IDRC began by establishing a framework to describe what was meant by policy influence, of which there are three levels:

- Expanding policy capacity. Research can support the development and dissemination of innovative ideas and contribute to the development of research and analytical skills. In other words, research can improve the institutional framework surrounding policy-making.
- Broadening policy horizons. Research can introduce new ideas to the agenda, ensure that knowledge is provided to decision-makers in a form they can use, and encourage dialogue between researchers and decision-makers. To put it another way, research can improve the intellectual framework surrounding policy-making.
- Changing strategic frameworks. Research outcomes can contribute to the development of legal standards, change programme orientations and modify existing organisations. In actual fact, such changes are rare and indirect, and are almost never visibly and directly inspired by research alone.

The range of these influence types extends well beyond decision-making. More generally, it includes capacity building for both researchers and decision-makers to facilitate their profitable use of knowledge and broaden the conceptual boundaries that can hamper or even block the whole research-to-policy process.

The evaluation reviewed the findings of 22 case studies covering IDRC's programme areas in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. It culminated in the following general conclusions:

- When it comes to doing research intended to influence policy, there are no "best practices"; rather, any impact is the result of a confluence of several dynamic factors. There is no ideal planning tool.
- The quality of relationships is critical. Regardless of the formal government or bureaucratic system in which they operate, the personal and professional ties between individual researchers and decision-makers are decisive in policy influence.
- IDRC believes that local ownership of research processes and findings is essential. It therefore supports research that is locally driven and locally used.

The findings from the case studies were also classified under the following three categories:

- (i) Why we intervene – the values and principles that guide IDRC support for research;

- (ii) Where we work – the institutional environment, or context, where research is carried out; and
- (iii) How we work – the organisation and management of actual projects.

We shall focus here on the second category – “where we work” –, and in particular on the interaction between knowledge acquisition and policy-making process. IDRC places particular emphasis on context and distinguishes between external factors and controllable factors.

The case studies show that the decision-making process is influenced by five dimensions of the research context that are *external* to projects and networks. These external factors relate to the situation in the country and the nature of its decision-making bodies. While it is difficult to change these factors, it is useful to take them into consideration when deciding where and when to concentrate efforts.

### ***1. The Stability of Decision-making Institutions***

In several cases, low policy influence appears to result from instability in policy-making structures, due to budget cuts, elimination or restructuring of agencies, etc. This instability mostly became evident at the completion of research, essentially at the time of implementing recommendations. However, more stable decision-making structures may sometimes be found, such as higher or lower levels of government and administration, and effort should be focused on collaborating with those entities.

### ***2. The Capacity of Policy-makers to Use Research***

Policy influence may be weaker where policy-makers either need basic training to understand research findings or are unable to reconcile competing interests. Some policy-makers were unable to utilise IDRC-financed research outcomes because they were unfamiliar with the concepts involved and the basic knowledge required had not been provided by the researchers. It also happens that officials from developing countries dependent on the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank have been hesitant in fully utilising research outcomes to advocate changes to the policy-making bodies of these international financial institutions.

### ***3. Decentralization Versus Centralization***

Decentralization may strengthen or reduce policy influence according to the level at which decisions are made on a specific issue. It is

therefore important for a project's overall framework to mesh smoothly with the country's basic constitutional structure. Likewise, strong centralization of powers can be either beneficial or detrimental to policy influence, depending to the nature of the project. Research teams should take this into account in planning strategies and relationships. Instead of blueprinting the level of policy influence to be obtained in a project, it may be useful to investigate initially what level of influence can reasonably be expected under specific circumstances.

#### ***4. Special Opportunities in Countries in Transition***

Two projects were carried out in Ukraine and Vietnam, countries in transition from communism to a market economy. They were effective not only in generating needs-relevant research and affecting policy, but also in teaching local researchers and policy-makers new approaches to collaboration and decision-making. For example, IDRC partners in Ukraine observed that IDRC staff had introduced them to a new management culture, characterized by open information sharing, consultation with stakeholders, and decision-making based on research findings. Thus, research activities may affect not only *what* policies are made but also *how* they are made.

#### ***5. Economic Pressures on the Government***

In most cases where government took strong interest in the findings of a research project, it was responding to economic pressures. This suggests that the more closely projects are linked to the economic interests of the country, the greater the likelihood that they will have influence. When this is not the case, project teams should be ready to undertake advocacy work to prove their project's worth to policy-makers.

Where controllable factors were concerned, the study indicated five different types of contexts in which research was known to have influenced policy. These contexts were judged as controllable because the project or network can understand and respond to these factors, and use them to heighten influence. The contexts identified are as follows: (1) government demand; (2) government interest but devoid of initiative; (3) government interest with a resource gap; (4) government neutrality with research interest; and (5) government disinterest with research interest.



Research teams that are aware of these nuances are better able to influence decision-makers in the planning, design, monitoring, and evaluation of new projects or networks. The framework can help them choose the best strategies to adopt, for example, in decisions on leadership structures, communication or information techniques, or the institutional basis for applying research findings.

*(1) Government Demand*

In this enabling context, policy-makers need knowledge and are ready to apply it. The opportunity for influence is high. To make an effective contribution, researchers need to have built strong, trust-based relationships with decision-makers and to enjoy a reputation for quality research and timeliness. In such cases, the likelihood of policy influence is high and project teams or networks will probably experience no real difficulty in disseminating their research findings or recommendations.

*(2) Government Interest, Lack of Initiative*

Here, the opportunity for influence is reduced. Although government is well aware of the issue and considers it important, there are no structures to implement researcher recommendations. The government has not yet taken the lead in deciding what to do, and no real decision-making body can be identified. In this situation, a project team or network members must take the initiative by paying particular attention to their communication strategies with decision-makers and finding the appropriate institutional structures to implement their recommendations. Otherwise, their research findings may never be used. Thus, government interest in research does not guarantee that the findings will influence policy.

*(3) Government Interest, Resource Gap*

In this case, the opportunity for influence is even smaller. Government is aware of the problem and the need for the research, but it has other priorities, or it may be short of resources. In this case, the initiative clearly rests with the project team or network, which should also try to convince the government to sufficiently prioritise the issue before undertaking research in a resource-scarce environment.

*(4) Government Neutrality, Research Interest*

In this case, the opportunity for influence is considerably reduced. Either policy-makers are simply not interested in the research programme, or the issue is controversial, or it is so recent that decision-

makers are yet to take an interest in it. Researchers, on the other hand, are keenly interested in proceeding with the project. In such a case, research groups need to do their utmost to sell and promote the project not only to decision-makers, but also to various other groups interested in the issue. They may need to lobby for the creation of new institutional structures to move matters forward. In this type of situation, the risk of failure is high, but researchers should use marketing tools and lobbying techniques to influence decision-makers.

*(5) Government Disinterest, Research Interest*

In this case, there is no opportunity for influence. Policy-makers are busy pursuing other priorities and are sometimes even hostile to the research project. Under these circumstances, there is very little likelihood that pressure groups can change their views, so research teams, a priori, need to show a strong sense of purpose and a cold-eyed recognition that the project, from a policy influence viewpoint anyway, is risky.

Of all the situations described, the ideal context is when policy-makers have a strong interest in research for the purposes of decision-making, and when organisations and procedures to implement research findings already exist.

One of the policies adopted by IDRC on the basis of this analysis was to urge leaders of its research projects to ask themselves the following questions: What is the degree of policy-maker interest in your research? Are there structures and procedures that can enable policy-makers to carry out your recommendations?

Because research is a dynamic process, the contexts of many of the twenty-two projects reviewed have changed with the passage of time. However, none of the projects remained at the level where government is neutral but researchers are keen to go forward. In all likelihood, where researchers are intent on influencing policy but relationships with the decision-making process are weak, either they find some way to achieve their goal or fail completely.

### Experience of MIMAP-Senegal

MIMAP [Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies] – Senegal, which was launched in June 2000, focused mainly on improving research capacity at CREA (*Centre de recherches économiques appliquées*, the Applied Economics Research Centre at Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar), to better understand the microeconomic impact of macroeconomic decisions and how they affect poverty issues. Its objectives were to:

- construct a poverty profile in Senegal and develop a monitoring system;
- develop analytical tools for measuring the impact of macroeconomic policies on income distribution;
- study poor people's access to financial services, the gender dimension of poverty, and the relationship between education and poverty; and
- promote dialogue among development actors – researchers, policy-makers, NGOs, and financial partners – in the fight against poverty.

Regarding the project's policy impact, the experts stated that the project played a key role in redefining links between research and policy in the country. They also added that because the research was interactive, it allowed for direct access to policy circles.

The PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) preparation process made use of CREA data and studies; this contribution was highly appreciated in diverse ways. Thus, the PRSP recommendations were based on CREA findings, illustrating the importance of research in influencing policy, particularly in Senegal's poverty reduction strategy.

Due to the contribution by CREA, the PRSP was written, not by foreign experts, but by Senegalese nationals, establishing ownership that was expected to facilitate its implementation.

In fact, CREA's collaboration with various government ministries brought about important changes in the public policy process. Before the PRSP, national researchers were largely ignored by policy-makers and economic policy research was done mainly by World Bank and IMF officials. The involvement of national researchers in the PRSP was therefore a remarkable example of change in the policy community.

Since several members of the CREA team were also in public administration, the policy process became much more interactive and bidirectional. Not only could the administration make its needs known, but it also got advice from local researchers as to what was needed. In addition, once decisions were made, the researchers continued to be involved in monitoring and evaluating the results.

Policy-makers were already stakeholders in MIMAP as it evolved into the PRSP. This is in stark contrast to other research projects that are particularly dependent on dissemination to reach policy-makers.

The PRSP was not part of MIMAP's original landscape. A number of internal and external factors created a significant policy window that was critical in bringing together these two efforts, and making the result so successful.

A number of lessons may be learned from this experience:

- Flexibility is essential—in this case, accepting the opportunity to work on the PRSP rather than the planned MIMAP outputs.
- Linking the project to a specific policy process created a favourable environment for the work to be translated into concrete policies.
- Institutional support is sometimes required to create greater visibility, leading to improved credibility and interaction with policy-makers.
- Data that is compiled by competent national experts, rather than foreign consultants, leads to a greater sense of ownership and improved implementation.

Source: [www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)

The foregoing is one example of research application, using a complex and evolving approach. It shows that researchers who want to influence development must work within the given decision-making environment. It requires the adoption of a strategic approach and maximizing opportunities for influence. No single factor is predominant, and no single condition is indispensable. Instead, the interplay of capacities, contexts, and conditions should be observed to understand how research is used to obtain informed policy.

### **Pragmatic Reflection in the West and Central African Context**

The West and Central Africa Regional Office (WARO) established a Council of Regional Advisors in September 2001 to enhance IDRC's reaction to sub-regional research needs, in keeping with the guidelines of its corporate strategy. The role of the Council is to help IDRC expand its response to the research needs of the region.

The Council consists of ten members from West and Central Africa, of whom six are men and four are women, and each has expertise in the three main IDRC programme areas, specifically the environment and natural resource management, economic and social justice, and information and communication technology for development, as well as in multidisciplinary areas such as health and gender equity. This group of "elders" advises the Centre on emerging issues, especially on research topics that are currently of vital importance in this part of Africa.

During its fourth meeting in August 2003, in Cotonou, Benin, WARO's Council of Regional Advisors, lamenting the lack of mechanisms linking policy-making process with relevant research findings, decided to launch a series of workshops that would bring together researchers and decision-makers in West and Central Africa. The workshop series aimed at increasing interactions between researchers and decision-makers and encouraging mechanisms to better match scientific research to decision-makers' needs. The workshops began in July 2004 and ended in January 2007; they were focused on the existing Advisors' countries of origin – Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Cameroon and Benin. Workshop participants established follow-up committees with a mandate to develop a plan of action based on workshop findings and organise validation seminars to ensure that workshop findings effectively contributed to enhancing dialogue

between researchers and decision-makers. Each follow-up committee was given a timeline for the completion of its mission.

The objective of the six workshops was to explore, in a pragmatic manner, relationships between researchers and decision-makers in West and Central Africa, identify bottlenecks in collaboration and propose sustainable mechanisms to facilitate the integration of research findings into the policy-making process. Their overall goal was to promote joint reflection between researchers and decision-makers. More specifically:

- to contribute to the strengthening of synergies between researchers and political decision-makers in West and Central Africa by promoting fruitful dialogue and possibly initiating collaboration and partnership mechanisms between these two actors in development; and
- based on concrete experiences of researchers and decision-makers in areas such as agriculture, education, private sector promotion, drought and desertification, governance and health, to pinpoint trends, ideas, and recommendations applicable in other sectors and in other countries of the sub-region.

The workshop participants decided to advance the process of establishing sustainable dialogue between researchers and decision-makers in the countries concerned by forming follow-up committees mandated to develop work schedules, use workshop outputs to identify activities for implementation in the medium term with a view to reinforcing sustainable dialogue between researchers and decision-makers, and to inform stakeholders of the outcomes of the information and validation workshops.

The thematic workshops produced important findings, which will be presented in the following chapters. The first of these identifies the principal constraints inhibiting critical collaboration between researchers and decision-makers. The second outlines experiences and initiatives promoting increased collaboration between researchers and decision-makers. Finally, recommendations drawn from the workshop series are presented with a view to improving dialogue between researchers and decision-makers in West and Central Africa.

### Series of Meetings on Relations between Researchers and Decision-makers

During the Council's fourth meeting, held in August 2003 in Cotonou, the Regional Advisors suggested that IDRC initiate a series of workshops to explore the relationship between researchers and decision-makers in a very pragmatic way. When it met again in January 2004, the Council and the Regional Office agreed on a series of meetings to be organised over a three-year period, at a rate of two per year. To ensure very concrete reflection based on the actual experiences of researchers and decision-makers in the sub-region, it was decided to organise the meetings at the national level, with a focus on specific themes.

The Regional Advisors from Senegal agreed to open the series by organizing the first workshop on agriculture, in Dakar in June 2004. At the insistence of the advisors from Burkina Faso, the second workshop was held in Ouagadougou in January 2005, on education. The third meeting was organised in Accra on private sector development in July 2005, and the fourth in Bamako on drought and desertification in February 2006. The Yaoundé meeting on governance was held in June 2006 and finally the Cotonou meeting on neonatal and maternal mortality in January 2007.

The workshops objectives were twofold:

- (a) To help strengthen synergy between researchers and decision-makers by facilitating fruitful dialogue and, where possible, by initiating a mechanism of collaboration and partnership between the two groups.
- (b) To analyze concrete researcher and decision-maker experiences within specific national contexts in order to identify trends, ideas and recommendations that may be implemented in other sectors and other countries of the sub-region with regard to synergy between researchers and decision-makers.

At the end of the workshop series, the ambition of IDRC and its Regional Advisors was to produce a document that would synthesize the totality of recommendations that emerged from the different meetings and to share this document with research partners of the Centre in the sub-region.

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- \* Workshop on the relation between researchers and decision-makers in the field of agriculture in Senegal. Dakar, 29-30 June 2004
- \* Workshop on synergy between researchers and decision-makers in the field of education in Burkina Faso. Ouagadougou, 27-28 January 2005
- \* Roundtable on synergy between researchers and decision-makers. Private sector development in Ghana: the role of research. Accra, 6-7 July 2005
- \* Forum for reflection and dialogue on drought and desertification in Central and West Africa: the case of Mali. Bamako, 8-9 February 2006
- \* Symposium on dialogue between researchers and decision-makers in the field of governance in Cameroon. Yaoundé, 21-22 June 2006
- \* Symposium on maternal and neonatal mortality in Benin. Cotonou, 16-17 January 2007

From [www.idrc.ca/en/ev-62273-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-62273-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html), which also contains links to documents and reports from the meetings.

# Chapter I

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## A Complex and Multifaceted Collaboration, Often Difficult to Implement

### **1. Marked Compartmentalization**

In general, most decision-makers are concerned with the consequences of deteriorating relations between researchers and decision-makers. Benin's Minister of Health lamented the lack of research in essential areas such as health which may explain the high maternal and neonatal death rates in Benin:<sup>4</sup> "The different initiatives and actions undertaken in this area have often met with failure due to a lack of interaction between researchers and decision-makers".

#### *a) Administrative Complications and Red Tape*

The process of defining research programmes and priorities is complicated by weak relationships between researchers and decision-makers. Lack of understanding between the two players aggravates and is exacerbated by red tape, which considerably slows down the research programmes developed by researchers and submitted to administration for decision-makers' approval or support. Such tie-ups, viewed as proof of an uncooperative attitude, can reinforce researchers' suspicions regarding decision-makers.

Administrative complications and red tape can be found at every level, including mobilization of financial and human resources for research. Since researchers see themselves as the poor cousins of the administration, the situation only confirms their opinion that decision-makers do not view them as a priority, and this further undermines relations between the spheres. Difficulty in mobilizing resources makes researchers' status even more precarious, in a situation where they already have extremely limited resources to conduct their investigations.

The multiplicity of entities supervising research is another factor that contributes to administrative complications and red tape. Government research structures are very similar throughout West and

Central Africa; technical ministries such as Education, Health, Agriculture, and the Environment have their own research institutions, but the need for national-level coordination of research has led most countries in the region to set up departments responsible for research. This measure is welcomed by the research community as evidence of the store decision-makers set on research. However, experience has shown that the implementation of this policy decision is complex. Indeed, due to habit, existing affinities including practical considerations, research organisations continue to work with their respective technical departments, with which they share sectoral activities, while more crosscutting issues such as the status of researchers, career plans, a national research plan, etc. are handled by the department of research. Since responsibility for the various areas is not clearly defined, many Research Departments try to carve out areas of intervention by positioning themselves in the areas left vacant by the technical departments. Unfortunately, the limited financial resource allocated to these Departments once again raises the question of the level of priority policy-makers truly accord research. This situation further complicates the existing red tape.

Lack of permanent frameworks for consultation and exchange between researchers and decision-makers was observed almost everywhere. In the rare cases where such structures existed, they were non-functional. Under such conditions, consultation only occurred sporadically, mainly in cases of crisis or urgent need. Yet, it is difficult to address in detail the sort of substantive issues involved in relations between researchers and decision-makers during occasional, one-off meetings.

***b) Decision-makers Uninformed of Researchers' Innovations and Technology Packages***

Because of the complexity and multidimensional nature of the issues they study, researchers increasingly offer technology packages. Unfortunately, they complain that decision-makers only focus on that portion of the research that applies directly to their concerns, ignoring the fact that it is part of an integrated package. This attitude does not guarantee success and can even be the cause of certain failures. We also note the speed with which decision-makers choose to popularize one of the options put forward by researchers without prior consultation with researchers or devoting time to review all the options.



### Experiences in the Agricultural Sector in Senegal

Two major experiences revealed serious deficiencies in synergy between researchers and decision-makers.

1. During a visit to colleagues at the National Centre for Agronomic Research (*Centre national de recherches agronomiques, CNRA*) in Bambey, we noted that an ISRA team had been working for several years on selection of maize varieties. We were presented with some twenty varieties, each of which was adapted to specific soil and climate conditions and specific agronomic targets. Shortly afterwards, we learned of the launching of a national 'maize programme' based on imported seeds. Consultation had not taken place between researchers and decision-makers prior to this decision.
2. Similarly, it is often repeated in animal production that decision-makers recommend 'sedentarization' of herders to promote stall housing and intensification of animal production techniques. However, this position is strongly challenged by most scientists whose technical and socio-economic studies of herding stress the vital role played by 'mobility' in exploiting Sahelian cattle ranges. Sedentarization of herders would undoubtedly challenge the very essence of their way of life.

Source: Ba, Cheikh Oumar and Duteurtre, Guillaume, 2004, 'L'information et la valorisation des résultats de recherche auprès des décideurs de l'agriculture au Sénégal : Réflexion à partir de l'expérience du BAME de l'ISRA'.

Decision-makers' lack of knowledge or awareness of technological packages presented by researchers can lead to the choice of incomplete solutions that delay problem solving or even aggravate issues. In the case of AIDS, it was observed that during the early days of the fight against the epidemic, measures taken by decision-makers failed to address the psychological dimension of the illness, which made screening very difficult, since patients were ashamed to admit that they had AIDS for fear of being rejected by society. On the other hand, however, the technological packages presented by researchers to slow the spread of AIDS and reduce suffering combined clinical, behavioural and sociological aspects.

In the area of the environment, early measures focussed on replanting of trees whereas researchers advocated a systemic approach that took into consideration local economic and energy needs. Indeed, there is no point in replanting trees if, at the same time, people cut down an equal number to meet their basic survival needs.

### Desertification and Development

In developing countries, development and environment are closely interdependent for three reasons:

1. First of all, natural resources are the basis for the productivity of the ecological system and the environment. In developing countries, exploitation of renewable natural resources makes a decisive contribution to meeting the essential needs of a large portion of the population.
2. Human activities linked to development have considerable repercussions on the environment and ecosystems. Actions that degrade the land are sometimes due to ignorance but may often be the product of expanding needs in a situation of insufficient technical know-how and unregulated access to resources.
3. Finally, pressures on resources and the environment depend on the functioning of social systems. Rural development cannot be reduced to mere technical or economic change. The way human societies manage their space and resources is strongly influenced by cultural constraints which determine their perceptions of the environment, as well as their capacity for change and ownership of new technology.

Numerous authors stress the strong links between desertification and poverty. Due to a lack of capital and economic opportunity, poor people are forced to exploit their limited resources to satisfy their immediate needs, even if this short-term exploitation compromises the sustainability of these resources and reinforces their long-term vulnerability. Poverty engenders land degradation. And desertification, in turn, is an aggravating factor for poverty.

Source: Diarra, Lassine and Bretaudeau, Alhousseini, 2006, 'Acquis et potentiels de la recherche sur la sécheresse et la désertification au Mali'.

We also note that it is not uncommon for decision-makers faced with emergency situations to allow short-term concerns to outweigh the need for a long-term vision or plan of action that is clearly articulated and accompanied by operational plans matched with adequate resources. Emergency situations lead to almost constant improvisation, making it impossible to muster the patience to wait for hypothetical research findings. This type of approach evades the real issues and does not promote the establishment of fruitful dialogue between researchers and decision-makers.

#### *c) Low Level Use of Research Findings, Often Produced Without Regard for Potential Users*

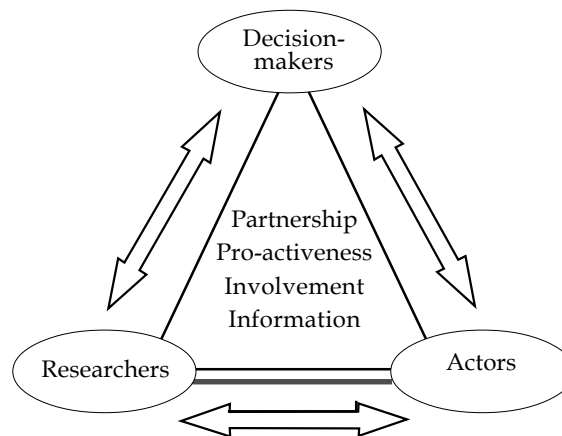
Various scenarios are possible. When research programmes are based on researchers' knowledge of their own environment, findings may be relevant but lack effective popularization or extension. In the worst-case scenario, actors in economic and industrial development may not feel concerned with research findings produced by research programmes in which they were not involved.

Under the influence of changing international research trends, researchers may also initiate programmes which do not fall within current economic priorities.

In order to advance their professional careers, researchers may engage in academic research whose outcomes, while relevant, do not reflect the needs of their country's economic and industrial development.

Generally speaking, actors in the economic and industrial development of West and Central Africa, attracted by short-term profitability, are unreceptive to research findings that they view as immature or rudimentary due to limited resources, and very slow in terms of meeting their urgent needs.

The lack of a real troika of decision-makers, researchers and actors handicaps the establishment of a dialogue that could have combined all three around a set of common goals.



***d) Actors Hesitant to Commit to a More Productive Relationship between the Private Sector and Research***

The lack of suitable mechanisms for mobilizing private sector financial resources for research has done little to promote the establishment of a tradition of financing research with private funds. Thus, financial requests from researchers to the private sector encounter a wall of reluctance due more to their mutual lack of knowledge than to actual facts.

The problem of financing research lies both upstream and downstream. Upstream, actors hesitate to pre-finance research activities, due to lack of sufficient visibility and guarantee that the expected results will be achieved. This hesitancy is exacerbated by the private sector's lack of knowledge of the research environment. Downstream, private sector actors may be reluctant to pay for research findings whose

relevance they find unconvincing, particularly when there was no prior consultation to determine their needs.

The reluctance of private sector to respond to researchers' questionnaires in order to define a problem or a situation is another example of hesitancy. These actors take a dim view of a community, far removed from their day-to-day concerns, poking its collective nose into their accounting, financial, technical, commercial or social data. Because they are also civil servants, researchers are often wrongly suspected of working indirectly for the government. In addition, when businesses are favourably disposed to providing information, it is rare that in return, they are presented with researchers' findings, produced on the basis of private sector data.

The weakness of collaboration mechanisms is reflected in the private sector's absence or low level of representation in research institutes. Indeed, it is extremely rare to see representatives of the business community sitting on boards or even advisory committees of research institutions. The latter are often corporate administrative or academic organisations that feel no need to open up their decision-making bodies to foreign elements.

*e) Identity and Leadership Conflicts: Researchers Seeking to Maintain or Improve their Status*

Academic research is generally perceived as an ivory tower. Academic researchers often confine themselves to scientific and academic publications that afford them a certain amount of international recognition and can help boost their careers.

By nature, researchers have a relatively high level of intellectual independence due to the creativity and innovation demanded by their work. They dislike intrusion into their work by elements outside of their research hypotheses or models. In this, they can be distinguished both from decision-makers, who are guided by political motivations, and business people, who are motivated by profit. They try to become increasingly independent, and map out territories within which they are academic leaders; they staunchly defend their status by resisting all attempted incursions by the political sphere.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, they may be forced to promote their own research findings to beneficiaries by mobilizing resources to implement pilot projects, representing an interesting combination of research and extension. This drive is all the more justified by the fact that they often run into a wall of incomprehension on the part of political decision-makers. Researchers are therefore torn between the need for independence, au-

tonomy and identity in the academic sphere and the need to popularize their research findings in the real world, even at the risk of being exposed to the influences against which they have always sought to protect themselves. The risk run by researchers is to move from the academic sphere into the real world—either as decision-makers or players in development – and never to return to their original circle due to their involvement in exciting activities or the acquisition of new standing considered “superior” to or more “status-enhancing” than their original position. The biggest danger of this trend, which is increasingly being observed in Africa, is a form of brain drain, not abroad, but into other sectors.<sup>6</sup>

*f) Competition Between Research and Private Expertise:*

*The Consultancy Phenomenon*

Generally speaking, researchers complain of unfair competition from private consultants, whom they accuse of infringing on their prerogatives. Sponsors of studies conducted by consultants are often political decision-makers or partners in development, who are in urgent need of quick research providing immediate results that can be included in their development plans. However, the research process is often time-consuming and unable to adjust to the urgent imperatives of a consultancy mission. Furthermore, private consultants are more experienced in collecting data, processing them and disseminating their findings within a very short time. Remuneration is another source of confusion; whereas researchers receive a research allowance that serves as a salary supplement in addition to the funds generated by research, consultants are paid a much higher fee. Despite the fact that consultancy fees represent a consultant’s total earnings, researchers tend to seek out consultancy missions, viewed as better paid than their research activities. This trend is reinforced by the low levels of research grants. The missions take up so much time that they run the risk of distracting researchers from their primary tasks. Nevertheless, such missions may be relevant if they are directly related to their programmes of research; unfortunately, they are often sponsored from abroad, with objectives defined outside the usual study area of the researchers, and therefore can constitute misuse of scarce resources. However, when missions fall within researchers’ area of competence and range of activities, they may prove useful and beneficial in that they decompartmentalize researchers and give them an opportunity to improve their work in the field.

The box below provides the viewpoint of a researcher on the differences between consulting and research as well as on the pernicious situation in which studies, seen as consultancy work, are more numerous than research outputs.

### **Differences between Consultancy and Research**

It is not easy to establish differences in practice. However, certain criteria can be used:

- difference involving the qualifications of researchers, methodology, rigour, and research techniques: scientific research is more demanding. Researchers must possess recognized qualifications and diplomas;
- difference as to the amount of time required to produce findings;
- research produces findings relatively slowly, whereas consultancy provides decision-makers with results within very short deadlines;
- orientation imposed on consultancy work, which may influence its findings;
- greater intellectual freedom and freedom of expression for researchers compared to consultants;
- limitations arising from the absence of strong constraints on research, which can result in scattered or useless research.

### *Relative Importance and Nature of Outputs*

Consultancy research is more common. A large number of reports were also noted – on workshops, seminars, symposia, meetings, etc. – while research papers were fewer in number.

The high number of consultancies was not just due to a bias in our data-gathering; instead, it truly reflects the interest in the sector among technical and financial partners who finance the studies.

In light of the appreciable volume of this activity type, it is hardly surprising that we recorded a high number of workshop, seminar, symposium, mission and similar reports. The loaded calendar of symposiums, seminars and other meetings in recent years is clear evidence.

The relative scarcity of research work can be explained primarily by the fact that it is slow to produce results when carried out by professionals, including the fact that the structures responsible for its development (except the University) have few skilled human resources to accomplish the task, and also relatively little time to carry out that activity.

These viewpoints are corroborated by the findings of the Research Workshop on Education in Burkina Faso (AREB) organised by FASAF in 2003. Based on 698 documents published between 1975 and 2003, AREB demonstrated that scientific publications (articles, books, theses) were few in number compared to commissioned studies (consultancies).

Source: Ilboudo, Ernest K. 2005, 'Le degré d'utilisation des résultats de la recherche à la lumière de la revue GTASE-Burkina (2001)'.

The following box clearly illustrates the problems referred to above by analyzing research on maternal and neonatal mortality, which is a major public health issue.

#### **State of Research on Maternal and Neonatal Mortality in Benin**

This study is descriptive, quantitative and qualitative. It includes a data-gathering strategy involving an inventory of research studies, a documentary review and semi-structured interviews with a sample of researchers and decision-makers. The study produced the following main findings:

- In all, a total of 118 research studies on reducing maternal and neonatal mortality were inventoried across the country over 11 years, with an average of 11 studies per year.
- Dissertations and theses represented nearly two thirds of the research study outputs.
- The main topics covered from 1996 to 2006 were, in descending order, emergency obstetrical care, prenatal care and childbirth, and maternal mortality. Issues on newborns were less frequently studied.
- Most of them were related to research on healthcare systems.
- The spatial distribution of the research was very uneven. Indeed, two departments, Littoral and Atlantique, accounted for over half.
- Nearly two thirds of researchers were students conducting research to obtain academic diplomas.
- Most of the papers inventoried were archived in national documentation centres in a handful of institutions, with a considerable proportion of papers kept by individuals or institutions.
- Only 33 documents, or 28%, had known sources of financing, of which more than 43% were USAID.
- Development partners and other donors expressed the greatest need for research which they also implemented.
- Research on reducing maternal and neonatal mortality was largely financed by development partners and foreign sources. The financial contribution of the government to research on reducing maternal and neonatal mortality was almost nil.
- There are no formal mechanisms for the dissemination of research findings.
- Research outputs in this field are very rarely used in Benin.

Source: Gbangbade, Sourou et al., 2007, 'État de la recherche au Bénin en matière de mortalité maternelle et néonatale'.

## 2. Communication and Information: Often Inappropriate Due to a Climate of Mistrust

### *a) Research Findings are Often Unknown and Inaccessible Outside the Scientific Community*

Due to the divide between researchers and decision-makers, the former often hoard or even hide their findings, or share them only with the scientific community. Research currently mouldering in African university libraries or archives could undoubtedly help resolve many of the problems confronting African societies today. This pervasive climate of mutual mistrust does not motivate researchers to devote effort to improving the transmission of their findings to decision-makers. Since research is treated like a poor cousin in government budgets, it is easy to understand the reluctance of researchers to incur additional expenses to develop high quality communication materials when they already have a hard time financing their research activities. And, since they do not feel sufficiently solicited by decision-makers, they may wonder whether such communication efforts are really worthwhile. This creates a vicious circle in which researchers make no effort to communicate with decision-makers, and the latter do not see the usefulness of research carried out in the "ivory tower", thus broadening the divide between the two communities.

In the academic community, "underground papers" or grey literature produced by doctoral students or teachers, and never officially published, contain a wealth of information and knowledge that could be very useful. This precious information remains inaccessible to decision-makers because researchers fail to implement a genuine communication strategy. This observation was made by Cameroonian researchers in a study funded by IDRC on the occasion of the Yaoundé Symposium on Governance: "a number of researchers in Cameroon have produced a pool of original ideas, in various disciplines, that could be used to leverage the rise of a truly sustainable form of human development governance. Unfortunately, their academic work, which is the product of many years of research, sometimes funded by the state budget, is sometimes hermetic and unusable for decision-makers or simply inaccessible."

The lack of a genuine policy on documentation and archiving of research outputs is also a serious issue. Researchers were aware that a considerable body of research had been done in education, health and agriculture in particular, but many of the findings remain dis-



persed in different research institutions or even different departments of the same institution and are often even hoarded by individuals, a situation that does not promote the development of an institutional memory. Such findings, beyond the reach of even researchers and research institutions, are obviously inaccessible to decision-makers.

***b) Decision-makers are not very Proactive in Gleaning Research Information, are Uninformed about Research Organisations and the Potential of National Expertise***

Decision-makers also share responsibility for the divide that separates them from researchers and their useful information. There are political underpinnings; for example, in many countries, the academic world is seen as a bastion of political protest, or even of the opposition. The mistrust of public authorities that reigns in the academic community may explain why decision-makers hesitate or are not proactive in turning to researchers for the information they sorely need.

This climate of mistrust also explains decision-makers' general lack of awareness about research organisations. Their unfamiliarity with organisations they supervise may seem surprising. However, this may be understandable because decision-makers – rightly or wrongly – view researchers as theorists whereas they, by their very essence, are people who focus on concrete, operational, field or topical issues. Still, this attitude is not an excuse: they need to step back and define a vision, based on careful analysis of the national situation in general and their respective sector in particular, which they should translate into a consistent and relevant plan of action, with a special focus on implementation. Such strategic planning must not ignore the valuable contributions of research, particularly in an evolving environment. Unfortunately, few decision-makers bother to master such planning techniques, and those who try are generally motivated by the opportunity to attract funding from donors who signalled their intentions during international conferences. Those who do master the technique often use it for political ends such as demonstrating their knowledge of modern management tools; but very few manage, during their five-year term, to follow through on the whole planning process, including systematic monitoring and evaluation. Under these circumstances, decision-makers show little concern about integrating national research into all aspects of planning, from design and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

Because decision-makers are unaware of the national expertise potential, they are unable to solicit this resource or make use of the results of its work. The situation is aggravated both by the compart-

mentalization of the two spheres and the limited skills of the decision-making community, which is often unable to comprehend technical matters. Decision-makers exert little effort to approach researchers to better grasp the relevance or usefulness of their findings.

Difficulty in accessing useful information is another obstacle to the research-to-decision-making process. How can decision-makers extract useful information from doctoral theses? Do they really have the time to pore through whole documents? Would they be able to grasp their full meaning, knowing that doctoral candidates usually write for a doctoral committee and not a wider audience? This raises the issue of communication, which will be further examined in the following sections.

#### **Do Decision-makers Use Research Findings?**

It is important to distinguish between political decision-makers (government and National Assembly), private sector actors who may be decision-makers in their own field, and civil society. The former are responsible for preparing, auditing and implementing agricultural policy based on research findings. According to the Department of Studies, Forecasts and Statistics (DAPS), the information provided by agricultural research is generally used to back up the visions of government officials such as the Minister of Agriculture and the President of the Republic.

The private sector and civil society most often use research findings to increase their business profitability and obtain background information for strategic advocacy campaigns aimed at the State or financial backers. Since research findings belong to the public domain and are funded partly by taxpayers, alongside the State, opposition-party think tanks (such as the Socialist Party's study and research group, the GER) and circles of intellectuals (such as CAP 21's CIA) use research findings to audit government policy options or challenge State plans in specific sectors. For the same reason, the private sector negotiates directly with research institutions, or even with individual researchers, according to their felt needs. Their actions are focussed on using research findings for financial profitability.

In any case, it remains obvious that research findings are used differently depending on the user's level of responsibility in the decision-making hierarchy and the interests involved. Regional and national technical branches regularly call on researchers to provide politicians with the requisite information for informed decision-making; however, they rarely have the opportunity to assess the extent to which their proposals have influenced the ultimate decision. This suggests that political decision-makers do not make optimal use of research findings despite the best efforts of officials at intermediary levels of the hierarchy.

Source: Ba, Cheikh Oumar; Diallo, Gorgui and Seck, Madieng, 2005, 'Synergies entre chercheurs et décideurs dans le domaine agricole au Sénégal: étude exploratoire'.

***c) Researchers are Often Poorly Equipped or Not Trained to Present their Projects to Potential Financers***

Researchers are not highly skilled in marketing techniques in general and communication in particular. In addition to their technical ability, modern researchers require skills in project design, management, and marketing and communication techniques in order to “sell” their research projects to financial backers. The latter, being specialized in financing research, have forms they require researchers to complete to ensure fulfilment of funding application criteria. But beyond complying with administrative requirements, researchers are not generally sufficiently proactive at the project design stage, when they ought to identify research goals, target beneficiaries, potential needs to be satisfied, possible environmental impact, research work duration, steps and schedules, required human, material and financial resources, research performance indicators, etc. This explains the delay in the approval and implementation of some research projects, while others need to be extended year after year for want of a proper resource mobilization strategy.

Because they place much more emphasis on their research work than on communicating about their research and lack mastery of presentation techniques, researchers are thus seriously constrained in marketing their work to funding agencies.

***d) Permanent Structures for Dialogue and Consultation***

One important observation focused on the virtual absence of mechanisms to ensure ongoing and concerted dialogue between researchers and decision-makers in the countries where IDRC organised its series of workshops on the relations between the two groups. In the rare cases where such structures existed, they were inoperative for several reasons:

- lack of motivation of both parties: this was primarily due to the longstanding mutual suspicion between the two spheres, undermining all attempts at consultation, which could lead to conciliation or even real partnership. The slightest obstacle can cause the spheres to entrench themselves in their respective positions;
- lack of resources and specific programmes: organisations generally lack logistical resources that would enable them to organise forums for dialogue over a relatively long period and coordinate activities between researchers and decision-makers. One consequence is that there are no real documentation archives of what

researchers and decision-makers should be exchanging, including reports of meetings and research and reflection processes;

- lack of continuity in government policy and instability in government structures: extreme mobility of government officials often leads to policy changes that may disrupt processes begun within consultation structures. In addition, ministerial reshuffles can cause the elimination of departments that initiated the setting up of the permanent mechanism for dialogue.

Increasing the number of supervisory bodies – both sectoral and crosscutting – may create inter-departmental conflicts that can affect the quality of consultation and render permanent forums for dialogue inoperative. Indeed, the difficulties encountered by research ministries seeking to introduce a crosscutting approach and coordination may include resistance from technical departments accustomed to supervising their own research structures directly. Such conflicts within decision-making circles may have direct repercussions on consultation structures and indirectly impact researchers.

*e) The 'Theoretical Academism' of Researchers Versus the 'Utilitarian Pragmatism' of Decision-makers: Difficulties in Finding a Common Language*

The difficulty of establishing dialogue between researchers and decision-makers is structural in origin. While researchers, motivated by career professionalism or the quest for international fame, prefer academic-style research that often requires a long period of observation and testing and thus delays, decision-makers, for their part, tend to be preoccupied with immediate or short-term solutions to meet the demands of their environment. These demands may come from beneficiary populations, whose impatience for appropriate responses to their problems may filter up to the highest authorities through the media or demonstrations.

Policy-makers who depend on researchers for solutions may face various types of sanctions in cabinet reshuffles or when budget choices are made. It is therefore understandable that decision-makers exert considerable pressure on researchers so that the latter respond more effectively and rapidly to their concerns.

### Decision-makers' Complaints Regarding Researchers

In general, there is a real gap of misunderstanding between researchers and decision-makers regarding their perceptions of the role of research in the planning and steering of the educational system.

To explain the limited use of research findings in the improvement of education systems, decision-makers presented a list of complaints against researchers, including:

- they are locked up in an 'ivory tower';
- they pay scant attention to the specific problems faced by decision-makers;
- their recommendations are often too general and do not make pragmatic and operational proposals that could provide short or medium term solutions to their problems. Decision-makers often accuse researchers of evading real solutions and answering their questions with more questions. However, most often, researchers' conclusions and questions disturb decision-makers' sense of certainty, especially when they seem to contradict common sense;
- they pay little heed to the time constraints imposed by decision-makers' mandates, particularly when those mandates are political;
- they frequently underestimate the political feasibility of their recommendations;
- they support foreign donors' conditionalities and ideas, particularly in relation to programme adjustments;
- they do not obey like other officials under their authority, such as advisors and project managers;
- they are too independent in their thinking and often even subversive.

Source: Tounkara, Bréhima, 2005, 'L'expérience de la collaboration entre les chercheurs du ROCARE et le ministère de l'éducation de base pour la réforme éducative au Mali'.

Researchers, for their part, complain that decision-makers fail to take account of the research cycle, which, though often long, delivers sustainable solutions to the problems faced by society. As a general rule, research cannot provide an immediate response to an acute problem. Unlike experts, who can provide opinions and recommendations almost instantly to any question within their area of expertise, researchers need to back up their recommended solutions with rigorous scientific argument. Several cases are possible. When the arguments have already been validated by research, the solution is instantaneous. When research is underway, the researcher may formulate the premise of a solution depending on the progress of the research. Finally, if research is yet to be conducted, then time will be needed to carry out the work and reach conclusions, however, this may provoke the impatience of decision-makers and render dialogue between the two groups more difficult.

### Researchers' Complaints Regarding Decision-makers

Researchers commonly made the following complaints about decision-makers:

- Decision-makers tend to ignore the advantages of basing their decision-making on research findings. Nomination criteria for advisors and department heads are most often political or based on interpersonal relationships.
- Decision-makers are more interested in ready-made solutions than in findings that raise uncertainties and qualifications in the quest for solutions to education issues. Qualified findings most often reflect the caution of researchers who prefer to avoid hasty statements that cannot be supported by objective data.
- Decision-makers focus on obtaining researchers' support for or confirmation of their own thinking, instead of being open to researchers' innovative ideas and suggestions, especially if they contradict or qualify their own ideas.
- Decision-makers often try to place responsibility for their failures on researchers.
- Decision-makers do not sufficiently compensate the efforts of researchers.
- Decision-makers tend to choose only short- and medium-term actions.
- Decision-makers pay little heed to the constraints of research methodology and the rigour required to ensure scientific validity of research findings.
- Decision-makers place empiricism above conceptualization, modelling and theorization. Their tendency to mechanically juxtapose concrete actions often leads to a mechanical approach to problem solving with no real conceptualization of the causes of the problems.

Through these grievances, researchers express their fundamental conviction: the 'research approach to problem solving' is based on the assumption that a problem can only be definitively solved when its causes have been very precisely identified through scientific research, which is founded in turn on theoretical paradigms and schemas.

Source: Tounkara, Bréhima, 2005, 'L'expérience de la collaboration entre les chercheurs du ROCARE et le ministère de l'éducation de base pour la réforme éducative au Mali'.

In the academic environment, research findings are essentially presented in student theses and dissertations, which decision-makers find difficult to use, especially when they are unfamiliar with such documents. Indeed, this type of work has to adhere to a certain academic style and format, and is primarily intended for examination by professors and other academics. It is therefore understandable that decision-makers have difficulty in decoding these documents, even though they may find their titles very attractive.

Another difficulty decision-makers face is the format in which researchers publish their work. In reality, researchers are rarely able to translate their research into understandable and accessible prose. It contains numerous technical terms, which generally repel rather than attract decision-makers and the general public. Rewriting such papers in more everyday terms involves costs that researchers are unwilling to pay. Thus, the recurring issue of complete research funding, including for the dissemination of findings, remains, and is also linked to researchers' lack of communication skills. This problem will remain unresolved as long as we ignore the pedagogical dimension required to ensure that research is transcribed into accessible language and, above all, that research concepts are made comprehensible.

*f) Low Researcher Capacity to Utilize Media Organisations in Promoting and Enhancing the Visibility of their Research and Findings*

Researchers have often been reproached for locking themselves up in their laboratories and hardly communicating with the outside world. However, many researchers have tried to increase the visibility and status of their findings. Unfortunately, their poor mastery of communication techniques constitutes a major obstacle. Beyond communication, researchers display poor skills in lobbying which requires highly sophisticated communication techniques and strategic alliances with stakeholders, who play a crucial role in the implementation of lobbying campaigns. Media people are among the key actors; unfortunately, they are neither aware of nor conversant with research issues. Researchers may seem hostile to any form of publicity surrounding their work due to their professional ethics or merely their unawareness of how best to approach the media. Very few African media people or reporters specialize in research and are able to promote a rapprochement between the research community, society and decision-makers. The media is used to addressing its audience in simple terms and have difficulty in understanding scientific and technical issues thoroughly enough to translate these into accessible language. It is therefore up to researchers to be proactive, educate the media and raise media awareness so that it can play the role expected of it in researchers' lobbying strategies.

***g) Poor Readability and Visibility of State-defined Research Priorities***

It is unfortunate that researchers often discover policy orientations through the media, when the government declares its policies in the National Assembly or during a national or international event. One often has the impression that the national media is the principal information relay between government establishments, especially when their relations are indirect. This situation is increasingly offset by the general availability of internet and e-mail, which have become powerful communication tools.

Certain researchers are dismayed on learning through the media that government had set agricultural production targets that could be achieved only through research findings, whereas the research community was, for the time being, unable to say whether they could be achieved. This would have required further research that would have undoubtedly extended beyond a single growing season.

When decision-makers fail to involve researchers upstream in defining government policy directions, the latter are unable to make valid contributions to the choice of research priorities. This can lead to situations in which supervising bodies hand down research assignments that are not credible to researchers, or where researchers are simply left on their own to define research programmes with no consistent linkages to state policy orientation. Such situations represent a considerable waste of national resources, particularly considering that it takes two to three decades to train a full-fledged researcher.

**3. Inconsistency in Public Policies on Research and Insufficient Collaboration between Researchers and Decision-makers**

***a) Supervisory Red Tape, Weak Interconnections: Lack of Mechanisms for Researcher Supervision and Evaluation***

The multiplication of sectoral and crosscutting supervisory bodies hardly facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of researchers. The coexistence of these two types of bodies leads to jurisdictional conflicts that hinder coordination and access to information, because each supervisory organ seeks to hoard information or databases on the same groups of researchers. Competition between supervising government departments affects research institutions, hence the great difficulty in launching, coordinating and completing major crosscutting research projects that require a multidisciplinary approach combining various research structures. The best multidisciplinary research is conducted within a single institution, led by a core group of researchers from within and working in partnership with outside researchers.



On a national or global level, researcher support and evaluation mechanisms are generally lacking due to the absence of consistent and thorough planning including performance indicators, although individual countries do possess research institutions that use modern planning and management techniques. This observation was already made by IDRC in the mid-1980s when it launched AGIR (*Amélioration de la gestion des institutions de recherches au Sahel*), a programme focusing on improving the management of research institutes in the Sahel, which was implemented by CESAG and included the development of management tools tailored to the research sector.

Should we conclude that researchers are left to their own devices? Difficulties in mobilizing financial resources and conditionalities imposed by development partners, who have become more demanding in the financing of proposals, have sparked researcher awareness. Researchers are displaying greater ownership of bankable research planning and elaboration techniques. Bankable research projects include a monitoring and evaluation component that obliges researchers to observe a certain rigour in their management. The problem, therefore, does not lie with the researchers but with the decision-makers, who, for various reasons, are unable to put in place effective mechanisms for research monitoring and evaluation.

***b) Externalizing Research Priorities and Agenda: The Weight of Development Partners***

In the absence of documentation defining research priorities and agenda, development partners propose their own research programmes, complete with financing. This situation is not necessarily due to lack of skills but rather to the low level of financial resources that the State devotes to national research. Researchers therefore tend to accept financial backers' research agendas when they are accompanied with sufficient funding. However, while they are useful and generally laudable, the priorities of development partners are not necessarily the same that researchers would have chosen had they been offered financial resources without any strings attached. One of the negative impacts of this situation is that decision-makers tend to grant higher budget allocation to research conducted under the aegis of development partners than to projects initiated by researchers alone.

The study conducted in Benin within the series of meetings between researchers and decision-makers is particularly instructive. While in developed countries research is often initiated locally to resolve issues of concern, in Benin generally, research needs are ex-

pressed and decisions to conduct research are made from abroad. This point of view was supported by a number of respondents to the study questionnaire as can be clearly seen in the following statement by one of the respondents:

Generally speaking, decisions often come from outside. Research projects are initiated and brought in from outside, then supported with outside resources. We apparently have to consider that everything we do in our theses and other papers is nothing but epiphenomena and minor experiments and that the recommendations produced by such work do not have enough impact. It is quite the contrary when it comes from abroad. Even within ministries, there is no real promotion of research. And we get the impression that we start doing things when a decision is handed down that says so.

However, other points of view softened the statement. They maintained that donors often initiate regional research programmes in which they elicit national involvement through the participation of local researchers. This provides countries with an opportunity to share their experience and benefit from that of others.

***c) Lack of Mechanisms to Evaluate the Implementation Costs and Impact of Research Findings***

Researchers often lack control over the implementation of their research findings because decision-makers who handle the operational aspects rarely inform them about the conditions or real costs of implementation. This lack of visibility relates to the absence of a mechanism to evaluate the costs of applying research findings.

Decision-makers are concerned with obtaining concrete results in the field and do not focus on assessing the costs of applying research, which are generally hidden within the implementation costs of extension programmes. A cost accounting approach, which would make it possible to determine the share of research in total costs, is often lacking. Due to issues involving skills, time and urgency, decision-makers even find it difficult to evaluate their own programmes, unless the evaluation is required by donors who have provided financial support.

***d) Poor Coordination of National Political Will and Sectoral Policies: Budgetary Limitations***

Political will can lead authorities to create a department for coordinating and stimulating research throughout the country, but such departments may face resistance from officials responsible for sectoral research policy. In addition, this type of government department receives a small budget allocation that is utterly insufficient to achieve its ambitious goals.

The small share of the national budget devoted to research is typical of developing countries in general and African countries in particular. In developed countries, the strategic importance of research is reflected in suitable funding mechanisms that mobilize considerable public and private resources for research. However, the contribution of Africa to financing research and development remains insignificant, representing only 0.7% of spending devoted to the sector worldwide<sup>9</sup> (UNESCO, 2001). In addition, three quarters of sub-Saharan Africa budget allocation to research and development comes from a single country: South Africa (Touré 2003). This situation is indicative of the strong dependence of research in Africa on international cooperation. In the opinion of numerous experts, the critical investment threshold required for research to have a significant impact on the level of development is higher than 1 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Whereas the rate ranges around 2 per cent in developed countries, the average in sub-Saharan Africa barely exceeds 0.3 per cent.

#### Sources of Research Funding

Funding is one of the bottlenecks affecting research in most African countries. Unfortunately, of the 118 research projects that were inventoried, only 33 (28%) had a known source of funding. In light of the nature of the documents available, it was not possible to determine the sources of funding for most of the research inventoried. In general, information on sources of funding was lacking in students' theses and dissertations.

Thirty-three sources of funding were identified. Nearly 43% of funding was accounted for by USAID, while other funds came from partners such as Belgian Cooperation, the International Development Association (IDA) and UNIDEA.

#### Research Funding

Institution	Number	Percentage
UNICEF	1	3.0
USAID	14	42.4
PBA	1	3.0
ANSSP	1	3.0
Belgium	5	15.2
UNFPA	1	3.0
LSHTM	2	6.1
UNIDEA	3	9.1
AMCES	2	6.1
IDA	3	9.1
Total	33	100.0

Source: Gbangbade, Sourou et al., 2007. 'Etat de la recherche au Bénin en matière de mortalité maternelle et néonatale'.

In West and Central African countries, research receives strong financing from foreign aid. As this support is often provided by one or two development partners, a change in their policies or orientation could provoke the collapse or near paralysis of the entire research system unless provisions for alternative funding are made. This model cannot ensure sustainability of the research system, which should, however, use it as an adjunct to a broader research programme that is both consistent and carefully coordinated.

*e) Low Level Participation of Socio-professional Associations in Defining Public Research Policies*

The low level of participation of socio-professional associations, NGOs and civil society in the definition of public research policies was observed throughout the IDRC meeting series. Very often, it is only when a project is fully developed and ready to be launched that certain stakeholders are informed and involved. Socio-professional associations have a twofold role to play, acting simultaneously as relays to their members and to beneficiaries. While they are not research specialists, their involvement would yield considerable benefits by making it possible to:

- save considerable time during research programme formulation and implementation. This is a crucial aspect in research project design, since the longer this phase drags on, the smaller the chance that development partners will channel resources into the projects, since resources are limited both in quantity and in time, and may be distributed according to the FIFO principle: first come, first served. Lack of concrete involvement of socio-professional associations at the project inception phase, as is sometimes required by development partners, can also cause harmful delays;
- better target needs and therefore better focus public research policies by making them more relevant. While they are not research specialists, due to their proximity to beneficiaries, socio-professional associations and civil society can express their needs more precisely than a researcher can;
- ensure that research programmes are implemented more quickly. Earlier involvement would have saved valuable time during the start-up phase of research programmes if the actors involved had been identified during the design and formulation phase;
- reduce research costs by increasing efficiency. When a research programme does not involve socio-professional associations in the design phase, piloting of the programme may be studded with so many evaluations and corrections that can push up the overall cost of research.

The lack of involvement of socio-professional associations often reflects improvisation in the formulation of research policies. This may reflect a lack of clearly defined advocacy strategies, which would have a negative impact on beneficiary ownership of research findings.

During the Round Table organised by IDRC in Ghana within the researcher - decision-maker meeting series, Emmanuel Owusu-Bennoah drew attention to the need to ensure a minimum of private sector presence in the field of research, in light of the sector's reluctance to invest in Research and Development (R&D), the absence of research incentives and the apparent disregard for intellectual property rights. He also mentioned the fact that tax collection agencies do not recognize the role of research and do not establish exemption measures for R&D. He therefore recommended that priority be given to research projects that aim at meeting social needs.

*f) Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks Are Often Obsolete*

Virtually no legal frameworks make research input mandatory in defining public policies. Decision-makers therefore feel no obligation to involve researchers in the earliest stages of policy formulation. Researcher involvement is generally a matter of the disposition of the decision-maker.

The lack of prestigious status hardly motivates researchers to make careers in this sector. Researchers are civil servants who often receive fewer benefits than their teaching colleagues, who may also do research, but generally view themselves more as lecturers than as dedicated researchers.

As they lack a special status, researchers are often "lost" in the middle of the civil service. In addition, many research assistants struggle to be absorbed in the civil service, and some may retain research assistant status for many years. As university regulations limit the duration of study or research assistant status in a given field, young researchers tend to change disciplines to maintain their status, which constitutes a considerable waste of time and resources.

The fact that researchers devote increasing time to consultancy work, for obvious economic reasons, raises the issue of their tax status. As civil servants, they pay income tax deducted from their salaries at source and, since civil servants cannot have the status of private consultants, they are unable to declare their supplementary income, which is often much higher than their annual salary.

Finally, the lack of tax incentives at both the personal and institutional levels does little to promote the emergence of new, private status research institutions that could introduce more diversity and innovation into the research community. Outside the medical sector, where the growing number of private laboratories benefits from practitioners' tendency to run tests before writing prescriptions, it is difficult to find private investments in the research sector, even in applied research.

***g) Universities and Research Institutes Operate in Isolation:  
Closed to Decision-makers***

If decision-makers complain that researchers shut themselves up in their ivory tower, it is because they view universities and research institutes as black boxes that only professors and researchers can decipher. The fact that researchers devote little effort to make their community attractive to decision-makers – perhaps for reasons of independence – and that decision-makers, who are not originally from the research community, show little inclination to enter into a milieu which they view as hostile creates a vicious circle and a growing divide. Elsewhere in the world, the most successful exploitation of research findings has been based on a strong partnership or complicity between researchers and decision-makers.

Universities and research institutes are generally closed to the public and, to a certain extent, to decision-makers. The sphere has never extended a welcoming hand to outsiders. Researchers' lack of proactive disposition, failure to communicate, and inaccessible language give decision-makers and the public the impression that the research community is a closed space that is only open to an elite group. The question that remains is whether researchers feel a need to inspire special respect for their knowledge or whether they are seeking to protect their possession of creativity and innovation from external contamination. People outside the research community continue to wonder, without finding satisfactory answers.

***h) Low Level of Institutional Lobbying***

Institutional lobbying has become an indispensable technique for getting ideas across to stakeholders who may show resistance or lack of interest towards the ideas one wishes to advocate. Unfortunately the low level of institutional lobbying prevents research institutes from having the visibility they deserve in the economic, scientific and social life of the nation. This weakness may have at least two main causes. The first is a lack of mastery of lobbying techniques, easily corrected

through training, on condition that the parties concerned recognize that this is in their best interest and agree to take training. The second is linked to the institutional structures in place. We have already referred to the lack of coordination of research activities and the absence of national-level consultation frameworks. This makes it impossible to carry out institutional lobbying, which requires strong analysis and real stakeholder involvement. Dispersal of research structures across supervisory bodies and the difficulty of national departments responsible for scientific and technical research to define their fundamental role do not create enabling conditions for institutional lobbying.





# Chapter II

## Experiences and Initiatives that Promote Collaboration between Researchers and Decision-makers

### 1. Democratization Processes and Attempts to Harmonize Research Policies at the Institutional Level

#### *a) Democratizing Political Environments Promotes the Development of Various Forms of Research*

In Africa, relations between researchers and decision-makers are highly dependent on national political environments. In some countries where freedom of expression is very limited, researchers rarely have the opportunity to put their ideas across to decision-makers. However, when the environment evolves towards greater democracy, multiple forms of research emerge. In reality, the whole environment changes with democracy and promotes various forms of expression, including research. The case of Mali is a clear illustration:

The democratic revolution in Mali provided a political framework for freedom of expression and promotion of creativity and innovation in every field, particularly in research. Under the two previous regimes, creative people in general and researchers in particular lived in a climate devoid of the freedom to provide inputs into decision-making. One of the major constraints was the almost mandatory use of data provided by government agencies without any criticism as to its validity (Toukara 2005).

When the dictatorial regime was overthrown and with the ushering in of democracy, long awaited by all, relations between researchers and decision-makers improved considerably. "In addition, the new political environment encouraged government authorities to promote innovation, as they were aware that their political future was increasingly dependent on the results of their actions to achieve sustainable development. The new environment went a long way to

explaining the successful collaboration between ROCARE/ERNWACA and the Ministry of Basic Education" (Touunkara 2005).

The democratization process promotes the progressive and growing involvement of researchers in defining government policies; it provides the opportunity to share their thoughts with decision-makers. This situation was illustrated by the case of Senegal during the researcher/decision-maker workshop on agriculture:

Nowadays, research is regularly discussed in inter-ministerial councils, in the development of national strategic plans, including certain local development plans, and very often in the identification and monitoring and evaluation of development projects. In Senegal, as elsewhere, agricultural research plays an important role in development through the provision of technical solutions, information and ideas in support of strategic choices (Touunkara 2005).

In the context of democratization, information has been very critical in creating freedom of speech. The progressive liberalization of the media has brought changes to the constitutions of many countries, which has facilitated the creation of agencies for audiovisual communications, thereby promoting the emergence of private media and greater respect for democratic norms through proper regulation. In addition, the advent of information and communication technology (ICT) has also promoted media globalization and democratization of information. Researchers in such an environment are more daring in increasing the visibility of their research findings.

***b) A Progressive Decentralization Policy Favours the Emergence of Diverse Political Players Open to Research***

Most West African countries have progressively established decentralization policies that grant more decision-making powers to communes, rural communities and grassroots organisations. Research organizations, active mostly in the field, were already decentralized within each country. In the agricultural sector, for instance, specialized research centres in animal production, agriculture, and forestry have emerged in rural areas. The decentralized structures work directly with local actors through jointly initiated projects. This participatory approach is confirmed and even reinforced by the administrative decentralization process that enables local actors to take initiatives and decisions without prior reference to central authorities.

One of the results of decentralization policies has been the emergence of numerous village groups and producers' associations that participate in research experiments or in popularization or extension of research findings. One remarkable example is the Siwaa<sup>7</sup> programme in Mali.

### The Siwaa Programme in Mali

The activities that culminated in the Siwaa convention began in Kaniko and Try, two villages located southeast of Koutiala, which exert strong pressure on sylvo-pastoral resources. These two villages requested the assistance of the Malian Textile Development Company (CMDT) to find solutions to control soil erosion.

Because it lacked the necessary technical skills at that time, CMDT requested and received support from the Rural Production Systems Research Division (*Division de recherche sur les systèmes de production rurale*, DRSPR), which had access to research findings from Fonsébougou. Thus, erosion control was introduced into the villages. People were trained to implement a number of techniques to minimize the negative effects of water erosion.

However, the results of the technical erosion control measures, which were mostly individual, were disappointing. The beneficiaries were convinced that they could not slow the deterioration without the cooperation of their immediate neighbours – M'péresso, Sinsina and Nampossela –, which had usufructuary rights on their land. Accordingly, a community approach was developed by DRSPR and adopted by CMDT in 1986.

Due to the success of the community approach and the scope of activities, the need was soon felt to address the problem of resource degradation as a whole. This gave rise in 1989 to a land-management programme that required the participation of both the local population and the government departments operating in the area. The programme, which covers six villages, began in an area of some 16 000 hectares known as Siwaa. The Siwaa project is supported by the Interdepartmental Technical Group (*Groupe technique interservice*, GTI), which includes representatives from CMDT, the Forestry Department, the Animal Production Department and the Rural Economics Institute (*Institut d'économie rurale*, IER).

The area is dominated by the coexistence of customary land tenure law and modern law. The founding families of the village, represented by the land chief, who is the eldest of the lineage, have the right to own and distribute land. However, the western part of Siwaa is threatened by the expansion of the town of Koutiala.

The Siwaa convention is a contract signed between the villagers and the public authorities to regulate resource use on their land in accordance with forestry legislation. Talks on the convention began in April 1993, but a final version accepted by all of the villages was only signed in October 1997.

The Siwaa experience shows that:

- it is necessary to directly involve village chiefs and local authorities in talks on land tenure;
- without the support of the GTI, the Siwaa Committee alone could never have obtained official approval of the convention;
- confidence and respect are vital to the success of community resource management based on a local convention;
- local conventions should be simple in their form and content; reflection could begin with the forests most vulnerable to risks of overuse and later be extended to all village lands.

Source: Coulibaly, Ngolo, 2006, 'Gestion des terroirs villageois et lutte contre la désertification : le Siwaa en zone CMDT'.

Siwaa's experience served as a model for the development of numerous other conventions throughout southern Mali; it highlighted the influence of research findings on policy decisions.

As for the private sector and civil society actors, research findings are mainly used to make their activities more profitable and provide them with information to develop strategic advocacy aimed at the government or donors. Because research results are in the public domain and are partly financed by the taxpayer, the State and political parties use research outcomes to check government policy options and support or argue the State's decisions and plans in a specific sector.

Decentralization and poverty reduction policies have allowed NGOs to play a stronger role on behalf of the poorest strata of society. For reasons of credibility, certain NGOs have even engaged in research to find selling points to strengthen their credibility. Their proximity to grassroots populations and community-based organisations enables them to target the most current concerns of the milieu, define research themes, deduce the causes of identified problems and conduct highly targeted advocacy. NGOs have established themselves as major actors in community-level development and their involvement is often required by development partners as a prerequisite for financing.

*c) Reform of Universities and Research Organisations to Embrace Social Concerns*

Long viewed as ivory towers where researchers locked themselves up to pursue their academic careers, universities have reacted by adopting several strategies aimed at aligning themselves more closely with society. In terms of curricula, they increasingly focus on applied research with more visible short- and medium-term impact, as opposed to fundamental research, which is long term. This change can be perceived in students' work, which now includes stints in professional organisations that tie in with research topics validated by their university. This desire to respond more effectively to society's concerns can also be seen in other research structures that are establishing partnerships with research beneficiaries to improve their experimental work. "Numerous experiences demonstrate the success of partnerships between research and development. In areas such as groundnut seed production, selection of fruit tree varieties, production of veterinary vaccines and rice-growing, it is recognized by all that decision-makers have made successful use of the research produced by the scientific community" (Ba and Duteurtre 2004).

Reforms have also been promoted by the steps taken by decision-makers in terms of orienting research towards community concerns, particularly in the framework of poverty reduction, as illustrated by the following example. "The government of Burkina Faso has adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework. With government support, all institutions, organisations and development partners are striving to achieve poverty reduction. The revised research strategy focuses on farmers. From now on, researchers must listen to farmers and everything must stem from them. That is why today in Burkina Faso, research activities can only be financed when they are based on the constraints and opinions of farmers" (Dabiré 2004).

At the institutional level, political decision-makers have undertaken reforms by decentralizing universities, thereby fostering the emergence of regional universities, which tend to specialize according to the particular features of the region. The development of specialized study in agriculture, animal production, information and communication technology, industry, etc. should help researchers address regional priorities more easily.

One of the consequences of reform in universities and research institutes has been their very strong involvement in government programmes such as poverty reduction, education and health. These actions often reflect a proactive stance by research institutes that are determined to overcome traditional barriers separating them from decision-makers. The latter have also shown a certain openness to research contributions in vital sectors such as health, education and agriculture.

Before the ten-year education and training programme (*Programme décennal de l'éducation et de la formation*, PDEF), national researchers were almost completely excluded from circles formulating educational policies. Studies of the education sector were conducted by foreign consultants recruited directly by donors such as the French Cooperation, the World Bank, UNESCO, etc. The involvement of the Applied Economic Research Centre (*Centre de recherches économiques appliquées*, CREA) in the implementation of the PDEF introduced a fundamental change in the 'policy community'; from then on, education policy options and orientations were based on the research findings of local researchers.<sup>8</sup> From this standpoint, we can say that CREA contributed to the internalization and ownership of education sector strategies (Daffé 2005).

*d) Research Financing More Focused on Development Issues and Development Problem-solving*

The crucial role of research financing has been stressed by all stakeholders – decision-makers, researchers and beneficiaries – involved in the different researcher – decision-maker workshops organised by IDRC. However, the issue of research project financing is still controversial. Is public financing valid despite its limitations? And what about donor financing, with its attendant risks? The example of Mali presents a clear illustration: “Stoppage of project financing often spells the end of certain technical and technological transfers, for example the elimination of the ‘planning’ component with the mainstreaming of CMDT and the end of Dutch funding meant the withdrawal of the two-wheeled cart equipment programme” (Traoré 2006).

The IDRC workshops provided an opportunity to distinguish several situations and related consequences according to the types of research financed, sources of financing, and stoppage of financing.

The small share of the national budget allocated to research seems to restrict public resources to recurrent expenses such as salaries, rent and certain consumables, whilst the financing of research operations is essentially borne by donors. The findings of the Dakar workshop showed that political decision-makers have chosen to adopt a dynamic role in identifying research priorities through strategic planning and scientific programming. “The State, for its part, strives to ensure the running of research institutions through financing from the national budget, while financing of research activities is the purview of bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, within the framework of agreements, conventions or projects” (Touré 2004).

The range of partners financing development-oriented research activities clearly demonstrates the interest of the international community in research; in addition, the influence it wields over African decision-makers facilitates the adoption of certain research results. The experience of BAME (Macroeconomic Analysis Bureau) in Senegal is edifying in this respect. “BAME’s current research focuses on three themes: studying the workings and dynamics of agricultural enterprises, analysing the professionalization of production chains and methods of market regulation, and assessing the impact of policies, projects and technologies” (Touré 2004). Thanks to the support of development partners for research on these themes, BAME participated in defining Senegal’s macroeconomic policies, in a situation where relations between researchers and decision-makers were not at their best.

“BAME has a dozen researchers based in Dakar and certain regional centres, supported by short-term expertise: post-doctoral students, research fellows and trainees. Various donors participate in financing research operations, including Canadian Cooperation (PPMEH), French Cooperation (PACD), the World Bank (PSAOP/FNRAA), ITA, USAID, etc.” (Touré 2004).

## **2. Diversification among Actors Engaged in Knowledge Management and Sharing**

### *a) More Sharing of Information among Researchers, Decision-makers, the Private Sector and Civil Society*

In recent decades, actors from non-research backgrounds have taken an interest in information pertaining to research. In the agricultural sector, for instance, producers who have used research results successfully have gone back to the researchers to seek advice or to request improved seeds. Decision-makers, on their part, have become aware that research can provide solutions or at least help solve critical problems affecting people, which prompted more frequent consultation with researchers. Civil society actors have also noticed that by using research results, they can lend greater credibility to their advocacy.

In recent years, efforts have been made to enhance collaboration between researchers and decision-makers. In addition, producers, who have rallied to form the National Rural Consultation Framework (*Cadre national de concertation des ruraux*, CNCR), have now defined their own agenda. They have developed a capacity for analysis and advice by establishing a renewed partnership with agricultural research (Touré 2004).

As we have noted, it is important to distinguish between political decision-makers, private actors who can be decision-makers in their own field, and civil society. Political decision-makers are responsible for developing, reviewing and implementing agricultural policies based on research results. Private sector actors are interested in short-term uses of research results that can be financially profitable; they tend to negotiate directly with research institutions, or even with individual researchers, according to their needs. Civil society may be interested in short-term research results, especially for advocacy work, but certain components (i.e. consumers' associations) may be interested in research that lays the foundation for long-term preventive or prospective action. The case of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) clearly illustrates this situation: while there is insufficient scientific proof of the harmful effects of GMOs on health, no one wants to run

the risk of discovering such effects in the future, so we all prefer to adopt precautionary measures.

The different researcher - decision-maker workshops revealed the growing role parliamentarians in the West and Central Africa region play in validation of research results by passing appropriate laws. In Benin, for example, the Parliamentarians Network on Population and Development (*Réseau des parlementaires béninois pour la population et le développement*, RPBPD) has become a channel for drafting and adopting laws on population and development issues.

Parliamentarians have regular meetings organised by competent bodies, in conjunction with the scientific community, to obtain enlightenment on specific laws such as those on reproductive health, family health, HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation and its consequences. Parliamentarians make important contributions at all stages of the adoption and implementation of laws pertaining to population and development, either through their own investigations, or through the training they receive in specialized workshops and seminars (Bio Bigou 2007).

In the health sector, information sharing and management between decision-makers and researchers have become a real tradition. University teaching hospitals, which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, are directly run by professors of medicine and medical students in training who do clinical research and provide care for patients in the framework of their studies. The lessons learned from this research are used to enrich the curriculum and provide advice to decision-makers on policies regarding prevention and prophylaxis, and control of epidemics and endemics.

In the agricultural sector, until recently, the information provided by agricultural research was generally used to document the vision of decision-makers, such as the Minister of Agriculture and the President of the Republic. Today, the trend is to involve agricultural workers not only in information sharing, but also in information production. In Burkina Faso, peasants have taken action to ensure that their concerns are addressed by decision-makers and researchers:

Due to pressures exerted by producers and interest shown by political decision-makers, and in the search for new research financing, it has been necessary to review and update the plan of activities in light of current concerns such as whitefly control and the development of cassava production. The review was conducted in concert with researchers and developers and also involved peasant organisations. Thus, for the first time in the history of Burkina Faso, the peasants themselves made their voices heard and imposed the inclusion of cassava as a priority speculation crop (Dabiré 2004).



Researchers also tend to anticipate decision-makers' needs and organise their research work around relevant and essential issues, identified in concert with political decision-makers and farm workers. However, producer involvement should not be limited to simply identifying their needs, which confines them to a position of mere consumers of research products. Producers should also be involved in the knowledge-generation process.

The media plays a primary role in popularizing research results. Researchers in Burkina Faso involved farmers in the introduction of very high yield cassava tubers and convinced authorities to adopt them at the national level, following effective media action involving the print media and national television, which broadcast the information across the country.

Finally, during FRSIT [*Forum national de la recherche scientifique et des innovations technologiques*, or National Forum for Scientific Research and Technological Innovation] and JNP [*Journée nationale du paysan*, or National Farmers' Day], the written press and national television played a tremendous role through its reports on cassava, with impressive impact and response around the country (Dabiré 2004).

***b) Consultation Frameworks and Bridges between Researchers, Decision-makers and Society***

Aware of the difficulty of dialogue between researchers and decision-makers, the latter have established formal and informal consultation frameworks to facilitate the flow of information between the two and discussion relating to the effective participation of research in the development process. In the agricultural sector, such structures exist at all levels of government. In Senegal, for instance, the progress achieved in improving the productivity of Senegalese agriculture was made possible by closely linking agricultural policy orientation defined by political authorities with research proposals and producers' concerns. This is achieved through several concerted consultation structures put in place by authorities:

- Weekly meetings at the Ministry of Agriculture to prepare the Minister's participation in the Council of Ministers, review the level of execution of ongoing projects and programmes, and create synergy between the different branches of the Ministry.
- National Programme Steering Committee: In the framework of the execution of national programmes on specific production chains, national steering committees are often formed with regional branches that act as consultation frameworks. The technical de-

partments and national bodies involved in the production chain are represented in such committees, which are often extended to all Ministries intervening in the field, the beneficiaries, and private sector and civil society representatives. The role of the steering committee is to ensure that all available and relevant research results are integrated in the execution of programme activities.

- **Presidential Council and Inter-ministerial Council:** The Presidential Council crowns the efforts of all actors in the field. This body rallies around the Head of State all participants that have been invited to defend their points of view. Following the discussions, instructions are issued and certain decisions are made immediately by the President of the Republic. The Inter-ministerial Council uses the same process, but before the Prime Minister, notably during preparations for the growing season.
- **Rural Development and Land Development Commission:** Within the National Assembly, there are commissions that conduct background studies prior to voting in laws to implement policies developed by decision-makers and participate in debates during budget sessions. The commission on rural development and land development holds regular dialogue with researchers, either directly, i.e. with members of the Senegalese Researchers' Association (*Association des chercheurs sénégalais*, ACS), or by asking research institutions to provide relevant information that can inform the voting and budget debate process.
- **Other Frameworks and Mechanisms:** Other frameworks and mechanisms are also used by decision-makers to keep abreast of research progress. These include research institutions' scientific and technical committees (STCs), in which the supervisory ministry and various partners are members. For example, the STC of ISRA (*Institut sénégalais de recherches agricoles*), which is the Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute, meets annually and uses the occasion to present its achievements and its action plan for the coming years. The meetings are attended by representatives of the ministries of agriculture and research.

These consultation bodies are part of a strategic plan defined at the top levels of government and implemented at the lower levels through a participatory approach in which each stakeholder has a role to play.

Strategic planning is an exercise that, based on the state of knowledge and participatory diagnosis of farmers' constraints and the orientation of state agricultural policies, defines priority research areas for a period of four to five years. Scientific programming is carried out on an annual basis and allows the development of thematic actions and research projects on the main areas of the strategic plan, viewed as priorities by all of the stakeholders. These two processes use an iterative approach consisting of taking stock of social demand and matching it to government orientations and financing opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

In other sectors, such as health, several consultation bodies help develop and implement public health policies based on the needs of the people and the information provided by researchers.

*c) Researchers and Decision-makers Sharing the Same Environment*

In recent decades, West and Central African decision-makers have drawn on academic resources by entrusting professors and/or researchers with ministerial portfolios in specific fields such as education, health, research, the environment and agriculture. These decision-makers are predisposed to collaborate with their natural environment, which is research. It is therefore not surprising to note strong researcher involvement in the activities of such ministries.

ROCARE [ERNWACA, the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa] was invited by a Minister, himself a former researcher, to participate in a vast renewal process marked by a strong determination to capitalise on all of the innovations being tried in Mali. Considered a great innovator by many observers, as soon as he was appointed Minister of Basic Education, he clearly stated his intention to conduct a thorough overhaul of the education system by ensuring the coherence of all its components (Toukara 2005).

Such decision-makers generally display a strong capacity for innovation – which is also one of the principal characteristics of researchers – and are therefore predisposed to undertake major reform programmes in their sector by introducing relevant research results. The above-mentioned case of Mali clearly illustrates this situation: “Thus, in the very first days of his tenure, the approach of the Minister of Basic Education was to consult various national establishments, particularly those responsible for research, implementation and evaluation. They were requested to review the numerous innovations that had been tried so as to identify those with positive potential for general application” (Toukara 2005).

As shown in the box below, sharing the same knowledge environment can be a decisive factor in the use of research results by decision-makers.

**ROCARE's Support to the Ministry of Basic Education  
in Organizing the 'Ségou Perspectives' Meeting**

The first formal and significant intervention by ROCARE/ERNWACA in educational policy planning in Mali took place during preparations for the regional meeting on education known as the 'Ségou Perspectives', organised in 1995 on the initiative of the Minister of Basic Education, Mr Adama Samasékou.

In the process of overhauling the Malian education system, the Minister of Basic Education, who often advocated a regional or even a pan-African approach to the renewal of education, took the initiative of inviting several countries from the subregion to analyse their educational systems and identify the principal convergence criteria for the establishment of a minimum regional action programme. One of the major themes focused on regional strategies for increasing girls' and women's enrolment.

In a bid to break away from seminars that were often not very functional or well grounded in scientific analyses of educational issues, ROCARE/ERNWACA was requested to conduct studies and analyses in eleven member countries and to support intellectual and material preparations for the meeting.

*'Ségou Perspectives'*

Objective presentations, differing from the official studies on the state of national education systems, were made to representatives of decision-makers, the principal development partners, NGOs and partner associations active in the education sector in the eleven ROCARE/ERNWACA countries. Discussions and workshops served to share problems and jointly develop a minimum regional programme for the renovation of education systems in West Africa.

Setting aside subjective judgements as to the success or failure of the 'Ségou Perspectives', it was noted, for the first time, that top-level decision-makers unanimously agreed to base the development of a regional action plan on dialogue with researchers, donors and civil society.

In addition, ROCARE/ERNWACA pointed out that the 'Ségou Perspectives' gave decision-makers and development partners a better appreciation of the added value of the network's contribution to the education planning process, due to the availability of high-level experts in a permanent network in its West and Central African countries.

Source: Tounkara, Brehima, 2005, 'L'expérience de la collaboration entre les chercheurs du ROCARE et le Ministère de l'Éducation de Base pour la réforme éducative au Mali'.

While it is more common to move from research to the decision-making circle, the opposite also occurs, when former ministers who have reached the end of their tenure return to their academic circles and capitalise on their experience as decision-makers to improve research programmes and, above all, to change attitudes and approaches with a view to promoting research in political circles.

**d) Alliances between Researchers and Users to Influence Decision-makers**

One meaningful example of an alliance between researchers and research users focuses on the changes made in the extension of cassava cultivation in Burkina Faso in recent years.

**Extension of Cassava Cultivation in Burkina Faso**

In contexts where dialogue is not fruitful, researchers must seek other ways and means of convincing political decision-makers to endorse their research results. Confident in the relevance of their research, they undertake lobbying to achieve their goals. In so doing, they look for people in their environment who can exert strong influence on decision-makers and they naturally turn to users of research results to establish partnerships with a view to weighing on the judgement of decision-makers.

Because decision-makers are sensitive to any sort of mass movement that could have political repercussions, alliances between researchers and users are particularly helpful when the latter belong to a sensitive sector of the population, such as rural people. In the case of cassava cultivation in Burkina Faso, it was actually researchers who imposed that option on political decision-makers by forming an alliance with the farmers who participated in the experimental phase and were in the best position to testify to the positive results they obtained. This experience provides interesting lessons that should be taken into account in improving advocacy approaches to promote research and ensure that research results are utilized.

During the 5th edition of the National Forum for Scientific Research and Technological Innovation (*Forum national de la recherche scientifique et des innovations technologiques*, FRST) in 2002, cassava results were presented to the general public by the INERA Tuber Programme. On that occasion, the political authorities were surprised to discover that high-yielding cassava was grown in Burkina Faso. The Minister of State in charge of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fishery Resources was particularly pleased with the results. That same year, cassava was presented during National Farmers' Day (*Journée nationale du paysan*, JNP), which was instituted by the President of Burkina Faso as a framework for meetings between the President and the country's farmers to exchange views on rural issues and suggest solutions. During the meeting, cassava by-products such as gari, attieke, tapioca and starch were shown by the Tuber Programme of the Institute of Environmental and Agricultural Research (*Institut de l'environnement et des recherches agricoles*, INERA), in association with women processing the cassava. This was repeated at the JNP in 2003.

The INERA Tuber Programme works with both individual producers and peasants organisations. The latter include the *Association des professionnels de l'irrigation privée et des activités connexes* (APIPAC), a professional irrigation association that requested INERA's support to train its members on cassava production and processing. Technology and knowledge transfer methods notably included the organisation of instructional tours and exchange visits among farm-owning peasants in different areas.

Source: Dabiré, Rémy A., 2004, 'Importance de l'implication des décideurs dans la diffusion des résultats de recherche : cas de la vulgarisation de la culture du manioc au Burkina Faso'.

Researcher actions, carried out jointly with farmers, convinced the Ministry of Agriculture to become a staunch promoter of the experiment's extension.

The Minister of Agriculture himself disseminates information on cassava throughout the agricultural and political environment, during his field outings to meet with farmers, during meetings with local government organisations and at conferences, workshops and seminars. Local decision-makers are also involved in the dissemination process, since we pay them goodwill visits and explain what we are bringing to their regions. In general, the latter are often interested in cassava cultivation and end up asking for cuttings to start production (Dabiré 2004).

*e) Emergence of Researchers within Civil Society:*

*Knowledge as a Foundation for Political Advocacy*

Democratization has permitted the emergence of researchers other than traditional types found in universities and specialized research institutes. In many countries in West and Central Africa, the democratization process is accompanied by growing civil society involvement in politics, reflected in the expression of different viewpoints, creating a need to back up advocacy with research findings. Civil society is often highly organised and has access to national and international resources, enabling it to recruit top-level staff with skills to conduct their own field investigations. It has the know-how to develop targeted, well argued advocacy based on facts gathered in the field. It has developed the capacity to mobilize the media and raise the awareness of the people, in whose name it speaks.<sup>10</sup>

African civil society is strengthened by the support it draws from foreign lobbying networks made up of international NGOs, through which it can gain access to considerable documentation on a wide range of topics. These networks also enable it to build research and lobbying capacity through training. Civil society also draws support from national networks of experts and researchers.

In Senegal, we can cite the example of the *Forum civil*, part of the Transparency International network, which conducted a substantive study on corruption in the health system with IDRC support.

### A Study on Corruption in the Senegalese Healthcare System

The goal of the study was to answer the following question: how has the report on corruption in healthcare organisations significantly influenced political decision-makers in Senegal to improve the performance of the healthcare system and effectively combat corruption in the sector? This investigation offered an opportunity to reconstruct the complex process of direct collaboration between a research support institution (IDRC), a Senegalese civil society institution (*Forum civil*), a multidisciplinary research team (*Laboratoire de recherche sur la gouvernance*, LAREG), the government of Senegal and other partners who became involved in the process later on (professional associations of doctors, pharmacists, midwives, nurses, unions, etc.). The study made it possible, *inter alia*, to reconstitute the dysfunctions observed in healthcare organisations, analyse the quality of and relationship to health care, and outline an analysis of corruption practices in maternity wards in particular and healthcare centres in general.

Feedback sessions were organised for the National Council for Economic and Social Affairs (*Conseil de la République pour les affaires économiques et sociales*, CRAES), the National Pharmacists' Association (*Ordre national des pharmaciens du Sénégal*), the National Physicians' Association (*Ordre national des médecins du Sénégal*), USAID, the Canadian Embassy including several development partners, the National Governance Programme (*Programme national de bonne gouvernance*, PNBG), etc.

Additional requests for feedback were made by others such as Parliament, the National Employers' Confederation (*Confédération nationale des employeurs du Sénégal*, CNES), the Health and Social Workers' Union (*Syndicat unique des Travailleurs de la santé et de l'action sociale*, SUTSAS), and the political parties represented in Parliament.

After each session, the nation's private and state media provided wide coverage of the proceedings, raising considerable national interest and passionate debates on the subject. Through this approach, *Forum civil* managed to decompartmentalize the debate on corruption in healthcare establishments and make it a national issue. Upon the publication of the report on corruption and health, *Forum civil* defined a selective dissemination approach targeting the President of the Republic, the Minister of Health, Parliament, CRAES, the health sector labour unions, the National Commission on Corruption (*Commission nationale de lutte contre la concussion, la corruption et la non-transparence*), certain political parties, development partners, etc.

The President of the Republic displayed a positive attitude by congratulating *Forum civil* on the quality of its report. At the request of *Forum civil*, the President agreed to meet the authors of the study to discuss the issues raised by the report and future prospects. After an audience lasting some hours, he suggested the creation of a steering committee to reflect on the issues raised. The legitimacy of the report was strengthened by the official support of the President.

However, the attitude of the President contrasted with that of the Minister of Health, who threatened a libel suit. Through the press, the Minister expressed disapproval of the report, considering it an insult to healthcare professionals. *Forum civil* used relations to approach the Minister and explain that the aim of the report was to help improve the performance of the system, not to stigmatize the medical profession.

This close interpersonal approach had positive results, since the Minister not only decided not to sue the writers of the report, but even subsequently agreed to preside at the official opening ceremony of the National Forum on Governance in the Senegalese healthcare sector, held in Dakar from 31 March to 1 April 2006.

Source: Ndao, Abdou, 2006, 'Eclairer la gouvernance par la recherche : l'expérience du rapport sur la corruption dans le secteur de la santé au Sénégal'.

This study clearly illustrates the capacity of certain civil society actors to conduct research and raise awareness, particularly among decision-makers, so that they endorse and own research results.

Other actors have also distinguished themselves: professional or employers' associations increasingly conduct economic and social research to improve the business environment by identifying and removing constraints that inhibit their sectors. They have contributed to the creation of consultation frameworks at the highest levels of government, such as the Presidential Investment Council chaired by the Head of State, which exists in several States in the sub-region. These associations have thus transformed ordinary trade unions into powerful organs capable of making concrete and constructive proposals through advocacy supported by well documented studies.

As we have noted, political parties use research results and increasingly conduct sub-regional studies comparing the price of basic foodstuffs or the cost of production in order to defend their positions on government actions with greater objectivity and credibility.

### 3. Information, Communication and Promotion of Research Outputs

#### *a) Stronger Efforts to Increase the Visibility of Research Findings*

The different workshops showed an increasing recognition among researchers that their research findings lack visibility. They have begun to use a number of strategies to improve communication with decision-makers and users by including the use of drawings and caricatures to portray messages. Caricatures are more expressive for people with low literacy levels.



In 2005, after the publication of the report on health and corruption in healthcare establishments, two caricaturists were solicited to portray the main research findings. Their caricatures were so expressive that they were published in various national and even international newspapers. In all the international meetings where the researchers were invited to present the findings of the study – in Lusaka, Nairobi, Cameroon, and Accra, for instance – the caricatures were hugely popular (Ndao 2006).

Researchers increasingly use modern information technology to improve their communication and media outreach, a development enhanced by the modernization efforts of research institutes through acquisition of quality equipment and participation in research projects supported by development partners. The international environment has also improved, in no small measure, as researchers communicate and publish their work on websites of research and international institutions.<sup>11</sup> In addition, organisations specializing in research or interested in research findings invite African researchers to consultative meetings, where they are able to share their research findings.

Research institutions increasingly organise “open house days” to popularize their research findings and work. In the agricultural sector, for instance, open house days give farmers an opportunity to discover improved seeds or new, high-yield farming methods. Researchers in Burkina Faso have made good use of this concept. During the 5th edition of FRSIT in 2002, for example, findings on cassava were presented to the general public by the INERA Tuber Programme. Among other events, agricultural trade shows such as the *Foire internationale de l'agriculture et des ressources animales* (FIARA, International Agricultural and Animal Resources Fair) offer farmers in West Africa an opportunity to showcase quality farm produce, often the product of research, and give researchers an opportunity to popularize their findings.

***b) Attempts at Scientific Facilitation Inclusive of All Actors -  
Researchers, Decision-makers, Civil Society, Media***

Researchers and decision-makers increasingly include institutional and non-institutional actors in initiatives integrating the research community, decision-makers, civil society and the media. This approach responds to the need to more broadly disseminate certain research results whose popularization and use require the full participation of other actors, such as the people. In such situations, civil society and the media play a crucial role. In the health sector, for instance, AIDS control requires strong social mobilization involving

the media at both the national and local levels, opinion leaders and well known associations to reach a wider segment of the population. To ensure that the most affected groups, such as poverty-stricken youths and women who resort to prostitution to survive, participate in information, awareness and education activities, it is necessary to call on strong supports such as religion, music, culture and tradition. This is where opinion leaders such as religious elders, music stars, notables and traditional chiefs come in, each using their influence and message on the target population to progressively bring the latter to pay attention to, and use research results. The same also applies to the education sector, as was pointed out by the Executive Secretary of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) on the subject of literacy and basic education:

If the potential contributions of the different sectors of civil society, the private sector, and religious, local and cultural communities are properly mobilized, it will bring tremendous gains in terms of broadening access and improving the efficiency and quality of learning. And these are often low-cost or no-cost investments with high yields (Ndoye 2005).

With development partner support, decision-makers are initiating more and more projects whose success requires the strong involvement or perfect collaboration of researchers, civil society and beneficiaries. In the education sector, for instance, authorities no longer settle for building schools and assigning teachers, only to discover subsequently that the rate of enrolment remains well below the initial target due to insufficient consideration of local socio-cultural realities. On the contrary, decision-makers increasingly involve researchers such as sociologists, anthropologists, economists, educators and other specialists, whose expertise contributes to a clearer understanding and better mastery of group or population behaviour. These actors are involved in every phase of the project cycle, from design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

For their part, researchers, convinced of the relevance of their research results, tend to undertake extension initiatives involving decision-makers, the media and civil society. In Burkina Faso, researchers conducted extension on cassava tubers at the *Forum national de la recherche scientifique et des innovations technologiques* (FRSIT) by informing and sensitising all the actors, to such an extent that the ministry of Agriculture assumed full ownership of the research findings and took steps to ensure the following:

- implementation of a feasibility and profitability study on cassava cultivation in Burkina Faso, which was conducted in 2002 by national experts and was extremely revealing;
- elaboration of a development project on the cassava production chain with a view to seeking financing;
- preparation and submission of a request to the FAO by the government of Burkina Faso for support through its Technical Cooperation Programmes;
- inclusion of cassava in the *Programme du développement de la petite irrigation villageoise* (Village-level Small Irrigation Development Programme);
- strong involvement and motivation of the local branches of the Ministry of Agriculture as well as NGOs and farmer organisations.

This researchers' success was achieved by the active participation of producers in both the research and extension phases. However, this type of initiative is not limited to researchers and decision-makers. It is not unusual for civil society, as part of its advocacy strategy, to initiate a plan of action that includes researchers, decision-makers and the media in order to achieve its objectives. The most telling example is that of *Forum civil* in Senegal, whose study on corruption in the healthcare sector yielded very conclusive results, which though very controversial, were well documented. The involvement of stakeholders (researchers, decision-makers and civil society) was exemplary.

In the agricultural sector, the macroeconomic analysis bureau of Senegal's Agricultural Research Institute (*Institut sénégalais de recherches agricoles, ISRA*) is well known for its resolve and ability to

#### **Role of ISRA's Macroeconomic Analysis Bureau (BAME) in Senegal**

The principal aim of this Bureau, founded in the early 1980s, is to provide political decision-makers with strategic information to support agricultural policy formulation. Indeed, the term 'macroeconomic' refers to 'national' policies and not to the use of 'macroeconomic' tools *stricto sensu*. Indeed, the work of BAME researchers continues to focus on sectoral policy. Since the early 1990s, BAME researchers have been working more and more with professional representatives, who are increasingly involved in decision-making, as seen by the recent concerted consultations on the Agro-sylvo-pastoral Act (*Loi d'orientation agro-sylvo-pastorale, LOASP*).

Source: Ba, Cheikh Oumar and Duteurtre, Guillaume, 2004, 'L'information et la valorisation des résultats de recherche auprès des décideurs de l'agriculture au Sénégal: réflexion à partir de l'expérience du BAME de l'ISRA'.

mobilize agricultural sector actors within the framework of its operations. It has broken new ground in ensuring dialogue between researchers, decision-makers, and users of research findings.

*c) Creation of Communication Units to Promote Research Outputs*

In virtually all the workshops organised in the researcher - decision-maker series of meetings, participants unanimously recognized that poor communication by researchers was one of the reasons for their isolation; this failing can easily be traced to the lack of communication facilities in research institutions in West and Central Africa. As decision-makers quickly realized the importance of communication to increase the visibility of government actions, they created communication units in most ministerial departments, including scientific and technical research; these units are often managed by former journalists with a strong media background.

There are several reasons why research institutes lack communication units:

- insufficient researcher communication skills, which limits their ability to grasp fully the dimensions of an effective communication strategy to disseminate research results;
- the low budget allocated by the State for research, which does not provide research institutes with sufficient means to set up communication units;
- the environment in which research takes place - both in the scientific and decision-making domains - has not necessitated the need to disseminate research results on a wider scale to justify the creation of communication units.

However, there is a growing awareness among researchers of the importance of having a communication system that is not limited to one-off actions, but characterised by sustained information flows among researchers, decision-makers and other actors.

That is why it is critical to redouble efforts in Africa to reduce the gap between research and political decision-making through viable communication interfaces that ensure dialogue between researchers and political decision-makers as well as through the emergence of new institutional cultures (Ndoye 2005).

The lack of communication units has led researchers to seek alternative strategies to bring their research results to the attention of decision-makers. For instance, they may occasionally resolve the problem by

using the communication units of their supervisory ministries. This solution cannot be totally satisfactory since ministerial communications officials can only marginally accommodate researchers. Other means have been put into practice in countries such as Mali.

An oral report on the rainfall situation is provided every two weeks to the Council of Ministers during the growing season to help the Government orient food security and natural disaster management actions. The management of the locust crisis in 2004 was one illustration (Diarra 2006).

*d) Media Participation in Strengthening Alliances between Researchers, Decision-makers, Civil Society and the Private Sector*

In the democratization and globalization of information, the media plays a prominent role in disseminating research results. Indeed, the growing popularity of radio can be observed everywhere in West and Central Africa. Although the print media only reaches the educated segment of the population, putting articles online increases the penetration rate, in West and Central Africa and in the diaspora. In terms of content, the media addresses practically all subjects of interest to the majority. The tough competition arising from the sector's liberalization promotes creativity in broadcasts and more specialized and better-researched articles or programmes on issues of popular concern. Indeed, throughout the IDRC workshop series, the point was reiterated that communication is one of the chief obstacles to dialogue among various actors, which naturally led researchers, decision-makers, civil society and the private sector to urge the media play a key role in reinforcing their alliances.

In certain fields such as meteorology, researchers generally use the radio, the most widespread means of communication in the agricultural world, and increasingly use television to share research findings with beneficiaries. The written press is rarely used by researchers, except during specific events such as conferences, seminars and symposiums where the media tends to broadcast widely, especially when the events are sponsored by political authorities.

Researchers are making more effort to include the media in their strategies for promoting research results beyond mere coverage of scientific events. Instead, they see the media as partners who should understand the importance of research in the development process and should play an active role in its dissemination. Journalists, for

their part, further this rapprochement by writing special press reports or featuring the principal actors on radio or television programmes. The potential impact of such high quality special reports or broadcasts on their audience motivates journalists to develop special relationships with all actors. The active and growing participation of journalists in research seminars, workshops, symposiums and field trips should be perceived as a natural and positive trend.

However, partnership with the press should be viewed with caution and discernment and be founded on a well thought out communication strategy if actors, particularly researchers, want to avoid negative side effects. Indeed, the escalating expansion of the media has led to the hiring of underqualified personnel without degrees, who are generally trained on the job, and the emergence of new media operators who lack media background. There is a strong temptation for this media category to disseminate sensational news, big headlines or major announcements, without taking the trouble to check facts, for the sole purpose of increasing circulation or winning audience shares. In the study on corruption conducted by *Forum civil* in Senegal, the report fell into the hands of journalists before its official publication. The articles they published on the report did more harm than good, as they turned certain stakeholders against *Forum civil* and sparked reactions against the whole report before it was even published. The authors had to regain control of communication by providing the press with relevant, accurate and targeted information that eventually corrected the situation.

The approach ... initially aimed at not involving the press in the dissemination and communication strategy. *Forum civil* felt it should first engage the actors of the system in a discrete debate before disseminating the research results. Unfortunately for *Forum civil*, a section of the press got hold of the document and began using it according to its own agenda. This was a big surprise to *Forum civil*, which was not prepared for such an eventuality (Ndao 2006).

Where research is concerned, it is important for the responsible institution to take the lead in involving the media to ensure the latter disseminates accurate information. As one journalist very rightly said at a symposium he was supposed to cover: "If I don't understand, how can my readers understand?" To avoid such a situation, the Dakar workshop organisers invited journalists to participate in all the proceedings, not only to ensure good coverage, but above all to ensure their full involvement in the implementation and monitoring

of the workshop recommendations, particularly in relation to communications between researchers and decision-makers.

*e) Tentative Efforts to Set Up, Manage and Share Scientific Databases*

Database creation, management and sharing are vital aspects for improving communication between researchers and other actors, particularly decision-makers. By definition, a database provides a structured and organised body of data that enables users to access the information directly and easily. By responding to the needs of others through this facility, researchers can strengthen their ties with stakeholders and develop real win-win partnerships. Some of the workshops, i.e. in Ouagadougou on education, stressed the need to put more emphasis on archives and documentation, which are fundamental in any rich and complete database. "The issue of archives and documentation remains vital and necessitates procedures and mechanisms that promote capitalization, exploitation and dissemination of research results, notably by setting up technical units and/or creating information centres for the development of education" (Coulibaly 2005).

On the part of researchers, the creation of databases will require the implementation of rigorous methodology in collecting, analyzing and processing relevant data. This condition can only be met if research is well organised and properly resourced.

Decision-makers have a genuine need to access databases because, as pointed out in the Ouagadougou workshop on education, "effective steering of policy necessitates the availability of a system and capacity to collect, analyse and process relevant data. Based on this knowledge ... appropriate actions can be developed in terms of coaching, support and correction according to the needs and problems that arise" (Coulibaly 2005).

Unfortunately, very few research institutions have their own databases. Very often, these institutions possess information stored in their archives that is not very accessible. They therefore tend to refer to external databases generated and managed by development partners. However, some research institutes are beginning to set up databases with a view to sharing them with decision-makers, as in Mali.

### **Progress Achieved by the 'Forest Resource' Programme in Mali**

The studies and research carried out by the Forest Resource Programme of the IER have produced a number of results that are particularly helpful in the fight against desertification. The most important progress was in the following areas: (a) production of a database to improve knowledge on soil and vegetation resources in Mali, (b) establishment of a database to increase understanding of the sand encroachment process, (c) identification and production of high-performance vegetable materials, (d) improved silviculture and agroforestry techniques, (e) protection of vegetation, (f) improved techniques in forest produce drying, preservation and processing, and (g) energy-saving techniques, such as Chorkor ovens for smoking fish.

Source: Diarra, Lassine and Bretaudeau, Alhousseini, 2006, 'Acquis et potentiels de la recherche sur la sécheresse et la désertification au Mali'.

This trend will continue, as research institutes are increasingly solicited by other actors. In Senegal, for instance, the Food Technology Institute (*Institut de technologie alimentaire*, ITA) and the Horticultural Development Centre (*Centre de développement horticole*, CDH) are often called upon by the private sector to provide information about agrifood processing techniques. Proper management and sharing of scientific databases are important to facilitate access to information and ensure the utilisation of research work.



# Chapter III

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## Recommendations to Improve Dialogue between Researchers and Decision-makers

At the end of the series of meetings, the fundamental recommendation was the inclusion of researcher - decision-maker synergies in the programmes of governments, research organisations and civil society at local, national and regional levels. To achieve this objective, four major areas of action were defined:

- development of strategic alliances among the different stakeholders involved in research;
- better sharing of the outputs and benefits of research;
- adoption of legal and financial measures; and
- joint participatory definition of research priorities.

These areas were defined in the form of specific recommendations by stakeholders participating in the analysis of the current situation and future prospects. While they may seem terse, the statements represent the outcomes of dialogue that constantly referred to concrete experiences and recognized the urgent need for stronger synergy between researchers, decision-makers and civil society.

### **1. Creating and Strengthening Strategic Alliances between Researchers, Decision-makers and Civil Society**

The following five priority objectives were defined:

#### *a) Improving Governance in Research Organisations and Increasing their Openness to Decision-makers' Requests by:*

- ensuring that decision-makers, researchers, parliamentarians, and civil society sit on research organisation steering bodies. This measure would facilitate decompartmentalization of research organisations and help to better address stakeholder needs and concerns;

- encouraging research structures to use modern management tools and techniques, like the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) , in areas such as strategic management and planning, marketing, financial management and human resource management, with a view to improving governance;
- strengthening the autonomy and credibility of research organisations through diversification of research resources with assistance from stakeholders such as the private sector, which will require better response to their demands; and
- making sure that research organisations form strategic alliances around organisational projects that address the concerns of decision-makers, who will play an active role both upstream and downstream of the research process.

***b) Diversifying Research Organisations with a View to Enhancing Decision-makers' Involvement in Knowledge Creation by:***

- redefining the concept of "researchers" to include other resources or experts operating outside the traditional boundaries of research, notably decision-makers and civil society;
- diversifying sources of knowledge by forming partnerships with decision-makers to collect and analyse field data, thus making research contribute substantially to understanding and improving operational policies;
- targeting decision-maker needs by research organisations to ensure proactive attention will be paid to the short- and medium-term concerns of decision-makers including provision of fitting responses through more targeted diversification; and
- adopting a participatory approach that involves decision-makers and civil society, in order to better address their needs in research programme design.

***c) Fostering Strategic Alliances with Institutional Players such as Parliamentarians, Local Authorities and Religious Leaders***

To achieve this, it is important to:

- form strategic alliances with these institutional actors by involving them in the research process to demonstrate its impact on people;
- train and sensitize institutional actors on research issues and the importance of legislation on research, while focusing on its potential positive spin-off for people;

- provide institutional actors with research papers of interest, which should be presented in an easily understood way; and
- organise with institutional actors joint events on research findings that can improve the living conditions of the population.

***d) Promoting and Encouraging Knowledge Ownership by Community-based Organisations and Non-governmental Organisations to Boost the Effectiveness of Advocacy***

In this case, there is the importance of:

- involving community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the process of defining research programmes, collecting data in the field and validating findings;
- organizing information, education and sensitisation meetings, sessions or seminars for CBOs and NGOs to heighten understanding of research findings; and
- helping CBOs and NGOs to take ownership of research findings and to popularize research results for beneficiary populations.

***e) Promoting the Contribution of Civil Society through Knowledge Creation and its Capacity to Mobilize Resources for Research***

A variety of initiatives are needed to:

- form partnerships with civil society by conducting joint research of common interest;
- secure researcher participation in research programmes initiated by civil society;
- involve civil society researchers in research programmes, and in particular by including them in teams of professional researchers;
- form partnerships with civil society on subjects of common interest and to take advantage of its capacity to mobilize resources for financing research;
- undertake social mobilization activities with civil society with a view to raising popular awareness of the benefits of research findings; and
- involve, on the initiative of decision-makers, civil society in popularizing research results.

## 2. Enhancing Accessibility and Use of Research Outputs

To promote access to and use of research results, the following should be pursued:

### *a) Improving Tools for Using Research Findings and Presentation Formats to Make Information More Accessible to Decision-makers*

To achieve this, researchers should:

- popularize and present research findings to decision-makers in an accessible form; to achieve this, researchers could be trained in popularization techniques or work with communication specialists;
- be capable of presenting research findings in summary form, using clear, simple language that is easily understood by decision-makers and other audiences unfamiliar with academia;
- work with communicators using a variety of media—animation, newspapers, posters, radio and television broadcasts, CD-ROMs – so that local decision-makers can access research findings and transmit them appropriately to non-literate populations. Using local languages on local radio programmes is a way to reach local decision-makers and communities;
- organise regular roundtables to promote research findings with media assistance;
- systematically set up communication units in research institutes; and
- archive and document research findings in accessible databases.

### *b) Fostering and Accompanying Decentralization in Research Organisations to Bring Researchers Closer to Local Decision-makers*

Public authorities should:

- include research organisations in national decentralization policies; and
- provide decentralized research organisations with sufficient resources to conduct research that addresses community needs and disseminate their findings as needed.

***c) Increasing the Use of Information and Communication Technology for Dissemination and Ownership of Research Findings by All Stakeholders Involved in Knowledge Creation and Sharing***

To this end, it is important to:

- accelerate online posting of research findings on dynamic and interactive websites;
- develop multimedia CD-ROMs for decision-makers and people interested in research; and
- communicate using text messages to mobile phones to inform people about special events or research findings that may interest them.

***d) Enhancing Scientific Facilitation by Including Communication Professionals in Every Step of the Process***

To achieve this, it is necessary and urgent to:

- raise journalists' awareness or train them in dissemination of research messages to the general public, particularly through written articles or audiovisual broadcasts focusing on research;
- involve media specialists in every step of the research process, and especially help them improve their grasp of research topics and write articles in simple language that can be understood by most people, without distorting scientific ideas;
- form strategic partnerships with the media with a view to producing regular broadcasts on research outcomes to educate and sensitize the general public and all concerned stakeholders;
- organise television and radio programmes involving all stakeholders (researchers, decision-makers and civil society) in partnership with the media to ensure that the principal beneficiaries of each research topic are represented;
- identify goodwill ambassadors, such as stars or champions, as well as renowned researchers, who can popularise certain knowledge to the general public in convivial ways; and
- make regular use of such goodwill ambassadors to raise public awareness.

*e) Encouraging Transmission of Research Findings to Actors in Formal and Informal Education through Appropriate Training and Awareness Strategies*

This will require actions aimed at:

- promoting the creation or strengthening of networks to disseminate research findings, in which formal education (schools, universities) and informal education can both play a key role;
- empowering such networks with training in the appropriate dissemination of research findings; and
- ensuring the effectiveness of formal and informal education as vectors for the dissemination of research findings, in part by the integration of significant findings into curricula.

**3. Adopting Legislative and Budgetary Measures to Adapt Operational Procedures of Universities and Research Centres to the Demands of Decision-makers and Researchers**

This action was aimed at:

*a) Creating a National Research Fund with Contributions from Government, the Private Sector and Other Development Partners*

This institution should include a peer review committee and operate according to principles of good governance.

*b) Building Researchers' Management and Resource Mobilization Capacities with an Eye to Decision-makers' Aspirations*

This can be attained by:

- organizing training sessions for researchers to help them better target the concerns of decision-makers, especially through the use of marketing techniques;
- training research institutions in resource mobilization techniques that fit with the procedures of technical and financial partners; and
- supporting researchers in the development of financial resource management procedures to ensure greater transparency and credibility.

*c) Convincing Researchers and Decision-makers to Redefine Research Roles and Missions to Accommodate New Demand Environments and Partner Concerns*

To achieve this, they will need to:

- organise awareness seminars, workshops or days for researchers and decision-makers with a view to revisiting the missions and roles of research in current contexts; and
- strengthen researcher and decision-maker capacities to determine strategic research directions based on medium-term trends identified through in-depth analysis of the environment.

*d) Raising Private Sector Awareness of the Contribution of Research to the Growth of Businesses Engaged in Innovation and Development*

To achieve this, seminars or roundtables should be organised in partnership with private sector professional organisations.

*e) Improving Governance Mechanisms of Research Institutes to Ensure Sustainable Links with Decision-makers*

Three pathways should be followed:

- putting in place modern management tools in research institutions to increase transparency and efficiency;
- reviewing the management and administration model of research institutions and changing them if necessary to strengthen ties with decision-makers so as to better meet their expectations; and
- urging decision-makers to appoint qualified representatives to the Boards of Directors of research institutions.

*f) Putting Tools in Place to Evaluate Researchers and Research*

This will require both:

- urging research institutions to equip themselves with effective tools to evaluate researchers and research programmes; and
- sensitizing decision-makers to the importance of equipping themselves with suitable tools to evaluate researchers and research programmes.

*g) Simplifying Administrative Procedures and Harmonizing Inter-ministerial Actions*

Such simplification involves:

- defining consistent administrative and technical oversight for research institutions;

- clarifying, in cases where there is a ministry in charge of research, the powers, duties and functions of the latter in relation to the technical departments using the research;
- harmonizing the actions of various ministries by simplifying administrative procedures with research institutions; and
- taking great care to avoid any duplication of studies.

***h) Reducing Development Partners' Influence on Research Programmes***

In order to meet this goal, it is necessary and urgent to:

- reduce the dependence of research on foreign funding by providing it with sufficient resources from the national budget; and
- design national and regional research programmes tailored to specific needs, with the participation of all stakeholders, before requesting financial support from development partners.

***i) Putting Mechanisms in Place to Assess Research Costs by:***

- setting up a cost accounting system that provides a better grasp of the true cost of research, within the global costs of extension programmes; and
- urging decision-makers to assess the costs of applying research in their development programmes.

***j) Improving the Status of Researchers by Resolving Career Advancement Issues by:***

- adopting a statute regarding researchers that defines their responsibilities, ensures their recognition, helps reduce brain drain, and facilitates researcher participation in high-level programmes;
- providing sufficient resources to enable them to participate in research supported by the requisite means to ensure quality research;
- promoting evaluations that cover all researchers' work, including non-academic work, with a view to career advancement; and
- ensuring a coherent transition from research assistant status to that of researcher in the civil service.



#### **4. Defining a Concerted Action Platform for Researchers, Decision-makers and Civil Society to Formulate Research Priorities and Actions**

These concerted actions are aimed at:

##### *a) Evaluating the Experience of Different Dialogue Types with a View to Optimizing Experiences Capable of Overcoming Mistrust between Researchers and Decision-makers*

To this purpose, the following are recommended:

- establishing a typology of the existing dialogue frameworks, evaluating them and learning lessons from those that are the most effective in overcoming mistrust between researchers and decision-makers; and
- promotion of the best dialogue frameworks and making improvements in the areas of representation and efficiency.

##### *b) Creating or Reactivating Research Councils to Foster Understanding among Different Actors*

The role of research councils, which is often limited, should be strengthened by:

- reviewing the experiences of research councils, adapting them to the new research environment, and providing them with adequate means to properly fulfil their missions;
- appointing new members who are truly representative of all actors to infuse new blood into existing councils that are somewhat inactive, if not lethargic; and
- creating research councils where they do not exist, and appointing representative members, establishing meeting schedules and defining clear and measurable objectives to create strong synergy between researchers and decision-makers.

*c) Creating or Reinforcing Existing Consultation Frameworks between Researchers, Decision-makers and Civil Society to Formulate Common Research Policies*

The aim is simultaneously to:

- create consultation frameworks between researchers, decision-makers and civil society on research themes of common interest;
- provide the consultation frameworks with resources to jointly formulate research policy; and
- urge decision-makers, researchers and civil society to work in synergy within consultation frameworks, for instance, by focusing on the best collaboration formula.

*d) Promoting the Creation of Powerful Integrated Research Networks*

This important goal consists of:

- promoting the creation of national multi-sectoral research networks capable of covering broad and multidimensional research themes;
- establishing regional research networks able to mobilize multidisciplinary human resources around research projects covering several countries; and
- encouraging joint mobilization of financial resources in order to meet the challenges of financing research.

## Notes

1. It took nearly forty years of research to assess the impact of tobacco on human health, to develop and adopt an International Outline Convention in 2003, and to convince a growing number of countries to take coercive measures such as bans on advertising, smoking in public places, etc.
2. The aim of the Research And Policy In Development (RAPID) programme is to increase the use of research findings in development policies.
3. We are referring here to the concept of 'windows of opportunity', which is well known in the information and communication technology sector, in which opportunities arise in the form of a window that opens and closes. This can apply to researchers, who have a short lapse of time in which to seize opportunities to influence the decision-making process before the window closes.
4. The rates stand at respectively 474 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births and 38 neonatal deaths per 1000 live births.
5. It should be noted that the new generation of researchers increasingly tries to distance itself from this attitude by seeking greater interaction with the community.
6. How many researchers who have occupied positions of responsibility within the government have returned to their original position at the end of their term? Very few, since many researchers remain in politics or economic and industrial development. As there are little or no statistics in this area, a study of these practices is warranted to describe and understand them.
7. Siwaa is a Minianka word meaning "dry bush".
8. An illustration of this change can be found in the PDEF's 2002 economic and financial report, which shows that, while strong progress has been achieved in extending access to all levels of education, the same does not apply to quality. The studies, which were shared by technical and financial partners in education, prompted the Ministry of National Education to change the annual operational budget plan (POBA) in 2003 to increase the focus on activities aimed at improving quality.
9. Opening address by Mr. Habib Sy, Minister of Agriculture and Hydraulics of Senegal (Touré 2004).

10. African civil society has raised awareness in certain African governments and obtained their commitment not to sign the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) in the form in which they were proposed by the European Commission.
11. Research institutions hire webmasters and build their own web sites and blogs. Multilateral cooperation organisations – such as United Nations agencies, Bretton Woods institutions, OECD – and bilateral organisations publish numerous research studies on their websites. Every year, IDRC publishes a CD-ROM containing around one hundred research works that is widely disseminated among researchers, decision-makers and users of research.

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