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IDRC - Lib. 106001

Réseau de Recherche sur les Politiques Industrielles

An External Evaluation of Phases I and II

Professor Mustapha K. Nabli
NABES Consulting

CITE BELVEDERE II
Jasmins 2 - Apt. 13
1004 EL MENZAH
Tunisie

Tel (216 1) 751 275
Fax (216 1) 751 275

Jeffrey C. Fine
Jeffrey C. Fine Consulting

1828 Yale Avenue
Ottawa, Canada K1H 6S4

Tel (1 613) 526 4258
Fax (1 613) 526 0286
E-Mail: jcfine@magi.com

November 15, 1996



Principal Abbreviations used in this Report

AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
CA	Conseil d'Administration
CEDRES	Centre de Recherche Economique et Sociale
CGE's	Computable General Equilibrium Models
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIRES	Centre Ivoirien de Recherche Economique et Sociale
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CREA	Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée
CRDE	Centre de Recherche en Développement Economique
CREFA	Centre de Recherche en Economie et en Finance Appliquées
CS	Comité Scientifique
FCFA	Franc CFA (US \$ 1.00 equivalent to approximately 500 CFA)
IBRD	The World Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre of Canada
INSEA	Institut National de Statistique et Economie Appliquée
PTCI	Programme de Troisième Cycle en Economie et Gestion
RPI	Réseau de Recherche sur les Politiques Industrielles
SISERA	Secretariat for Institutional Support of Economic Research in Africa
SME's	Small and Medium Scale Enterprises
USAID	US Agency for International Development

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Established in 1989, the *Réseau de Recherches sur les Politiques Industrielles* (hereafter *the Réseau* or *the RPI*) has been charged with the dual objectives of:

- Conducting high quality research that will inform policy makers; and
- Establishing within francophone Africa a locally based capacity to conduct rigorous, policy relevant economic research on a sustainable basis.

Since its inception the *Réseau* has been supported by various donors including the IDRC, the lead agency, CIDA, USAID, and the IBRD. Its current phase, beginning in 1994, is financed by the IDRC, CIDA and USAID.

As the *Réseau* approaches the end of its current phase, it faces a crucial set of choices concerning its future. This report, comprising the results of an external evaluation, conducted between end May and early November 1996, attempts to inform these choices in two ways.

First, it assesses the activities of the *RPI* since its inception. The findings, presented in chapter 3, address the following issues:

- To what extent has the explicit link between capacity building and research been mutually supportive? Put somewhat differently, is the *Réseau's* principal thrust research or is it *formation* i.e. training?
- What have been the specific outcomes in terms of the output of policy relevant research and the establishment of a local capacity within francophone Africa to conduct such research on a sustainable basis?
- Have the resources invested in the *Réseau* been used well, in terms of their efficient management and specific outcomes as regards training and research?
- Is external support for the activity, as currently construed, likely to achieve its longer term objective of establishing a locally based capacity, within francophone Africa, able to conduct high quality, policy relevant economic research?

Following on this evaluation of the *Réseau*, within its existing organisational and programmatic parameters, chapter four considers possible directions for the future. Our strategic analysis commences by examining the task of capacity building in francophone Africa. In what ways does it differ from other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa such that a focused effort is not only desirable but necessary? Is the *RPI*, in its current orientation, likely to achieve this objective? A similar question is posed concerning the other objective of producing high quality, policy relevant research. Is the current approach sustainable? How should it be altered, both toward strengthening capacity building in francophone Africa and taking full advantage of other ongoing and proposed initiatives?

Among such ongoing initiatives we single out two in particular: the African Economic Research Consortium (*hereafter* AERC), a highly successful research network, based in Nairobi and supported by a broad spectrum of donors, with a purview extending over all Sub-Saharan Africa, and the PTCI, a collaborative graduate program in economics for francophone African universities. Under likely initiatives we highlight the proposed IDRC managed Secretariat for Institutional Support of Economic Research in Africa (*hereafter* SISERA), intended to co-ordinate donor support for the *Réseau*, PTCI, and economic research institutes. In this broader context, the report examines strategic choices and proposes a new role for *Réseau*. The implications of this recommendation, in terms of activities, linkages with these other initiatives, and transitional measures toward undertaking this new role are set out in the concluding sections of this report.

1.2 Approach

This evaluation has been undertaken by Professor Mustapha Nabli and Mr. Jeffrey C. Fine.

Professor Nabli received his doctorate in economics at UCLA and is former Head of the Economics Department of the University of Tunis. Subsequently Professor Nabli was Chairman of the Tunis Stock Exchange, and then served from 1990 to 1995 as Minister of Planning and Economic Development. Most recently, Professor Nabli served on a UN sponsored Commission of internationally renowned economists that has authored a major study on Development Strategies and the Management of the Market Economy. Professor Nabli is member of the Executive Committee of the International Economics Association and member of the Board of Trustees of the Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey.

As a member of the Economic Policy Program of the IDRC from 1979 to 1988, Jeffrey C. Fine played a leading role in establishing economic research networks in South East Asia, Latin America, and East Africa. The latter effort was transformed in 1988 into the African Economic Research Consortium, in which Mr. Fine served as its first Executive Director from 1988 to mid-1994. Currently Mr. Fine is engaged in a variety of activities involving capacity building in economics, with particular reference to Sub-Saharan Africa.

The approach adopted by the evaluators was conditioned by other assessments. The first was undertaken in 1992 at the mid-term of phase I by Dr. Anne Marie Gourgeon and Dr. Jacques Pegatienan Hiey, and the second at the end of 1994 by Dr. Abdoulaye Diagne and Mr. Djibril Ndiaye. Our own study has been complemented by three others. The first is an assessment by Mr. Réal Lavergne, on behalf of the Conseil d'Administration of the *Réseau*, comprising the donors, and charged with the determination of its policies, procedures, and executive appointments. The second, which has yet to be finalised, is an evaluation by the *Réseau's Comité Scientifique* and Secretariat. The third has been an “*auto-évaluation*” by the community of researchers themselves, undertaken by two of its more senior members, Mr. Bouabre Bohun and Mr. Mady Koanda. This latter exercise has proven especially useful to the evaluators insofar as it examines in greater depth, through a questionnaire and field visits to 6 countries, issues relating to the *Réseau's* impact or otherwise on the community of francophone economists, notably their capacity to undertake rigorous policy relevant research.

Our own evaluation commenced with attendance at the *Réseau's Assemblée*, held in early June 1996. Prior to attending this meeting, the evaluators reviewed extensive documentation provided by the IDRC, including the basic reference document for the current phase; the evaluations conducted in 1992 and of 1994; research reports and newsletters; data on projects, researchers, training and expenditures; and the draft terms of reference for the “*auto-évaluation*”. (A list of the reference documents used for this report is provided in Appendix B.)

Attendance at the meeting provided an opportunity to observe the *Réseau* in action. The authors attended sessions where researchers presented and discussed new proposals, ongoing work, and final reports, along with others devoted to technical and methodological concerns. They observed meetings convened by the researchers, the *Comité Scientifique* (CS) and the *Conseil d'Administration* (CA). There were interviews with a sample of individual researchers, comprising a cross section of countries and levels of seniority, with directors of three major research institutes, and the dean of a large university. In-depth discussions were held with invited resource persons, members of the *Réseau's* Secretariat and *Comité Scientifique*, the then Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, the institute housing the

secretariat, and program officers of the IDRC. The meeting also provided an opportunity to co-ordinate data requirements with the field survey about to be undertaken through the “*auto-évaluation*”. (A list of those interviewed during this meeting and contacted subsequently over the course of the evaluation is provided in Appendix C.)

Following the meeting, Professor Nabli carried out an in-depth study of a sample of 19 research projects supported by the *Réseau*. He also visited research institutes and donor organisations in France and Brussels to conduct a more broadly based assessment of the *RPI*'s research output and capacity building requirements in francophone Africa. Mr. Fine conducted a parallel assessment through meetings at USAID and the World Bank. He obtained additional information concerning research and training activities proposed for the AERC's fourth phase and discussed with the IDRC its proposed Secretariat for Institutional Support of Economic Research in Africa (SISERA).

The results of these various studies and inquiries were discussed by the authors and a draft report was prepared in Ottawa between October 25 and November 3 1996. During this period, the authors were also able to meet with Mr. Mady Koanda to discuss the findings of the “*auto-évaluation*”. Findings and preliminary recommendations were discussed, in person and by telephone, with members of the IDRC, Mr. Koanda, Mr. Dominique Njinkeu, the Coordinator of the *Réseau*, and Professor Bernard Decaluwé, Université Laval, Chairman of the *Comité Scientifique*. This draft report was finalised between November 3 and 14.

The authors wish to thank all those who contributed to this effort. We note in particular the support provided by Mr. Réal Lavergne of the IDRC in providing reference documents, arranging various activities during the *RPI*'s June '96 workshop, and in commenting on our findings at various stages of the study. Whilst accepting that some of those whom we consulted may take issue with specific findings and recommendations, we recognise that all share a deeply felt commitment to establishing an internationally recognised research capability in francophone Africa. Furthermore, they believe, as do the authors, that the *Réseau* can, through a well informed and carefully articulated change in its current thrust, make a major contribution toward achieving this objective.

Chapter 2 Overview of the *Réseau*

2.1 Evolution of the *Réseau*

Evolution of the *Réseau* has been extensively documented in many of the above mentioned reports. To provide the necessary context for our own findings and recommendations, we highlight some key aspects of its development and current set of activities.

The point of departure for the *Réseau*, as for the AERC, was the IDRC Macroeconomic Policy Network for Eastern and Southern Africa. The latter, initiated in 1984, was a pioneering attempt to facilitate policy relevant research by local economists *and* strengthen capacity for such research over the long term. The selected modality was small grants of short duration, i.e. one year, provided to teams of researchers, ranging from 2 to 5 in number, drawn from professionals in government as well as academia. Very quickly it was recognised that this activity had to be supported by targeted support to provide the skills, techniques, methodology and knowledge necessary for rigorous research. The principal instrument was a biannual workshop, comprising researchers and selected resource persons, who could provide a critical mass of scholarship not found in any one institutional or national setting. Other supportive activities included the provision of essential reference materials, focused workshops, and institutional attachments. Through the pressure exerted by peer review, the workshop proved highly effective in ensuring timely delivery of the agreed research output.

A crucial finding was that use of the workshop modality entailed a “trade-off” in terms of thematic coverage. In providing technical and professional guidance to relatively untried researchers, the themes for research had to be narrowly focused for such guidance and peer review to be effective in deepening their skills. Another finding was the need for supplementary support, in the form of targeted institutional grants, to ensure that the researchers could function within a facilitating environment. A third, which eventually resulted in collaborative MA programs for both anglophone and francophone Africa, was the need to address the deep rooted problems of advanced education in economics. This activity had to be complemented by selective training activities, including workshops and attachments i.e. “*stages*” to ensure that the researchers had the basic knowledge and skills to *commence* professionally acceptable research.

Establishment of the AERC in 1988 was followed by initiation of the *Réseau* in 1989. In both cases, the long term objective was the development of capacity through research. In the case of the AERC, the thematic focus was macroeconomic policy, and subsequently trade, whilst the *Réseau* adopted industrial protection as

its field for research. This choice was informed by two factors: the prior selection of macroeconomic policy by the AERC, whose purview, in contrast to the *Réseau*, extended over all Sub-Saharan Africa, c.f. anglophone Africa, and the existence of monetary unions in francophone Africa that, by precluding the exercise of *national* monetary and exchange rate policies, had dampened *local* research interest, together with the need for prior investment in the necessary knowledge and skills, among francophone African economists.

Whereas the AERC functioned from the outset as a distinct legal entity with clearly demarcated functions for its Board (comprising the financiers), its Advisory Committee (charged with setting the research agenda and assessing research projects), and Secretariat, (responsible for implementation of a programme of work and budget), management of the *Réseau* has been much more convoluted. Whilst the IDRC has functioned as the lead donor agency, there has been an effort to localise the activity in Africa through its placement in CODESRIA, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. For the first phase, responsibility for management of the *Réseau* was vested in a "*Comité Exécutif*". To ensure continuity in scientific support for research, the CRDE of the University of Montréal was designated as a "partner" or "associate" of the *Réseau*.

"Teething problems" in launching the activity were identified by the mid-term evaluation of phase I undertaken in 1992. We note those that in our view are central to understanding both subsequent development of the *Réseau* and some major underlying issues to which we return in our evaluation of the current phase and consideration of its future.

- The evaluators were critical of what they considered the overly narrow thematic focus. In their view, it excluded many qualified francophone African researchers, in particular more senior researchers who felt severely constrained by the methodological approach associated with work on protection.
- Another factor that apparently inhibited the involvement of more senior researchers were the complex procedures used to compensate - if only partially - for the "opportunity cost" of time devoted to research. Aside from comprising a perverse incentive that seemingly rewarded researchers for prolonging their project, the procedures detracted from the professional character of the network insofar as participating researchers often felt they were being treated more as "research assistants" than as fully fledged professionals.
- There were considerable criticisms of the "management" of the *Réseau*. The role of the IDRC was considered overly dominating, diminishing the stature of the

Réseau's Coordinator. A clear definition and demarcation of roles, to be formalised in a procedures manual, was recommended.

- The evaluators recommended more focused, structured and intensive scientific support. Among their recommendations was formalisation of a project cycle, very similar to that being used by the AERC, carefully articulated involvement of resource persons in each stage of the cycle and between workshop meetings, and additional scientific support for the Secretariat.

There have been attempts to respond to many of these issues since 1993.

- The thematic focus of “industrial policy” was broadened to encompass additional sub-themes, namely competitiveness and export supply; computable general equilibrium modelling; the development of small and medium scale enterprise; productivity, efficiency and innovation; and privatisation.
- The formula used to determine compensation to researchers was changed in an attempt to simplify it.
- A variety of measures were introduced to provide more timely, structured and consistent scientific support for researchers. Foremost was the adoption of a formalised project cycle, with clear criteria and procedures for the submission, approval and continuing support for research projects. The role of the *Comité Scientifique* was more clearly defined by a general mandate for “purely” scientific matters and a clearly designated role in applying quality control as well as technical advice throughout the project cycle. Another measure was reinforced support for the publication of completed research results through CODESRIA. In addition to providing a professional incentive for researchers and disseminating research results, it was aimed at attracting more senior scholars into the network.
- The need to strengthen skills was recognised through continued support for overseas attachments (“*stages*”) and technical workshops within Africa (“*ateliers*”). Phase II also made provision for a part-time Senior Technical Advisor to the Co-ordinator¹, and targeted assistance, in terms of technical advice along with reference materials and software.
- The *Comité Exécutif* was abolished and its various functions were distributed among distinct entities: a *Conseil d'Administration (CA)*, comprising the donors and responsible for the ultimate determination of policies, procedures and

¹ This particular arrangement was only implemented for a short time.

expenditure; the *Comité Scientifique (CS)*, now charged with “purely” scientific matters relating to research and training activities; a Secretariat, headed by a Co-ordinator, responsible for implementing the *Réseau’s* activities; and “partenaire” or associate institutions, notably CREFA and CODESRIA. The “implementing agency” for the *Réseau*, which does not exist as a separate legal entity, was not clearly designated: the IDRC was identified as the leading donor agency and CODESRIA as the institution housing the Secretariat and directly accountable for its expenditures. Finally, a Manual setting out all relevant procedures was to be introduced during phase II.

At this juncture, we take note of some important issues that conditioned subsequent development of the *Réseau* during phase II.

The first is the continued intention of developing capacity through research. Use of the workshop modality, reinforced by targeted technical support, clearly necessitated retention of a relatively narrow thematic focus. To some extent, this constraint was to be alleviated through the introduction of sub-themes and greater latitude in the selection of methodology.

The second, evident even at this stage, was the need to attract more senior scholars. External perception of the *Réseau* as a “preparatory activity” for untried researchers would be self-fulfilling. Failure to “deepen” the research would also dissuade high quality resource persons from a long term commitment because of the absence of intellectual interest. An added cause for concern was the apparent success of the AERC in attracting more qualified francophone researchers, either from the outset or, in a few cases, following “graduation” from the *Réseau*. The recent evaluation of the AERC states that the share of grants extended to francophone researchers appears to have reached a “steady state” of about 15% (P. 17, Thorbecke E. 1995).

The third was a growing realisation of the importance of training activities, with an implicit trade-off, in terms of support, between these and research.

A fourth was unresolved problems in managing the *Réseau*. The demarcation of functions was not resolved prior to the initiation of phase II. Furthermore, they were blurred and complicated by cross representation of each of the three “organs” on the other two.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the *specificity* of the *Réseau* was not articulated. Its selected thematic focus, industrial policy, could not be demarcated in terms of francophone Africa alone as the issues in question concerned all Sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, the task of capacity building in francophone Africa did pose unique challenges which the *RPI*, because of its geographical and linguistic focus, appeared well posed to address.

2.2 Overview of the Réseau's Activities

Completing this overview is a summary of the Réseau's research and training activities, and the financial disbursements associated with them.

The activities of the RPI can best be appreciated by looking at research projects since they are the main instrument used to attain its objectives. Proposals are submitted by individual or teams of researchers to the Secretariat of the Réseau. They are first screened by the Secretariat and then by the Scientific Committee.

Table 1 relates the total number of submissions received by the Secretariat to the number of grants awarded by the RPI. Over the 8 years of operation of RPI 128 proposals were received. After screening by the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee, 58 or 45 % were accepted by June 1996. There has been no increase in the rate of acceptance: it was 43% for the first 4 years; 46% between 1993 and 1996, and only 40% for 1995-96.

Table 1: Number and Screening of Projects

Year*	Received**	Rejected by Secretariat	Rejected following review by Comité Scientifique	Accepted
1989	20	--	17	3
1990	15	2	5	8
1991	8	1	1	6
1992	11	5	--	6
1993	28	15	2	11
1994	14	3	1	10
1995	13	4	4	4
1996***	7	2	3	2
1996****	12	--	5	7
Total	128	32	38	58

Notes:

- * Year in which proposal received as opposed to the year of the project contract
- ** Figures do not include pre-financing awards for the preparation of proposals and include only those where a decision was made concerning acceptance or rejection.
- *** Those received prior to June 1996 and where contracts were signed.
- **** Those presented in June 1996. No contracts signed as of June 1996

Of interest are the "peaks" in terms of proposals received. They correspond to the initiation of *RPI* in 1989-90 and to the opening of the thematic areas in 1993.

Table 2 summarises activities of *RPI* in terms of types of contracts (pre-financing awards for developing a proposal, pre-project grants to implement an initial phase, and grants for complete projects), number of researchers and budget allocated to these projects according to the year the contract was signed.² The pre-financing awards were introduced in 1993 involve modest disbursements to prepare a proposal.

Table 2: Projects, Researchers and Budgeted Expenditure, 1990 to 1996
(Cost in '000 FCFA)

Item	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Pre-Financing Awards:							
Number	0	0	0	5	1	3	2
Number of researchers	0	0	0	12	1	3	2
Amount budgeted	0	0	0	2685	271	718	500
Project and Pre-project Grants							
Number Awarded	9	5	4	6	15	7	5
Completed by June 1996)	(9)	(5)	(4)	(5)	(12)	(3)	(--)
Number of researchers	25	11	9	8	21	7	5
Amount budgeted	29689	17913	23658	21407	41451	20380	17496
Number of researchers/project	2.8	2.2	2.2	1.3	1.4	1.0	1.0
Budget/project	3299	3583	5915	3568	2763	2911	3499

It should be noted that the size of teams per project has declined steadily from an average of almost 3 at the beginning to about one. The budget per project has varied but without any significant trend being discerned.

Of particular interest is evidence relating to a deepening process, whereby the research activity, as a whole is enriched by the involvement of more experienced researchers engaged in a second or even third project. The relevant information

² The numbers of projects is by year of contract, whereas the figures in table 1 refer to the year in which the proposal was presented.

about inter-linkages between projects is given in Table 3. More than a third (21) out of 61 of the projects have been preceded by earlier projects. More detailed investigation also revealed that whilst there has been an apparent involvement of 86 researchers in all project grants, in effect the actual number is 58, after taking account of support of individual researchers through more than one grant or award.

Table 3: Links Between Projects

Item	Completed Projects	Continuing and New Projects	Total
First time projects:	24	6	30
<i>Pre-Project Awards</i>	7		7
<i>Project Grants</i>	17	6	23
Projects following on earlier:			
<i>Pre-financing awards</i>	3	2	5
<i>Pre-project grants</i>	5	0	5
<i>Project grants</i>	6	5	11
Sub-total	14	7	21
Total	38	13	61

Table 4 summarises the distribution of research grants according to thematic focus. The dominant theme has been industrial protection with a focus on incentives and comparative advantage in more than half the projects. The related theme of competitiveness, exports and supply response is the second most important followed by computable general equilibrium models. The other three themes are much less important.

Table 4: Distribution of Awards and Grants According to Thematic Focus

Thematic Focus	Pre-Financing Awards	Project Grants	Total Contracted	Additional Grants (June '96)
Protection, incentives, comparative advantage	4	29	33	1
Competitiveness, exports, supply response	1	10	10	3
Computable General Equilibrium Models	3	7	11	1
Productivity, efficiency, innovation	1	3	4	1
Informal sectors, SME's	-	2	2	-
Privatisation	2	-	2	1
Total	11	51	62	7

Of significance is the evolution of the thematic focus over time as indicated in Table 5. Corresponding with expansion of the thematic focus in 1993 and more prominently in phase II has been growth in research on competitiveness/export supply and general equilibrium modelling and a decline in work on protection and incentives. The other themes on productivity, efficiency and innovation, the informal sector and small-medium scale enterprise, and privatisation have led to only a limited number of projects since 1994.

Table 5: Distribution of Projects by Theme and Year of Contract

Theme	1989 to 1992	1993	1994 to 1996
Protection, incentives, comparative advantage	17	7	9
Competitiveness, exports, supply response	1	1	9
Computable general equilibrium modelling	--	2	8
Productivity, efficiency, innovation	--	--	4
Informal sector, small and medium scale enterprise	--	1	1
Privatisation	--	--	2
Total	18	11	33

Bearing in mind that a total of 58 researchers have been involved in the *Réseau*, we have set out their distribution by country. Of note is the preponderance of researchers from Cameroon and Benin and the absence of certain francophone countries, notably Zaire, Gabon and Guinée. The low number from Sénégal and Côte d'Ivoire cannot be attributed to the absence of research capacity in these countries relative to others represented in the *Réseau*.

Table 6: Researcher Distribution by Country

Country	Researchers
Benin	11
Burkina Faso	6
Cameroon	12
Congo	7
Côte d'Ivoire	7
Mali	2
Niger	4
Sénégal	5
Sierra Leone*	1
Togo	3
Total	58

* A French speaking Sierra Leonian

Besides the activities centring directly on research projects, the *RPI* has implemented a significant program of direct training. These activities have included the following:

- *Workshops*: *RPI* organised six workshops during Phase I (1990, 1991, 1992, 1993) on the methodology to analyse protection and incentives and two workshops on econometric techniques that were held in 1994 and September 1996. The workshops have lasted from 5 to 10 days. *RPI* researchers were also able to participate in workshops on Computable General Equilibrium Modelling (Ecole et Clinique PARADI) organised by GREPE/CREFA in 1992-93 (6), 1994 (5) and 1995 (2).
- *Short lectures* lasting one session or an entire day have been provided during workshops or *Assemblées*.
- *Bourses and Stages*: These were offered for periods ranging from 4 months to two years at overseas research centres and universities. Six took place during phase I and three during phase II

- Language training: 13 six-week “stages” to acquire English language skills were financed during phase I.

To provide a complete overview of *RPI*, we provide in Table 7 a breakdown of the *RPI*'s actual expenditures over the entire period of its existence. It should be stressed that the figures in Table 7 do not correspond to the *total* expenditures *disbursed* by donors. Rather, they include only those actually spent by *RPI*. Other costs include services incurred by IDRC in managing the project and the 10% levy by IDRC on the contribution of other donors for the same purpose.

Because phase II has not been completed, columns 3 and 5 express expenditures as *ratios of total direct outlays on research and training*, in order to facilitate comparisons with the preceding phase. A total of over 4 million Canadian dollars was actually spent on *RPI* activities between 1989 and June 1996. We note that in *relative* terms, the importance of non-direct outlays, i.e. expenditures not directed toward individual participants, has increased during phase II. During phase I about 1/3 of expenditure was used directly for research and training, whilst during phase II the ratio fell to 1/5. Indirect expenditures include external scientific support, the cost of the annual meetings and general administration. The significance of this trend will be discussed in the following chapter.

Table 7: Actual Expenditures, Phases I and II

(Amounts are in Canadian dollars)

Activity	Phase I* Amount	Phase I Ratio‡	Phase II** Amount	Phase II Ratio
Direct Expenditure on:				
Research	386619	54.3	231523	60.2
Training	325279	45.7	153148	39.8
Subtotal	711898	100.0	384671	100.0
Other Expenditure:				
External Scientific Support	363570	51.0	291272	75.7
Annual Meetings	551306	77.4	505164	131.3
General Administration	532229	74.8	634067	164.8
Total Direct and Other Expenditure	2159003	303.3	1815174	471.9

Notes:

* March 1989 to December 1993

** January 1994 to June 1996

‡ Expenditure as ratio of total direct outlays on research and training

3. Evaluation of Phases I and II

3.1 Introduction

This part of our evaluation examines the *RPI*'s performance in terms of achieving its *stated* objectives for phases I and II. In undertaking this task, we have taken account of two particular features of the *RPI*.

The first is the importance of training and capacity building relative to research. Since the reference documents, setting out the objectives of both phases, are not precise as to the priority assigned to each, we have had to choose between two approaches. The first is to assume that what has emerged, in terms of activities, reflects the revealed preferences of the researchers and scientific support personnel. This being so, we can then simply assess each component separately and not worry about whether the balance between them is appropriate. This is the perspective adopted in this chapter. The other is to examine each component from the broader perspective of the requirements for economic research and researchers in the region. Whilst more difficult, this approach is more appropriate for two reasons. First, it corresponds to the motives behind external support for the *RPI*. Secondly, as will become evident in the course of our analysis, it addresses the fundamental question of whether the current approach can and should be sustained. We adopt this second perspective in the next chapter.

The second is that the *RPI*'s activities have been implemented in two distinct stages. The first, coinciding roughly with phase I (1989-93) emphasised training and the acquisition of techniques through a narrow thematic concentration on protection, incentives and comparative advantage. The second stage has attempted to expand the scope of the *RPI*, both with respect to techniques and thematic coverage. This phasing will be referred to in our evaluation.

3.2 Research Activities of the *RPI*

The reference documents for both phases set out an ambitious list of objectives. For phase I, the dual aims of capacity building and research appear to be given equal emphasis. For phase II, however, capacity building is underscored as the principal aim of the *RPI*. In neither case are specific outcomes associated with any of the stated objectives. Hence, in assessing the *RPI*'s research related activities, we have focused on outcomes with respect to the volume of commissioned work, thematic focus, quality and impact.

3.2.1 Volume and Thematic Concentration

The data in Table 3 indicate that 38 projects were completed as of June 1996. Excluding seven pre-projects grants and three projects terminated prior to completion, there are 28 projects yielding final research reports over a period of seven years, i.e. an average of four reports annually. Most of the completed research falls within the theme of protection, incentives and comparative advantage (19), whilst the others are distributed among three others, namely competitiveness (3), CGE's (4) and productivity and efficiency (2).

Research in phase I concentrated on protection, incentives and comparative advantage, an admittedly narrow focus as compared to that envisaged in the reference documents and stated as the objectives of the program. Topics for research were to encompass various issues relating to industrialisation and industrial policy, including small scale enterprise, the role of the state, and the linkages between agriculture and industry. Furthermore, the analytical methods actually used for research were confined to calculating incentives indicators by techniques developed and widely used since the 1960's and early 1970's.

In our view the limited focus characterising this phase was necessary because of the program's principal modality which involved both project grants and research workshops. These could only be applied at a reasonable cost, in terms of financial outlays and use of resource persons, by focusing on a very narrow set of topics and techniques.

This approach did entail serious costs. First, many participants appeared frustrated by the strong and directed training element - a feeling of "returning to school". Indeed, many quit because of the quantitative orientation and limited scope. Secondly, the theme entailed a major investment in data collection. Typically the required data were not readily available. Hence a major effort had to be devoted to data collection, as opposed to analysis and discussion of the results. This factor certainly affected both output and quality. Thirdly, the limited scope of the topics and the technical approach, considered in some professional quarters to be outmoded in terms of research, constrained the *RPI* from attracting a larger number of high quality resource persons.

Since 1993 the *RPI* has expanded thematic coverage. The reference document for phase II explicitly sets out a number of new themes: productivity and competitiveness, effects of exchange rates, economic integration, industry and growth. As can be seen from Table 4, this opening has occurred but only to a limited extent. One new area, competitiveness, is closely related to the original theme. Many of the projects in the group using computable general equilibrium

models continue to focus on trade policy, protection and comparative advantage. Only recently have issues such as privatisation or technical efficiency emerged.

Has the effective opening of *RPI* to new themes been limited by insufficient capacity to supervise the new research activities by the CS, resource persons and Secretariat ? To answer this question we took a sample of 10 proposals which were not accepted and checked whether any might have constituted interesting projects but had been rejected because they did not fall within the designated thematic focus. The sample covered proposals received from 1989 to 1995. Our inquiry revealed that none could have been accepted with any reasonable likelihood of success. Hence, thematic focus *per se* does not appear to have a significant factor in the rejection of project proposals.

Since the volume of research produced thus far is modest and concentrated essentially in the field of protection, incentives and comparative advantage, an appreciation of its quality is especially important in assessing the *RPI*'s research

3.2.2 Quality

To evaluate quality, a sample of 19 projects out of 51 (37%) was selected for in-depth evaluation. The sampling procedure was as follows: the 51 projects (excluding pre-financing ones) were ordered by chronological order according to the year the contract was signed. Samples were selected at random (every 2 to 3 projects), with slight adjustments to ensure adequate country representation. Summary information on the sample, by theme and stage of completion, is provided in Table 8. The sample was divided into two groups. The first, comprising ten projects, falls within the field of protection, incentives and comparative advantage and corresponds, in terms of weighting, to the thematic distribution of projects within the overall program (33 of 62 projects, including pre-financing awards). The remaining nine, making up the second group, covers the other themes.

Table 8: Sample Characteristics

Thematic Focus	Completed Projects	Ongoing Projects	Total Projects
Protection, incentives, comparative advantage	10	--	10
Competitiveness, exports, supply response	1	2	3
Computable general equilibrium models	2	2	4
Productivity, efficiency, innovation	1	1	2
Informal sector, SME's	--	--	--
Privatisation	--	--	--
Total	14	5	19

First Sample Group

Nine of the 10 projects were initiated between 1989 and 1993 (9 out of 10); all were completed by June 1996. They comprise:

- 2 pre-projects
- 3 first time research projects
- 3 projects that were preceded by pre-projects; and
- 2 projects that comprise follow-up research to earlier ones.

Hence the projects ought not be analysed on their own, but in most cases as part of a continuous process, even though the composition of the research team may have varied.

A detailed study of the relevant documentation, from first presentation of the proposal until the final report, including all the intermediate stages involving revision of the proposal, intermediate reports, and preliminary final reports, was undertaken in order to evaluate performance in terms of the following criteria:

- degree to which the objectives of the research were achieved
- extent to which the researchers' abilities improved
- quality of the research by the end of this process
- the difficulty or ease encountered in executing the research, including its duration

An overall appreciation was then made on the basis of these criteria.

A striking observation is the average length of the projects as can be seen from the data in Table 9. Average length from the first proposal until the final report was 35.7 months or about 3 years. From the date of contract to the final report it was 26.4 months or 2.2 years. When allowance is made for the fact that many projects are preliminary or follow on others, the length of the period taken to complete research is even more striking. For projects that did not follow on others, average duration was 3.5 years, and from contract to final report was 2.5 years. In effect, projects in the first phase of program were similar to doctoral dissertations in terms of supervision, staging, intensity, focus and duration.

Table 9: Sample Group I: Duration of Research (months)

Sample No.	Pre-Project	Proposal to Contract	Contract to Final Report: Actual	Contract to Final Report: Estimated	Proposal to Final Report	Comments
#1		12	25	18	37	
#4		10	16	4	26	terminated
#7		6	24	10	30	pre-project
#11		10	53	15	63	
#13		5	43	19	48	pre-project; not continued
#16	22	19	33	24	52	
#18	18	6	27	15	33	
#20		3	11	12	14	follows on #12
#24	26	15	13	5	28	
#31		7	19	10	26	follows on #11

From our sample, two projects are clear failures: one was terminated before completion and the other, a preliminary grant, proved unsatisfactory and the work was not continued. The remaining eight divide into two sub-groups of four each.

The projects in the first sub-group of four can be considered successful in terms of the quality of the research, by achieving the agreed research objectives and improving the capacity of the researchers themselves. However, we notice that 3 out of the 4 projects were preceded by preliminary projects. If the duration of the latter is taken into consideration, the complete process leading to these results runs to six and seven years, or even more. The final reports of these projects may be the basis for a publication of reasonable quality in a regional or national journal. They are unlikely to be published in an international journal since the research lacks originality insofar as it essentially involves the measurement of incentive indicators of trade policy and comparative advantage in various countries. Some do demonstrate a tangible improvement in the capacity of the researcher(s) over time, from a first proposal lacking the basic ingredients of analytical and quantitative

economic research to a final report of reasonable quality. Nonetheless, all the final reports are clearly weak in terms of analysing the policy implications of the research and interpreting the empirical results.

The projects belonging to the second sub-group of four are clearly of lower quality and performance. The research was mostly a standard application of the techniques presented within the *Réseau*, and does not show the desired improvement in the capacity of the researchers to do quality work. In fact 2 of the 4 are preliminary or first phase projects, and the other 2 were preceded by preliminary ones. This sub-group clearly suggests that significant problems are being encountered in improving the capacity of the researchers and implementing the projects. None of these projects would give rise to papers of sufficient quality for publication in a refereed journal.

Second Sample Group

The nine projects in this sub-sample include four completed ones, and five that are still in progress, even though preliminary final reports are available for three of them. In one case, the research was preceded by a preliminary project and in two others a preceding *RPI* supported project had been completed.

Table 10: Sample Group II, Duration of Research (months)

Sample No.	Pre-Project	Proposal to Contract	Contract to Final Report: Actual	Contract to Final Report: Estimated	Proposal to Final Report	Comments
<i>Completed</i>						
#26	23	5	22	12	27	pre-financing
#29		14	18	8	32	
#34		5	21	12	26	
#39		5	15	12	20	
<i>Continuing</i>						
#22		16	48*	24	64	follows #1
#43		11	8*	10	19	
#44		10	8*	10	18	
#46		17		12		
#48		4		12		follows #34

* Draft final report not yet accepted by the CS.

The average duration of a project completed or almost completed and not following other projects was 23 months in total and 14 months for the period since signing of the contract. These figures point to a significant shortening in the length of projects compared with the first group and period. Eight of the projects had contracts signed after 1993, i.e. after the *RPI* widened the scope of the research themes. They cover three broad areas: competitiveness, exports and supply (3 projects), computable general equilibrium models (4 projects), and productivity analysis, efficiency and innovation (2 projects). All of the projects are clear departures from the first group/first phase of the *Réseau* which concentrated on trade protection and incentives indicators.

Scientific evaluation of these projects shows that two have been failures and did not achieve any reasonable objectives (one of them after 64 months). Two others can also be considered failures, even though the outcomes were accepted as satisfactory by the *Réseau*. The quality of the research and the content of the final reports are very disappointing. Of the remaining five, three have been completed. One of these can be considered of good quality whilst the other two are greatly inferior although the researchers themselves have achieved considerable progress given their background.

As was noted for the first group/first phase of *RPI*, a significant part of the research activity is more akin to training at the doctoral or post-doctoral levels. This applies to the second phase, but probably to a lesser degree. The length of time taken to complete projects; the type of relationship between the researchers and the scientific support mechanisms (namely, the resource persons and the scientific committee); as well as the outcome of the projects clearly suggest that a lot of effort has been spent helping participants acquire research skills. The research content was dominated by the technical aspects. There was emphasis on application of techniques and often lack of appreciation of the relative merit, relevance and implication of the technical work.

Finally, from our overall sample of 19 projects, we note that 17 have been or are almost completed. Of these, five can be considered failures; six are of acceptable quality; and 6 of reasonably good quality.

3.2.3 Dissemination and impact

Publications

Five of the final reports have been published as internal Working Papers of the *Réseau* since May 1995. They have not been distributed outside the network to any significant degree. One of the research results has been published in an international quality journal. Several have appeared in journals issued by domestic institutions. Whilst this outcome may be attributed to the absence of effort on the

RPI to disseminate the research results, a more fundamental reason would seem to be that the quality of the research itself does not warrant acceptance in international refereed journals.

External knowledge and perceptions of RPI

The *RPI* seems to be well known within higher education institutions in francophone Africa.³ However, in interviews we had with people working on Africa, whether aid organisations, research institutions or individual researchers, we found practically no knowledge of the *RPI*'s existence or its output. For example, two experts working in Africa, who had been posted until very recently in Dakar, had never heard of *RPI* even though they were involved in development issues, and one in particular with industrial policy. The only persons we met who knew something about *RPI* were those directly involved with the project such as resource persons or those directly linked to them. Some people who knew about the project confused it with AERC or a francophone arm of it! In summary, our informants knew a great deal about other economic research initiatives, the AERC in particular, and very little about the *RPI*.

Few activities were undertaken to widely disseminate information about *RPI*. The newsletter "Réseau Info" was launched only in 1995 (first issue in April 1995) and still has limited distribution (400 copies only).

Policy relevance

The main research theme covered by *RPI*, as well as the newer themes developed since the second phase are highly relevant to Sub-Saharan Africa. However, two factors have prevented the immediate application of the research output to public policy. First, the very strong focus on training in research methods has channelled most efforts toward improving the quality of the technical work. Secondly, researchers often have failed to go beyond describing their empirical results into analysing their policy implications for policy. This behaviour reflects limited success in promoting the ability of researchers to tackle economic policy issues in a clear and determined way.

Although we do recognise that the research itself may not have had a direct impact on policy, the latter may have been influenced in less direct ways through the researchers themselves. From a sample of 14 researchers, the *auto evaluation* reports that seven participants believed that their research facilitated access to consulting assignments. Undoubtedly some of these related to public policy concerns that could be analysed using knowledge and research skills acquired through the *RPI*.

³ This is indicated by the data obtained by the "Auto-evaluation".

3.3 Training and capacity building

The *RPI*'s basic documents for phase I and more emphatically for phase II highlight the aim of building research capacity. Many specific objectives are indicated, but none have been made precise in terms of desired outcomes.

In any event, strong interest in training activities proved a necessary complement, if not absolute requirement, for the success of the research activities. The *RPI* has performed quite well in supplying this training and adapting to the needs of the researchers. Accordingly, the instruments for training have evolved and become more diversified. This activity has been highly appreciated by the researchers and is strongly demanded by them. The auto evaluation cites that three quarters of the researchers interviewed perceive the *RPI* essentially as a capacity building initiative whilst only 7% see it primarily as a vehicle for research.

Technical workshops

The technical workshops (including those of Ecole and Clinique PARADI on CGE's) were a major tool during the first few years and have proven effective imparting the basic skills necessary for research within the designated thematic focus. However they were probably too exclusively technical and were conducted by junior resource persons. As a result, there was a tendency to develop research proposals that consisted essentially of "applications" of techniques and "recipes" learned, e.g. use of "*fiches techniques*" and a lack of emphasis on relevant economic issues and the economic analysis most suitable for addressing them.

Stages and Bourses

There was no clear policy for this category of training, and it developed in a pragmatic fashion based on individual needs and pressure from researchers. It involved a relatively limited number (9) of participants until June 1996. Typically the *stage* was for a period of 4 to 6 months at a university and was aimed at giving the participant an opportunity to upgrade his training in basic economics courses.⁴ They were not centred on research. Nonetheless they were generally very effective in improving the participants' skills and immersing them in an academic environment conducive to research. The *stages* have had a perceptibly positive impact in motivating the participants.

⁴ Stages for a longer duration of up to 2 years were for very junior participants who pursued a masters degree..

3.4 The Participants

The types of participant in the *RPI* can be identified from the following data obtained from the 28 researchers included in our sample of 19 projects. Their CV's provide information about their formal education and professional status at the time they submitted their first proposal.

The distribution of researchers according to the highest degree they had at that time is as follows:

- Doctoral degree (*de 3e cycle, nouvelle thèse*) obtained from francophone institutions: 13
- Ph.D. from an American university: 3
- Less than doctoral degree (*MA, DEA, DES, Engineer, Maîtrise*): 7
- Indeterminate: 5

These figures indicate that more than half the participants had a doctoral degree and were at an early stage of their professional careers. Some of the participants were also preparing for their doctoral degree.

In terms of professional activity we have the following distribution:

- Researchers-teachers: 17
- Statisticians: 3
- Civil servants: 4
- Student: 1
- Consultant: 1
- Indeterminate: 2.

The principal category is researchers-teachers in universities and higher education institutions. However, there is a significant group (25%) from statistical institutions and the civil service.

Among the researchers-teachers the majority are junior as seen by the degree levels. This is confirmed by data from the "*auto-évaluation*" which shows that out of 30 in its sample, 23 are *Assistant* and *Maître Assistant*. The respondents also revealed that as a group they had not published any quality research: 30 % had never published and 33% published only one paper in a local journal.

These data suggest that the *RPI* has succeeded in stimulating a number of researchers by giving them, in the words of one respondent, "the taste and

acceptance of the culture of rigorous and quantitative research". From our sample of projects, we estimate that 16 out of the 28 researchers (or 57%) successfully completed their projects and can be considered to have improved significantly their capacity. If we apply this ratio to the entire population of researchers (i.e. 58) we get an estimate of about 30-35 researchers who would have acquired adequate research capacity through the *RPI*'s support mechanisms. This is a significant group of quality researchers who have been involved in an active network over many years. In addition, the *RPI* introduced and even helped develop a significant capacity in the use of many techniques of analysis such as indicators of incentives, computable general equilibrium modelling, and the analysis of competitiveness.

The *RPI* helped alleviate many material problems, bearing on income and working conditions, confronting researchers in the region who had latent capacity. Of particular significance has been its role in advancing professional careers. Data from a sample of 14 researchers who were interviewed in depth in the course of the "*auto-evaluation*" reveal that:

- Nine have been promoted as a direct consequence of research undertaken through the *RPI*
- Four have completed masters' or doctoral theses with research supported by the *RPI*
- Many who had not previously published a single paper now had up to five to their credit.

The *RPI* has attracted essentially junior researchers who have recently completed a doctoral degree or are very close to doing so. On the other hand, it has not succeeded in attracting senior francophone researchers. Many reasons were cited to us. It should be noted that they are not necessarily consistent, since they reflect a variety of views.

- the limited thematic coverage of the *RPI*
- lack of intellectual challenge
- reluctance to be subjected to "peer review" by relative junior colleague
- existence of alternative sources of financing
- inadequate incentives in terms of honoraria and opportunities for publication.

These views underscore what appears to us a widely held perception that the *RPI* is essentially a training and capacity building program.

An attractive feature of *RPI* during its first phase was the promotion of team research with members drawn from university and government as well as different degrees of seniority. For 1990-1992 the average number of researchers per project was 2.5. In many cases the teams included researchers from different backgrounds and institutions. However this feature has practically disappeared in the more recent

years. The average number of researchers per project was 1.4 during 1993-94 and 1.0 during 1995-96. Collective work has disappeared and individual projects are the rule. Whilst the basic reasons for this trend are not fully clear to us, three appear important. First, many collaborative projects did not succeed because of internal friction. Secondly, by 1995-96 many projects were being undertaken by researchers who had already completed one project and felt they could work on their own. Thirdly, possibly for reasons of cost, the CS decided to limit the number of researchers per project to a maximum of two.

3.5 Scientific Support

Scientific support for training and research was provided through three mechanisms. The first was a formally designated institution, initially CRDE-GREPE and then CREFA. All parties acknowledge that this task was implemented with great success and proved highly effective. The second was general meetings (*Assemblées Generales* and *Comité Scientifique*) where project reports were presented, discussed and evaluated. The third was resource persons who since 1995 were recruited to advise researchers in a more continuous fashion between meetings and workshops and to help evaluate their work. They have been involved in the general meetings and are then expected to keep in touch with grantees over the project cycle.

Two other mechanisms, centred on the Secretariat, have proven less successful. First, at the onset of the *RPI*, the Coordinator was expected to play an active role in the scientific support of projects. However, due to administrative tasks, he was not able to fulfil this function to any significant degree. Part-time support for him, in the person of a Senior Scientific Advisor, although provided for in phase II, was not continued.

The *RPI* did not attempt to evaluate its research externally except through resource persons who subsequently became part of the network. During the research, or even more importantly, at the stage of determining the publication of Working Papers, no external evaluation takes place.

Until 1995, scientific support suffered from problems that, according to researchers, reduced the program's effectiveness. There were long delays, of at least six months, in reviewing proposals since this task depended upon meetings of the *Comité Scientifique* and the *Assemblée* which tended to be held annually. One consequence, as revealed by our own sample data, was a very long time span from the first presentation of a proposal to completion of the research. Furthermore, the *Comité Scientifique* often did not function properly because of unresolved problems over incentives (for time spent in supporting the researchers) as well as

issues of management (which are discussed below). As a result, the level of participation by the CS members was low, thereby reducing the *RPI*'s capacity to support and evaluate research.

Since 1995 measures aimed at using resource persons more effectively along with systematic biannual meetings of the CS and *Assemblée* have led to a significant improvement in the quality and timing of support. The duration of projects has dropped. Nonetheless, there remain some unresolved problems. Researchers complain of inadequate support in fields where *RPI* is not strong. For example, with regard to econometrics, some researchers have been upset about the poor quality of support. They also point to continuing weaknesses in the evaluation process. In particular, a turnover in resource persons can lead to very uneven and sometimes unfair appraisals of their work.

3.6 The *RPI* and Research Institutions

Circumstance vary considerably as regards the existence and role of research institutions. In some countries (e.g. Cameroon), such institutions are non-existent and researchers or teams work independently. In others, well structured research institutions exist and are generally part of the universities (CREA in Sénégal, CEDRES in Burkina-Faso, CIRES in Côte d'Ivoire). In Benin an independent research group, drawn partly from the university and partly from INSEA has proven very active within the *RPI* with a core group of six to seven researchers.

The basic approach of *RPI*, like the AERC, is to link directly to researchers as individuals or teams. The *RPI* has not been designed to directly enhance the capacity of research institutions. Although grant contracts have had to be countersigned by the responsible authority of the researchers' institutions, their involvement has varied. In some cases, the institutions have taken a very active role. In most others, it has been perfunctory. Nonetheless, these institutions have been affected in the following ways:

- a spillover effect on other researchers, through a "demonstration effect", competition or collaboration in other research
- adoption of a more rigorous procedure for appraising research proposals, e.g. in CIRES
- publication of research results in an institution's journal, e.g. CEDRES
- inclusion of research results in teaching courses. At least nine of those interviewed in the course of the *auto évaluation* stated that their involvement in *RPI* research has had a positive effect on their teaching

This positive impact on individual researchers does not, however, always translate into an improvement in institutional capacity, especially when institutions lose their more senior and experienced professionals. For example CIREs has lost 12 researchers since 1991, mostly to international organisations. Where researchers remain disconnected from their institution, none of the above mentioned spillover effects tend to occur.

3.7 Geographical Coverage

Assessment of the *RPI*'s geographical coverage is guided by two considerations. The first is that many francophone countries have not been involved. These include Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, République d'Afrique Centrale, Tchad, Mauritanie, Guinée, and the Malagasy Republic. The issue is whether this is due to inadequate promotion of the project in these countries or to a lack of response. In some cases, earlier visits, for example to the République d'Afrique Centrale and to Guinée, were not followed up. On the other hand, many of these countries may lack individuals sufficiently well qualified to undertake research within the *RPI*, even with its targeted support for skill development. Since many countries could not be visited, often because of serious civil disorder or war, it is difficult to ascertain whether a more intensive effort might have led to research proposals and the involvement of researchers from them.

The second consideration is whether those countries most involved (such as Cameroon or Côte d'Ivoire) are the ones that most require the *RPI*. Perhaps the *RPI*'s resources should have been directed to those where the potential exists but lack other sources of support for developing research capacity in economics.

Although we could not obtain more precise information from the interviews with researchers and directors of research institutions, we believe that there is a gap between the potential number who could benefit from the *RPI* and the actual number of participants. The relative prominence of Camerounian and Ivorien researchers corresponds to a considerable potential.⁵ A similar observation holds true for Burkina-Faso and Benin.⁶ On the other hand, the *RPI* appears to have attracted a considerable share of capable researchers from Mali and Niger. Even so, we believe that certain countries, with potential researchers, such as Togo or Congo, may be underrepresented within the *RPI*.

⁵ The following numbers were gathered but are only approximations: Côte d'Ivoire: 80 researchers at University and 10 at ENSEA, and 30 active researchers at CIREs; Cameroun: 70 to 100 researchers at University.

⁶ The following data were obtained: Burkina-Faso: 20 researchers in CEDRES, Benin: limited number of economists at the INSEA and INE.

3.8 Management of the *RPI*

Success of a network depends on its efficient management. This observation is especially pertinent to the *RPI* since the disbursement of small grants requires carefully designed selection and monitoring procedures. These are supplemented by meetings, resource persons, training courses, and the provision of reference materials, all of which are administratively taxing. Furthermore, they must be managed across a far flung region, with expensive and tenuous communications and transport linkages.

Sound management requires unambiguous lines of responsibility and accountability. Functions must be clearly delineated, with decision making authority assigned to its appropriate level of responsibility. Similarly accountability for outcomes must be transparent. Structures, procedures and processes should be well defined and set out in an operations manual.

In terms of these standards, the *RPI*'s management has been flawed, in ways that seriously detract from its cost effectiveness. Furthermore, although many of the problems noted below were recognised at an early stage, corrective actions have either not been taken or adopted in a piecemeal fashion.

As noted in our introductory chapter, changes introduced in response to criticisms contained in the evaluation of phase I resulted in the following arrangement - on paper:

- A *Conseil d'Administration* (responsible for approving the *RPI*'s budget, program of work, and procedures. Comprising donor representatives and meeting once annually, the CA has in effect been run by its President, the Program Officer of the IDRC, which has been responsible for monitoring the activity on their behalf.
- A *Comité Scientifique* responsible for "purely scientific matters", covering research and training. In practice, the grant approval process has led to the CS's involvement in financial and administrative matters.
- A Secretariat responsible to both the CA and CS for managing the *RPI*.

Seemingly clean on paper, this arrangement in practice has been characterised by overlapping responsibilities and gaps in accountability for major managerial functions.

- Since the *RPI* only exists, in legal terms, as a project of CODESRIA, the latter is legally responsible, as the official grant recipient, for administering the *RPI*'s

funds. Should it fail to satisfy the IDRC's auditing requirements, not only with respect to the *RPI* but *other* IDRC projects, all IDRC disbursements can be frozen, causing very serious disruption to the *RPI*. In fact, this did occur on one occasion.

- Although formally employed by CODESRIA, the Coordinator's terms and conditions are negotiated by the CA. In discharging his responsibilities, he must refer continually to the CS, the CA and the IDRC. In practice the latter has continued to act as the effective implementing agency of the *RPI*. To compensate for this task, the IDRC levies 10% on funds contributed by other donors to the *RPI*.
- Nonetheless, CODESRIA remains responsible for supplying key administrative services, including office space, support staff, logistical support (for meetings), communications, and publications (of research results). For these services, CODESRIA levies a further 13% charge on the *RPI* funds received from the IDRC. The level of service has been poor. Efficiency of the Secretariat has continued to suffer from the lack of office space, uncertain access to telephones, faxes and photocopiers, and poor administrative, travel and financial support services.
- On the other hand, recurring problems in cash flows have forced CODESRIA, not a well endowed institution, to pre-finance the *RPI* on several occasions along with the IDRC. Without such pre-financing, the *RPI*'s ongoing training and research activities would have ground to a halt.
- With the aim of facilitating communication, there is overlapping membership - through the provision of "observers" - between the CS and CA. To these are added two other bodies. The first is a "Representative of the Researchers" whose mandate and functions are not mentioned in the reference documents or draft procedures manual. The second is representatives of the two "*partenaire*" institutions whose roles are very dissimilar, namely CODESRIA and CREFA, the latter being responsible for scientific support.
- To underscore "partnership" in research, the researchers convene their own meeting during the *Assemblée Générale*. The one we attended had "syndicalist" overtones, of junior staff demanding better working conditions from "management". The meeting was chaired by the Researchers' Representative "elected" for a two year term. Precisely *who* are qualified to act as electors and whether the Representative's status is contingent upon involvement as an active grantee, was never ascertained. Long-standing frustrations on many items, including the "*primes de recherche*", provision of computers and printers, external review procedures, and per diems were evident because of the absence of clear guidelines and a continued postponement of promised actions. Because

the Representative was encouraged to present these views to the CA and CS, the status of the Coordinator, formally charged with addressing such needs, was being undermined.

The consequences of this untidy arrangement have been far-reaching. To underscore the necessity of fundamental restructuring, we list our major findings under six headings.

(1) *High Costs and Poor Service*

As the responsible donor, the IDRC deducts 10% from the contributions of the other donors to help offset the time devoted by its support and program staff to the *RPI*. Subsequently, a further 13% is deducted by CODESRIA to pay for administrative support services.⁷ The latter, we stress, does not include expenditure for the Coordinator's salary and travel, nor for publications. Nevertheless, as we noted earlier, the Secretariat lacks the facilities, equipment and support services necessary to run an administratively taxing program in an efficient fashion.

(2) *Wasted Effort*

A considerable amount of time is wasted in protracted and unresolved discussion of long standing issues, such as methods of determination of "*primes de recherche*" or the provision of grant funds for computers. Such issues were typically raised successively in three different fora, namely the researchers' meeting, the CS and the CA. Since the CA meeting, with the exception of the other two donor representatives, involved the same people, the result was continuing frustration and a waste of time that could have been used far more productively.

(3) *Neglected Priorities*

In spite of this investment of time and effort, the *RPI* still lacks certain items essential for sound management. One is a formal program of work and budget. A second is regular and accurate system for financial reporting. A third is an approved manual of procedures. As a result, the Secretariat often lacks the mandate and information necessary for implementing the *RPI*'s activities properly.

⁷ The levy by CODESRIA was lower during Phase I. It was raised for phase II and may partly explain the large increase in general administration expenditures observed in Table 7.

(4) *Unnecessary Disruptions*

The *RPI*'s activities have been abruptly halted because of cash flow problems. As noted earlier, on one occasion the problem stemmed from an IDRC audit of CODESRIA's accounts. On another, a shortage of cash occurred because of the IDRC's requirement for quarterly financial reports and projections, a demand which CODESRIA's administration was not able to satisfy. The cost of such disruptions, in terms of morale and researchers' frustration was probably considerable. We also suspect that the Secretariat was forced to postpone contracts and delay payments, thereby needlessly prolonging the duration of projects.

(5) *Questionable Practices*

Participation of the Researchers' Representative in meetings of the CA and CS has probably inhibited frank and open discussion. More importantly it has created a conflict of interest since the individual in question is representing researchers whose grants are being determined by the CS. This observation should in no way be interpreted as critical of the Representative, a gifted and committed researcher who conducted himself in a highly discreet and very professional fashion. Rather it underscores the problems stemming from an unnecessarily convoluted, yet highly inefficient arrangement for running the *RPI*.

(6) *Local Capacity for Management*

Ideally the *RPI*'s commitment to capacity building should include management of the activity itself. However, after seven years CODESRIA is in no better position to manage the *RPI* than at the outset. Not surprisingly, the Secretariat has also failed to develop the necessary stature and confidence needed to discharge its functions in a more independent fashion.

Our overall conclusion is that management of the *RPI* , regardless of its future orientation, must be overhauled to ensure:

- a clear delineation of lines of responsibility and accountability
- a comprehensive and consistent assignment of functions and decision making authority
- full articulation of policies, procedures and practices in a manual of procedures.

3.9 Overall Assessment of Phases I and II

We summarise our principal findings in anticipation of the strategic analysis of the *RPI*'s current orientation and its future in the following chapter.

3.9.1 Research versus Capacity Building

Our close scrutiny of the activities, processes and outcomes of the *RPI* indicates clearly that it has essentially been a training and capacity building activity. The perception by participants is also one of a predominantly capacity building activity. Through a small grants approach to research, what has taken place is an effort to train francophone researchers in modern and to acquire the skills and "culture" of economic research. Whilst a significant share of resources was nominally allocated to research, the activity itself was actually much more akin to training and capacity building.

3.9.2 Outcomes and Impact

The major tangible outcome has been the creation of a network of between 30 and 35 researchers who now have the capacity to do quality research in francophone countries. Whilst probably only half this group is currently of a high professional standard, the other half is capable of rapid improvement. This group comprises a significant addition to research capacity in economics for the region.

In terms of research output, the results have been very limited. Few of the research documents indicate output of sufficient quality meriting publication in a quality economics journals. Also most of the research output did not arrive at any directly useful policy recommendations. However, a significant part could be the basis of future policy related work. Whilst the impact to date on policy has been limited, there exists potential for its future utilisation.

In terms of country coverage, most of the *RPI*'s capacity building and research has been concentrated in 3 to 4 countries, namely Cameroon, Benin, Burkina-Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire. Others have been far less involved and many have been absent. Hence, those countries that probably have the lowest research capacity in economics have not yet benefited from the program. An important question is how best this task could be undertaken in future.

3.9.3 Cost and Efficiency

A major conclusion is that the underlying approach used by the *RPI* to train through research has been inefficient in terms of cost as well as the time taken to obtain results.

In terms of financial cost, it is neither useful nor appropriate to compare the *RPI* with other programs such as AERC. The type of “product” the *RPI* develops is different from other programs, since it is really focusing on building capacity for economic research in a very different institutional environment. Rather we can assess the *RPI*'s cost effectiveness by considering alternative approaches toward achieving the objective of capacity building *per se*. We will return to this issue in the course of our strategic overview and recommendations in the next chapter.

To provide the necessary context for that discussion, we present an estimate of the costs entailed in the *RPI*'s approach to capacity building. Over the entire period to June 1996, total expenditure (without discounting) was in the order of C\$4 million. We take as a measure of output the number of quality researchers the *RPI* has helped upgrade, which we have estimated to be in the order of 30 to 35 researchers. Hence, the average cost for developing a “quality” functioning economic researcher has been in the range of C\$115 to C\$135 thousand. Since this estimate does not include some researchers still “in training” and the research produced in the course of this “capacity building”, a more reasonable figure would perhaps be C\$100 thousand as the cost of training a researcher through the *RPI*'s approach.

Equally important is the time needed for training. We have shown that it has generally been very lengthy. A single project has taken a long time to complete, typically about 3 years during phase I. But a single researcher normally has had to be involved in more than one project to reach the level of professional capability that we would consider adequate. Typically this process has required between five and seven years participation in the *RPI*. It is unduly long, both in terms of the resources available and the broader needs of the region.

Our analysis points to an implicit trade-off between shortening the duration of projects and longer term cost. A comparison of outlays between phases I and II, as presented in Table 7, shows that indirect costs have grown substantially in relation to direct i.e. individual grants for research and training, as a consequence of increased expenditure on the various scientific support mechanisms noted earlier as well as on general administration. It has probably been important in reducing the

time taken to complete research. Given these divergent trends, namely in growing indirect costs on the one hand, and a faster rate of “throughput” in “producing” competent researchers on the other, it is not clear whether overall average cost, in terms of research production and capacity building or training, will increase or decline over the longer term.

At one level, it would appear that the *RPI* has been very careful in managing its resources. Indeed, it has become renowned, at least among participating researchers and resource persons, for the very tight way it has managed money. Even so, as suggested by our observations concerning its management, there remains the question of whether it has been efficient, especially in terms of the time spent on sorting out long standing and, in many instances, unresolved managerial and administrative problems. Much of this effort, we believe, would have been better invested in the *RPI*'s training and research activities. This conclusion is important for our strategic assessment of the *RPI*'s future.

3.9.4 Sustainability

Our overall conclusion is that the *RPI* in its present form is not sustainable in the sense that it must confront challenges that cannot be *simultaneously* addressed, in a cost effective fashion, with its present orientation and mode of operation.

First, a substantial broadening of thematic coverage would entail a prior or concurrent investment, as in the past, in training researchers. The administrative and financial resources this task would entail will undoubtedly exceed those at the disposal of the *RPI*. Furthermore, human resources, in the form of qualified resource persons, will also be very limited.

Secondly, in order to reduce the duration of the research cycle, the *RPI*, especially with the addition of new themes, will have to invest heavily in the scientific support mechanisms we noted earlier, and possibly in others as well. Whether the *RPI* would have the financial resources and administrative capability to initiate more and larger meetings, along with more intensive efforts to develop skills through workshops, *stages* and the like, is questionable.

Thirdly, success of these efforts will depend on the *RPI*'s ability to attract more senior researchers. Many of its successful “graduates” no longer find it attractive and have looked elsewhere, for example to the AERC, as a mechanism for pursuing their research careers. The need to balance their needs against a more intensive training effort will be very difficult to resolve.

Fourthly, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the *RPI* has not been very successful in attracting new entrants from countries with a very low capacity for research. This nurturing effort would require an even stronger bias toward skill development and training, one that would make the *RPI* even less attractive for more senior researchers (and many resource people). It would also lengthen, once again, the project cycle and increase average costs per completed project.

Fifthly and finally, the longer term goal of high quality, policy relevant research draws into question the desirability of a purely francophone focused effort. Quality requires international links and exposure, powerful inducements for those senior researchers drawn toward the AERC. Whether and how the *RPI* could open up to non-francophones and at the same time address the region's shortcomings in capacity may prove difficult, if not impossible to resolve within its current orientation and mode of operation.

4. Strategic Analysis and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

From our evaluation, we have concluded that the *RPI*, in its current strategic orientation, structure and mode of operation, is “non-sustainable”. A more intensive effort along current lines is unlikely to achieve its research and capacity building objectives.

From our assessment, however, we have also confirmed that the *RPI* has developed a strong core group of 30 to 35 researchers, whose expertise and knowledge could contribute to economic policy making. We have also concluded that in emphasising “capacity building” in phase II, the *RPI* is attempting to address a major priority for francophone Africa. Furthermore, we have intimated that the *RPI*, with an appropriate strategic orientation and major restructuring of its current activities, is well positioned to address this vital task.

What are the principal considerations that ought to shape this new strategy?

First, it should attempt to use those mechanisms that address the challenge in a cost effective fashion likely to yield tangible results over a period of seven to ten years. Secondly, these mechanisms should complement others, so that *in toto* they are likely to achieve the desired aim of establishing a vital “*culture de recherche*” in francophone Africa. Thirdly, these efforts should be consistent with the larger aim of developing an internationally respected economics profession within Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Finally, the strategy should make full use of the *RPI*'s achievements to date.

4.2 Building Capacity for Economic Research in Francophone Africa

4.2.1 The Challenge

The *RPI* has attempted to address this objective through focused research supported by many interventions aimed at improving the skills and knowledge of a young and inexperienced group of professionals. We have concluded that the current approach is not sustainable.

This concern, which has lain at the heart of the *RPI*'s activities since its inception is best summarised by the current Co-ordinator as the establishment of a “*culture de recherche*” in francophone Africa. Precisely what is meant by a “*culture*

de recherche” and in what way is francophone Africa particularly unique in this regard?

A “*culture de recherche*” involves more than simply a solid grounding in particular techniques or the acquisition of specialised knowledge. Rather it denotes an ability to apply skills and knowledge in a rigorous way, according to accepted norms and practices of the economics profession internationally, to the analysis of problems. This process involves an individual capacity to:

- define the problem in ways amenable to research
- conduct rigorous analysis using appropriate knowledge and methods
- interpret the findings in ways that deepen understanding of the problem or issue in question; inform public policy; and provide a solid foundation for further work
- validate findings and conclusions through accepted professional procedures including peer and external review
- disseminate the findings and conclusions, especially through scientific publications.

This capacity is largely absent in francophone Africa. To develop an appropriate strategic response it is first necessary to comprehend some of its underlying causes.

One factor is the intellectual tradition in many francophone countries which tends to stress institutional and theoretically based insights in contrast to the empiricism that characterises main stream economics. The situation has been changing rapidly in France, but is evolving much more slowly in francophone Africa. We note that in some universities economics is still part of the Law Faculty. Furthermore, where there now exists a separate Economics Faculty or Department, an uneasy coexistence reigns between staff, often senior, trained in the older tradition and those exposed to what has become the international norm for the profession. Whilst this situation will undoubtedly change, the transition may be quite lengthy.

A second is the French language medium. English is the international language of communication for the profession. Thus, in addition to acquiring advanced knowledge and skills, francophone scholars must develop facility in what for them will be a third or fourth language. To function effectively in fora such as the AERC, their facility in English cannot remain passive, i.e. limited to reading, but developed to the stage where they feel capable of participating in active exchanges in public meetings.

Many francophone countries have also followed the French tradition of assigning tertiary education and research to separate institutions. There are clearly

exceptions among francophone African countries. However, the weight of this tradition is felt in other areas, notably in career advancement. The CAMES, the body responsible for promoting staff to senior positions, still places heavier emphasis on pedagogical skills as opposed to research accomplishments than is the case for the profession internationally.

We also suspect from our own personal acquaintance with conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa that there has been far less investment in both research institutes and individuals within francophone, as opposed to anglophone Africa. In the latter, there was heavy investment, through scholarship programs in the sixties and seventies by major donors, as well as the IDRC, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. This investment provided the essential core on which the IDRC, and subsequently the AERC, could develop its research activities. Although many francophone scholars benefited at that time from a parallel French investment, much of it, we suspect, was along lines now obsolescent within the economics profession.

Finally, we note that the monetary unions incorporating most francophone countries may have inhibited the development of research capacity in macroeconomics. When these unions appeared to be functioning well, there was little demand for *local* research, since monetary and exchange rate policies were not determined nationally. Even now, francophone scholars, in contrast to their anglophone counterparts, have only limited *localised* experiences and information upon which to ground future research in these and related fields.

In summary, the case for establishing a "*culture de recherche*" in francophone Africa is strong and, furthermore, warrants an effort specifically adapted to its needs.

From this perspective, we can more readily perceive why the *RPI*, in its current orientation, has been unable to address these needs in a fundamental way.

The individual researcher will likely be located in an isolated environment, with inadequate facilities, limited access to recent reference materials, and poor communications to other scholars within and outside Africa. He/she will be relatively junior. Some more senior scholars, with facility in economics and English, will be drawn into the AERC. Others, trained in an earlier intellectual tradition, will be unwilling or unable to offer collegial guidance and support. The researcher's "lifeline" so to speak, will be very thin and tenuous: occasional one week long meetings held once or twice annually, intensive exposures to new methods, some direct and long distance contacts with a changing group of resource persons and, for a very fortunate few, a three to six month *stage* outside Africa. To participate, however, the researcher must be prepared to confine him/herself to a relatively narrow field, possibly quite remote from their own intellectual interest, and to expend

enormous effort in learning new techniques, often on a piecemeal basis. Nonetheless, he/she still has very little inkling of what is required *professionally* in terms of preparing a research proposal, writing up and presenting the findings, drawing appropriate inferences, especially with respect to public policy, and preparing the “output” in a form appropriate for scientific publication. Those who have succeeded in acquiring these skills do so by persevering over a five to seven year period. Many others do not, either because they cannot stand the course or the thematic focus entails a major departure from their own intellectual interests.

The one mechanism that appears to have been particularly effective in addressing the needs of individual researchers has been the “*stages*”. Although few in number, the response by recipients, as documented by the “*auto-évaluation*” has been uniformly positive, indeed enthusiastic. Their impact has not been limited to the acquisition of specialised skills and knowledge. Many of the *stagiaires* have found themselves, for the first time in an “*environnement de recherche*”. Whilst impressed by the level of material and scientific support, they have been deeply influenced by other less tangible factors: the function of peer review; the drive for professional excellence; and the importance of scientific publications.

Before setting out our recommendations on how best to address the issue of capacity building in francophone Africa, we briefly consider whether the AERC might not be better suited for this task. The Consortium has already succeeded in attracting some of the more senior and qualified francophone researchers. It has expanded their access to the profession internationally through contacts with major international centres and leading resource persons. Furthermore, the AERC has been addressing the task of capacity building through various mechanisms, including institutional attachments (*stages*), sabbatical leaves, targeted institutional grants, support for professional associations, and a collaborative MA program for anglophone African universities (with the exception of Nigeria and South Africa).

With the exception of the collaborative MA program, which corresponds to the PTCI in francophone Africa, all of the above mentioned mechanisms are designed to develop capacity *through research*. In this regard, therefore, the AERC's strategic approach would amount to an intensification of the *RPI's* current effort. Our own strategic analysis, however, has concluded that this approach is not sustainable, in the sense of establishing a *culture de recherche* in francophone Africa.

4.2.2 The Response

The centre piece of the strategy to meet this challenge would be a greatly expanded program of “*stages*”. These would be accessible to francophone Africans in *all* sub-specialties, who have completed a doctoral degree or its equivalent. *Stagiaires* would be selected through an annual region wide competition. The *stages* would be tenable for a period of 12 months at an internationally respected economic research institute. To be eligible for consideration, the applicant would have to submit on a personal basis a research proposal that would be undertaken, under the supervision of an overseas *mentor* at an overseas institute, over the course of the *stage*. By the end of this period, the *stagiaire* will be expected to have written up the research in a format suitable for one or more scientific publications. In addition, he/she will have prepared a proposal for further work back in their home country and institution.

The *stage*, in addition to meeting transport and living costs, would provide funds for field research. Typically there would be provision for a return air fare (from the overseas institution), a living allowance, and funds for data collection. To facilitate the involvement of female professionals, many of whom will have family obligations, the *stage* would provide them funds either for child care overseas or for an additional return air fare plus child care expenses in their home country.

To help launch returning *stagiaires* on a research career, two additional modalities are proposed. The first would be an annual conference at which returning *stagiaires* would present the results of their research. This conference would “show case” both the researchers and their research to a wider international audience, thereby facilitating contacts that would further advance their careers at home. Secondly, *stagiaires* would be provided a modest post-*stage* award that could be applied to a variety of needs including the publication of research results, presentation of their work at an international meeting, and the preparation of a proposal for further work.

The proposed program would entail expanding the current list of “*partenaire*” or collaborating institutions. Among the criteria for inclusion would be a well established reputation for high level research; intellectual interest in a field pertinent to a qualified *stagiaire*; and the presence of a *mentor* willing to supervise the *stagiaire*’s research. The institution in question need not be oriented toward francophone Africa per se. Rather, its field of interest should match that of the *stagiaire* and the institution might want to deepen its own expertise by drawing on knowledge specific to francophone Africa.

Our preliminary estimate is that these activities, including the overseas attachment, field research, annual conference, and post-*stage* awards will be in the

region of \$75 thousand per *stagiaire*. This amount is considerably less than the \$100 thousand we estimate it currently costs the RPI to “produce” a well grounded researcher. Furthermore, the period of one to two years will be considerably less than the five to seven required under the current approach. Finally, this direct comparison of cost-effectiveness does not take account of the higher quality training we would expect from the *stage*; its much broader coverage of specialites within the profession; and the potential for forging links between francophone African researchers and top international research institutes and leading professionals.

The *stages* are designed to complement two other measures that together would comprise a determined and broadly based effort to develop research capacity in francophone Africa. The first is the PTCI which in future years should produce the “input”, namely graduates well versed in mainstream economics at an MA level. The second would be the program of institutional support, already initiated by the IDRC, which could be further realigned to complement both the PTCI and the proposed capacity building activities. The *stages* would fill a gap, providing a yet untested doctoral level graduate with the tools, knowledge and broader *savoir faire* necessary for functioning as a credible researcher. Furthermore, the *stages* would facilitate the establishment of African and international linkages which would further promote his/her research activities. The institutional support program would help provide the appropriate professional environment for research.

There would remain, however, within this gamut of capacity building activities, one important gap. In the course of our evaluation, we became increasingly aware of the lack of support for doctoral research. Indeed, some researchers had used the *RPI's* grants and scientific support mechanisms toward completing their dissertations. This serious shortcoming should be addressed through a program of doctoral thesis awards that would not only fund direct research costs but also periodic support by a designated resource person. As in the case of the *stages*, grantees would be selected through open competition. To qualify for consideration, applicants would have completed successfully the equivalent of a masters' degree, satisfied the necessary pre-thesis prerequisites, and registered their thesis with the university awarding the degree.

We believe that the IDRC, particularly in light of its proposed Secretariat for Institutional Support of Economic Research in Africa (SISERA), is uniquely suited to undertake this task. The IDRC is located at a hub of communications for francophone Africa, operates in French, and has an in-depth knowledge of the “institutional topography” of the region.

4.3 Economic Research in Francophone Africa

4.3.1 The Challenge

The RPI has succeeded in developing a core group of 30 to 35 francophone African researchers capable of undertaking good policy relevant research. Although currently centred on various aspects of industrial policy, many of them over time can branch into other areas. Secondly, our own inquiry, as well as that of the *auto évaluation*, has revealed that there are other senior researchers, currently not members of the RPI or the AERC, that could also conduct good policy relevant research.

The immediate challenge is to involve both groups in research activities of an international calibre that expand their ties with professionals in other parts of Africa and within the profession internationally. Aside from the research output itself, another positive outcome would be the emergence of a senior group of francophone African researchers providing role models and intellectual leadership for the next generation being developed through capacity building activities such as those mentioned above.

4.3.2 The Response

To meet this challenge, we recommend that the current themes - and qualified researchers - be folded into the AERC. This transfer, we believe, also corresponds to the AERC's current desire to expand its presence in francophone Africa. Many of the researchers could comprise the core of a new thematic network. Whilst subject to the AERC's current procedures and standards, which include the involvement of anglophone researchers, the fact that the majority are likely to be "graduates" of the *RPI* will help ensure that this thematic network retains a distinctive francophone character from the outset. This feature could prove valuable to the AERC, by providing an initial point of entry, that in terms of language, would prove less intimidating to otherwise qualified francophone researchers that have not yet been involved in either network. Furthermore, this thematic focus on industrial policy might give rise to collaborative research in which senior francophone scholars would play a prominent role.

4.4 Principal Elements of the Proposed Strategy

The principal elements of the proposed strategy are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11: The New Strategy

Activity	Programs/Elements	Details
Capacity Building	<i>Stages Awards</i>	12 to 15 12 month attachments at overseas research institutions open to francophone African scholars in all sub-specialties provision for field research and child care support (for women) eligibility: doctoral level degree; research proposal
	<i>Annual Conference</i>	presentation of papers based on research during <i>stage</i> "showcasing" of both researchers and their research
	<i>Post Stage Awards</i>	12 to 15 annually; award to successful <i>stagiaires</i> finance presentation and publication of research results; preparation of new research proposal
	<i>Doctoral Thesis Awards</i>	Up to 10 annually to finance thesis research and facilitate contacts with resource persons
Research	<i>Project Grants</i>	Phasing out of current grants program Transfer of researchers and thematic research focus to AERC
	<i>Conseil d'Administration</i>	Disband at the end of the current phase IDRC or Secretariat to act as implementing agency on behalf of supporting donors
Management	<i>Comité Scientifique</i>	Replacement by new 6 to 8 person Advisory Board: responsible for determining grant procedures responsible for selecting grantees
	<i>Secretariat</i>	Retention of current position of Coordinator Employment of Coordinator by IDRC or Secretariat Housing of Secretariat within IDRC or Secretariat Coordinator functions: - responsible for capacity building activities - advises IDRC Secretariat on institutional grants - monitors quality of PTCI - special part-time responsibility for francophone based research of AERC (per future negotiation)

In addition to the programmatic elements discussed above, the new strategy has immediate implications for management of these activities. We recommend that the capacity building activities be incorporated in the proposed IDRC Secretariat (SISERA) that would be based in its Dakar office. Should the Secretariat not be established, the activities should be run as an IDRC administered project housed within its Dakar office. The current RPI Co-ordinator would be employed directly by the IDRC or the Secretariat. The current *Comité Scientifique* should be replaced by a small (six to eight person) Advisory Board charged with the following tasks: recommending procedures and awarding *stages*, *post-stages*, and dissertation awards. The Board should be selected from among leading African and international professionals. It would meet at least once annually.

The RPI's *Conseil d'Administration* should be disbanded at the end of the current phase. It need not be replaced since the IDRC, as the implementing agency, either for the proposed capacity building program or the Secretariat, can deal directly with donors supporting the project. We would strongly advise, however, that the IDRC *not* be a member of the Advisory Board, either ex-officio or as an observer. This arrangement will ensure that policies concerning selection procedures as well as the selections themselves, are conducted at arm's length, thereby underscoring the transparency and objectivity of the program.

Aside from managing the above mentioned grants, the current *RPI* Co-ordinator will have other important functions to fulfil. With respect to capacity building, we believe he should play a major role assisting the IDRC (or SISERA) in implementing its institutional support program in francophone Africa and in monitoring the quality of the PTCl. In the case of research, we recommend that his services be offered, on a part-time basis, to the AERC, with particular reference to responding to the needs of francophone African researchers. The details of any such arrangement would clearly be the subject of future negotiations. However, we would urge that they begin as soon as possible, as part of the proposed transfer of the *RPI*'s research functions to the AERC.

4.5 Transitional Measures

We conclude our report by identifying measures necessary to effect a smooth transition to the new strategy. Some should be initiated before the current phase is terminated. Furthermore, we believe that tangible measures taken toward adopting this new approach may help mobilise resources from a broader spectrum of the international donor community.

The measures in question follow on our summary presentation of the principal elements of the new strategy in Table 11. We have deliberately declined to specify

them in detail, since in many instances these will either be determined within the IDRC or in future negotiations with the AERC.

Clearly the principal concern will be the transfer of the *RPI*'s research functions to the AERC. The *RPI*'s stake holders will wish to ensure that the solid achievements of the first two phases, specifically the group of 30 to 35 promising researchers, are not dissipated. Undoubtedly the latter will also be concerned as to how they might fare within the AERC. The AERC will be anxious to ensure that entry of this group, with the possible establishment of a largely French speaking thematic network, does not entail a change in its current procedures and policies. Furthermore, it would not want to stretch its already tight financial and more especially, administrative capacity, more thinly.

The AERC's anxiety concerning financial resources can be allayed by allocating part of the *RPI*'s research funds to it, so as to offset expenditures caused by a larger than anticipated expansion in thematic grants. To facilitate this transition, the *RPI* can also offer, on a part-time basis, the services of the current Co-ordinator who could monitor this research. A very critical role can be played by the current Director of CREFA. A member of both the AERC Advisory Committee and the *RPI*'s *Comité Scientifique*, and highly regarded by both as well as participating researchers in both networks, he is uniquely qualified to advise on how this transfer might be best effected in the best interest of all concerned parties. For this purpose, we would recommend that he be given the necessary resources, in terms of contracted services and travel, to study this issue in depth and facilitate direct negotiations between the AERC and the IDRC.

Additional to the foregoing, we recommend that the *RPI* signal its commitment to this new strategy by announcing that it will not accept any new research proposals. Ongoing research grants should be completed by the end of phase II. The Coordinator should be given the funds and latitude necessary to publicise the new strategy widely within francophone Africa and among overseas research institutions. He should also begin to identify potential candidates for the new Advisory Board and to draft policies and procedures in anticipation of the first round of grant selection under the new strategy.

Finally, no changes are advised in the current management structure in light of its replacement in less than one year.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

Our call for a new strategy may be misinterpreted by some as an admission that the *RPI* has “failed”. We would reject such views. As noted earlier, the *RPI* has made considerable inroads toward achieving its aim of establishing a “*culture de recherche*” in economics within francophone Africa. This achievement has been due to the dedicated and sustained efforts of many professionals - not least the researchers themselves.

What we have concluded is that the current approach is not sustainable - it cannot achieve the dual objectives of high quality policy research and a strengthened capacity research for conducting such research within the time frame and resources available to the *RPI* in future. However, past efforts have placed the *RPI* and, by extension, the IDRC in a strategic position to mount a concerted capacity building initiative likely to yield positive results.

Appendix A:

Terms of Reference

a) évaluer le niveau de réussite et d'efficacité du Réseau dans l'atteinte de ses objectifs fixés comme suit:

- créer un noyau d'économistes en Afrique francophone sub-saharienne, capables de conduire la recherche appliquée en sciences économiques de façon rigoureuse en accord avec les normes internationales de la profession;
- produire et disséminer des travaux de recherche pertinente et de haute qualité, permettant:
 - une meilleure compréhension des problèmes de politique économique
 - l'amélioration de l'enseignement et de la recherche
 - le développement de la profession et la promotion des chercheurs individuels
- diminuer l'isolement professionnel des économistes, des institutions de recherche et les départements d'enseignement en Afrique francophone sub-saharienne
- renforcer les capacités des institutions en Afrique francophone sub-saharienne dans les domaines de la recherche, de l'enseignement et de l'analyse politique.

b) identifier les facteurs-clés qui ont contribué favorablement ou défavorablement à l'atteinte des objectifs cités ci-dessus;

c) examiner et apprécier les différentes directions dans laquelle le Réseau pourrait être appelé à évoluer, en tenant compte des facteurs suivants:

- les réalisations du projet jusqu'ici
- d'autres développements et initiatives pouvant avoir des répercussions sur le Réseau en ce qui concerne:
 - ses objectifs et le contenu de ses activités de recherche, de formation et dissémination
 - les possibilités d'appui des donateurs en termes de ressources financières et humaines
- les problèmes de développement à court et moyen terme de l'Afrique francophone sub-saharienne.

Appendix B:

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16. Tableaux fournis par le Secretariat sur les Projets, les Budgets, les Chercheurs et les Depenses du Reseau

Other Documents

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2. A Proposal for the Establishment of a Secretariat for Capacity Building in Economics in West and Central Africa, IDRC, Dakar, Senegal, Feb. 25, 1996.
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Annex C: Persons Interviewed

Dakar, June 3-10 1996

Directors of institutions

1. Joseph Yao Yao, Director CIRES, Côte d'Ivoire
2. Hervé Kabore, Director CEDRES, Burkina-Faso
3. Touna Mama, Dean, Faculté de Sciences Economiques, Yaounde, Cameroon
4. Thandika Mkandawere, Executive Director, CODESRIA, Dakar
5. Abdoulaye Diagne, Director, CREA, Senegal.

Researchers

1. Christian Emini, Cameroon
2. Mamadou Dansokho, Senegal
3. Bouabre Bohoun, Cote d'Ivoire
4. Mady Koanda, Burkina-Faso
5. Epiphane Adjovi, Benin
6. Bernadette Kamgnia, Cameroon

RPI Secretariat

1. Dominique Njinkeu, Coordinator
2. Nejib Bousselmi, former Coordinator, and present administrative assistant

Scientific Committee

1. Bernard Decaluwé, President
2. Mohamed Lahouel
3. Aristomène Varoudakis

IDRC

1. Réal Lavergne
2. Diery Seck

Europe, October 3-12 1996

CERDI, Clermont-Ferrand, France

1. Patrick Guillaumont, President
2. Sylviane Guillaumont
3. Elliott Berg
4. Jean-Paul Azan
5. Marie-Francoise Renard
6. Anne-Marie Gourgeon

OECD Development Centre

1. Jean Bonvin, President

2. Jean-Claude Berthelemy
3. Aristomene Varoudakis
4. Christian Morisson

European Commission, Brussels

1. Martin Minguella
2. John Roberts
3. Jean-Claude Bredeloux

Caisse Française de Développement

1. Collange
2. Hemery

Ministère de la Coopération, Paris

1. Gilbert Wernert

Washington, August 26 and 27

USAID

1. Joon Lee
2. David Attwood
3. Jerome Wolgin (telephone)

World Bank

1. Philip English
2. Brian Ngo
3. Peter Miovic (telephone)
4. Tom Eisemon
5. Bob Prouty