

IDRC POLICY CASE STUDIES
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFC	Agricultural Finance Corporation
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AHI	African Highland Initiative
ASERACA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
CBOs	Community based organisations
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIMMYT	International Centre for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat
COMESA	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRD	Department of Research and Development, Tanzania
EAC	East African Cooperation
ECA	East and Central Africa
ECAPAPA	Eastern and Central Africa Programme for Agricultural Policy Analysis
EEAU	Environmental Economics Association of Uganda
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre (Makerere University, Uganda)
ESRF	Economic and Social Research Foundation (Tanzania)
EU	European Union
FANRPAN	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GHA	Greater Horn of Africa
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HIV/AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICRAF	International Centre for Research on Agro-forestry
ICRISAT	International Crop Research Institute for Semi and Arid Tropics
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
LDU	Local Defence Units
MSEs	Micro and Small Enterprises
NARIs	National Agricultural Research Institutes
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation (Uganda)
NARS	National Agricultural Research Systems
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	Natural Resource Management

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
REPA	Regional Economic Policy Analysis
RTAA	Regional Trade Analytic Agenda (USAID, REDSO/ESA)
SACCOS	Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/AFR-SD	USAID/Africa Office for Sustainable Development
USAID/REDSO-ESA	USAID/Regional Economic Development Services Office

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I pay special gratitude to the policy experts and practitioners who gave useful insights (during lengthy brainstorming sessions) into this tricky link between research and policy making processes in the region. Although they did not constitute a sample in a statistical sense, I could see their views converging and I have made an effort to ensure that the views are reported in the report almost verbatim.

Finally I thank Dr Isaac Minde and his program assistant (Mr Geoffrey Ebong) at the ECAPAPA Coordinating Unit for the assistance with both the necessary documents as well as useful comments on the draft reports. I do hope that they will find the final report worthwhile to the ASARECA NARIS and ECAPAPA's regional networks. Last but by no means least, I am grateful to my REMPPI research associates Tim Okech for doing the Tanzania interviews and for Paul Kere for his extensive surveys in Nairobi, Kampala and Entebbe. Paul also assisted with literature compilation and production of thoughtful in-house draft copies.

Research, dialogue and policy reforms constitute an important process that is a major challenge to analysts and policy makers: I hope this report will make a modest contribution to the process. Any distortion, by the investigator, of facts and information provided by all those who participated in the case study in one way or the other is highly regretted.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The link between research and policy making processes has always been problematic. The expectation of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is that the projects and programs it supports will influence public policy at the national and local levels. The Centre, however, needs to address what it means by the term *policy influence*. Initial discussions within the Centre and reviews of the literature and other relevant Centre documents point to three key questions: (1) what constitutes public policy influence in IDRC's experience; (2) to what degrees, and in what ways, has IDRC-supported research influenced public policy; and (3) what factors and conditions have facilitated or inhibited the public policy influence potential of IDRC-supported research. Evaluation of these three questions will not only provide learning at the program level thus enhancing the design of projects and programs to address policy issues but will also provide an opportunity for corporate level learning.

The case study of projects supported by IDRC through the East and Central Africa Program for Agricultural Policy Analysis (ECAPAPA) forms an important set of data that will help in improving the Centre's capacity to support research which fosters and supports the production, dissemination and application of research results leading to policies and technologies that enhance the lives of people in developing countries. The focus of the case study is on the development of rich case studies that explore not only the IDRC work undertaken but also the changing context in which the work was carried out and the processes that were used. It was anticipated that the study would cover a range of stories to include cases where policy outcomes may be perceived as either positive or negative (i.e., research leads to "good" or "bad" policymaking).

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- ❑ Establish the policy concerns of ECA governments and evaluate how projects supported by IDRC address these concerns
- ❑ Establish the policy intent of selected projects supported by IDRC under ECAPAPA
- ❑ Determine what constitutes public policy influence and how selected DRC/ECAPAPA projects influenced public policy (to what degree and in what ways)
- ❑ Establish the factors and conditions that facilitated or inhibited the public policy influence of IDRC/ECAPAPA projects
- ❑ Evaluate whether ECAPAPA has the capacity and financial resources necessary to assist the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) family of National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) to incorporate policy concerns into their work

These objectives were investigated in the backdrop of an extremely dynamic policy arena in the East and Central Africa (ECA) region with many questions also being raised about the ability of the policy makers to translate plans and policy pronouncements (including recommendations arising from research) into real actions that promote economic growth, considering the current state of widespread insecurity, doubts about good governance and external impacts such as rapid globalisation. The ECA policy arena and other key concerns are summarised viz:

- ❑ **Markets:** their structure/conduct and how the institutions that manage them can be made to perform more efficiently; how market liberalisation and commercialisation are likely to influence market performance, especially impact on small producers and consumers; access to domestic and foreign markets and appropriate policies to open up regional markets
- ❑ **Productivity:** the prime movers relating to innovation (technology R&D); getting *capital* to the agricultural sector (the growth engine for many of the countries in the region) and revitalising agricultural *institutions*; improving *infrastructure* and access to utilities such as water and electricity; and the issue of sustainability, not just of the *environment and natural resources* but also of policy reforms (avoiding policy reversals), *education*, health and economic growth
- ❑ **Civil strife:** what are the causes of frequent wars in the region; how they lead to market failure which is further exacerbated by government failure (dictatorships, bad governance and state sponsored corruption) and implications on foreign direct investments
- ❑ **Poverty eradication and food security:** this is a major preoccupation of almost all the ECA governments, at least on paper; what are the poverty traps and how do we ensure that while attempting to direct public resources towards the poor we avoid unnecessary opportunity costs (lost markets, investments, growth and wealth creation potentials)
- ❑ **Implementation:** one of the biggest weaknesses in the region is the poor implementation of policies and national plans; there are institutional capacity constraints but there are also administrative and coordination lapses that are often compounded by political and ethnic considerations; the policy making process is thus made much more complex to outsiders, researchers and policy makers included; efforts aimed at influencing policy must therefore consider the intended and unintended impacts.

Our investigation into the IDRC supported research is therefore premised on the hypothesis that it would be much more difficult for the projects coordinated by ECAPAPA to have policy influence if they were not designed in the context of these key concerns and the many inhibiting factors that we consider endogenous to the ECA region. We hoped to derive from the specific cases we identified detailed stories or lessons of what worked, why they worked and the factors that contributed to failure or success in policy influence. For projects that had not matured to a point of assessing their impacts, we discuss their potential to influence policy in terms of their design, who was involved, funding levels, contacts and networks initiated during implementation, quality of the research team and organizational support from both IDRC project officers and the ECAPAPA Coordinating Unit.

Methodology

The methodologies and field survey procedures we applied can be summarised as follows:

- A review of documents including project design documents, monitoring documents and project reports
- Interviews with project researchers (team leaders and collaborators): for this a standard questionnaire developed by IDRC was administered with only slight amendments by the investigator (raw data/information from these interviews are attached as a separate document titled: *Interview results for researchers and their collaborators*)
- Brainstorming sessions with peer reviewers of the project proposals, ECAPAPA/CU staff, senior policy analysts/advisors and research administrators within NARS: this was done because the standard questionnaire was not applicable for those who did not directly participate in the projects either as researchers or as collaborators (*Results of the brainstorming sessions are in Appendix I at the end of this report*)
- Interviews with those said to have been influenced: but as pointed out below, this was not possible since dissemination activities were confined to administrators and stakeholders based within the project areas
- Interviews with relevant IDRC project officers: only one project officer was available in Nairobi and his input is captured at a brainstorming session

Policy Intent and influence of the selected projects

IDRC has supported a number of research projects in the ten ASARECA countries, however, due to budgetary constraints for this review, only research projects implemented in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have been selected. The projects comprise those that were partially funded by IDRC between 1998 and 2000 as well as those fully funded by the Centre between 2000 and 2002. The policy intent of the projects is evaluated on the basis of a review of the project proposals, design and composition of the research team. Policy influence is assessed on the basis of survey procedures of the project, participation in workshops by key administrators, quality of the reports and dissemination of research findings. Determination of policy influence in the case of IDRC/ECAPAPA projects runs into a number of problems, among them: dissemination had not been anticipated; complications that arise from the fact that policy influence was not a stated objective of the projects (implicitly, there was a leaning towards capacity building but we argue in the report that even this may not have been achieved due to unique factors relating to individual researchers and their host institutions); and potential neglect of the project value added dimensions for ECAPAPA and what the program does to support ASARECA family of NARIS institutions (looking at policy influence per se may thus be misleading).

The selected research projects fell into two thematic areas: economic viability assessment of agricultural technology, and conflicts in natural resource management and use. The following summary gives the projects that were selected and an assessment of their policy intent and influence:

Projects on Economic Viability Assessment of Agricultural Technology

The role of technology in poverty alleviation: Determination of farm household financial profitability in bean production in Kenya. The study was implemented during the period 1998-2000 in selected agro-ecological zones east and west of Kenya and was only partially funded by IDRC. The project had not been completed at the time of this case study but progress reports

were available at ECAPAPA. There was no explicit mention of intent to influence public policies, nor were there any indications that dissemination activities were being carried out by members of the research team, all of whom had moved on to other institutions and were now engaged on different assignments. The final report from this project still needed significant technical input and would not constitute a valuable source of information on alternative profitable technologies for beans in the selected agro-ecological zones

Farm Household profitability of Irish potatoes in Uganda. The chief investigator for this project, implemented in Uganda, was assisted by staff of the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO). The project has been completed and statements attributed to the Head of State seem to suggest that there was some form of policy influence. But like in the other projects, policy intent was not overt and any influence arising thereof appear to have been as a result of the strategic public position and research experience of the chief investigator.

Farm Household financial profitability of Maize/Beans intercropping technological packages. The research team for this study located in the north-eastern parts of Tanzania (around Arusha area) was based at the Department of Research and Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Dar es salaam, Tanzania. The final project report dated November 2000 lists several collaborating researchers with rather unclear roles and responsibility. Although one of the collaborators states that the project recommended technologies that have been adopted, discussions with target farmers contradicted these claims. Policy intent was not apparent in any of the documents and contacts made seem to have been confined to the research locality. Two workshops were held during project implementation with participants representing mostly the local farmers, stockists and representatives of community based organisations.

Projects on Natural Resources Management and Use

Conflicts in access and use of water resources in the Tana River Basin. The study was located in Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Meru Central, Tharaka and Tana districts of Kenya and the chief investigator and his research collaborators were all based at the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis and Research (KIPPRA). The project had not been completed at the time of the case study and there were little prospects of completion due to dispersion and emigration of key collaborators and the chief investigator to other institutions within and out of the country. Workshops held during project implementation attracted local administrators who may have been sensitised about the resource management and the need for community grown solutions to access conflicts.

Minimizing Conflicts in Natural Resources Management and Use: The Role of Social Capital and Local Policies in Kabale, Uganda. The project was located in the highlands of Kabale in the south-western parts of Uganda. The chief investigator was a Research Fellow at the Africa Highlands Initiative (AHI/ICRAF) and also the coordinator of AHI Policy Task Force. Although the project had not been completed, there were good prospects for completion as well as indications that policy influence was being achieved at the community level through participation of key persons in the implementation process and on-going workshops.

Pasture and water use conflicts between Karamoja and the neighbouring districts- Impacts and potential minimisation strategies. This project has not been completed probably due to security problems in Karamoja (the research site) and government's unpopular policy of forced disarmament of the warring tribes. However, there is a final research report containing an excellent review and account of achievements made thus far. Participatory survey techniques involved local communities and administrators as well as senior public legislators. There were thus good prospects for policy influence at higher echelons but, like in other projects, no financial resources were available for further dissemination and involvement of national policy makers.

Indicators of policy influence

Following the literature review by the IDRC staff three categories of policy influence set the stage for evaluation of the case study projects: expanding policy capacities; broadening policy horizons; and, affecting policy regimes. The report dwells on the issue of whether or not the researchers' capacity was developed since this seems to have been a key albeit implicit objective of IDRC. There was a major issue concerning wide spread inability to complete projects and the report argues that merely submitting a final report to ECAPAPA does not constitute project completion, especially in this case where policy influence was anticipated.

Factors that facilitated policy the potential to influence public policies

A number of factors have been discussed and tabulated for both the technology and NRM projects in relation to the direction of their impact on policy influence. Since, technically, the majority of the projects were never completed, the factors are assessed in terms of their potential to influence policy. The key factors discussed were:

- Relevance of the project to national/regional policy makers
- Significance of the problem to the local community
- Involvement of the policy makers and other stakeholders in the design and prioritisation of the problem
- Composition and experience of the research team
- Support by the host institution and synergy of the project with on-going research
- Establishment and access to information generated by the project (database)

Factors that hindered policy influence

The following factors have been discussed:

- Financial resources and administration of the project by ECAPAPA and by the team leader and/or host institution
- Instability of the research teams, lack of experience and/or lack of commitment
- Lack of political will and capacity of public institutions to absorb research products

- Institutional capacity weaknesses on the research side and wide diversity of priorities of NARS within ASARECA

Marching IDRC supported research with the region's policy concerns

The policy arena of the ECA region is recapped and views of expert policy analysts and practitioners collated with particular reference to IDRC supported projects. The main aspects causing concern are the weak capacity and lack of commitment to conduct policy relevant research. Although there is a capacity to conduct research, brain drain is influencing research output negatively. The IDRC objective of capacity building is thus worth pursuing but it is unlikely that one single donor will have the required impact especially in public institutions and universities. Government support of agricultural research remains at unacceptable levels and implementation of research recommendations and plans equally problematic, a situation that has encouraged donor driven research and the accusation that in some cases donors maybe pursuing goals that are not immediately relevant to policy makers' urgent priorities such as fighting poverty and HIV/AIDS. Experts suggest that donors must play a more proactive role not just in funding research but also in bringing policy makers together with researchers.

It is concluded that IDRC should explore the following avenues in order to improve the relevance and influence of its funded projects:

- Priority setting and more careful selection of research teams
- Increasing the funding levels for each project, improving on predictability of the flow of funds to facilitate better planning on the part of recipients and marching experience of the researchers with opportunity costs in order to avoid abandonment of projects
- Catering explicitly for policy influence and funds for dissemination

The Gender Factor

Gender analysis is important because of various reasons but the subject risks strategic exclusion and may miss altogether from policy prescriptions. Although females were involved in some of the case study projects as collaborators, their role was quite subdued in all subsequent stages. This could be due to lack of initiative but the picture that is emerging is that mainstreaming gender in research projects is made much more complicated by the fact that the region seems to lack the analytical capacity needed for gender analysis: sociologists and anthropologists who are more comfortable with analysis of gender issues usually lack the training and skills to merge such issues with those relating to household economics and the exogenous factors that impact on them. Economists trained in the latter generally lack the skills and inclination to undertake gender analysis. Because of this dilemma, and in particular reference to ECAPAPA, selection of the research team is critical especially if gender perspectives are to be accounted for in the ensuing policy prescriptions. IDRC is already supporting ECAPAPA to undertake projects specifically targeting gender but it will be important to note that there are burning questions in the minds of policy makers in the ECA region (poverty eradication, insecurity, regional integration, globalisation, etc) and that gender issues, like environmental degradation and gender issues, important as they may be, risk being put on the back burner.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy goals and research agenda in East and Central Africa (ECA)

Agriculture remains the most dominant sector in almost all of the economies of East and Central Africa (ECA). Neglect of the sector in terms of national economic development strategies and in terms of coherent policy direction will lead not only to a weakening of agricultural institutions and their service provision capability, but also to a decline of economic growth. But the agricultural sector in the region faces many challenges, the implications of which are by now quite well known. We briefly recap below the main challenges shaping the policy process in ECA.

MARKETS

One basic feature of agriculture in ECA is the over-reliance on rainfall for the production of a narrow range of low value products. Prices especially for the major staple, maize, fluctuate wildly between seasons and farmers engaged in cash crops such as sugarcane, coffee, tea and tobacco face high input costs and risky markets. Liberalization of the domestic markets have had mixed outcomes with the small scale producers being left at the mercy of unscrupulous agents. Although commercialisation offers a lot of scope for example in bulking of food commodities to achieve economies of scale and in getting access to finance and urban markets, putting into operation the requisite institutional arrangements remains a major challenge for the small farmers.

Regional trade integration under the auspices of the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the newly launched East African Cooperation (EAC) aim at enlarging the market through elimination of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. These institutions are facing serious teething problems, especially the implementation of the COMESA free trade area that is struggling due to member countries' reluctance to allow unbridled free trade in agricultural commodities. Poor access to developed country markets is explained largely by subsidies on commodities in which developing countries currently have comparative advantage either in production or in adding value. The consequence of agricultural subsidies in the OECD countries, low commodity prices in the international markets, coupled with stringent quality standards, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements and quantitative restrictions impact adversely on the region's farm incomes and prosperity.

But there are those who argue that agriculture generally gets a raw deal from the region's policy makers especially in terms of budgetary allocations and, more importantly, in terms of appropriate economic policies and implementation strategies for uplifting productivity and sustainable economic growth. Markets are important but the farmers must be empowered through suitable policies and investments in public goods (infrastructure, research, education and health) to respond to domestic/regional opportunities such as the rising urban populations. Such empowerment would also enable them take advantage of OECD apologies for farm subsidies, for

example, by the US (through the African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA) and EU (through Everything but Arms agreement).

PRODUCTIVITY

Why does ECA agricultural productivity remain low compared to other regions? There are external influences as well as internal factors. Policy makers have little influence on external factors so we shall only highlight below those that can be considered as control variables from a policy perspective: innovation; agricultural finance (institutions); infrastructure and telecommunication; and, natural resource use and management (the sustainability question). There are likely to be significant dividends if attention is directed to these internal policy issues rather than complaining about the exogenous impacts arising from the global markets and actions such as agricultural subsidies in the developed countries.

Innovation

There is a general tendency to over-emphasise the role played by technologies such as high yielding seed varieties and fertilizer while neglecting institutional innovations (marketing, extension, communication, financing, cooperatives, etc) and resource constraints (e.g. water) that make it possible for farmers to adopt. The agro-ecological and resource diversity of the east and central Africa region is such that it would be naïve to make generalisations but it is safe to say that use of improved seeds and fertilizer lags considerably below those of other developing regions such as south east Asia and Latin America (cite). Past studies suggest that there are many technologies still lying on the shelves of research institutions (Transformation of African Agriculture dialogue series, Winrock International; KARI; TEGEMEO Institute and Michigan State policy series;). This state of affairs has been blamed on: technologies not accounting for farmers' optimisation objectives (attempts made to resolve this through on-farm research or farming systems approach to research and extension); weak extension systems (an alternative World Bank sponsored approach of training and visit proved too costly, regimented and unsustainable); structural adjustment programs and the inability of the private sector to fill the lacuna left by retrenchments and cut backs on public spending; low expenditure by regional governments on research and technology generation; and, weak links between research and the policy making processes.

It is important to reiterate the last point because it brings us the basic issue of supply and demand for research: researchers and institutions engaged in research do not just generate technologies, they also undertake policy analysis and recommendations on alternative institutional arrangements for optimising technology uptake and economic growth. But in trying to raise agricultural productivity, the weakest link seems to be that between researchers and policy makers. Research and policy analysis institutions in ECA have been suffering from massive brain drain and financial constraints; problems that seem to be fuelled by low capacities in both the private and public sectors. The capacity of national agricultural research systems (NARS), together with the international research centres (the CGIAR), and their ability to guide policy reforms towards accelerated agricultural transformation, has become a particularly pertinent issue for public debate.

The region's political leadership has yet to develop a culture of basing policy decisions on scientific facts. The policy analysts on the other hand lack the strategies for packaging and disseminating their findings in non-esoteric terms and they have been hopeless at competing effectively for political attention along with other lobby groups. Their apparent lack of sympathy for political dimensions of the policy making process adds to the mistrust and lack of communication with politicians and planners in the public sector. Research links with the private sector have not been encouraging either, with the latter continuing to view agricultural research and policy analysis as public goods that must be provided by governments and donors.

Agricultural Finance

Many models for financing the agricultural sector have been tried and will continue to be tried. Agriculture is a risky business (due to price and production fluctuations) but so are many other business ventures, so why are the big commercial banks afraid to lend to agriculture but eager to pre-finance large shipments of maize imports? There are a number of alternative options for financing agriculture: subsidized public lending institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) of Kenya [...of Uganda and Tanzania... check in RTAA documents], savings and credit (cooperative) societies (SACCOS), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), building societies, and the informal lenders who normally charge exorbitant interest rates. Mismanagement has wrecked havoc in both public lending institutions and the cooperative movement. This dilemma makes agricultural finance, especially when viewed together with privatization and the emergence of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) a critical policy area. The new NARC government in Kenya for instance is looking at the MSEs not only in terms of employment creation but also as a catalyst for agricultural development: farmers who have access to off-farm incomes (e.g. from businesses, civil service employment, remittances) are more likely to adopt improved farming practices than those who do not (Kenya, Ministry of Planning: Strategy for Economic Recovery, March 2003).

Agricultural financing is to a large extent an institutional issue that is likely to be influenced by merchandising innovations that are emerging as a result of rapid changes in consumer incomes and buying habits. One such change is the emergence of mega-retail outlets in large urban centers: such changes not only offer farmers market opportunities, they also offer them a chance to vertically integrate with retail outlets thereby facilitating access to modern technologies, financing and ability to adhere to higher quality standards, strict supply schedules and better management techniques. An example of this development and its multiplier effects is the southern Africa fast food chains (Nandos and Steers) that have had significant impact not just on the consumers and other small restaurants but also on meat (poultry, beef, pork) suppliers based in the peri-urban areas of several east African cities.

Other options and opportunities for boosting agricultural growth are through risk mitigation: targeted farm subsidies, guaranteed minimum returns, commodity exchange systems and interest rate controls, each with its strengths and weaknesses. These are areas of policy concern and for which research and policy analysis will contribute immensely.

Infrastructure

The term infrastructure captures many different things but for agriculture what comes to mind immediately is transport: rail and road networks. Emphasis of rail and road networks need not reduce the importance of other aspects of infrastructure such as storage, rural electrification and telecommunication but the reality of conditions in rural Africa are such that these other aspects are not the binding constraints to increasing productivity. There are of course situations where even construction of roads has not been able to induce marketable surpluses for agricultural commodities and others where limitations in airfreight are proving to be a major factor inhibiting growth (e.g. floriculture and horticulture in Kenya and Tanzania).

Regional Trade Analytic Agenda (RTAA) studies conducted in selected transit corridors of east and southern Africa reveal the economic gains that could accrue especially to the land-locked countries in the Great Lakes region (Uganda was paying 40-50 percent of cif values while Rwanda and Burundi paid 45-75 percent of cif values for cargo imported through Mombasa in 1996/97: G. Anyango, SD Publication Series Technical Paper 22, April 1997). The report also states that transport policy harmonization (e.g. on axle load regulations, port procedures, road block inspections, etc) could minimize these transit charges and turn-around times significantly. These cost reductions in turn mean better prices for both consumers and exporters. A persistent policy question is: who should pay for investments in development of physical infrastructure; the public sector has been in the past looked upon as the provider of such public goods but private sector driven alternatives are gaining popularity. Furthermore, there are strong arguments pointing to the fact that major strides can be achieved in cost reductions through non-physical investments, that is, by putting more efforts on elimination of transport policy constraints: for example, privatization and deregulation of the telecommunication sector, elimination of transport monopolies, and harmonization of rail and road transport to avoid unnecessary competition along the same transit corridors.

Sustaining Economic Growth

We discuss the problem of sustainability with respect to three important policy themes: land, water and development of human capital. Land and water access and use have such sensitive political, cultural and legal undertones that at times subsume their economic role:

- The desire by every Kenyan to own land for example has led to resettlement disputes that linger on since the country gained independence in 1963;
- Land has been used by various political regimes to buy allegiance and is right now at the center of on-going investigations on past high level corruption;
- From an economic perspective, there have been repeated calls for legislative reforms aimed at improving equitability in land ownership for instance through land taxation that would discourage speculation;
- Similarly, there are arguments that government policies, coupled with cultural attachments to land have led to subdivision of land below economically viable threshold levels.

The situation in the other countries is not different: indeed, the free trade areas being anticipated under the regional institutions such as COMESA do not envision trade in land, especially agricultural land.

Water use is equally problematic from a regional perspective: the cases of lake Victoria water and River Nile water (Treaty with Egypt and Sudan) are typical but there are simmers from government sources, especially Kenya, that the time may be opportune to introduce water taxes.

In both cases (land and water), the issues of degradation, alternative sources, management and conflicts arising from competitive users or uses are proving to be critical policy dilemmas that have to be addressed urgently in order to avoid future catastrophes and rapid productivity declines. Some of the environments have been so resource degraded that they can no longer sustain livelihoods and decisions have to be made to minimize any further losses in terms of public resource interventions to maintain people there; this implies that we have to allow emigration but that means loss of traditional coping mechanisms and the state has to come up with appropriate social welfare strategies for such internally displaced persons.

Manpower development is critical to development and adoption of innovations and one cannot over-emphasize the importance of education. It is feared that regional governments are not spending enough of their national incomes on the development of human capital and not adequately remunerating their trained and specialized personnel in order to avoid brain drain through emigration as well as through institutional decay and mental waste. The other dimension of manpower and agricultural productivity is the potential impact of HIV/AIDS. Not much is currently known about the impact of HIV/AIDS on agriculture hence a lot of donor and research attention is being focused on the disease whose impacts are likely to be higher on rural populations ravaged by other illnesses such as malaria.

CIVIL STRIFE AND GOVERNMENT FAILURE

Agriculture is affected seriously by civil strife that seems to occur in the Greater Horn of Africa (GHA) with an alarming frequency (USAID/SD/AFR; see d'Silva's synthesis of events in relation to poverty and food security in GHA, 2002). Cross border wars and internal ethnic clashes lead to market failure and loss of productive capacity. Trading opportunities are also missed in situations of insecurity: Tanzania border with Mozambique; Uganda/Sudan/DRC border; cattle rustling along Uganda/Kenya border; Kenya/Somalia border; Kenya Ethiopia border; Ethiopia/Eritrea border war and elusiveness of peace deals brokered by the international community and initiatives of Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD. Another consequence of these wars and ethnic tensions is the swelling numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons whose financial burdens rest on the host nations. Insecurity together with natural disasters such as droughts and floods consume valuable donor funds that could be devoted to development.

Market failure is further aggravated by government failure in many countries in the region: dictatorships, poor governance, corruption, ineptitude and inappropriate macro-economic policies.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

Many nations in the region were excited about their plans for industrialization and indeed went ahead to chart their paths and timetables (e.g. Kenya by 2025). Agriculture for a short while was put on the back burner but many saw this to be a big folly considering the magnitudes of rural populations and the dependence of the manufacturing sector on agricultural performance. In recent times, the World Bank has convinced literally all governments in the region to target elimination of poverty and food insecurity as the starting point so poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) now abound in government offices and occupy a lion's share of public debates and strategy papers: without the PRSPs, governments risk losing IMF/World Bank lending!

The term 'poor' in the PRSP framework is a real misnomer and thus leads many to identify the PRSP process purely with poverty rather than with the many aspects and policy dimensions that constitute the approach: sound macroeconomic policies, agricultural development, human resource development, infrastructure, trade and tourism, public safety, public administration and information technology, monitoring and evaluation, among others. The strategy of the PRSP itself is broad-based and implies wealth creation but the implementation philosophy, pegged firmly as it is on identification of the poor and causes of poverty, is quite misplaced: poverty is not the problem, it is a consequence of the governments' inability to put in place appropriate policies and strategies for accelerating economic growth (with equity). Neglect of agriculture and failure to address the key challenges highlighted above is what has caused poverty and food insecurity. Policy makers have been able to find short term political and fiscal solutions (taxation, tariff and non-tariff trade barriers and state trading corporations) but the challenges persist while poverty retrenches itself and productive capacity undermined in both industry and agriculture.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND ROLE OF RESEARCHERS AND DONORS

Even in cases where there are sound policies, their implementation lags woefully due to many different reasons depending on the national circumstances: institutional capacity weaknesses and poor coordination of activities and roles of line Ministries, lack of political will, especially the commitment to allocate adequate resources to agricultural development, lack of an integrated approach to implementation (policy matters are dealt with in an ad hoc manner without considering interactions among different problems and sectors of the economy) and poor monitoring and evaluation of projects. Lack of financial resources is often cited but our view is that, more often than not, this is an excuse for failure (of governments and of supporting institutions) rather than a valid reason for the many stalled projects in the region. However, poor allocation of resources (especially for agriculture in proportion to its contribution to GDP) may be a legitimate concern. One other concern that has been gaining significance in terms of explaining the poor conduct and performance of priority setting and policy implementation is the disconnect between policy makers and institutions that undertake research and policy analysis. Past studies have clearly demonstrated that agricultural research (agronomic and breeding work) have high internal rates of return (Karanja for research on maize in Kenya, 1994; others) even as

we lament the high number of technologies that lie in the shelves un-adopted by farmers. Similarly, adoption of recommendations coming out of agricultural policy analysis by researchers in universities, other NARS and international research institutions remains at levels that are not acceptable considering the fact that there is now unanimous opinion that the region's economic growth must be agriculture led.

1.2 The Objectives of the Case Study

The above narrative gives the current research and policy environment in the east and central Africa (ECA). It highlights the policy goals and the difficulties of conducting research and disseminating results that policy makers can relate to and internalize in their day-to-day procedures and routines. The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the policy intent and influence of ECAPAPA research projects funded by IDRC, hence to be referred to simply as IDRC/ECAPAPA projects. In addressing this broad objective, we shall in effect be answering the question that we have carried over from the foregoing sub-section, namely: what is the role of donors in terms of research priority setting *vis-a-vis* the role of government and what is the policy influence of the projects they fund? The significance of this question derives from the fact that many regional governments have abdicated their public goods provision responsibility as far as research is concerned. It is commendable that donors have readily stepped in to provide financial resources desperately needed by NARS to conduct research and policy analysis but there are fears that the relationship between donors and NARS institutions, especially in project design and prioritisation, maybe gradually crowding out policy makers and other stakeholders thereby adversely affecting the policy relevance of research. A case study of IDRC/ECAPAPA projects will contribute significantly towards shedding light on the important roles of different players and how interactions among them influence policies.

The specific objectives of the case study are to:

- ❑ Establish the policy concerns of ECA governments and evaluate how projects supported by IDRC address these concerns
- ❑ Establish the policy intent of selected projects supported by IDRC under ECAPAPA
- ❑ Determine what constitutes public policy influence and how selected IDRC/ECAPAPA projects influenced public policy (to what degree and in what ways)
- ❑ Establish the factors and conditions that facilitated or inhibited the public policy influence of IDRC/ECAPAPA projects
- ❑ Evaluate whether ECAPAPA has the capacity and financial resources necessary to assist the ASARECA family of NARS to incorporate policy concerns into their work

The motivation for this study originates from IDRC Program Directions (2000-2005, p.16) that states, inter alia, that: *IDRC will foster and support the production, dissemination and application of research results leading to policies and technologies that enhance the lives of people in developing countries.*

Definitions of Selected terms

What constitutes public policy influence? According to a review given by Lindquist, policy influence can be categorised as follows:

Expanding Policy Capacities: Activities that improve the knowledge or data of certain actors; support recipients to develop innovative ideas; improve capabilities to communicate ideas; or those that develop new talent for research and analysis.

Broadening Policy Horizons: Activities that provide policy makers with opportunities for networking or learning within their jurisdiction or with colleagues elsewhere; introduce new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate; educate researchers and others who take up new positions with broader understanding of issues; or stimulate quiet dialogue among decision-makers (and among, or with, researchers)

Affecting Policy Regimes: Activities that modify existing programs or policies; or those that lead to the fundamental re-design of programs and policies.

Creation of a new policy regime in an emerging field of endeavor

Unintended consequences of a particular policy process, for example in influencing other (related) policy processes or content.

CHAPTER 2: THE METHODOLOGIES FOR THE CASE STUDY

2.1 Project Selection

This chapter gives the geographic coverage of the case study as well as the procedures adopted in selecting projects and respondents. IDRC has supported a number of research projects in the ten ASARECA countries, however, due to budgetary constraints for this review, only research projects implemented in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have been selected. The projects comprise those that were partially funded by IDRC between 1998 and 2000 as well as those fully funded by the Centre between 2000 and 2002. The initial task was to identify the researchers and to compile the documents that they had produced. This exercise was followed by informal interviews in order to establish the project objectives, contacts made by the researchers during the design and implementation, and status of the project activities and researchers (for example: was the project completed, are the researchers still in their stations and what are the planned activities?).

The selected research projects fell into two thematic areas: economic viability assessment of agricultural technology, and conflicts in natural resource management and use. The former aims at ensuring that the technologies developed are adopted by the farming fraternity while the latter is designed to come up with policy recommendations for strengthening capacity in the management of natural resources and settling of conflicts arising from different users/users¹. The project titles and brief profiles are presented below.

2.2 Brief Project Profiles

2.2.1 Projects on Economic Viability Assessment of Agricultural Technology

- I. ***The role of technology in poverty alleviation: Determination of farm household financial profitability in bean production in Kenya.*** The study was implemented during the period 1998-2000 in selected agro-ecological zones east and west of Kenya and was only partially funded by IDRC. The chief investigator was L. Mose; other investigators, all KARI employees at the time, were M. Waithaka, E. Njue, S. Wangia, B. Salasya and G. Mbugua. All the researchers, including the chief investigator were no longer at KARI at the time of this case study. A report provided by ECAPAPA indicates that the field study was completed but dissemination was not conducted and none of the researchers was at the time working on the project to ensure that dissemination is carried out.
- II. ***Farm Household profitability of Irish potatoes in Uganda.*** The chief investigator was Peter Ngatengize who at the time of the study was based at the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) but has since moved to Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture based in the Ministry of Finance, Kampala, Uganda. The project has been completed and the following documents are available: research proposal; proceedings of a stakeholder workshop held 18 September 2000² and the final report. The chief investigator was assisted by NARO staff.
- III. ***Farm Household financial profitability of Maize/Beans intercropping technological packages.*** The research team for this study located in the north-eastern parts of Tanzania (around Arusha area) was headed by Timothy N. Kirway based at the Department of Research and Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Dar es salaam, Tanzania. The final project report dated November 2000 lists nine collaborating researchers but our preliminary consultations revealed that each actually played only a minor role and everyone, including the team leader, seemed reluctant to own the final report and/or answer questions relating to it. Other available documents are: research proposal, and briefs of workshops held 22 November 2000 at Arumeru and 24 November

¹ We are focusing on evaluating the effects of policy related projects that have been supported through ECAPAPA thus far rather than looking at the influence of ECAPAPA as a whole on its primary target audience. ECAPAPA projects were intended also as a capacity building opportunity (for agricultural researchers participating in the study and through their interaction with policy experts brought into the teams). The projects were also meant to underscore the importance of micro-level information.

²Stakeholders included: policy makers, professionals (researchers and extensionists), private sector and farmers from major potato growing districts (list of participants is appended in Annex 4)

2000 at Babati, both in the vicinity of the research site. Mr Lyimo, deputising for the team leader, stated that the workshop participants (farmers' representatives, extension workers, NGO representatives e.g. World Vision, stockists and traders) were now applying technologies recommended by the project but this could not be independently confirmed during our brief stay at his research station (SARI).

2.2.2 Projects on Natural Resources Management and Use

- I. ***Conflicts in access and use of water resources in the Tana River Basin.*** The study was located in Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Meru Central, Tharaka and Tana districts of Kenya and the chief investigator was Wilson Wasike of the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), assisted by M.M. Ikiara and H.O. Nyangito, also from the same institute. This project has not been completed but the researchers say they have made several contacts with district-level administrators with the aim of increasing awareness and building their capacity in resolving water conflicts. They also state that they are in the process of finalising the draft report and making arrangements for a wider dissemination workshop in Nairobi. Dr Wasike has since moved to another employer while Dr Ikiara also appeared destined to quit his current position at KIPPRA. Dr Nyangito, the most senior member of the team, had other competing responsibilities and apparently was only nominally involved in the activities of this particular project. A research proposal dated September 2001 and a progress report dated October to April 2002 are the only available documents to-date.
- II. ***Minimizing Conflicts in Natural Resources Management and Use: The Role of Social Capital and Local Policies in Kabale, Uganda.*** The project is located in the highlands of Kabale in the southwestern parts of Uganda. Pascal Sanginga a Research Fellow at the African Highlands Initiative (AHI/ICRAF) and the coordinator of AHI Policy Task Force was the key contact person. The project team included a crop scientist, policy maker, a district director of agricultural production and marketing and research assistants. On the basis of reports from the ECAPAPA Coordinating Unit, presentations made to the ECAPAPA Steering Committee and in-built dissemination activities involving stakeholders in Kabale, Dr Sanginga is making good progress and is already contemplating the next phase of the project. But although the researcher claimed that current phase is complete the final report is not ready and all there is on record are the project proposal (August 2001) and a progress report covering the period January through April 2002.
- III. ***Pasture and water use conflicts between Karamoja and the neighbouring districts- Impacts and potential minimisation strategies.*** The principal investigator is Dr. Yakobo Moyini assisted by co-researchers the key ones being Ms. Astrid Van Rooij and Dr. Ayiga. This project is not complete probably due to security problems in the Karamoja area as explained by one of the key researchers interviewed, however a final draft report dated February 2003 is available.

2.3 Survey Procedures to Evaluate Project Policy Intent and Influence

The case study aimed (ideally) at applying the following procedures in order to assess the policy intent and influence of projects funded by IDRC:

- A review of documents including project design documents, monitoring documents and project reports
- Interviews with project researchers (team leaders and collaborators): for this a standard questionnaire developed by IDRC was administered with only slight amendments by the investigator (raw data/information from these interviews are attached as a separate document titled: *Interview results for researchers and their collaborators*)
- Brainstorming sessions with peer reviewers of the project proposals, ECAPAPA/CU staff, senior policy analysts/advisors and research administrators within NARS: this was done because the standard questionnaire was not applicable for those who did not directly participate in the projects either as researchers or as collaborators (*Results of the brainstorming sessions are in Appendix I at the end of this report*)
- Interviews with those said to have been influenced: but as pointed out below, this was not possible since dissemination activities were confined to administrators and stakeholders based within the project areas
- Interviews with relevant IDRC project officers: only one project officer was available in Nairobi and his input is captured at a brainstorming session

The above procedures would help the case study establish and evaluate the following aspects:

- a) Objectives of the research and any reference to policy influence
- b) Activities/mechanisms/approaches to facilitate or influence policy
- c) The level at which the policy is targeted
- d) How the project/research has influenced or contributed towards policy influence
- e) The type of policy influence attributed to the research

Choice of the case study research projects and the survey procedures depended to a large extent on resource availability and past collaboration between IDRC and ECAPAPA. Between 1998–2000 there were three studies on agricultural technology economic viability assessment: one in each of the three east African countries. These studies were only partially funded by IDRC. During the 2000–2002 period, IDRC fully funded three projects on natural resource management and use: one study in Kenya and two in Uganda. There were other projects in these two thematic areas but they were located in countries too distant to cover within the allocated time frame³. Preliminary investigations showed that out of the six projects selected for review, three had been completed while the others were in various stages of implementation. Direct policy impact or influence was therefore difficult to detect because, even for projects that had been completed,

³ There are other recent projects fully supported by IDRC on internalizing the gender factor in agricultural research, but they cannot be included in the case study because their implementation just commenced towards the end of 2003.

there was no dissemination aimed at national as opposed to local (grassroots level) policy makers.

Since the projects selected for the case study are by and large incomplete, we shall require a different strategy for evaluating their potential to influence policy. As can be seen from the narrative of the tasks accomplished so far by the research teams (project profiles), contacts in one form or another have been made during the design stages and stakeholders have participated in workshops held at various levels. There are benefits therefore that have accrued and capacities that may have been strengthened. This is important strategically because although IDRC targets policy influence and would in future place emphasis on projects with such potentials, capacity building is an equally important goal: adoption of agricultural innovations as well as policy influence are to a large extent hindered by institutional capacity weaknesses both in the public and private sectors. We therefore decided not to downplay the policy influence dimension, but to also direct our attention to the following potential contributions of the selected projects⁴:

- Institutional capacity building and networks created
- Calibre and number of policy makers that participated during the design stages of the project
- Extent to which the participating research teams improved their research capacities, and the networks they have created or in which they participated
- Number and quality of dissemination workshops held; the calibre and number of participants
- Successful completion indicator giving a judgement from the researcher's perspective as to whether the project will be completed and research findings disseminated (is work currently on-going or at a standstill, is there commitment to completing the tasks, are the financial resources available to continue and later disseminate the findings to policy makers, what other responsibilities are the researchers currently engaged in and what are the time horizons and timetables/schedules)
- What are the linkages with ECAPAPA Coordinating Unit (CU) or direct associates (partners): synergies and extensions or benefits to ASARECA partners; improvements in organization and management of similar or other projects under ECAPAPA; presentations by research teams of tentative findings at meetings of ASARECA/ECAPAPA and use/application of results from the on-going research to other areas or to policy makers; communication between CU and the researchers regarding current status and any difficulties encountered in the field; possibility of project extension or availability of additional funds; and successful completion indicator giving a judgement from ECAPAPA's perspective
- The policy making environment in the region: what are the major issues/policy goals and what are the constraints e.g. lack of human and financial resources in the public sector; are the selected projects relevant to policy makers; are the research teams capable of delivering research products required by policy makers; what institutional arrangements and resources are needed to improve dissemination of research outputs to policy makers?

⁴ We may not accomplish a thorough investigation of all these issues within the scope of this case study but it is hoped that at least ECAPAPA researchers and policy experts will be made more aware of the need to account for them in future project formulation. Lessons derived from each project selected for this case study will contribute towards achievement of more efficient operational procedures.

Irrespective of the stage of the research, the case study should identify factors that may have facilitated and/or inhibited policy influence in the projects. Factors considered to facilitate policy influence include the involvement of policy makers in the project, the establishment of links between government officials and researchers, the revision of a policy by the government when the researchers made results available to them, the timeliness of the research, and the relevance of the research to policy makers. Types of policy impact include the actual formulation of new policy, use of project results as inputs into policy, the facilitation of policy formulation by policy makers through the use of an introduced technology, request of research results to prepare a policy document, and the gaining of greater capacity by a research institution or researchers to present research results to policy makers (Kimberly Edwards, 2001). Due to the fact that the selected projects were in reality works in progress, investigations centred on policy influence as already defined above rather than on policy impact.

In addition to factors raised in the main structured questionnaire, research influence will also depend on other institutional, organizational and managerial variables such as: capacity and experience of the researchers, compatibility of project with on-going institutional research agenda, level of project funding, underlying strategic objectives and goals of agencies providing research funds, involvement of policy makers in research priority setting and design, timeliness and schedules for project deliverables, dissemination strategies and funding provision post-project. The ability of a research project to influence policy processes thus hinges on whether the project was merely ad hoc or was a sustained and broad-based process that allows various stakeholders to buy in and eventually own that process. Through intensive discussion sessions with selected key informants, we evaluated ECAPAPA/IDRC projects on the basis of the above criteria: are these projects ad hoc or are they creating and strengthening a research/policy influence process; are the projects adequately designed, funded and managed, compared to projects funded by other donors that compete for researchers' limited time? Answers to these questions are contained in Appendix I and discussed in detail in chapter 5; chapters 3 and 4 give highlights of researchers' responses to questions raised in the main survey questionnaire relating to policy intent and influence of their projects.

From every research/project, the case study will select the interview sample from the following categories of contacts made by the research projects: researchers (national and international), project officers, policy makers at local and national levels, and other stakeholders such as NGOs, and community based organisations. Due to time constraint, farmers will not be interviewed.

2.4 Constraints Encountered during Survey Implementation

The first problem encountered was in relation to logistical coordination with the principal researchers. After considerable postponements that consumed a lot of valuable time, we finally managed to make contact with almost all the targeted researchers and their collaborators. In some cases, as indicated in the project profiles, researchers had already moved away from their original institutions thus making it extremely difficult to secure appointments. And where the principal investigator was out of the country, as was the case for two projects, we felt that collaborators left behind had little motivation to answer questions especially if they had not been active in the project. In Tanzania, we could not manage to get any response from the principal

investigator due to other field commitments: the collaborator who was interviewed skipped many questions claiming that only the principal investigator had the answers. But these problems reflect the reality of the research environment, especially among those associated with policy research work.

The second problem was in relation to the main questionnaire (case study interview data sheet) that we received from IDRC and was to be filled out as part of a larger world-wide survey of IRDC projects. This data sheet could only be filled out comprehensively by the research team leaders: collaborators had a difficult time answering some of the questions especially if they did not participate in the project conception, proposal review workshops or if they were only partially involved in the writing of the report. By and large, the length of the data sheet intimidated literally all the respondents and made it impossible to administer through a mailing system because most of the questions required interpretation, expounding and probing: in two cases we left questionnaires to be filled out and mailed back to us only to find that the answer slots for many questions were filled with N/A (not applicable). We could have eliminated a lot of questions that we felt were going to be inapplicable considering that out of the six projects, only three had been completed and hardly any dissemination (post-project) activities accomplished. Making significant amendments to the interview data sheet would have had serious repercussions on the overall design and analysis vis-à-vis other case studies and was therefore not attempted.

The last problem is with regard to the glaring male bias, not just in the sample of respondents filling out the main interview data sheet but also for the key informants contributing to the brainstorming sessions. This bias is driven by capacity weaknesses in the national agricultural research systems (NARS) where one rarely finds a large number of highly qualified female researchers (e.g. at MSc/MA and PhD). Female applications for research grants are therefore usually outnumbered by those of males⁵. For example, for all of the ECAPAPA projects reviewed in this case study, there were no female team leaders and among the senior collaborators, we could only find two in the NRM projects in Uganda; the KARI technology team had three female co-researchers but all had moved to other institutions and could not be reached. The situation was somewhat better at the few district level workshops that had been convened by two or three of the projects (as indicated by participants' lists). Although gender had been flagged by IDRC as a key issue in research for development and dissemination of research findings, it appears that gender mainstreaming may have only been implicit in the projects under investigation. Discussions with policy analysts from NARS and the CGIAR centres based in Nairobi seemed to indicate that in spite of the fact that gender is critical to resource use efficiency and sustainable management of natural resources, it is only assumed as a cross-cutting issue, but rarely incorporated explicitly as part of the project objective.

These problems will most likely impact on the extent to which our data set can be used for making extrapolations. But as far as ECAPAPA is concerned, issues such as those relating to gender will require deliberate actions especially at the stage of selecting proposals and research teams: the fear, however, is that affirmative actions aimed at gender or age/experience balancing usually have undesirable impacts on the quality of the research outputs.

⁵ Compare female applications and successful proposals under ECAPAPA with those under other networks (such as FANRPAN, Foodnet, ARPAN, IFPRI/2020) and donor agencies

CHAPTER 3: POLICY INTENT OF ECAPAPA PROJECTS

3.1. Projects on Economic Viability Assessment of Agricultural Technologies

3.1.1. How the Projects were Selected

The initial policy analysis research commenced in November 1998 in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The main objectives were to: determine farm household financial profitability of recommended crop varieties under different agro-ecologies; initiate NARI bio-physical scientists to start appreciating the role of integrating profitability concerns in the planning of their technology development work; and, test the extent to which multi-disciplinary teams could work together on a socio-economic issue affecting the NARIs and the clientele being served (see Appendix A1 for Country Teams).

These research activities were important to ECAPAPA as test cases on collaborative work between ASERACA and NARIs on issues related to progress reporting, handling of research funds and future administration of research grants of larger magnitudes. The intent was therefore not only in research results but also in the process and lessons learned for the future planning of research activities.

3.1.2. A Review of the Project Documents

The three studies (the role of technology in poverty alleviation: determination of farm household financial profitability in bean production in Kenya; farm household profitability of Irish potatoes in Uganda; and farm household financial profitability of Maize/Beans intercropping technological packages: a case study of northern Tanzania) were partially funded by IDRC during the years 1998-2000 under the agricultural policy research and analysis activities of ECAPAPA. The project documents and activities are reviewed below:

a: The role of technology in poverty alleviation: Determination of farm household financial profitability in bean production in Kenya

This project was started in December 1998 and was reported to have been completed by May 2001. The study had the following objectives:

- Describing the current farmer bean production practices vis-à-vis research recommendations
- Describing the current bean marketing system and identifying areas with bottlenecks
- Establishing financial profitability of dry beans under different Agricultural Ecological Zones (AEZ) and production scenarios.

It was envisaged that the project results would be able to address policy issues related to information availability on appropriateness of the technologies and dissemination channels and different farmer circumstances, and the timely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizer and certified seeds. The criteria for selection of areas of study were tilted towards the status of

utilization of beans in the area and its ranking in the local inhabitants' diets, hence the choice of AEZs in the eastern and western parts of Kenya.

One of the findings of the study was that yields obtained by farmers were low partly due to non-use of fertilizer and certified seeds; this was caused by poor knowledge about these technologies and also because of inadequate supply or perceived high prices. The study also found that due to lack of market information and uncertainty in returns, not much land was being allocated to beans. Their recommendations were that:

- Bean production packages be availed to the farmers through extension demonstrations and pamphlets
- Market information on bean production, consumption and market prices be made readily available
- Since bean seeds can be recycled instead of buying fresh seed each year, some of the farmers should be encouraged to produce bean seeds locally in order to supply good quality seeds to their neighbours

Intent of policy influence

The fourth objective in the proposal was to “suggest policy implications emerging from the study”. However, the final research document had only three major objectives as stated above. This may suggest that, perhaps, policy intent was not one of the key issues under consideration. From the stated objectives of this study, there were strong inclinations towards knowledge generation as an indirect means of policy influence. The findings point to the importance of beans in food security, its importance in soil fertility management and why policy makers should promote the commodity as a strategy for reducing poverty and unemployment. But explicit intentions to influence policy along these directions are lacking in both the proposal and the final document that was made available to us. Discussions with the ECAPAPA project coordinators confirm that policy influence may have been implied but had not been articulated explicitly in the documents.

b: Farm household profitability of Irish potatoes in Uganda

The study was commenced in October 1998 and completed by March 2001. The choice of Irish potato was because it is an important cash crop as well as being one of the main food crops especially among the urban communities in Uganda; other food crops are bananas (the main staple), maize, beans, cassava and groundnuts. It is highly responsive to inputs such as high quality seed tubers, fertilizers, pesticides and improved agronomic practices. Because of its relatively high yields, a short growing period and high market value, the crop is being used to target poverty alleviation. The main objectives of the study were to:

- Describe existing production systems and available technologies
- Assess the level of adoption for available/recommended technologies
- Determine the farm level profitability for selected technologies in the ecological zones
- Generate policy and institutional implications for increased adoption of technologies and increased production and farm level incomes

The study areas were the highland and midland elevation regions of Uganda where potatoes are a major cash and food crop. One of the key issues as a result of this study is the high cost of improved seeds. This concern is reflected in the recommendations that state that:

- Research should emphasize improvement of seed quality and quantity and work closely with the private sector in multiplication and distribution; post-harvest handling should be developed
- Government should promote private sector participation in seed multiplication and distribution
- Market information and extension/research linkages should be strengthened
- Infrastructure should be improved in order to cut down marketing costs

Other important policy implications were in relation to seed distribution, technology dissemination and advisory services.

Intent of policy influence

There is no forthright policy intent mentioned at the proposal stage but in the final report, one of the objectives is to generate policy and institutional implications for increased adoption of technologies and increased production and farm level incomes. Going by this objective, it is obvious that the researchers were looking for new ideas to inform policy makers and contribute to the formulation of policy options.

c: Farm Household financial profitability of Maize/Beans intercropping technological packages: a case study of northern Tanzania

The Tanzanian study commenced at the same time as the Kenyan study in December 1998 and was completed in June 2001. The focus of the study, maize and beans, is justified on grounds that the crops are important food crops in the region; maize is the staple food crop while beans are important in the diets of the people. The other motivation is the fact that Tanzania is the biggest producer of beans in terms of total production and yields per unit area in the region and the country is the biggest exporter among the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries. The study was initiated in the eastern and northern zone of Tanzania with the main objectives of:

- Reviewing previous studies regarding technical recommendation and socio-economic factors affecting maize/beans intercropping, maize/pigeon pea intercropping and maize mono-cropping enterprises in the study area
- Describing current farmer practices on maize/beans intercropping, maize/pigeon pea intercropping and maize mono-cropping in the study area
- Determining household financial profitability that different categories of farmers using different levels of inputs and recommendations packages can get from different cropping patterns
- Creating awareness and feedback to policy makers as well as various stakeholders regarding financial profitability of the technologies

The research work was completed and its recommendations discussed in two workshops that were convened in the locality of the research project.

Intent of policy influence

The policy intent of this research was explicitly stated as one of the objectives, that is: to create awareness and feedback to policy makers as well as various stakeholders regarding financial profitability of the technologies. It is therefore assumed that all the findings should have been targeted to the identified people to ensure that the objectives are fully met. The report has also highlighted the importance for researchers of different disciplines to work together to address farmers' problems. This is an important issue especially if the research findings are going to be relevant to agricultural policy.

3.1.3 An Evaluation of Procedures and Strategies of the Projects

a: The role of technology in poverty alleviation: Determination of farm household financial profitability in bean production in Kenya

The core team members were all from the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). They incorporated three other research extension liaison officers (who were employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) for the initial workshops and for the study programme. The interaction between this group and other informants were basically to provide the required information in their areas of expertise, other than dissemination. A final report of the study is available but the core team members have since migrated to other institutions. Consequently, no dissemination of the results of the study has been undertaken. Discussions with one of the researchers now working at a locally based international institution confirmed that dissemination was never done and policy makers could not possibly be aware of the study and its recommendations⁶. This was confirmed by talking to key people in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the Department of Research and Liaison Division whose officers participated in the study and other policy makers involved in food security decision-making cycle in the country.

b: Farm household profitability of Irish potatoes in Uganda

Although the majority of the researchers were from the national agricultural research institutes/stations, there were others from a private seed producing association and a non-governmental organisation interested in food security issues in the region of the study. The roles played by the latter categories were, however, not clear.

After completion of the study, a workshop was held where participants representing different sectors were invited (Participants list Appendix A2). The main participants were legislators; and representatives of NGOs with interest in the marketing of potato and distribution of inputs; farmers from various parts of the countries; seed producer associations; and, researchers. The presentation of research findings was followed by formation of discussion groups on four thematic areas: production, technologies, marketing and profitability. A number of resolutions

⁶ Dr M. Waithaka of International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

were made on how to strengthen the key segments in the Irish potato commodity chain. One other accomplishment of the workshop was that the key actors in the industry agreed to collaborate for the success and benefit of the producers and the general public.

c: Farm Household financial profitability of Maize/Beans intercropping technological packages: a case study of northern Tanzania

As in the other studies, the research team was multidisciplinary and comprised agricultural economists, breeders, agronomists and soil scientists. The locations of the study were selected because they were representative in terms of level of production and long term involvement of researchers. This may suggest that the researchers intended to sustain research interventions in the areas in the future but the reports do not commit them to this directly and explicitly.

The workshops to disseminate the research findings were conducted at two different district headquarters and the participants included farmer representatives from all the villages, extension representative, stockists, traders and world vision representatives, all of who were working in the locations where the studies were conducted. The approach was presentation of results and the discussion and contributions from the stakeholders. The workshop had a large representation from the farmers and it was therefore found necessary to use the local language for ease of communication. At the end of the workshop, local language summary of the report was given to the farmers and the copies of the main report to extension workers, stockists, traders and the NGO representatives.

3.2 Projects on Natural Resource Management (NRM)

3.2.1 How the Projects were Selected for Funding by ECAPAPA

ECAPAPA promotes policies and institutions that facilitate sustainable and equitable productivity growth. It recognises that generating technologies without being conscious of the local conditions where they will be applied has the potential of raising conflicts and sustainability concerns. Conflicts that appear to be local can acquire national, regional and even international dimensions and hence the need for pre-emptive measures. The reason for involvement in conflict studies was to strengthen rural communities (as well as organizations that support them) with increased awareness and capabilities regarding the imperative to use and manage natural resources sustainably in order to improve the community's livelihood strategies and attainment of productive and equitable development. The general objective of these projects was to develop, through case analyses, multi-stakeholder approaches for managing conflicts over natural resources in Eastern and Central Africa. The studies were expected to provide guidance for in-situ efforts as well as for external support to deal with conflicts that may be obstructing proper NRM and their contributions to poverty alleviation and wider development.

The Coordinating Unit (CU) of ECAPAPA started by preparing a concept paper on the subject in February 2001 before sending out a request for proposals (RFP) that targeted individuals and research institutions based in the ten countries of ASARECA. Once the proposals were received, the CU short-listed 15 for a peer review process. The principal investigators were invited to make oral presentations of their proposals before final selection was done. It was the view of the

panel that in the proposals, the stakeholders and policy makers involved should be clearly identified and encouraged to engage in the process from the beginning in order to ensure their active participation and ownership of the entire process⁷. The focus had to be on “conflict” and the budgets were to be accompanied by detailed and explicit notes based on activities described in the work plan. Dissemination elements should have been thought out from the start of the research activity and enough resources, both financial and time, allocated for each activity.

Multidisciplinary teams were preferred with each member having clearly spelt out assignments and responsibilities. ECAPAPA encouraged the applicants to seek clearance and assent for the research activity to ensure that the respective institutions were supportive of the project. An experienced regional resource person (advisor) was identified to guide the process and provide leadership to the teams and to eventually synthesize the results looking for common outputs and cross border similarities.

The studies selected by ECAPAPA under this category were five, however the ones that will be reviewed for this case study are only three as already indicated earlier.

3.2.2 A Review of the NRM Project Documents

a: Minimizing conflicts in natural resources management and use: the role of social capital and local policies in Kabale, Uganda

The purpose of the study was to assess the role of social capital and the local policies in minimizing natural resource conflicts and to identify alternative policy options and strategies for minimising conflicts in the use and management of natural resources in the highlands of Kabale, South-western Uganda. It is asserted that little attention has been paid to local conflicts over the use and management of natural resources by local communities. Yet these are probably the most common widespread conflicts affecting natural resource management practices and the livelihood options for the majority of small-scale farmers. In a country like Uganda where the majority depend on agriculture, strategies to minimise these conflicts is of critical importance for development. The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the sources, causes, dimensions and the underlying factors that lead to conflicts over the use and management of natural resources
- Understand how NRM conflicts impinge on management strategies and livelihood options of small scale farmers and their implications on building or diluting social capital
- Assess the effects of the social capital on the implementation of local policies and in the management of natural resource conflicts
- Analyse local policies and their effectiveness and implications in managing conflicts over the use of natural resources
- Develop strategies and formulate recommendations for improving the relevance of local policies and social capital in minimizing conflicts in natural resources management and use

⁷ This noble desire was, however, never met as it became logistically difficult to bring relevant stakeholders and other research collaborators to the peer review and design workshops that preceded launching of the projects.

Although the final report of the research work is not out, the researchers maintain that a lot has been achieved based on the findings of this study and that, since it was participatory, most of the recommendations were being implemented as the study progressed.

Intent of policy influence

The stated aim of the study was to provide information and to stimulate policy responses that improve conflict management at the local level. It was envisaged that the results could be used to enhance the integrity of local councils and redress inefficiencies in their management and handling of disputes and conflicts. The intent of the research was to point to relevant new policy actions needed to support the process of decentralisation and enhance the capacity of decentralised local councils and local communities to manage and transform conflicts that affect the use of natural resources into opportunities for collective learning, collaboration and action. But it appears that what is missing is a better definition of the targeted level of policy and policy makers (community or higher) and more specific methodological steps to engage and influence them. This weakness spreads through all the case study projects and points to a need for guidance from an experienced regional advisor.⁸

b: Pasture and water use conflicts between Karamoja and the neighbouring districts - Impacts and potential conflict minimisation strategies

Karamoja region is located in the north-eastern part of Uganda and covers about 24,000 square kilometres. It is a region of constant social hardship, droughts, famine, livestock epidemics and general insecurity. The interplay of these factors has revealed how the history of the Karamoja has been punctuated with forward and backward movements in its social transformation. The major problems of the region are:

- Relatively harsh climatic conditions coupled with a mode of living based on a strong cultural value of cattle that have resulted in ecological degradation
- Limited availability of surface water sources thus discouraging sedentary lifestyles
- Food insecurity due to frequent droughts and lack of a culture of cultivation
- Recent increase in insecurity as a result of acquisition of modern weapons by the Karimojong
- Extremely poor health conditions of the population due to malnutrition, poor medical facilities, and inadequate awareness creation (NEAP Secretariat, 1993)

The overall goal of the study was to identify the underlying causes of the natural resource based conflicts between Karamoja and the surrounding districts and also to identify strategies for minimizing the conflicts. The specific objectives are stated as:

- Identifying factors that cause inter-district, and inter and intra-community conflicts over natural resources, particularly water and pasture
- Identifying leading causes of natural resources scarcity

⁸ Although ECAPAPA had clearly anticipated this problem and engaged the services of a resource person to review and guide the NRM projects, logistical difficulties seem to have affected implementation of this idea.

- Establishing the impact of natural resources scarcity on livestock and crop production and distribution in the region
- Identifying appropriate conflict minimising strategies
- Disseminating and promoting research findings among resource users, district leaders, central government, legislators and researchers

Intent of policy influence

The focus of intent of policy influence was to be through dissemination of research findings to policy makers and resource users. But the implementation strategies fall short of a clear translation of these intentions into action: unlike the NRM project in Kabale where a number of local meetings could be used to disseminate information while the project is in progress, no such actions are reported to have been implemented with any degree of conviction and success in the case of Karamoja.

d: Conflicts in access and use of water resources in the Tana River Basin, Kenya

The conflict in access to water resources along most of Kenya's small catchments is due to stress and water scarcity especially in regions with dense population. This problem is amplified in the case of smallholdings based in the arid and semi-arid parts and in situations where water development institutions are weak and water pricing is inefficient. This is more so for the Mt. Kenya region where, upstream, there is high demand for water to irrigate horticultural crops and downstream (in areas that are semiarid) there is demand for growing the same crops as well as food crops. In addition to these demands, there is heavy demand for water for hydroelectric power generation along the Tana River that drains the region. Thus competition for water is a major public policy concern. The study therefore had the following objectives:

- Examine ecological economic, social, institutional cultural and political aspects of water access, use and management in the Tana River basin
- Describe and analyse allocation and use of water among different economic activities along the basin and determine the optimal water allocation strategies for smallholder irrigation schemes
- Estimate direct and indirect income loss/gains due to changes or variations in access to water resources both in upper and lower basin agricultural enterprises
- Evaluate factors contributing to local water stress and conflicts upstream and downstream the basin
- Develop and highlight strategies for conflict resolution and improved management of Tana basin's water resource in order to alleviate the deterioration of water quantity (and quality) in the basin and for resolving future basin resource conflicts at sub-regional and national levels

Intent of policy influence

The study recognised that the competition for water is a major public policy concern and intended to come out with policy briefs on:

- Evidence on the nature and effect of water conflicts in the Tana basin among small enterprise chains – this is important in developing a case for comprehensive water management reforms to mitigate against potentially adverse impacts of water transfers for local communities in order to sustain crop yields and output growth
- A framework for looking at pluralism in water rights within the Tana River basin
- Perception of household and other water users in the Basin on water transfers and markets, which will help resolve contentious issues in the establishment of tradable water rights

These were seen as important research outputs that would help the government in its formulation of legal and regulatory frameworks for managing freshwater resources in micro-catchments. They could also assist community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs in designing proposals of fundable projects on community water management associations. Finally, they constitute an important foundation for the producers’ understanding and appreciation of recommended solutions to various natural resource conflicts and could also be a basis for replication of strategies to other groups or catchments areas that are struggling to resolve their own water conflicts.⁹

3.2.3 An Evaluation of Procedures and Strategies of the NRM Projects

a: Minimizing conflicts in natural resources management and use: the role of social capital and local policies in Kabale, Uganda.

Six years prior to this project, the African Highland Initiative (AHI) had been promoting community based participatory approaches to address NRM issues related to maintaining soil productivity, land use efficiency and to generate technologies that are more appropriate to farmers’ circumstances. Recognising that policy reforms are almost always needed for the implementation of the NRM innovations to alleviate poverty, AHI established a policy-working group to increase the policy relevance of research at the local level and to identify and undertake joint priority activities. The AHI local NRM policy research initiative focuses on assessing: the effects of policy on NRM; the degree of harmony or conflict of policies on NRM as they are implemented at local levels; the effectiveness of local NRM policy processes; and, the relationship between policy change, technology adoption and NRM.

In Kabale, AHI is supporting efforts to catalyse local political cooperation to facilitate the adoption of sustainable NRM innovations and policies. A policy task force was subsequently formed to provide a forum for institutional linkages and collaboration among relevant stakeholders, prioritise research and policy needs and follow up actions of common interest. The policy task force identified priority areas where research can contribute significantly to policy making. In late 2000, a participatory action research project entitled “strengthening social capital for improving policies and decision making in NRM” funded by NRSP/DFID started in selected communities in the Rubaya sub-county of Kabale. The purpose of the project was to improve the NRM through strengthening social capital and local level processes and capacity for developing, implementing and enforcing bylaws and other local policies. This project therefore was supposed to build on and complement the on-going research whose overall goal was to

⁹ The final report on this project was not yet out at the time of this study hence no comments can be made on findings and recommendations.

improve the understanding of conflicts in the use and management of natural resources and conflict management mechanisms processes under decentralised local government.

The Initiative's new strategy has given increasing emphasis to community based participatory approaches to solve natural resource management problems and this was the method used in the study. It included focus group discussions, case studies, resource mapping and diagramming (social, mobility, resources, etc) of key informants, informal interviews, field observations, community workshops and meetings.

The conceptual framework of the study was adopted from the "Synergy Approach" of social capital (Woolcock and Narayan 2000). This approach contends that policies or social capital alone are not sufficient for the promotion of broad based and sustainable conflict resolution strategies: complementarity and partnerships forged both within and across different sectors are required.

Apart from the participatory approach, the other methods of dissemination such as emails, publications, presentations and reports were used. The policy task force and the policy stakeholders' forum were to facilitate collaboration among institutions and stakeholders at the different scales and levels. The task force was made of competent analysts/researchers, dedicated research-friendly policy makers and development agents of diverse backgrounds, disciplines and institutions.

b: Pasture and water use conflicts between Karamoja and the neighbouring districts - Impacts and potential conflict minimisation strategies

Environmental Economics Association of Uganda (EEAU), a private consulting firm that doubles as an NGO, carried out this study. The conflict between the districts of Karamoja and the neighbouring ones has been increasing in severity. Mistrust between the Karimojong, their neighbours and Central Government is also on the increase and efforts aimed at putting an end to the conflicts have not succeeded. Opting for disarmament of the Karimojong does not seem to be a feasible lasting solution. If current levels of conflict continue or even escalate then the agricultural potential of the north-east and parts of eastern Uganda will be severely undermined. Already, agricultural productivity in Karamoja is extremely low, with many manifestations of land degradation, principally through overgrazing at watering points. There is an urgent need, therefore, to identify alternative, sustainable and win-win strategies for conflict minimisation in these regions of the country.

The study methodology used was participatory rural appraisal. First, documentary and literature review was conducted to determine the spatial and temporal dimension of the study and to form the design of the research instruments. The research team developed three instruments for the baseline study. These instruments included the individual questionnaire, key interview guides and focus group discussion guides. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants earlier selected purposively and considered to be more aware of, and knowledgeable about, the situation; as well as those involved in different capacities in and out of Karamoja. These included government officials, local council members, both at the districts and sub-county and other levels, a few elders and church of Uganda Mission in Moroto.

A uniform sample selection procedure, stratified by districts, was applied to identify all individuals for interview. This study used the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) methodology, whereby cluster and systematic sampling methods were used.¹⁰ This Multistage Cluster Sampling Design was developed using the district as the first sampling unit, then to sub-county, followed by parishes, local councils/villages and, ultimately, the household as the last unit of sampling. In some districts, a household sampling list was obtained from local council (LC I) Chairpersons of the village while elsewhere, a household listing was done. Using the systematic sampling technique, a total of 25 households (with replacement) was selected from each village. A total of 50 households per district and a total of 400 households in the study area were selected. In each household, the target respondents were the head of the household. This was perhaps the most important instrument since it collected most of the measurable/quantitative indicators on the conflict situation within Karamoja and between Karamoja and neighbouring districts. It focused on, but was not limited to, the demographic characteristics of the population; socio-economic aspects; livelihood systems of the population; and, causes, impacts and resolution mechanisms of conflicts; among others.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guides were developed to elicit information through interaction with the stakeholders. Participants in FGDs included women and men aged 15 years and above. FGDs were conducted at parish level. Data from in-depth interviews and FGDs were used extensively to generate qualitative data that was better suited to producing an understanding of the conflict dynamics and the systematic interplay between cultural and underlying attitudinal factors that impact on the nature and level of conflicts. Results from the FGDs were used to validate what was established in the questionnaires.

Because the security situation in Karamoja region had not adequately improved, the researchers had to use facilitators/enumerators from the area. These were selected from competent persons in the study area based on academic credentials, experience in research, and ability to effectively translate the questions into local languages.

Data collection involved identification of respondents for each of the instruments, the actual administration of the various survey instruments, editing and compiling and transmission of the completed questionnaires to the institutional home of EEAU for analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed using statistical and quantitative methods.

The conclusion from this study was that attempts to bring the conflicts within Karamoja and with the neighbouring districts to manageable levels intensified. This not only calls for interventions from Government and others, but also requires that the Karimojong themselves accept being part of the larger Uganda and operate within its laws and governance systems. Thus, a more holistic, multi-pronged approach to conflict minimisation is necessary. Any future conflict prevention and management strategies must be inclusive of all factions both small and large, inside Karamoja, as well as all their neighbours from both within Uganda and the neighbouring countries.

¹⁰ The ideal method, Simple Random Sampling (SRS), was found to be too cumbersome to apply in selecting households.

The study recommends that unless all the relevant stakeholders are recognised and facilitated to sit together to reach a consensus on the management and use of the natural resources, attempts to enforce the authority of the state and policies (e.g. disarmament, deployment of forces, recruitment of local defence units or LDUs, will only increase the tension and conflict. Conflict resolution in Karamoja region and all the neighbouring areas needs many fronts, many of which have been opened up by NGOs. Given the history of successes registered by NGO operations and the aggressiveness exhibited by them, for example, during the disarmament exercise, the government should channel funding through them to expand on developmental programmes in the entire region. The study reiterates the point that conflict resolution and local management of natural resources rely on locality-specific solutions. Information sharing and communication are important because they can increase transparency, build trust, resolve issues of fact and also serve as a valuable means of identifying and engaging various stakeholders.

Natural resources are sometimes far more productive when left intact than when physically divided. In the Karamoja case, the resources in question may look much more divisible and more suited to fencing, but since these resources are scarce and unevenly distributed, they need to be managed in larger units. Common property regimes seem to be the most efficient form of resource use in such a case. There is considerable consensus that nomadic pastoralism based on common property arrangements are the most productive use of arid lands that can only support limited and occasional grazing and temporary cultivation.

c: Conflicts in access and use of water resources in the Tana River Basin, Kenya

The NRM project in Kenya was conducted by a team of researchers based at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) in five administrative districts along the Tana River basin. Secondary data was collected on relevant issues but primary data constituted the main type of information collected. The primary data covered items like the nature of conflict, water conflict management, multiple water uses in the water catchments areas, and relevant details about the households. The key instruments for data collection were interview schedules and structured questionnaires. The focus of the study was on small enterprise chains and the criteria for selection of the area were physical and socio-economic characteristics of the basin, administrative spread in household choice agro-ecological zones, human population density/activity, distribution of water users in terms of landholdings size, and the history of conflict and efforts aimed at their resolution.

The analytical method used depended on the objectives but were predominantly: econometric analysis, descriptive analysis, water accounting, contingent valuation and application of principles of environmental resource conflict management.

The dissemination strategy was a workshop of between 60-100 people (including representatives of selected catchments areas) with the aim of building capacity within the Tana Basin to resolve water conflicts and the publication of discussion papers, policy briefs, pamphlets and journals. As mentioned earlier, the study has not been completed therefore any activities resulting from recommendations and dissemination do not exist.

CHAPTER 4: POLICY INFLUENCE BY ECAPAPA PROJECTS

4.1 Indicators of Policy Influence

4.1.1 An Overview

Policy is seen as a set of processes, activities or actions preferred in the pursuit of one or more objectives of an organization (Neilson, 2001). The policy process covers several things: it emphasizes the stages of decision-making and ways of putting issues on the agenda as matters of public concern, along with often rather intangible processes of shaping the way issues are thought and talked about. Policy processes are often thought of as defining problems or goals, coming up with policy solutions or choices, and their implementation strategies. In those instances where ideas or policy recommendations from outside government are seriously considered, they are invariably modified by internal bureaucratic dynamics and other political considerations. Lindquist (2001) has outlined, on the basis of an extensive literature review, the perspectives for assessing the policy influence of IDRC projects. The author states that assessing policy influence is about carefully discerning intermediate influences such as expanding capacities of chosen actors and broadening horizons of others that comprise a policy network. Three broad categories of policy influence are considered:

Expanding policy capacities

- Improving the knowledge/data of certain actors
- Supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas
- Improving capabilities to communicate ideas
- Developing new talent for research and analysis

Broadening policy horizons

- Providing opportunities for networking/learning within the jurisdiction or with colleagues elsewhere
- Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate
- Educating researchers and others who take up new positions with broader understanding of issues
- Stimulating quiet dialogue among decision makers and among or with researchers

Affecting policy regimes

- Modification of existing programs or policies
- Fundamental re-design of programs and policies

Although some of the six projects selected for review have not been finalized and dissemination activities undertaken, they can easily be assessed on the basis of the first criteria listed above. It would be naïve to expect any policy reforms arising from the technology studies but in the case

of the NRM projects, one can say with some degree of confidence that the target for policy influence starts at the community level and sub-regional levels. Indeed, if these community level policy targets had been clearly defined and appropriate analytical methodologies applied, higher levels of policy influence, and even direct impacts, could have been discernible. The NRM studies, especially those in Uganda, applied participatory techniques requiring cooperation of local CBOs, NGOs, administrators and politicians. We cannot therefore gainsay the fact that these people were influenced in terms of expanding their policy capacities and broadening their policy horizons. This result is in line with the mandate of ECAPAPA: to help build research capacities, provide policy relevant information and strengthen the policy/research links but there are some inherent weaknesses that need to be ironed out in order to go beyond the level of expanding the levels of policy capacities and horizons.

First, we did observe that the *methodologies and strategies for influencing policy makers at different levels appear to be ad hoc*; they must be tested and refined in order to guarantee more predictable outcomes and we strongly feel this is an area ECAPAPA can have significant roles. As already mentioned in earlier sections of this report, the NRM projects had a regional advisor whose engagement run into difficulties that probably have something to do with remuneration levels/opportunity costs of the senior researchers and/or wavering professional commitment (this issue is discussed further below and in Chapter 6). The technology studies, on the other hand followed a more conventional methodology where policy influence could only be expected to arise from dissemination of the final products. Although there was one case of reported policy impact (the Irish potato project headed by Dr Peter Ngategize), we are not at all convinced that this favourable outcome was entirely due to the recommendations of the project. But this particular case underscores our concern about the need to institutionalise the methods, filed practices and strategies for influencing policy makers. Where a policy impact/influence appears to have been contingent upon the strategic location of the team leader of a project (Dr Ngategize happened to be located in the Ministry of Finance and close enough to the Office of the President) questions arise as to whether the same level of policy influence could actually have been achieved otherwise: what was done right, how was it done and who else was influenced in the process? Answers to these questions have important implications for reinforcement of behavioural change. If outcomes are only coincidental then it is unlikely that there will be the institutional memory needed to sustain the policy reforms. But this particular story can be turned around and viewed as an opportunity: greater policy influence can be attained depending on the researcher's experience and his/her knowledge about policy-making processes. This, for ECAPAPA would mean more stringent selection criteria, not just for the projects and the methodologies, but also for the research teams.

The second observation is that all the projects went through the motions of project design, thinking through the data, deriving potential policy requirements and expressing these as recommendations *but without additional concrete efforts to indicate how those recommendations could be translated into policy reforms at different levels of decision making*. This challenge seems to go beyond the scopes of these particular projects considering the modest financial resource envelopes and the implicit capacity building objective with which both ECAPAPA and IDRC appear to have been quite content.

4.1.2 Was there any individual capacity building that would be the foundation for policy influence?

It was pointed out to us by many respondents, and we have also raised the prospect repeatedly, that these projects benefited the researchers in terms of building their capacity and exposure. This was a desirable outcome and due to lack of completion of the projects, probably the only expectation in the context of a long term policy influence. However, the achievement of this objective is questionable on the following grounds:

- The research teams rarely operated as a unit and learning opportunities, especially for the junior members, seem to have been far in between; the teams appear to have disintegrated rather prematurely thus precluding any chances of interaction with other professionals and policy makers beyond the research locations
- Not a single team leader mentioned that the results of their studies were presented at any conference or workshop that could challenge the analytical techniques that were used. The NRM projects held community level workshops which, according to the criteria we raised in the Methodology section (2.3), should have been evaluated in terms of the calibre and relevance of their participants
- Although the proposals went through a peer review and workshop, the final reports did not go through the same process: the validity of the results must be evaluated against the stated research problem, objectives and methodologies actually applied. This can only be done by the same policy experts who reviewed the proposals; this procedure is useful not just for continuity but also as a learning (capacity building) exercise for the researchers. Since ECAPAPA does not have the internal capacity to undertake thorough reviews and quality control, the task of ensuring that projects have been successfully completed would fall squarely on its regional networks and policy advisors (we discuss below the issue of project completion in its own right)
- The NRM studies applied participatory techniques and there may have been some form of two-way interaction between community level stakeholders and the researchers and this may pass as knowledge sharing and hence capacity building (that is) if we really stretch the definitions; but in the case of the technology studies, we could not detect any such capacity building avenues and opportunities for all concerned
- All the researchers confined themselves to what can be referred to as their analytical comfort zones: no new analytical tools were applied and there was no prior training in this regard. ECAPAPA has since mounted a number of regional workshops on proposal writing (including issuance of manuals on the subject) but we can confidently report that these particular researchers were not beneficiaries of such training
- There is no follow-up work in progress for projects that were supposedly completed, nor was there any funding set aside for such post-completion activities. For the projects that have not been completed (i.e. no final report submitted to ECAPAPA the NRM projects located in Kabale, Uganda, and Tana river basin, Kenya), opportunities for acquiring tangible professional benefits may have been lost.

4.1.3 What constitutes project completion?

We are suggesting that there is a direct link between project completion and benefits to the researchers as well as the potential for having influence on policy processes. Of the six projects under review, four have submitted to ECAPAPA what the researchers consider to be the final draft reports. But these final draft reports, as we have pointed out above, have not been subjected to a peer review process. The question therefore arises: what is the project cycle being applied by ECAPAPA; when is the researcher through and final disbursements/honoraria made? This question is raised under the assumption that the researchers have no responsibility for dissemination and that there are no financial provisions for such post-research activities (the situation applying in this case).

We quote here, for purposes of comparison with ECAPAPA, four alternatives the University of Nairobi (Board of Postgraduate Studies, BPS) requires its external examiners to consider while making a recommendation about the status of a thesis and degree award:

- ❖ The thesis is adequate and satisfactory in form and content, and reflects a sound understanding of the subject: the degree should be awarded without any changes to the thesis...**a rare case**
- ❖ The thesis is adequate and satisfactory in form and content, and reflects an adequate understanding of the subject but the degree should be awarded only after minor changes have been made (can be done within three to six months)...**a good chance of success**
- ❖ The thesis, though unsatisfactory and inadequate in form and content, contains a substantial contribution to knowledge. To remove these defects, it should be substantially revised and re-submitted for examination by another Board of Examiners (the candidate is often given about one year to resubmit) ...**indeterminate!**
- ❖ The thesis is grossly inadequate and unsatisfactory and offers no scope for improvement, does not reflect a clear understanding of the subject and should be rejected. The degree should not be awarded...**total investment loss!**

These options are directly applicable to ECAPAPA but there are questions that must be dealt with: could the total investment loss be avoided; are there resources to deal with the consequences of the extended work implied in the middle two options; who does the 'examination' – the research user or fellow professionals?

Let us use three of the case study reports to illustrate the application of the above criteria:

- ❖ Pasture and water use conflicts between Karamoja and the neighbouring districts (report dated February 2003). This report was long overdue and its findings and recommendations may have been overtaken by events in this highly volatile district, but by and large, it is quite satisfactory in both form and content; the authors have made a commendable effort to contribute towards a better understanding of the research objectives. The draft report would only require minor corrections in order to conclude this stage of the project; so, the verdict: for all practical purposes, *the project is completed.*

- ❖ The role of technology in poverty alleviation: farm household financial profitability of maize/beans intercropping technological packages in northern Tanzania (report dated November 2000). This study sets out rather simplistic objectives such as reviewing literature, describing current farmer practices and creating awareness and feedback to policy makers (the latter hardly attempted); the methodology section simply gives the research team, the study area and, again, says that they will review literature yet the report actually does not review any literature, for example, in order to articulate how the project intended to address the poverty issue that features in the project title. In order for this report to contribute substantially to knowledge, it would have to be resubmitted (with a lot of effort going to statement of objectives, definitions, literature review and methodology). The verdict is that *the project is not complete and the final outcomes of the recommended revisions indeterminate*.
- ❖ The role of technology in poverty alleviation: determination of farm household financial profitability in bean production in Kenya (report undated). The significance of the research problem does not come out clearly nor is there any justification for estimating financial profitability of dry beans in different agro-ecological zones. Beans are predominantly a subsistence crop and while profitability may be an issue, there are other factors explaining current low productivity that should have been investigated. There are glimpses of literature cited in this report that contains 18 pages of text and a further 11 pages of appendices. More in-depth analysis could have been done in this project considering the rather generous collaboration comprising six researchers all of whom had academic qualifications of MSc and above. Like in the Tanzania case, how the poverty issue comes in remains unclear hence we conclude that the report would have to be rewritten: verdict, *project not completed*.

The above two cases of non-completion must be added to the NRM projects in Kabale and Tana river basin which have yet to deliver draft final reports to ECAPAPA. The fact that four out of six projects are being labelled as incomplete raises serious concerns about the timing for an assessment of the policy influence of these projects. It is for this reason that our emphasis is on policy intent in the project proposals, capacity building, and factors that would facilitate or hamper the *potential to influence policy* and interactions with stakeholders. In sections 4.2 we highlight some specific factors that may have contributed favourably towards policy influence for the IDRC/ECAPAPA projects (but not necessarily in all the cases) and in section 4.3 those we consider to have been definitely hampering potential policy influence. We shall revisit the same (facilitating and inhibiting) factors from a regional context in Chapter 5.

4.2 Factors that had potential to facilitate influence of technology and NRM projects on the policy process

4.2.1 Selection of the enterprise or problem of study (national policy relevance)

Generally the national policies towards agriculture during the time of technology studies favoured the nature of the studies. This was the time when all the countries in the region were involved in the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) that emphasised the development of agricultural sector to ensure a quick national development and prevention of the spread of poverty in the region. From the ECAPAPA angle, the objective building the capacity of the NARI in socio-economic analysis was entirely within the scope of these studies. Although policy influence may not have been the key issue at that time, the selection of the commodities for studies in the various countries may have been deliberately based on the importance of those commodities. For example, in Kenya, beans are second to maize in terms of food security for most parts of the country. It was also viewed as important for soil fertility management for intensification of agriculture, which is acknowledged as important for poverty reduction through appropriate technology and development of agribusiness. In Uganda, potatoes are a major cash and food crop in the study areas. It has high yield potential and shorter growing period while in Tanzania maize/beans selection was also premise on poverty and food security.

The NRM studies were appealing not just to policy makers but also to the local communities and administrators. Policy relevance was a key feature in the selection of the NRM proposals and the close collaboration the researchers received at the community level seems to suggest that there was some form of policy influence.

4.2.2 Involving the public officials and other stakeholders in the study teams (appropriate research team composition)

Although there was little involvement of stakeholders at the design stages, most of the studies involved the government officials/policy makers at one stage or another. Some were used as part of the network in information gathering while others participated fully as part of the research team. Incidentally, the majority of the chief investigators and a number of the research team members were from the national agricultural research institutes that are quasi government institutions.

The Ugandan Irish potato research had a mix of researchers, seed potato associations and NGOs. This is likely to strengthen the links within the network and contribute to policy influence. For example, it is indicated that AFRICARE (Uganda based NGO) was interested in the marketing aspects of the Irish potato while the Seed Association was responsible for the multiplication and marketing of seed potato. The study results identified these two areas (multiplication and marketing) as critical constraints in the expansion of production in the country.

4.2.3 Mix of research experience and knowledge of government policy processes

It was argued that traditional research has not been guided strictly by economic considerations hence poor adoption by farmers. The multidisciplinary approach was preferred as a means of

eliminating professional biases that tended to lead to the production of inappropriate technologies and recommendations on field practices. In the NRM study conducted in Kabale, civil servants and politicians were involved. This created a relationship of trust and a sense of research ownership that facilitated acceptance and implementation of the project's recommendations. The researchers described their approach as "Synergy Approach" based on complementarity and embeddedness where the former refers to mutually supportive relations between the public and private actors, local government and local communities, as well as stronger links between state institutions and local communities; while the latter refers to the nature and extent of the ties connecting people and communities and public institutions.

Within the research team, there is a need to ensure that there is participation by both young and more senior and experienced researchers; this has positive policy impact implications as well as the added advantage of capacity building for the younger members of the research team. Unfortunately, not many of the projects met this requirement.

4.2.4 Significance of the research problem to the local community and administrators

The Kabale project had an innovative approach in the formation of policy working group to increase policy relevance of research at the local level and to identify and undertake joint priority activities and to design alternative policy instruments to facilitate the adoption of NRM technologies. A Policy task force was subsequently formed to provide a forum for institutional linkages and collaboration among relevant stakeholders, prioritise research and policy needs and follow up actions of common interest to the local community. In the other case studies it is not clear how the interest of the local community was translated into real participation and consensus building for policy influence.

4.2.5 Institutional support and synergy of project with on-going research

The NRM study in Kabale had strong support from AHI/ICRAF and at the same time it was a continuation of the same conservation project that had been on-going for some time. Secondly Kabale being near to ECAPAPA head office it is logical that it was easier for the researchers to get the necessary support better than those far away in other countries. Host institution support is important for bridging financial resource gaps and in ensuring that there is accountability. The studies in Uganda and Tanzania had this form of support; it was not clear if KIPPRA and KARI (in Kenya) provided this kind of support and oversight to their researchers who were involved in the ECAPAPA projects. There was some form of correlation between quality of the research outputs, timeliness and host institution support. Apparent lack of host institution support could be due to lack of congruence between the project and core activities of the host institution and we feel that this needs to be built into the mechanisms for screening proposals and research teams.

4.2.6 Generation of knowledge and databases and use of research results as input into policy process

Where the projects have been finalised in the sense of completing the entire cycle of evaluations/examinations as discussed earlier, contribution to knowledge and databases would be

seen as the initial steps in policy influence. For example, the data generated in the Irish potato study led to the crop being selected as a strategic export crop in Uganda. We demonstrated, however, that the majority of the projects have not been completed and their contributions would be confined to the community or local research locations. There is really nothing wrong with this because we consider capacity building and behavioural changes at these levels equally important. Further benefits of projects that have been completed may come from efforts of ECAPAPA through its regional network. Expectations about capacity and institutional impacts of ECAPAPA projects may be unrealistic in some cases, as the KARI Director points out in an informal brainstorming session held with the investigator. Some of the ASARECA member countries and NARIs do need these quick/short term projects for capacity building and generation of valuable databases but there is a lot of diversity within the ASARECA family of NARI institutions; the benefits of information and capacity building must therefore be weighed carefully against the unique individual priorities and policy concerns.

4.3 Factors that Hindered Policy Influence of the Projects

4.3.1 Financial resources and administration (coordination)

The issue of ‘money’ does not come out explicitly in the survey data sheet and seems to have been assumed by IDRC during the case study design yet it is at the heart of project success or failure. We raised the issue of level of funding in the brainstorming sessions held with key informants and most of them considered the issue to be particularly important especially in terms of actual level of funding compared to other projects that are competing for the researchers’ time, schedules of disbursement and modes of contracting. The researchers in the technology projects mentioned that they experienced delays in initial release of funds thereby interfering with the work plan. In the Kenyan case even after the funds were availed it was not clear within their institute how to handle the payments for various purposes. Although the issues were later solved a lot of valuable time had been lost.

The issue of ECAPAPA contracting directly with individual researchers had been raised for example in the case of KARI where all the researchers have migrated and in KIPPRA where the same problem is likely to occur before the end of the project. Contracting directly with researchers raises questions of accountability and division of labour especially in large institutions that have tight project schedules. Dr. Kiome, the KARI Director, suggests that “IDRC should make bold efforts to link up directly with regional institutions rather than allowing ECAPAPA to contract individual researchers”. The competitive grant system administered by ECAPAPA could start with individual researchers but could be modified to bring in heads of institutions at the contract signing stages: we do not particularly subscribe to the view that donors have to deal directly with numerous NARS institutions especially if the capacity of a regional program such as ECAPAPA and its networks could be bolstered to gain economies of scale. Lapses in funding mechanisms and delays in deliverables must be looked at from a more global perspective spanning the entire process: funding sources, bidding, contracting, supervision and research outcomes.

There were definitely cases where the institutions gave the individual researchers a lot of logistical support but we hesitate to make inferences (linking project management efficiency and the contract mode) on the basis of the few cases (projects) that we have reviewed here. There are theoretical benefits for having multidisciplinary teams but as demonstrated in the case of the Irish potato project in Uganda, difficulties of coordination arise: all the researchers have other on-going activities within their institutes.

4.3.2 Instability and experience of the research teams

While young and inexperienced researchers were suited to this particular competitive grant system on grounds of capacity building, this quality may have caused team instability as members move out for further studies or to greener pastures. This was the case in KARI where the research team disintegrated apparently because of lack of promotion/financial incentives and motivation. This trend was also witnessed in NARO (Uganda) and KIPPRA (Kenya). Achievement of an optimal research team will remain a particularly elusive goal for ECAPAPA.

4.3.3 Lack of political will and capacity

Political will is such a broad term that we shall only mention it here by way of passing, but more so to remind ourselves that it is an excellent excuse for researchers facing dissemination and adoption problems. Researches in Tanzania, when asked to narrate “what the policymakers now know about the research work that they did not know before”, had this to say:

“The councillors that were involved do not have interest and there is no political will. The leaders seem to have other sources of income not related to agriculture hence they do not see why they should support agriculture. Politicians do not participate due to conflict of interest and they are not committed to the sector at all.”

However, in the case of Irish potato project in Uganda, politicians and the President, no less, a keen interest in the research findings; he apparently proposed the building of an airport to facilitate airlifting of potatoes to foreign markets. The NRM studies in Kabale and Karamoja also reported close and fruitful relationships with politicians and local administrators. While lack of political will may be an issue, these varied experiences show that it all depends on the researcher’s experience, the relevance of the problem to the policy makers or politicians and the targeted level of influence (community, tertiary or national).

4.3.4 Institutional capacity weaknesses

Researchers instability and movements due to factors already mentioned such as clear research policy, motivation and remuneration is obviously contributing to the migration that is likely to destabilize the research work in the organizations. Secondly, the linkage between the researchers and various government bodies (including quasi government research institutes) that may influence policy is not very strong. Policy influence may also be affected by the national significance of the institution, which in turn depends on the perceived integrity of the individual heading the institution.

4.3.5 When key assumptions change

The relevance and influence of research findings can be affected by externalities that are beyond the researchers' control. A typical illustration of this is when the Ugandan government came up with the policy of forceful disarmament of the Karamojong during the course of the NRM project in that region. The locals have strenuously resisted this move and the tension and heightened insecurity that ensued made it practically impossible for the researchers to continue their work and collaboration with the communities and the CBOs and NGOs operating in the Karamoja region. It was initially assumed that peace would prevail shortly but this has not been the case.

Table 4.1: Summary of factors and their facilitating or inhibiting impact on policy (technology projects)

FACTORS:	Facilitating policy influence	Inhibiting policy influence
1. Relevance of research problem to policy domain	Irish potato may have been an important factor in Uganda	Maize/beans technologies in Kenya may not have been a major issue especially if extension is the binding constraint
2. Policy makers and other stakeholder involvement in design and prioritisation of problem	Opportunities for positive influence were missed	Due to resource constraints, only the team leaders attended the review workshops and policy makers never took part
3. Research team composition: experience of the Team Leader and collaborating researchers	The Irish potato study had wider collaboration with NARO and other key scientists outside of NARO	Tanzanian and Kenyan studies were limited to scientists from the Institutes
4. Research team stability	This factor did not feature in the pre-project programs and discussions	Implementation by the KARI team worst hit by migration of researchers to other institutions before termination of the project
5. Timeliness of research findings and dissemination	In the Irish potato project it may have been an important factor especially in discussing and selecting crops in Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture in Uganda	In other projects this factor had not been anticipated and worked against policy influence
6. Significance of the research problem to the local communities	Opportunities missed because the issue was not explicit during planning stages. Where to research theme was directly relevant and well understood by local communities, policy influence was possible	But in many of the projects, prioritisation of the problem to be investigated was one-sided and consequently this factor was scored negatively on policy influence
7. Host institution support to researchers		The project on Irish potatoes received direct support from the parent institution; in the other projects, support was not anticipated. If there are no concrete plans for institutional cooperation in terms of project design and resource commitments, the organizations will stay aloof and impact negatively on results and policy influence.

8. Likely benefits of research to host institution agenda	Capacity building and databases	May not have been a key priority and some larger institutions such as KARI may not have expected any real direct benefits
9. Financial resources: research budget		Not adequate for post research activities e.g. KARI and Tanzania
10. Research administration and coordination (capacity of ECAPAPA coordinating unit)	May have been there for Irish potato project located within close proximity to Entebbe where ECAPAPA is based. But there are lessons to learn for future planning and administration of ECAPAPA projects	
11. Political will to fund, support and apply research recommendations	In Irish potato project, positive comments from the Head of state were reported	Generally, low funding from government breeds apathy that is often harmful to policy influence

Table 4.2: Summary of factors and their facilitating or inhibiting impact on policy (NRM projects)

FACTORS:	Facilitating policy influence	Inhibiting policy influence
1. Relevance of research problem to policy domain	Support for the on-going NRM project in Kabale. Karamoja insecurity a continuing problem for the government of Uganda	
2. Policy makers and other stakeholder involvement in design and prioritisation of problem	In Kabale, Stakeholders were involved and in the Tana river basin, local administrators were involved in workshops	Design by researchers for both Karamoja and Tana River study; Targeted level of influence seems to have been local in which case success was registered but at higher national policy levels, there was little perception and involvement
3. Research team composition: experience of the Team Leader and collaborating researchers	Were already in the old project, hence continuation	Was not the basis for selecting successful project proposals
4. Research team stability	Never considered	KIPPRRA team affected through migration to greener pastures
5. Timeliness of research findings and dissemination	Kabale results incorporated in bylaws review and formulation; Karamoja project also participatory	A desirable outcome for all the projects but findings, especially in the Karamoja project not timely for higher level policy makers because field activities were disrupted by government directive on forced disarmament.
6. Significance of the research problem to the local communities	Important factor contributing to potential policy influence in all the three NRM projects	

7. Host institution support to researchers	AHI/ICRAF involvement and support seemed positive. E(EAU Researchers were the key people in the organisation so this factor not relevant)	Not strongly felt in the case of KIPPRA
8. Likely benefits of research to host institution agenda	Capacity building. Databases	May not have been a key priority
9. Financial resources: research budget		The indications generally are that the research budgets were too small especially in the NRM case and for the more senior researchers whose opportunity costs are much higher thus leading to abandonment of projects midway for other more lucrative projects.
10. Research administration and coordination (capacity of ECAPAPA coordinating unit)	May have been there for Kabale and Karamoja because of proximity to ECAPAPA and through personal initiatives of the Team leaders	ECAPAPA coordinating unit over-stretched because of its small capacity; contact and follow-up of projects in other parts of the ASARECA region may have been constrained thereby affecting timeliness in project completion/termination and feedback.
11. Political will to fund, support and apply research recommendations	Application of research findings already going on in Kabale and to some extent encouraging awareness in Karamoja and the politicians seem to be keen and interested	Generally low funding from government maybe due to lack of political will that arises from low capacity, inability to appreciate long term environmental impacts and/or preoccupation with high profile domestic policy issues

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH AND POLICY INFLUENCE – Marching the IDRC Supported Research with the Region’s Policy Concerns and Capacities

The policy arena in the ECA region (revisited)

In Chapter 1 we highlighted five key areas that ought to be of concern to policy makers. We say ‘ought to be of concern’ because in practice, not all of the issues are clearly appreciated by the political leadership, especially the interactions among the different domestic and international forces that have to be accounted for in the policy making processes. Policy analysis should derive its role and significance from this weakness and unless researchers can come up with recommendations that have a direct or indirect bearing on these concerns then they would not be helping to shape the future economic growth of the region. But even more importantly, research and technology generation risk marginalization unless they explicitly address the felt needs of

policy makers. Sustainability and stability of policy reforms, on the other hand, require that researchers also attend to the unfelt needs (the subtle challenges) such as environment, investment on human capital and policies of foreign trading partners. Just to recap, the five key areas were given as:

- ❑ **Markets:** their structure/conduct and how the institutions that manage them can be made to perform more efficiently; how market liberalisation and commercialisation is likely to influence market performance, especially impact on small producers and consumers; access to domestic and foreign markets and appropriate policies to open up regional markets.
- ❑ But markets are of little use to a nation if there are no marketable surpluses, so we introduced a number of **productivity** prime movers relating to innovation (technology R&D); getting *capital* to the agricultural sector (the growth engine for many of the countries in the region) and revitalising agricultural *institutions*; improving *infrastructure* and access to utilities such as water and electricity; and the issue of sustainability, not just of the *environment and natural resources* but also of policy reforms (avoiding policy reversals), *education*, health and economic growth.
- ❑ **Civil strife:** what are the causes of frequent wars in the region; how they lead to market failure which is further exacerbated by government failure (dictatorships, bad governance and state sponsored corruption) and implications on foreign direct investments and ODAs
- ❑ There is a massive preoccupation with **poverty eradication and food security**, at least on paper; what are the poverty traps and how do we ensure that while attempting to direct public resources towards the poor we avoid unnecessary opportunity costs (lost markets, investments, growth and wealth creation potentials).
- ❑ **Implementation:** one of the biggest weaknesses in the region is the poor implementation of policies and national plans; there are institutional capacity constraints but there are also administrative and coordination lapses that are often compounded by political and ethnic considerations; the policy making process is thus made much more complex to outsiders, researchers and policy makers included; efforts aimed at influencing policy must therefore consider the intended and unintended impacts (Idachaba, November 2000, p 19).

What are the agendas and capacities of research institutions in the region

Having established the region's policy concerns (albeit as a maintained hypothesis), the questions that one may wish to ask are: which institutions within the region are conducting research and policy analysis directed at these concerns; how are research priorities set; is there a capacity in these institutions to conduct policy relevant research; who is funding research and policy analysis; how are research outputs disseminated to policy makers and other private sector and NGO stakeholders; what is the role of donors in terms of research priority setting *vis-a-vis* the role of government; and what was there a policy influence potential for the IDRC/ECAPAPA technology and NRM case studies, especially in terms of their relevance, design and administration? In the sections that follow, we summarize the views of selected key practitioners of research and policy analysis and draw some lessons that may help assist IDRC's interventions in the region and also improve on the future synergies between ECAPAPA and the NARS within the ASARECA member countries. This synthesis is particularly important because the six

projects being reviewed here had not gone through the minimum gestation period needed to justify an evaluation of their influence on national policy processes. We shall start with a quick overview of the institutions conducting research in the region, their agenda and the extent of congruence between what these organizations are doing and the priorities being pursued by IDRC through ECAPAPA.

Institutions conducting agricultural research in ECA

Within the ECA, Kenya probably has the largest network of institutions conducting agricultural research and is led by the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI); the equivalent of KARI in Uganda and Tanzania are NARO and Division of Research and Development (DRD), respectively. The other countries have relatively small agricultural research institutions engaged in generation of agricultural technologies hence the desire to pool the limited resources and share research products and adapt them to other agro-ecological zones under the auspices of regional organizations such as the East African Cooperation (EAC).

Universities (only at public universities; the author is not aware of research undertaken at private universities) and a small range of private firms also conduct policy relevant research and comprise what is referred to as the national agricultural research systems (NARS) in each country. Added to the NARS in recent years are quasi-government funded research centers such as IPAR, TEGEMEO and KIPPRA (Kenya), Economic Policy Research Center, EPRC (Uganda) and Economic and Social Research Foundation, ESRF (Tanzania). But policy analysis is also undertaken by international institutions, especially under the aegis of the CGIAR (ILRI, CIMMYT, ICRISAT, ICRAF, IFPRI, to mention but a few), United Nations (ECA, FAO) and donor organizations (World Bank, DFID, USAID, IDRC, SIDA, GTZ, JICA, EU, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation and Winrock International, again to mention but a few). A catalogue of trade related initiatives undertaken by various organizations working within the Greater Horn and southern Africa was compiled under the RTAA program supported by USAID/REDSO/ESA and should reflect not just the concerns of donor organizations and where the resources are being directed but also what the organizations deem to be the main policy concerns (Barasa and Agwara; RTAA monograph, Technoserve, Nairobi, August 2002).

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as domestic and foreign consulting firms undertake commissioned policy analysis but there is a tendency especially by public officials to sit on ensuing reports for too long thus rendering their recommendations valueless. There is a lot of fragmentation of research and funding due to the many donors and institutions targeting the improvement of livelihoods in Africa. This can be terribly confusing to the policy makers and it is not surprising that a number of the policy documents never see the light of day. ECAPAPA (a program of ASARECA covering east and central Africa) and other similar sub-regional institutions such as FANRPAN (southern Africa) and REPA (west Africa) aim at better coordination of research effort and dissemination. The problem of dealing with small micro-level policy issues and small budgets may also be addressed by the proposed Challenge Program for Sub-Saharan Africa under the auspices of Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and NEPAD.

The research agenda

Several research institutions (both NARIs and the international research centers) are engaged actively in generation of more efficient production technologies as a means of raising productivity and farm incomes. While the major research institutions such as KARI, NARO, and DRD in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, respectively, pledge to fulfill their mandate to conduct breeding and agronomic work covering a wide range of agro-ecological zones and land use systems, minimal resources are going to studies of markets, institutions and getting the policies right so as to facilitate adoption of the new innovations by resource poor farmers.

It is acknowledged that the causes of poverty are now well known and that more effort should be directed to tackling of the policy and environmental constraints, and indeed many of the key informants mentioned that they do have projects on poverty and livelihood strategies in various parts of the region. But is also well known that there is a lot of duplication of efforts and that projects on poverty tend to be localized thus failing to account for the exogenous factors; sustainability of solutions and empowerment of local communities to move out of the poverty traps in the long run therefore deserve more attention.

Research projects on natural resources generally require more regional coordination and higher financial budgets; this kind of work seems currently to be confined to the international research centers such as ICRAF, ICRISAT and various regional research networks funded by donors. Sub-regional environmental issues are normally handled by UNEP but institutions such as the East African Cooperation (EAC) and IGAD are starting to develop a keen interest on research and policies relating to use and management of shared natural resources such as lakes, rivers and national parks. These institutions will definitely be sourcing donor funds to commission studies on natural resources. Natural resource degradation is closely linked to poverty and gender issues which seem, rightly, to be recurrent research agenda topics of many institutions but gender mainstreaming in projects remains particularly stubborn apparently due to analytical weaknesses and inability to harmonize the priorities and interests of different professionals.

Researchers are mentioning HIV/AIDS as a major concern with potential negative impacts on agricultural productivity and poverty eradication. But HIV/AIDS is not the only factor impacting negatively on rural welfare, nor is it the only factor contributing to morbidity and debilitation of agricultural labor force. HIV/AIDS is scary enough elicit research funding from donor agencies but modeling for its impacts and interventions must not ignore the other prime movers of rural development where policy makers are perennially at fault: market access and pricing policies, institutions, education, infrastructure and the ability to innovate.

Although many institutions conduct research in various countries in the ECA region, these efforts are not truly 'regional'; the research efforts and agendas are fragmented and discrete and the results and recommendations are rarely pooled into a regional picture: for example, what are the implications of a natural resource study in Malawi or Mozambique for the highlands of western Uganda? The exception we can cite here is of study by ICRISAT that aimed at bringing together pigeon peas agronomic/technology studies in Tanzania and Malawi with cross-border trade (involving Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique), processing and export of this commodity; the other examples are the regional seed policy harmonization work coordinated by

ECAPAPA that brought together different private sector stakeholders; and, the regional informal cross-border trade and transport studies sponsored by USAID/REDSO/ESA between 1995 and 2001. We are sure there are many other examples of studies that cut across the borders but the point being illustrated here is that many research institutions, especially the national ones (NARS) tend to confine their research agendas to parochial national concerns even in cases where more gains could accrue from regional cooperation. Regional work seems to be sponsored by donors in the form of consultancy work whose design findings are rarely subjected to critical peer review and wide dissemination.

It should be obvious from this discussion that many key areas of concern for policy makers in the region are not part and parcel of research agendas. Technology, adoption, and natural resource degradation are the core areas of research while poverty comes as a distant goal mentioned by almost everybody but with efforts aimed at achievement it lacking seriously in terms of coherence. Gender is interesting but in real terms fading away from the center while HIV/AIDS can now attract donor funds (e.g. from World Bank). Public policy research seems to be in the domain of consultancy and a few institutions such as KIPPRA in Kenya, ESRF in Tanzania and EPRC in Uganda. There were expectations that organizations such as the ECA and FAO would play a leading role in conducting sub-regional policy studies (especially on trade policies, natural resources, factor movements, security and governance) but with the emergence of active regional institutions such as EAC, COMESA and SADC, we are not sure about the relevance and role these UN organizations are playing.

We conclude here that research institutions have left out of their agenda key concerns of policy makers: market liberalization and privatization issues, regional trade integration, agricultural institutions (e.g. for production, marketing and finance), insecurity that locks out certain communities or regions from the mainstream economy; and, governance issues. The IDRC/ECAPAPA case studies on NRM fall into an *unfelt needs* category and would therefore be better predisposed to influence policies but we doubt the comparative advantage of the researchers and their coordination through ECAPAPA rather than through the larger international institutions such as ICRAF that are already undertaking similar work. The technology case studies, on the other hand, seem to be dwelling on an over-exposed problem and the researchers may just have been tinkering with tasks likely to yield fairly known remedies: national research institutions as well as many other organizations are working on technology generation but lack the expertise to accommodate socio-economic issues and wider global factors into their agenda.

Capacity to conduct policy relevant research

Opinion leans in support of the fact that, at least in numerical terms, the region has adequate capacity to conduct policy relevant research. However, in reality, researchers as well as research efforts are poorly coordinated, there is duplication of efforts with donors supporting many little projects that rarely have predictability in terms of the flow of funds and life span. Mr. Harris Mule, a former Permanent Secretary in the Kenyan government and currently a policy advisor to many regional governments, says that senior researchers in the region are slowly developing a bad 'consultant syndrome' whereby professionals refuse to do research and just wait to be paid to undertake consultancy work either for governments or for donor organizations. There are

those who feel, however, that remuneration packages, especially in public institutions, fail to match opportunity costs for well trained and senior policy analysts and researchers and that these institutions will inevitably have to face serious brain drain. Under the circumstances (brain drain coupled with regular promotion of senior researchers to administrative positions within institutions or to public jobs), the NARS, especially, lack effective capacity to undertake policy relevant research. In order to have good results that can influence policies, researchers must be aware, but most importantly, conscious, of the different strands of the project and the expectations of policy makers, points out Dr Luis Navarro, the senior IDRC program officer based in Nairobi. He adds that institutional support is necessary in order to build the capacity to conduct research alongside the pursuit of other goals and mandates (e.g. universities have to teach in addition to conducting research and outreach).

Implications: Although some of the IDRC/ECAPAPA case studies being reviewed may have been under the responsibility of less experienced researchers, supervision from the more senior colleagues within and out of their host institutions should not have been a problem. The NRM projects, due to their intrinsic complexity had a highly experienced regional resource person entrusted with this very responsibility of tutelage and quality control but the service was never delivered. ECAPAPA is currently seriously considering a workable model for engaging resource persons to help with the coordination and management of projects within its regional network. But such a model must account for opportunity costs of senior researchers and the priorities of their institutions. The apparent inability to undertake policy relevant research, as pointed out above, may be a consequence of bad habits that have developed on both the supply and demand sides (researchers favoring only paid research and policy makers not being keen on applying research findings) rather than purely because of lack of a critical mass of analysts.

Recommendation: Having pointed out the above implications, we hasten to add that brain drain in the region's research institutions is real. Considering the short term infeasibility of significantly raising researchers' salaries in public institutions (to match opportunity costs), donors should reconsider their current stand on post-graduate training: a number of donors like Rockefeller Foundation, World Bank, FAO and Ford Foundation that took the lead in sponsoring students abroad for PhD training in the 1970s have since switched their focus either to primary education or to participatory rural projects. More efforts should go towards postgraduate training (both within the region and abroad) in order to significantly raise the numbers in junior research ranks. The thresholds that were envisaged as being able to self-propel national institutions of higher learning with minimal external injections of resources will now take longer to attain due to brain drain. It is the actions of reversing the declining trends in numbers and interests of researchers in the region's institutions that will ultimately lead to credibility of researchers and their recommendations. But the policy makers must change their attitudes and avoid taking recommendations of inexperienced foreign 'experts' just because the latter are part of an attractive financial package; such attitude implicitly condemn local research. And the link between researchers and policy makers.

The role and capacity of ECAPAPA

The Eastern and Central Africa Program for Agricultural Policy Analysis (ECAPAPA) was established by ASARECA in 1997 following a report of a working group that was commissioned in 1995. ASARECA aims at strengthening agricultural research in ten eastern and central African countries: Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan, and Tanzania. ECAPAPA is one of several programs of ASARECA and is therefore answerable to the ASARECA Committee of Directors. ECAPAPA

has a Coordinating Unit (CU) comprising a regional coordinator, program assistant and a secretary. The CU operates largely through a regional network of researchers and institutions but its programs, work plans and budgets get approval from a technical Steering Committee that meets at least once every year.

The Goal of ECAPAPA is to improve the policy environment in the region for the purpose of enhancing agricultural technology generation and adoption in order to raise economic growth and reduce poverty and environmental degradation. The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Strengthen the capacity, effectiveness and efficiency of the NARS in the ECA countries in socio-economic research and to enable them to become more responsive to existing agricultural policies and more proactive in policy research and analysis that is related to technology development and transfer systems
- 2) Strengthen the capacity of agricultural policy research, analysis and formulation, by engaging agricultural researchers in making available to policy makers and other leaders the results of research options and advising them about the implications of such policies on agricultural productivity, overall production and sustainability of the agricultural systems

The available reports show that, as of the year 2000, the main funding sources for ECAPAPA were: United States Agency for International Development, Sustainable Development Office (USAID/AFR/SD); United States Agency for International Development, Regional Economic Development Services Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (USAID/REDSO/ESA); International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); and, ACP-Lome Convention through CTA. The first two donors contribute to ASARECA and AECAPAPA over 50% of their budgets. For the year 2003, the CU had a budget of about US\$ 800,000 against donor pledges of about US\$ 880,000: of the latter, USAID/REDSO/ESA and USAID/SD/AFR accounted for about 60% while the pledge by IDRC was equivalent to 26% of all the pledges (ECAPAPA Work Plan and Budget for 2003).

ECAPAPA initially identified the three major tasks under its programme: a) *capacity building* directed towards National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) to enable them increase their ability to affect policy and to relate their technology development programmes to existing policy goals; provision of *socio-economic training* to NARI researchers in order to improve the capacity of such institutions to evaluate technology generation from a socio-economic perspective; and, incorporation of *M&E tools* as part of research implementation fall under this category of capacity building; b) agricultural *policy research and analysis*; and, c) agricultural *policy information exchange* which has been implemented through attendance and participation in meetings and workshops, stakeholder directory, electronic newsletter and periodic publications. So far, these tasks have been implemented in several ASARECA countries and about 19 studies (falling under the policy research and analysis category) have been conducted and coordinated by ECAPAPA. This case study reviews only six of these studies.

It is important to reiterate that the original purpose of ECAPAPA was mainly to influence agricultural research and policy linkages so as to improve their relevance, impact and profile. Direct policy research and influence was anticipated but was never initially the overt concern

because policy analysis capabilities and interests were limited and needed to be developed first through partnerships and stronger networks of agricultural researchers and policy experts. More specifically, many ASARECA family of NARIs had very weak socio-economics units and thus lacked the ability to merge national policy concerns with their traditional scientific research. While the policy analysis capacity gap may have been a legitimate concern when ECAPAPA was being set up, there are now indications that capacity *per se* may not be the real weak link between research and policy makers (see discussion below). A midterm report (by Mukhebi et al in May 2001) acknowledges that it would be too early to expect significant results and impacts of ECAPAPA activities (and we may add, especially those relating to research and policy analysis) given the short period of the program's existence but adds that there is a potential to impact positively on policies. An example often cited is the work done by ECAPAPA on seed policy harmonisation that has actively brought together various stakeholders interested in the promotion of seed development and trade in the region. Other services particularly the weekly electronic newsletter have been highly appreciated by researchers.

Questions are, however, being raised regarding the capacity and autonomy of the Coordinating Unit and the role that can be played by ECAPAPA's regional network. The issue of capacity is raised with respect to both human and financial resources while autonomy is meant to reflect the ability of ECAPAPA to make crucial decisions, especially those touching on project administration (e.g. ability to apply 'stick and carrot' method to expedite a project cycle, and budgetary flexibility), fund raising and a more attenuated role of ASARECA. Streamlining of these management aspects will be critical to achievement of policy influence. We received quite varied but highly pertinent responses to the following questions posed to senior informants, some of whom have been associated with ECAPAPA in various capacities since its inception (derived from Annex --).

We make no effort to further interpret or read too much into the views of the informants. But for ECAPAPA as a regional program, and for donors, we do see a link to the objective of policy influence. Some conclusions that we find unavoidable are, first, that the capacity of ECAPAPA and its regional networks have to be strengthened; secondly, autonomous decision making as is currently accorded to ECAPAPA by IDRC is necessary and beneficial but is not sufficient to guarantee accountability and timely research outcomes; finally, there are those who are questioning the rationale for ASARECA's strong grip on ECAPAPA: to which we counter that the link is desirable as long as long as ECAPAPA continues to find ways and means of strengthening the ASARECA family of NARS institutions in terms of incorporating policy concerns into their (predominantly biological) research and technology generation, building their socio-economics units, and facilitating stronger regional networks and information sharing while being cognizant of the wide diversity of ASARECA NARS institutions and their unique priorities.

Is the capacity and networks of ECAPAPA facilitating or hindering policy influence of IDRC funded projects?

- The capacity of ECAPAPA is currently below the threshold required to adequately manage its network starting from project conception, implementation, public relations and fund raising, quality control, running regional training workshops, reporting to donors, and lobbying for policy reforms
- Regional resource persons (policy advisors) must be financed and motivated to strengthen the ECAPAPA network and to be able to provide an early warning system whenever there are symptoms of trouble that may lead to project failure. On paper, these resource persons or mentors are expected to keep close contact with researchers and to be able to undertake quality control and synthesis of the final reports emerging from different countries. But in practice, they seem to lack the resources, commitment and the necessary carrot/stick to accelerate the process and, where necessary, link promptly to ECAPAPA and the Steering Committee to recommend appropriate decisions or actions on a project.
- Terminating a project midway is an emotionally difficult decision but ECAPAPA, together with its network members, must come up with a regional model that yields research results quickly so that they can benefit policy makers. It is unlikely that analytical capacities of implementers of struggling projects will be strengthened as ECAPAPA sits on project funds that could be allocated to other needy cases and network members. Researchers engaged in struggling projects that deserve to be terminated may have switched their attention to other projects and usually financial loss to them is minimal. It may therefore be prudent on the part of ECAPAPA to get the signals promptly and use the whip at the earliest opportunity thereby minimizing losses.
- The capacity of the CU needs to be increased to enable it get the best out of ECAPAPA's network. The network members will assist in proposal review and supervision during project implementation but if they are to contribute effectively towards dissemination then the model has to be revisited particularly in terms of its linkages regionally. Network members must also be facilitated to attend meetings in different parts of the region or countries of residence: things as basic as costs of transport and telephones can cause inactivity and failure
- In addition to the regional network of national institutions and resource persons, ECAPAPA would need at the CU a program officer (or technical manager) to play a proactive role in quality control with the Coordinator taking responsibility for strategic plans, program development and fund raising; the technical manager would be supported by a program assistant. This arrangement would boost ECAPAPA's capacity to link with policy makers in the region and with ASARECA stakeholders but it is not clear who would fund these new positions.
- The role of ECAPAPA CU and its links to ASARECA stakeholders at different levels of growth and concerns should be recast; this is the question of balancing wider regional coverage while attending to the unique needs of stakeholders. ECAPAPA is a project, it does not have the capacity to implement projects; it must rely on its regional network not only for analysis but also for dissemination and policy influence.

IDRC currently gives ECAPAPA considerable autonomy in terms of project selection and management: what are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach in terms of project cycles and policy objectives?

- Even with the autonomy, one cannot expect results if ECAPAPA does not have the resource capacity to undertake the minimum set of tasks and the requisite follow-up. The regional network of institutions, researchers and policy advisors must be empowered and their feedback relayed promptly to ECAPAPA, the Steering Committee and IDRC. Benchmarks must be set and criteria established to check if they are being met. Such benchmarks must also include dissemination and policy influence; objectives of stakeholders and policy influence must not come just by coincidence. The implication of this is that IDRC must anticipate in advance when and how it will intervene, regardless of whether the project just aims at capacity building rather than policy influence
- Autonomy of ECAPAPA in terms of project design and implementation and hence the flexibility it enjoys needs to go hand in hand with accountability. The autonomy accords ECAPAPA the flexibility it needs to respond to the needs of ASARECA countries but, ultimately, the latter will have to answer to the donor (in this case IDRC) giving the lessons about what worked and what did not work. Accountability can be improved through ensuring that there are clear measurable objectives and time frames from IDRC's perspective
- ECAPAPA needs to reconsider the tools it applies to ensure promptness in project completion. Aspects that need to be streamlined are, among others: research team selection, closer supervision and timelines for progress reports, institutional rather than individual contracts, phased out funds disbursement
- The principle of equitability in distribution of projects in all the ASARECA countries may not be practical and decisions must be made to address certain policy issues in some of the countries and not others, depending on priorities and research capacities of NARIs in member countries. This approach will not be possible without some degree of freedom and trust between the donors and ECAPAPA
- Projects rarely start on time and this weakness is not unique to ECAPAPA/IDRC projects since in almost all cases, other professions or divisions of funding and receiving organizations (Accounts and Administration) have to get involved thus complicating logistics. In this regard, autonomy given to ECAPAPA would be a positive thing as it is likely to cut down on bureaucratic dead time in the project cycle. But even with autonomy, time-lines must be kept and the IDRC pulse on ECAPAPA must be felt at all times; this will have implications or demands on personnel on both sides.
- Autonomy is quite welcome and is indeed helping ECAPAPA to address thematic issues it considers are of policy concern to members of ASARECA. But for this autonomy to be translated into real gains and policy influence by IDRC projects, there are other pertinent considerations: individual and institutional capacities, funding levels and predictability, project cycles, and endorsing mechanisms spanning the ASARECA CD.
- There is no real danger in ECAPAPA having the autonomy; if anything, it should be the norm. The regional institutions and stakeholders must decide on the research priorities and coordinate donor efforts to address stated policy goals: research benefits accrue to stakeholders, not to the donors hence there must be autonomy to decide on what needs to be done and how it will be done. There are some countries in the region that will go as far as rejecting donor funds unless they have the autonomy to make the critical decisions on where such funds are allocated; we should encourage this.

CHAPTER 6: IMPROVING THE POLICY RELEVANCE AND INFLUENCE OF IDRC FUNDED PROJECTS

Priority setting and selection of project teams

Priority setting that involves both policy makers and researchers is more likely to yield research outputs and recommendations that are relevant to stated policy goals and unique conditions faced by stakeholders in diverse parts of the region. There is no formula for priority setting at the NARS level (more so at public universities) whereas the CGIAR centers appear to go through an elaborate mechanism but which all the same does not involve stakeholders, at least not the civil servants who are ultimately targeted with the research outputs. USAID/REDSO/ESA, that has supported a lot of policy studies on regional transport and trade since the early 1990s also goes through an intensive priority setting exercise involving implementing agencies but again the role of ultimate beneficiaries is subdued especially by the fact that the exercise is underpinned on a pre-conceived strategic objective that does not have domestic ownership¹¹. In many cases, the research themes and projects, are conceived by researchers or their institutions, are theoretically appropriate and can logically contribute to the national policy making processes but the resources are spread out too thinly to many micro-environments thus making it difficult to come up with generalizations that capture the big picture that a policy maker usually needs. Freeman, a senior policy analyst at ICRISAT/Kenya refers to this phenomenon as ‘thinking within the box’ and he adds that such micro-focused projects tend to come up with expected and well known prescriptions that rarely excite anybody.

The technology and NRM studies reviewed in this report had proposals that went through a rigorous selection and peer review process but due to resource constraints and operational procedures followed by ECAPAPA, the research priority setting did not involve policy makers and other stakeholders. Research team selection did not anticipate the lack of cohesion that was later found to be a major factor affecting project completion and timeliness of the results; this may have adversely impacted on policy influence. Key informants are of the strong view that projects should be based not just on the priorities of the governments but also of the research institutions. The short and medium term needs of these institutions, in terms of management and research obligations to their boards, vary from one country to another in the ASARECA countries but project prioritization may not necessarily require that ECAPAPA responds to the peculiar concerns of each and every country and institution with which it collaborates. What is required is the ability to address a particular policy issue with a certain degree of consistency and to be able to draw certain useful lessons for a large number of countries and for future project design and dissemination of findings. Some of the experts consulted were of the view that ECAPAPA should adopt the model currently applied by the IFPRI/2020 projects whereby policy makers are made members of the research team. Whereas this idea sounds appealing, in practice it does not seem to work since public officials rarely get involved in a consistent manner probably due to lack of real commitment or because of other pressing routine responsibilities and orders from superiors. Involving many stakeholders and disciplines may easily raise administrative and logistical problems and ECAPAPA may want to follow the design and multidisciplinary coordination that is followed for example by ICRISAT: the organization has socio-economic activities in marketing that are tailored to fit into activities of natural scientists (e.g. breeders): the project design, while keeping the goals and objectives in mind, must therefore account for varied professional practices and contributions.

¹¹ The author was the regional coordinator of the REDSO/ESA project on cross-border trade between 1995 and 2002

Funding levels for policy analysis

Funds for policy analysis and for building analytical capacity in this aspect are considerably lower than what is obligated for scientific research aiming at generating or adapting agricultural technologies and also much lower than what donors generally pay for consultancy services. There are considerable variations in amounts allocated per project, timeframes and management and reporting modalities. Research and policy analysis products still retain the ‘public goods’ property: this means that benefits may accrue in the long run and to many stakeholders without a possible recourse to exclusion. Everybody expects governments to fund research and since many of the region’s governments seem to lack both foresight and the political will to devote resources to the agricultural sector¹², this responsibility has switched to donors who may now operate with little consultation with government and its policy drivers: it is a vicious cycle where government puts in little money, underpays its researchers, lets donors take over (leading to the familiar accusation of so-called donor driven research), policy relevance of research declines, demand for research output diminishes and government sees no rationale for devoting additional resources to research institutes such as universities. Here is what the policy experts think about funding levels and what needs to be done to reverse the negative trends now threatening policy influence and relevance of donor funding, generally, and more specifically in relation to IDRC.

GENERALLY:

- ❖ Donor funds should directly address issues that are of relevance to policy makers and funding levels must be assessed jointly with the issues of sustainability and consistency especially in terms of being able to facilitate follow-up work, impact assessment and continued participation of stakeholders. Haphazard projects are unlikely to build long lasting relationships and trust between researchers and policy makers, funding levels notwithstanding.
- ❖ Increasing project funding levels is one form of direct motivation to researchers but this objective could also be achieved through proper selection of research teams and mentors (regional policy advisors). On average, the donors seem to peg their estimated project costs at about US\$ 20,000 but this is not covering the opportunity costs of the researchers in this region. The dichotomy of having one or two large projects as opposed to numerous little projects equitably covering all the ASARECA countries should be reviewed and timing of projects made right in order to maximize benefits out of the limited funds.
- ❖ ECAPAPA, however, refutes the claim that it attempts to cover all ASARECA countries thereby reducing unit funding below optimum thresholds. But they add that: due to a general shortage of funds, typically about US\$ 90,000 per year, efforts are made to cover as much ground as is possible. The implication of this is that, in terms of policy influence, these resource allocations have limitations considering the opportunity costs of the more senior researchers that are the desired target for policy analysis.
- ❖ There is also a problem with the impromptu nature of access to research funds; this seems to apply to donors across the board. This unpredictability makes planning difficult especially in the case of ECAPAPA where there are no core research funds that can be used to maintain the tempo at all times while efforts aimed at raising external funds are underway.
- ❖ In view of the above (budgetary, personnel and funds consistency and sustainability), donors should reassess their policy impact expectations from the research projects that they fund.

¹² This may be an unfair statement but by and large, public rhetoric about the important role that agriculture can play in poverty reduction has not been followed with real changes in budgetary allocations to agriculture nor with higher support levels for agricultural research and policy analysis: research accounting for less than 1 percent of GDP across the board in ECA countries.

SPECIFICALLY: How realistic are IDRC funding levels, assuming policy influence is the objective, and who are the comparators in the region?

- ❖ ECAPAPA points out that unlike other donors whose funds also cover ASARECA, IDRC funds go exclusively to the program and its stated regional activities. Capacity building rather than influence on policy has been the implicit objective in the present lot of IDRC funded projects under ECAPAPA and any policy influences achieved for example through contacts made by researchers in the course of implementation must be treated as a bonus.
- ❖ IDRC funding levels and project contracting and administration are compared with similar projects funded by Rockefeller, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), IFPRI/2020, FOODNET, GTZ, DfID as well as projects run under institutions with mandates similar to ECAPAPA such as TEGEMEO Institute of Egerton University and the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), the latter two discussed in the next section dealing with dissemination.
- ❖ Both Rockefeller and IFPRI/2020 channel their funds through the institutions to which the researchers are affiliated (the former favouring University Departments while the latter having a more diverse selection). These donors are both actively engaged at early stages of proposal screening and grantee selection just as in the IDRC/ECAPAPA case but with grant levels at much higher than those of IDRC (Rockefeller for example has been giving US\$ 65,000 compared to IDRC which gives about US 14,000 for the Technology studies and US\$ 20,000 for the NRM projects). The two comparators go through more strict regimes and schedules for deliverables and this may or may not be as a result of accountability instilled by the contracting institutions.
- ❖ SIDA also goes through institutions, for example, its Lake Victoria projects go to Universities. The mode of contracting will have a bearing on the benefits that accrue to the institutions as opposed to individual researchers. The latter are of course capacity building but when the project passes through an institution such as a university, graduate students benefit and the institution may get office equipment such as computers and telephones which improve communication and access to research information.

Many of the respondents agreed that the funding levels are never adequate at any time: what needs to be stressed is that priority setting should involve a wider range of stakeholders in order for the projects to have any meaningful impact on policy formulation, funding levels notwithstanding. Donors must also appreciate the invisible nature of policy; it is a process, a history. This implies that there must be consistency and sustainability in funding of selected priority areas; unreliable and unpredictable funding will contribute little to policy reforms.

Dissemination of research findings and recommendations

Dissemination remains the most problematic and tricky aspect of the policy/research puzzle: problematic because of the resource limitations and tricky because there are special competences and capacities that are often lacking on both the research supply and demand sides. It is said that joint priority setting and consultations between policy makers may help erode the current

mistrust between the two sides but our investigations and brainstorming with key informants and practitioners show that researchers may not even know who is being referred to as ‘policy maker’. The intellectual divide between researchers and policy makers (and politicians) has always been there and may have been a healthy means of mutually ensuring non-interference and accountability in decision making. But as indicated in the above sections, there are many more institutions now engaging in policy research and agriculture itself is becoming more complex especially when viewed in a global context. At the same time, those whose tax money is going into supporting agricultural research are increasingly looking for tangible results that must be demonstrated and verified through monitoring and evaluation. A number of informants agree that the conventional dissemination strategies are not working and cite capacity weaknesses and lack of resources for post-project activities as the main reasons (see responses to Q4 in Appendix A4).

Alternative approaches involving project teams that actively involve civil servants/senior policy makers, senior researchers and young professionals should be considered in dissemination strategies. Similarly, increasing public relations with legislators (e.g. parliamentarians and their select committees on agriculture and trade) could improve researchers’ profiles and acceptability of their work at the national level.¹³

When ACTS had staff covering diverse professional disciplines, it was quite successful in making direct contacts with policy makers. Their proposals targeted specific policy gaps and policy intent was made clear in the proposals with the public and private sector stakeholders being involved in the process from an early stage for example through various meetings and PR sessions. ACTS managed to have better influence on policy processes and gain confidence of the policy makers just like TEGEMEO has managed to do more recently, but both institutions now suffer from staff attrition and policy contacts and achievements that they made in the past may not be sustained.

The case study projects reviewed in this report suffered from a number of factors that we have highlighted in the foregoing sections. These factors definitely curtailed the potential for the projects to influence policy processes. In addition to the factors that have already been discussed, we have to add that all the projects had not matured for impact assessment as our TOR may have suggested. The funding levels (especially in comparison to projects funded by other donors and considering the opportunity costs of the researchers) were rather modest. Due to the small and short term nature of the projects, emphasis on policy influence was not a priority; although invariably there was mention of policy implications in the proposals, there was never any resource allocation for the post-project period for concerted dissemination and contacts with target stakeholders.

Is the conventional dissemination strategy working?

Opinion is varied as to whether to continue using workshop and policy briefs as a means of disseminating information to policy makers. Dr Place of ICRAF/Nairobi says that: *there is no success recipe but recommends that ECAPAPA should experiment with models that others are*

¹³ TEGEMEO Institute of Egerton University, African Center for Technology Studies, ACTS, and the Institute for Economic Affairs, (Kenya); and Economic and Social Research Foundation (Tanzania) apply these approaches with reasonable success.

applying with various degrees of policy influence: involving policy makers directly; a more aggressive approach used by ACTS; lobbying legislators as TEGEMEO seems to be doing with some degree of success; developing the flexibility to respond quickly to the policy makers' demands. This requires financial and human resources involving policy makers directly; if an institution is in a straight jacket in terms of staffing and research/training mandate, it is unlikely to attend to a national or regional issue that is a top priority to a politician.

Uptake of research output is a continuing challenge to both the demand side of research as well as the supply side: the public sector must have the capacity to utilize research findings and this means a change of mind set, not just increasing their capacity to absorb and seek information. And the research institutions must appreciate national policy concerns, especially the political dimensions of policy, and the institutions (not just the individuals) must have the flexibility to respond to policy needs. It is only by addressing both sides of the problem (policy makers and researchers) will dissemination achieve policy influence and a culture developed of mutual respect and need for each other. But there is a niche here for the donors such as IDRC, adds Freeman (ICRISAT/Nairobi) who also cites a relevant lesson: *Round table discussions organized by GTZ for example were quite useful in coming up with research problems that incorporated the views of a wide cross section of stakeholders and thus results were amenable to adoption by policy makers. The process of articulating research problems is of vital importance and donors must play a role. They also have to follow it up and play a role in connecting researchers with policy makers; meetings called by donors are more likely to be attended by senior policy makers than those called just by researcher; it is a mind set in the public sector that will take time to change and which can be exploited by the donor community.*

There are, however, those with the view that there is nothing particularly defective with the conventional approach to dissemination but the policy influence must be explicit and the research team geared to and empowered mentally and financially to make the necessary contacts with policy makers. Experienced researchers who happen to be in a vantage position to rub shoulders with senior policy makers are likely to gain more policy influence compared to relatively young and inexperienced researchers even if the latter are better equipped with the latest analytical skills. But the senior researchers seem to more spread out too thinly hence the need for a more careful selection of the teams if policy influence is the ultimate goal. Policy influence during the project implementation phase should be emphasized but dissemination activities and their policy intents have to be programmed and anticipated in the early conception phases rather than being merely accidental.

Dr Minde, the ECAPAPA regional coordinator, feels that the strategy of researchers also doubling as disseminators can work if the level of policy influence is clearly defined. The current lot of IDRC projects shows evidence that even if post-project dissemination funds are not provided, policy influence can be achieved as long as the researchers are strategically placed in relation to senior public officials such as Ministers and Principal/Permanent Secretaries. The west African example whereby a council of ministers of agriculture is involved in design, priority setting and lobby for policy change is noteworthy for consideration by ECAPAPA. He adds that the program's dissemination efforts are likely to fizzle off at the level of the Committee of Directors of ASARECA unless strategies for direct involvement of senior policy makers are put in place. The weakness in the strategic positioning of ECAPAPA in terms of dissemination is

similar to that of other regional institutions such as FANRPAN, namely: no clear ownership of project outputs and endorsement procedures are non-existent. Under these circumstances, there is a tendency for emergence of donor-driven research networks whose strategic plans hardly fit into frontline economic and political goals of national governments.

The Gender Dimension in Research and Dissemination

Finally, we summarise here the views of respondents about gender mainstreaming in research projects. Gender analysis is important because of various reasons: regional research capacity in technology development; efficiency in use, management and sustainability of natural resources; education; health; and, household food security. Because of these reasons, gender is usually a cross-cutting theme in almost all projects but despite this omnipresence, it risks strategic exclusion and may miss altogether from policy prescriptions. Although females were involved in some of the case study projects (especially the KARI team) as collaborators, they were conspicuously missing at the proposal stages. This could be due to lack of initiative but the picture that is emerging is that of inadequate critical mass. This problem adds onto the waning interests in gender analysis: gender was in vogue about ten years ago just like HIV/AIDS is today. The respondents and policy experts we had discussions with could not categorically state that their institutions are pursuing gender in its own right and our own view is that there really should be no basis for this since gender is a cross-cutting issue.

Genderizing projects is made much more complicated by the fact that the region seems to lack the analytical capacity needed for gender analysis: sociologists and anthropologists who are more comfortable with analysis of gender issues usually lack the training and skills to merge such issues with those relating to household economics and the exogenous factors that impact on them. Economists trained in the latter generally lack the skills and inclination to undertake gender analysis. Because of this dilemma, and in particular reference to ECAPAPA, selection of the research team is critical especially if gender perspectives are to be accounted for in the ensuing policy prescriptions.¹⁴

Experiences of other regional and international institutions are varied: ICRISAT for example tends to be weak on mainstreaming gender in its projects at the diagnostic stages but the lessons of its researchers, especially in Mozambique (Nacala corridor) where they are looking at production and trade practices, clearly demonstrate the importance, for example, of determining who is the *de jure/de facto* head of the household: this affects resource use patterns and livelihood strategies. If gender issues are merged with other research objectives, neglect may be suspected. KARI on the other hand has a national gender coordinator but does not have projects that work specifically on gender. Gender mainstreaming in the projects under review may not have been a deliberate design feature and it would not be surprising if the final reports downplay or even omit the issue altogether. The NRM projects, for example, did not address gender as a stand alone issue but various aspects of gender may actually came up during the project implementation and in the workshops held at the community level. Analysis of gender must be tied to the objectives and policy implications and, for this reason, one would expect that the main

¹⁴ IDRC has since 2002 funded ECAPAPA to undertake analysis of gender related issues and implementation of the projects is already underway.

concerns in the NRM projects had something to do with sustainability and equitability in the management and access to natural resources; gender analysis is thus a means to an end rather than a social or political end in itself or even worse, a simplistic analysis of differences between men and women.

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