Project Title:	TTI Phase 2 Institutional Support: Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR)
IDRC Project Number:	107906-001
Institution Name:	Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR)
Location:	Makerere University Campus Plot-1, Makerere Hill Road Kampala

Final Technical Report
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Executive summary

Provide an informative summary of the key results, and significant or important outcomes arising from support from the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), with a focus on the enhancement of organizational capacities.

We excelled in all three major areas we had identified as the objectives of our program:

1. The TTI program made possible the development of an MPhil/PhD program which radically expanded our research capacity and publication output, as measured by books, publications in peer-reviewed journals, Working Papers, Policy Briefs, articles in newspapers, both local and international, and the launch of a new journal.
2. The above development both required and made possible an expanded organisational performance, measured in the effectiveness of support services: the library, publications and communications, administration, finance office, and property management. Our library has doubled in capacity and we have established a publication and communication unit.
3. Development of organic links with numerous public interest groups and non-governmental organisations, especially in two fields: the land questions, and the management of extreme violence in the political domain.

Objectives and Progress towards Milestones

Briefly describe achievement and progress towards the overall organizational objectives related to the three pillars of (1) research quality, (2) organizational performance, and (3) policy engagement for the reporting period (TTI Phase 2). Provide any evidence that milestones were achieved, and refer to evidence in previous reports and/or attached annexes (as needed). If applicable, explain why any milestones were not achieved.

- Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to strengthen MISR's role as a credible public institution in Uganda by strengthening its ability to provide high quality, influential and policy relevant research.

The specific objectives of the project were as follows:

1.1 Enhancing research quality
   a. Meet the information needs of MISR's growing research cadre and increased demands from the wider Ugandan research community for availability of research resources and improved research infrastructure (library space, archival, visual and digital media)
   b. Expand into new fields of research (in addition to MISR's core thematic areas) by conducting at least one research project per year in new research areas that are a priority to public policy debate in Uganda
   c. Increase the number of research trainings and peer learning opportunities including visiting senior scholars and young researcher internships as means of acquiring and sharing knowledge on research and methodologies

d. Increase the number of collaborative research projects and partnerships within Makerere University and beyond at domestic, regional and international levels.

1.2 Improving organizational performance

a. Strengthen organizational and management structures by improving the infrastructure and enhancing the capacity of internal management committees to better service the research process and the dissemination of its output

b. Strengthen MISR's administrative capacity by recruiting and training qualified administrative and technical staff

c. Enhance staff retention and performance through improved working conditions, benefits and incentive schemes

1.3 Strengthening Policy Engagement, Communications and outreach

a. Strengthen communication and publication channels by improving communications and IT infrastructure including upgrades to telecom facilities, hardware and software and recruitment of appropriate qualified staff.

b. Increase production, dissemination and accessibility, demand and uptake of MISR research outputs across a wide range of stakeholders

c. Facilitate dialogue around public policy development and implementation in multi-stakeholder approach

d. Strengthen existing partnerships as well as identify and develop new strategic partnerships to enable the fruition of MISR thematic objectives.

Synthesis of results

Reflect on the main outcomes from the grant. In particular, reflect on:

♣ Changes in behaviour, capacities, actions, or relationships within your think tank, its researchers or organizational staff, relation to networks or other research institutions?

There has been a change in the think tank, the organisational staff, and our relations to networks and research institutions:

(a) The think tank developed into a research and policy unit with a widespread reach and growing influence in the shaping of public policy.

(b) We have transformed the physical environment with the renovation of existing structures (plumbing, water, painting) and the building of new small-scale infrastructure: the Pavilion with a student café, a lecture room/cinema hall, a seminar room, and an outdoor meeting place.

(c) We now have an impressive research library, a publications and communications unit, a professionally run accounts office, an efficient administrative office, and a full-time property manager.

(d) Our participation in networks and relations with other research institutions have grown impressively. We are part of the CODESRIA network. We have a Mellon-funded 5-year 1.5 million USD grant to develop a collaboration on 'Decolonization, the Disciplines and the University' involving 5 institutions: the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana,

American University of Beirut, Centre for the Study of Social Sciences in Kolkata and the Ifriqiyya Colloquium at Columbia University in New York City.

♣ Changes in behaviour, capacities, actions, or relationships of research users or those affected by the research process or findings?

(a) We have developed a post-graduate program, have already graduated 7 PhDs and over 30 MPhils.

(b) With the graduation of PhDs, we have developed a program of post-doctoral fellows. The grant has made it possible to fund two-year post-doctoral fellowships, leading to publications and involvement with key public issues and key public

(c) Our research staff includes 6 full-time Research Fellows and 3 part-time Research Associates. We are also about to hire another six Research Fellows, many we hope from our new Post-Doctoral Fellows. In other words, we have reached the point of growing our own timber.

♣ Policy influence (e.g., expanded policy engagement capacities of researchers; strengthened communications function; broadening policy horizons of policymakers; and specific policy influence stories, including any development outcome of the influence)?"

(a) With the development of the post-doctoral program, our research and publication profile has grown significantly. Only this year, we are publishing 6 new books, including 3 by Research Fellows and 3 by Post-Doctoral Fellows.

(b) We are now a sought-after think tank whose participation is sought in two areas of public policy: the land question, and political violence and conflict resolution. On issues dealing with land, we have ongoing collaboration with Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU) and a range of NGOs that work on the question of Land Acquisition.

♣ Lessons learned about approaches to elements for organizational strengthening, building capacity, or influencing policy or practice? What problems arose, and what changes in orientation occurred? Were certain aspects of project design particularly important to the degree of success of the project?

(a) Our major challenge, as our main opportunities, have come from our location within a public university. The opportunity comes from the obvious fact that the university represents a pool of intellectual resources on a range of specializations, one that we can draw on as and when necessary. This same location has presented us with our challenges. These include having to reckon with a formidable bureaucracy, and with corruption which has become rampant in the public sector.

(b) We received critical support from TTI when having to deal with abuse of office in the Accounts Office. The TTI grant funded a Financial Review which made it possible to marshal the evidence to make a forceful and effective case for its reform with the university authorities.

(c) The *flexibility of the TTI grant* made possible a flexible and prompt response. It took us several years, two to be exact, to put the accounts office in order and to find the right leadership for it. An unintended outcome of this was an undue delay in the audit process that should have been annual. It is only this year that we are catching up with our audit agenda.

♣ What contributed to these results and what lessons did you draw from the experience?

(a) We have drawn two key lessons from this experience: (a) the importance of combining basic research with policy engagement, and thus developing active and long-term relations with public interest organizations outside government; (b) developing a strong internal financial and administrative capacity to have workable and effective mechanisms to ensure accountability.

♣ What was the role of other organizations or donors in this project? How was this relationship managed?
We managed to generate support from several donors in diverse fields: (a) on the strengthening of infrastructure (library, seminar rooms), we got substantial support from NORHED, especially in the last phase when TTI seemed to turn lukewarm; (b) on research, from Carnegie and NORHED.

The project was able to mobilize new support from Mellon to create a supra-national network which would move us beyond higher education to the question of decolonizing the disciplines and the university.

Since each donor dealt with us in a bilateral fashion, there was a tendency to assume that we were working within the context of a bilateral relationship. This sometimes created problems arising from conflicting demands and oversize expectations, especially when it came to reporting schedules. We managed it on a week-by-week basis, as best as we could!

Problems and Challenges

Have there been any problems or challenges faced by the project? These could include delays, problems amongst stakeholders, with research activities etc. Highlight any risks that might have emerged in the project, and innovative ways you have found to deal with these risks.

(a) We have already explained above the organisational and administrative challenge we faced in the middle years of the program.
(b) Our location in the university structure has been a second problem. What is the appropriate location of a post-graduate research institute in a primarily under graduate public university? What should be the degree of its autonomy? What is the appropriate mix of teaching / research and public policy formulation? How should different stakeholders (disciplinary departments, relevant government ministries, external public policy pressure groups such as NGOs) be represented on the Board of the institute?

Administrative Reflections and Recommendations

This section is about administrative recommendations for IDRC. What would you do differently as a result of this experience, and what general and useful lessons can be derived for improving future projects?

What recommendations would you make to IDRC with respect to the administration of the project, related to the scope, duration, or budget? Candid observations about the overall experience with the project are encouraged. However, any sensitive or confidential information should be addressed through a direct exchange with the program officer, and documented and filed separately.

(a) The key lesson of this project is the degree of flexibility and freedom it allowed the grantee institution. From the outside, this may seem a risky proposition. To minimize risk through greater control is to make for not only a risk-free environment but also one where the opportunities for learning and organisational and leadership development are minimized.

(b) For this to not lead to naivite, it is important that program officers be given latitude and freedom to make decisions on the spot. It is the program officer who should effectively and regularly deal with the leadership on the ground.

(c) Some donors in the public sector (e.g., GAVI) sometimes allow grant recipients to use alternative procurement methods or to modify existing systems in order to circumvent known and anticipated bureaucratic delays. These can go up to making room for internal evaluation and contract committees to ensure a reasonable degree of control over the work process and project pace.