

DONORS TO AFRICAN EDUCATION

**THE WORKING GROUP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING IN
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS**

**Report of a Workshop held in Gaborone,
Botswana November 25-26, 1992**

Working Group Workshop Report No. 3, 1992

**IDRC
Social Policy Program
Social Sciences Division
IDRC - EARO
P.O. Box 62084
Nairobi, Kenya.**

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REPORT OF WORKSHOP OF THE WORKING GROUP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss and formulate strategies for the building and strengthening educational research and policy analysis in Eastern and Southern Africa. The focus was particularly on the needs of researchers and institutions in the region.

The workshop was a follow up to a meeting of the Working Group on Capacity-Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis which was held in Nairobi, July 24-25, 1991 which identified the need for working out strategies for the implementation of the recommendations of the IDRC commissioned study on the status of Educational Research and Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa carried out by two consultants between March and July, 1991.

The workshop which was hosted by the Educational Research Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA) brought together researchers, policy makers and donors interested in promoting and strengthening educational research for policy in the region. A list of the participants is given at the end of this report.

Opening Speeches

The Chairperson of ERNESA, Changu Mannathoko in her welcoming address underscored the importance of the workshop in formulating future strategies for educational research and policy analysis in Eastern and Southern Africa. The significance of the meeting was also marked by the participation of researchers from South Africa.

A presentation by Christopher Shaw, the Executive Secretary to Donors to African Education, (DAE) Secretariat, focused on programmes carried out by DAE. It was noted that DAE is an outcome of the World Bank study on education in Sub-Saharan Africa that stimulated interest in a continuous discussion and dialogue of national, regional and international levels on issues affecting education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Structurally, it has the Task Force or general membership which is made up from all agencies involved in education and training in Africa and the African Ministers of Education. The DAE has an Executive Committee composed of African Ministers of Education and Donor Agencies contributing undesignated funds to DAE. DAE's activities are conducted through 7 to 8 voluntary Working Groups each lead by donor agency. Each Working Group addresses itself to a priority of educational issue in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Senior Program Officer, Social Sciences Division of IDRC, Kabiru Kinyanjui, informed participants that IDRC is the lead agency of the Working Group on Capacity-Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis. This is as a result of its long involvement not only in the area of educational research, but also on the account of its commitment to research and capacity building in other fields. The objective of this Working group is to strengthen research and policy analysis in Sub-Saharan Africa through the support of activities such as assessment of education research needs, demand for educational research and policy analysis, funding of research, development of training materials, sponsoring of courses, strengthening of networks, dissemination, sustainability and related activities. Among the Working Groups' activities have

been the funding of a survey on the status of Capacity-Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1991, and its dissemination through workshops.

Focusing on some findings of the report, Kinyanjui, decried the low quality of capacity building and educational research institutions which are incapable of imparting the necessary skills that would contribute to the development of research in Africa. He also underscored the poor management of research and dissemination, the brain drain and related problems in the field of research and policy. The workshop was challenged to examine ways and means of assisting countries whose development is retarded by conflict and war, strengthening of training, research and documentation in a majority of countries, and the creation of an enabling environment for capacity building in educational research and policy analysis. It was emphasized that such a goal can only be achieved by learning from past mistakes.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education Mr P.O. Molosi in his official opening speech noted that this was a very timely workshop which should take stock of the past weaknesses of capacity building in educational research and policy analysis and adapt a forward ever and backward never strategy towards the achievement of sustainable development in this field. He also challenged the workshop to address itself to issues of research and development, its relevance and cost effectiveness. It was also noted that research can only thrive in a political environment that is conducive and supportive which has generally been lacking in many parts of the continent. Other issues highlighted included the importance of an emerging free South Africa in the consumption and dissemination of research information, the need for a comprehensive appraisal of critical research issues, the linkage between research, policy formulation and practice in order to answer the right questions and the need for human resource development for improved living standards.

Report of the Status of Capacity-Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis in Sub-Saharan Africa

The summary of the report which was presented by Sibry Tapsoba, one of the consultants to the study, had the objective of examining the status of capacity-building in Sub-Saharan Africa, namely, to collect data on strengths and weaknesses in the current status of capacity building and policy analysis in the region. The study sampled 16 countries in East and Southern Africa and Central and West Africa from which data was collected to construct a portrait of capacity building in educational research and policy analysis. The presentation focused on a number of areas, namely, educational research institutions, management of research, dissemination of research results, training in educational research and policy analysis, funding, demand and utilisation of capacity.

a) Educational Research Institutions

These included: university faculties and departments of education planning, research and evaluation units located in Ministries of Education, autonomous research institutions or bureaux and private research centres and consulting offices.

Problems of these institutions:

- . Their quality varied immensely across the countries and all experienced budgetary cuts.
- . With the dwindling of financial support, the quality of the training and research environment deteriorated leading to decline in the quality of research output.
- . Poor utilisation of the existing trained cadre to contribute to capacity building. Focus on consultancies by faculty researchers tends to interfere with quality of research and capacity of research training.

b) Management of Research

Problems in the management of research included:

- . Understaffing, under-funding, lack of autonomy and a combination of factors such as disruption by student strikes, brain drain and inadequate facilities.
- . Institutions not engaged in collection, management and dissemination of basic data of their own programmes or activities.
- . Research is generally managed and organised by individual researchers.
- . Constant change and transfer of personnel, climate of distrust, especially in MOE controlled institutions.
- . Lack of planning and formulation of clear priorities in developing human resources.
- . Tendency to overload units with unplanned activities as a result of changes in policy.
- . Inability to link the work of the units with work in other institutions which would increase the pool of expertise available.
- . The proliferation of sub-units sponsored by donor agencies, many of which duplicate the work of the original units.

c) Dissemination of Research Results

It was observed that research output is generally poorly managed and disseminated. Problems of dissemination included:

- . Local journals published irregularly and many researchers have a tendency to publish in reputable journals abroad.

- . The products of research are kept either by individual authors or in small and efficient local documentation centres and units which often do not share their stock with the main university or departmental libraries.
- . The existence of a poor reading culture.

d) Training in Educational Research and Policy Analysis

Problems identified in training in educational research and policy analysis were as follows:

- . Poor and small graduate courses and diversion of funds away from research towards teaching and student scholarships.
- . Graduate training programmes generally train specialists in discipline areas as opposed to research, with a poor mastery of basic research techniques.
- . Research methodology courses do not pay much attention to training in policy analysis since they are limited to skills required in thesis writing.
- . Many researchers acquire their research skills through the inadequate non-formal training in workshops and short term courses.
- . Faculties of education have been adversely affected by the enormous expansion of the education systems hence more concentration on the production of teachers at the expense of effective graduate training and research.

e) Funding of Educational Research

It was noted that funding of educational research is a major handicap in the promotion of research and capacity building. Some of the issues included:

- . Many governments pay lip service to the importance of research, but are unwilling to fund it.
- . African countries are reluctant to include in their borrowing requests provisions for educational research although they borrow heavily for other areas, especially in defence.
- . Although donors spend substantial funds on development research in Sub-saharan Africa, expenditure on capacity-building and educational research have not been their top priority, save for IDRC which has been the most active donor agency in funding communication and networking activities among educational researchers in the region.

f) **Research Demand and Utilisation of Capacity**

A number of issues were highlighted in the area of research demand and utilisation of capacity. These included:

- . Many governments wait for crisis to call for research 'the fire-brigade approach'.
- . Researchers do not generally incorporate elements of utilisation in their research findings, and are more concerned with its relevance in academic promotions.
- . Governments and universities tend to make extensive use of ideas emanating from research done especially in the North. This tends to prompt the demand for research locally.
- . There is a general lack of mechanisms to ensure the utilisation of research in important developmental issues in education.

g) **Suggestions for Strengthening Capacity-Building**

Some suggestions were made regarding the strengthening of capacity building:

- . Governments and universities must play a leading role in strengthening of research capacity within and across their various institutions. Donor agencies despite their substantial investment should only play a catalytic role in meeting national and regional requests for support.
- . Planning units should define their tasks clearly, employ qualified local expertise, acquire autonomy and resources for their management.
- . Regional centres of excellence could be established to undertake research, publications and documentation.
- . Donor agencies need to consolidate their programmes into major categories to enable researchers to undertake large and multi-disciplinary projects.
- . Universities need to increase their training capacities at the postgraduate level within improved and high quality curriculum.

Synthesis of the Report

In the synthesis of the report three major areas were identified for strengthening education research and capacity building, namely, supply, demand and the utilisation of educational

research. These were discussed in the plenary session following the presentation of the report and continued in group discussions.

1. Issues in the Supply of Educational Researchers

Discussions on the supply of educational researchers centred on three issues; training and upgrading of researchers, training in policy and training in qualitative research and use of modern techniques. It was noted that:

- . Emphasis in training should focus on both qualitative and quantitative research.
- . Research methodology is normally determined in part by the type of questions asked.
- . Policy analysis is part of educational research and should therefore be given full attention in research training programmes.

Problems in Training Institutions

- . Underutilisation of available expertise
- . Training and upgrading facilities not evenly distributed
- . Brain drain and general lack of manpower
- . Lack of courses in research methodology
- . Heavy teaching responsibilities
- . Training institutions are often small, work in isolation and have no adequate funding.

Strategies for Future Development

- 1) Need to develop local expertise
- 2) Need for strong undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in education which should include methodology and policy analysis courses.
- 3) Identify quality research institutions for the training of researchers in the region.
- 4) Co-ordination among research institutions in government and universities in the region.
- 5) A media campaign to promote a research culture and awareness of the need for research.

- 6) Create awareness of the need for researchers to upgrade their skills and competencies and to develop new ones. This should be done through research associations and networks.
- 7) Avoid the duplication of small research units which are mainly donor directed.
- 8) It was agreed that although other research agencies need to be given serious attention, university as institutions in which large national resources are utilised need to be revitalised.
- 9) The need for networking to strengthen research institutions managed by relatively junior scholars.
- 10) The need to be realistic about available resources generated nationally and by donor agencies in view of the structural adjustment programmes.

II. Issues of Research Utilization

Discussions on issues of research utilisation centred on documentation and dissemination at different levels, networking at different levels to promote south to south collaboration and collaborative ventures at the regional level. A number of other issues not highlighted in the report were noted. It was agreed that on the whole the politics of research and education have not been well appreciated, there is also the need to disseminate research in simple language and terminologies through popular media. In collecting data, it is important to utilise lower structures of the ministries instead of higher echelons of the administrative hierarchy. More importantly, it is necessary to involve policy makers, practitioners and informants in research projects.

Strategies for Future Development

A. Documentation and Dissemination

- 1) The need for good national and regional data banks was emphasized because:

It is currently difficult to conduct online literature searches, and because connections between regional libraries are limited.

In this regard it is necessary to establish which institutions are or could be linked up and to connect national documentation centres to the Regional Documentation Centre.

- 2) The main emphasis was on the establishment of a regional documentation centre based at the ERNESA Secretariat in Gaborone. The coordination of the relevant activities would be both regional (ERNESA) and national (ERNESA national chapters, national institutions and individuals).

The programme of action required to implement this project is as follows:

- . By end of January, 1993 national facilitators should have given a list of all research material collection points in their respective countries.
 - . The Regional Coordinating point would write back to the national associations and ask for specific summaries of documents by June, 1993.
 - . Users to come in and ask for what is available.
 - . Documents begin to be available through the traditional or electronic means.
- 3) The possible sources of information were identified as national universities, ministries of education, universities in the North and South, donor agencies, organisations such as IIEP, NGO's, universities in the North which focus on developing countries and national government documentation centres.
 - 4) Summary abstracts for documentation centres will be based on keywords and list of articles on specific topics.

B. Net Working

- 1) The key here is ERNESA.
- 2) Other levels of networking include:
 - National (associations)
 - Wider regional (e.g. with ERNWACA)
 - ERNESA/South (e.g. with SEARRAC, REDUC. etc)
 - ERNESA/North (e.g. with NORRAG)

- 3) Networking activities to be organized around:
 - Information sharing
 - Training
 - Meetings
 - Joint research projects
- 4) With regard to those networking activities it was emphasized that ERNESA needs to cooperate with other networks who do engage in related activities such as economic and agricultural based networks. Individual members who have contacts with such associations which will be required to promote these links.

C. Collaborative Ventures

In addition to some of the collaborative projects which were mentioned in the previous two sections, other possible areas of collaboration were identified as:

- 1) Collaborative projects between governments and universities to build the necessary rapport between the two bodies.
- 2) Recruitment of Network (Association) members from both the government and the academic community, and
- 3) Training based on regional centres which are seen as the leaders in specific training fields.

With regard to both documentation, dissemination, networking and collaboration, the group emphasized the need for:

- a) Spreading the load across the various associations and individuals. Commitment to those ideas is key if the planned activities have to succeed.
- b) Quality Control for the credibility of the coordinating networks and institutions.

III. Demand for Educational Research

Major issues of demand for educational research focused on the sensitisation of main actors to the importance of research and policy analysis, generating

resources to overcome the dependency syndrome and improving the research environment. Other issues noted included, the need for researchers to focus on policy making process, improvement of quality research through peer evaluations, the diversification of research funding through a thorough and realistic re-examination of the African environment to make the continent self-reliant, harmonising the ideologies of various actors in educational research through advocacy and a continuous dialogue between researchers and planners.

Strategies for Future Development

A. Sensitization of Main Actors to the importance of research/policy analysis

- 1) Demystify research at the individual and institutional levels.
- 2) Conduct research that is readily useable and answers an immediate policy problem.
- 3) Researchers should strive to get access to/into the official policy-making fora in the Ministries of education where issues of relevance to policy analysis are raised.
- 4) Researchers should acquaint themselves with what is going on in the overall "Education Environment" coverage should include the grassroots e.g. communities, parents, teachers, schools, students, etc.
5. There is need for researchers to create a "healthy" balance between reactive and proactive research.
6. Data-banks have to be built up so that information is available to planners and other consumers of information.

B. How to Generate Resources to Overcome Dependency Syndrome

- 1) Cost effective use of resources. The issue of accountability is very critical.
- 2) Market the research skills through good results in order to attract consultancies from whose fees the Associations can get a certain percentage. ERNESA should also benefit from the consultancies that it has initiated.

- 3) Donors need to be sensitized to using the existing local regional and local networks that have demonstrated competency.
- 4) Governments be urged to budget for research under units such as Curriculum Centres, Planning, Examinations' Councils, etc.
- 5) Researchers need to be "realistic" and be "modest" in the light of the existing financial constraints.
- 6) Capacity-Building: Technical Assistance should have counterparts, with a view of utilising more of the local expertise.
- 7) Pooling the "human resource" by bringing together "small" research institutes. This could be facilitated through regional, national and institutional networking. Collaborative Donor effort could also be useful.

C. How to Improve the Research Environment

- 1) Promote less "bureaucratic structures" within associations and consolidate the already existing research capacity.
- 2) Focus more on the core activities:
 - Data base management
 - Collaborative activities
 - Bridging the gap between policy makers and researchers in the universities.
 - Research in the African region is dominated by foreign researchers who normally tend to use local researchers as research assistants. Such research is often published by foreign researchers without any reference to local researchers.

Concluding Remarks

- Participants were once again referred to the objectives of the Working Group on Capacity Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis.

- It was observed that a number of other Donor Agencies were invited to this workshop. They included, SAREC, DSE, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the British Council, SADCC and the World Bank.
- This workshop which was funded by DAE and IDRC is the last of the dissemination workshop on the capacity-building in educational Research and Policy Analysis in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The collaboration of AAS, CODESRIA, AAU and the Working Group was noted and appreciated.
- It was emphasized that the period ahead is one of action both at the local and national levels. There is an urgent need to resolve some of Africa's pressing problems in educational research and policy.
- BERA was commended for its successful hosting of the workshop.
- Participation in the workshop by researchers from South Africa, Malawi and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Botswana was noted with appreciation.

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

Donors to African Education (DAE)

Working Group on Capacity-Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis

AGENDA

Wednesday, November 25, 1992

08.00 - 10.00	Registration of Participants
10.00 - 10.30	Tea Break
10.30 - 12.30	Chairperson: Changu Mannathoko Welcoming remarks: Lydia Ramahobo , Chairperson, BERA Introductory Remarks: Kabiru Kinyanjui , Co-ordinator, Working Group on education Research and Policy Analysis: Remarks on the work on the Task Force of Donors to African Education (DAE): Christopher Shaw , Executive Secretary, DAE Secretariat, IIEP, Paris Opening address by: Peter Molosi , The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Botswana Vote of Thanks: Donatus Komba , Coordinator, ERNESA
12.30 - 14.00	Lunch

14.00 - 16.00	Chairperson: Kabiru Kinyanjui Presentation of the report on the status of Capacity Building in Educational Research and Policy Analysis in Sub-Saharan Africa: Sibry Tapsoba
16.00 - 16.30	Tea Break
16.30 - 18.30	Comments and discussions in plenary

Thursday November 26, 1992

08.30 - 09.30	Chairperson: Kabiru Kinyanjui
09.30 - 10.30	Presentation of a summary of previous day's discussions and critical issues for group discussions
10.30 - 11.00	Tea Break
11.00 - 13.00	Group discussions (continued)
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14.30 - 17.30	Report on discussion groups and discussions of the reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key actions and future activities: - Information on new activities - Concluding remarks Kabiru Kinyanjui - IDRC Changu Mannathoko - ERNESA Chairperson
19.00	Cocktail

PARTICIPANTS LIST

BOTSWANA

Mr Peter Molosi
Permanant Secretary
Ministry of Education
Private Bag 0055
Gaborone, BOTSWANA.
Fax: 3600458
Tel: 3600461/2/3

Lydia Nyati-Ramahobo
BERA, University of Botswana
P/Bag 0022
Gaborone, BOTSWANA
Fax: 356591
Tel: 351151 Ext 2251

Mr Robert Prophet
University of Botswana
BERA, P/Bag 0022
Gaborone, BOTSWANA.
Tel: 351151
Fax: 356591

Mr S G Weeks
BERA, University of Botswana
P/Bag X031, The Village
P O Gaborone, BOTSWANA.
Fax: (267) 356591
Tel: (267) X2397 & UNI 351151
AH304147

Dr Andy Chebanne
ERNESA Secretariat
University of Botswana
P/Bag 0022
Gaborone, BOTSWANA.
Fax: 356591
Tel: 351151 Ext. 2094

Ms Changu Mannathoko
Education Research Network of
Eastern and Southern Africa
University of Birmingham
School of Education,
International Unit, Edgbaston,
Birmingham B15 2TT
UNITED KINGDOM.
Tel: 021-414-0320 (Home)

ETHIOPIA

Dr Dibaba Birhanu
Ministry of Education
Curriculum Development
P.O. Box 2346
Addis Ababa
ETHIOPIA.
Tel: 127359

KENYA

Prof Daniel Sifuna
ERNESA Facilitator and ERNIKE
Chairperson for Kenya
Kenyatta University
Faculty of Education
P.O. Box 43844
NAIROBI.
Telex: 254-2-Ken UNIKE
Tel: 254 2 810901-12
Fax: 254-2-810754

Dr Kilemi Mwiria
KUTERA Coordinator
Kenyatta University
Bureau for Educational Research
P.O. Box 43844
NAIROBI.
Telex: 254-2-Ken UNIKE
Tel: 254 2 810901-12
Fax: 254-2-810754

LESOTHO

Mr Bernard Parneng
Deputy Principal Secretary
for Education
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 47
Maseru, LESOTHO.
Tel: 323037 Off
Tel: 316086 Hse

Dr Matora Ntimo-Makara
ERNESA Facilitator and LERA
Chairperson for Lesotho
Lesotho Institute of Education
P.O. Roma 180,
LESOTHO.
Telex: 4303 LO; Fax: 340000
Tel: (09266) 340601

MALAWI

Prof Joseph B K Mwale
Director & Associate
Professor of Education
University of Malawi
P.O. Box 280
Zomba, MALAWI.
Fax: 522046
Tel: 522490 or 522222

Mr Saulos Nyirenda
ERNESA Facilitator for Malawi
Ministry of Education and Culture
Private Bag 328
Lilongwe 3
MALAWI.

NAMIBIA

Mr Joseph Mukendwa
Director of Education Planning
Ministry of Education
M.E.C. Building Private Bag 13186
Windhoek, NAMIBIA.
Telex: 3347
Fax: 061-224277
Tel: 061-221920

Prof R Katengela Auala
Namibian Research Association
University of Namibia
P.O. Box 20081
Windhoek 9000, NAMIBIA.
Fax: 061-3072444
Tel: 061-3072243

SOUTH AFRICA

Mr Silas Zuma
Director of Planning
The Education Foundation
P.O. Box 2915
Durban 4000
SOUTH AFRICA.
Fax: 031-305-5571
Tel: 031-3052401 (Off)
031-9061978 (Hse)

Dr Michael Cross
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3 Wits 2050
SOUTH AFRICA.
Fax: (011) 339 3956
Tel: (011) 7165393

Ms Monica Bot
Edusource (Education Foundation)
P.O. Box 41892
2024, Craighall, RSA
Fax: (011) 8868069
TEL: (011) 8867874

Mr Neville Alexander
Director, Project for
the Study of Alternative
Education in South Africa (PRAESA)
University of Cape Town
Private Bag, Rondebosch 7700
Room 305 Education Building
Middle Campus, SOUTH AFRICA.
Fax: (27) 21 650-3489
Tel: (27) 21 650-4013

Dr Teboho Moja
Union of Democratic Staff
Association
University of Bophuthatswana
P/Bag X2046, Mmabatho, 8681
SOUTH AFRICA.
Fax: (0140)25775
Tel: (0140)892107/892096

MOZAMBIQUE

Mr Zeferino Martins
ERNESA Facilitator for Mozambique
Director of INDE
P.O. Box 4653
Maputo, MOZAMBIQUE.
Telex: 6-148 MINED
Fax: 258-1-426797
Tel: 258-1-421701/3

SWAZILAND

Mr Sihle Zwane
Chairman, Zera
Dept. of Curriculum & Teaching
University of Swaziland
P/Bag 4, Kwaluseni
SWAZILAND.
Telex: 2087 WD; Fax: (09268) 85276
Tel: (09268) 84011 Ext. 251

TANZANIA

Mrs Christine Hongoke
ERNESA Facilitator and ERNETA
Chairperson for Tanzania
Coordinating Unit for Research
and Evaluation
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 9121
Dar es Salaam, TANZANIA.
Telex: 051 41274 ELIMU TZ
Tel: 051 27211 Ext 321; 29906

Dr Donatus Komba
ERNESA Regional Coordinator
University of Dar es Salaam
Faculty of Education
P.O. Box 35048
Dar es Salaam
TANZANIA.
Telex: 41561 UNIVIPTZ/41327 UNISCIE
Fax: 48135 Tel: 49056/49192

UGANDA

Prof Cooper F Odaet
ERNESA Facilitator and UERA
Chairperson for Uganda
Department of Education
Makerere University
P.O. Box 7062
Kampala, UGANDA.
Fax: 255409; Tel: 545040

ZAMBIA

Pro E K Waddimba
Chairman, Zambia Educational
Research Association (ZAMERA)
University of Zambia
P.O. Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia
Tlx: ZA 44370
Tel: 213221

ZIMBABWE

Dr Obert E Maravanyika
ZERA/ERNESA
C/o University of Botswana
Private Bag 0022
Gaborone, BOTSWANA.
Telex: 2429 BD
Fax: 356591
Tel: 351151

DAE

Christopher Shaw
Executive Secretary
DAE/IIEP
79 rue Eugene-Delacroix
Paris, 75016
FRANCE.
Fax: 33 1 45 033 965
Tel: 33 1 45 033 796

DSE

Dr Wim Hoppers
DSE-Germany & Ministry of
Development Cooperation-
Halland CESO,
Box 90734, The Hague
Netherlands.
Fax: 31-70-3510596
Tel: 31-70-3510591

USAID

Mr Heactor Nava
USAID
P.O. Box 90
Gaborone, BOTSWANA.

AAS

Dr Makaziwe Mandela
African Academy of Sciences
P.O. Box 14798
Nairobi, KENYA.
Fax: 254 02 884406
Tel: 254-02-884401

ACBF

Representative from:
African Capacity Building
Foundation (ACBF)
CABS Centre, 5th Floor
Jason Moyo Avenue
Harare, ZIMBABWE.

IDRC

Kabiru Kinyanjui
International Development Research
Centre (I.D.R.C.)
P.O. Box 62084
Nairobi, KENYA.
Fax: 254-2-214583
Tel: 254-2-330850

Sibry Tapsoba
International Development Research
Centre (I.D.R.C.)
B.P. 11007, CD Annexe
Dakar, SENEGAL
Fax: 221 253255