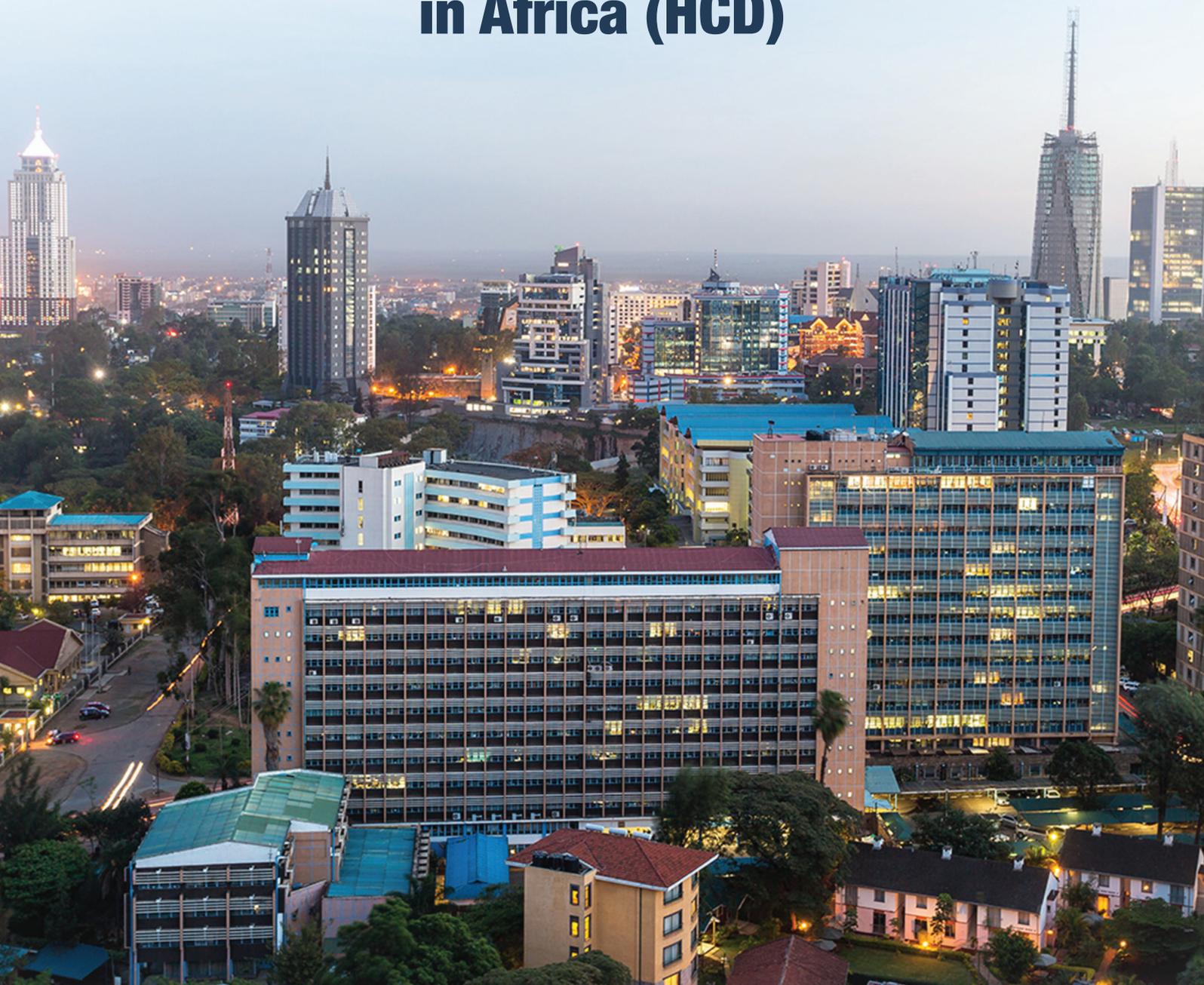




AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXV
CONCEPT NOTE

Theme:

**Human Capital Development
in Africa (HCD)**



About AERC

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), established in 1988, is one of the most robust Research and Capacity Building Institutions in the world, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The Consortium's mission is to strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa. The AERC achieves its mission and objectives through a long-standing collaborative and networking framework of its research and training programmes, with the support of an interactive communications and outreach programme and backed by a comprehensive management and administration component.

At the core of the AERC is a platform for networking of individuals (researchers, resource persons, faculty, students, and policy makers) and institutions from across Africa and other parts of the world to bring synergies for enhanced developmental outcomes. For over 30 years now, the AERC has built a solid core of highly credible research and a cadre of well-trained economists that has enhanced the professional stature of the network, both locally and internationally, and that has focused attention on issues critical to African development, bringing rigour and evidence to policy making.

Need for Human Capital Development in Africa

Human capital—the education, skills, and health of people — plays a pivotal role in the transformation of African economies. Sub-Saharan Africa scores the lowest of all the world's regions on the World Bank's Human Capital Index (about 0.40), a measurement of how well countries invest in the next generation of workers (World Bank, 2020). This is despite the fact that access to sources of human capital in Africa, although still low, has increased significantly over the past two decades (Leornard, 2022). More households have access to health care, more students are enrolled, and families have access to more tools for improving the quality of their life. However, the goal of human capital, quality of life still lags significantly behind even in other developing countries, especially considering the substantial gains in access. Africa's low human capital can be explained by three interlinked factors, namely: survival, school, and health.

Human capital is critical for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in Africa. Investment in human beings for improved social and economic outcomes in future – through education and training, learning and experience, or health interventions – is vital in shaping future income and productivity. Developing human capital in Africa, therefore, requires a massive and coordinated effort to strengthen the quantity, efficiency, and impact of investments in people. There is need to facilitate regional and country-owned policy reforms, action plans and cross-country learning in four key areas:

- *Expanding effective government investment in social services.*
- *Introducing reforms and innovation to improve service delivery.*
- *Committing to equity and inclusiveness.*
- *Addressing fertility and gender issues to harness a demographic dividend.*

Enhancing the capacity of African governments to make policy decisions that will confront the challenges of building human capital for accelerated inclusive development in a 21st century context is fundamental to improving the capability of the continent (and its policy makers) to address the key constraints on human capital accumulation.



The AERC Research on Human Capital Development in Africa

Over the last three years, the AERC, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), has implemented several activities under the “Building Policy Research Institutions to Support Human Capital” Programme. Key components of the programme are:

- *Capacity building for policy-oriented economic research undertaken within the AERC research capacity building program;*
- *Institutional Partnerships;*
- *Technical skills enhancement workshops;*
- *Research Fellowships with National Think Tanks & International Research Centers of excellence;*
- *Policy outreach and research dissemination; and*
- *One collaborative research project on human capital development in Africa*

The Collaborative research project on ‘Human Capital Development in Africa’ sought to generate evidence on the challenges of building human capital for accelerated inclusive development as well as address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDM). In addition, this collaborative research project sought to provide policy reforms that would enable Africa’s young people to grow up with optimal health and equipped with the right skills to compete in the digitizing global economy. The project involved both framework papers and country case studies.

The framework papers sought to investigate broad, and crosscutting issues around human capital development to improve the capability of the continent (and its policy makers) to confront human capital development challenges, and leverage the opportunities they present, as it confronts its development challenges. The country case studies sought to inform policy makers and development practitioners on human capital development in Africa from the viewpoint of individual countries and/or sub-regions (or group of countries).

To assist policy makers and other actors improve generation and management of knowledge on Africa’s human capital and address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems (SDS), the AERC intends to disseminate the findings from the above studies to senior African policy makers through its flagship dissemination vehicle, the “Senior Policy Seminar” (SPS).

About The AERC Senior Policy Seminars

One of the AERC’s major activities is bridging the gap between economic research and economic policy. The Senior Policy Seminars (SPS) are intended to bring together the economic policy researchers and the policy makers, along with high level private sector and non-state actors, to discuss key policy research issues in sub-Saharan Africa. A typical physical seminar features about 100 policy makers and private and non-state sector actors discussing the AERC collaborative research findings and research of other thought leaders presented for dialogue between researchers and policy makers. The policy makers are normally identified for their interest in policy research issues and the level of seniority of the policy makers is generally right, leading to detailed discussions. Researchers are reasonably well balanced between anglophone and francophone.

Aside from the specific aims of bringing researchers and policy makers together, the seminars are directly useful to the AERC because they help identify research imperatives facing a transforming Africa to be considered by a network of researchers and educators. They also improve prospects for policy involvement of the researchers and enhance the AERC’s visibility in the policy community. Thus, they serve to highlight the growing capacity in the region for policy research and, overall, provide important feedback to AERC for its research and training programs.

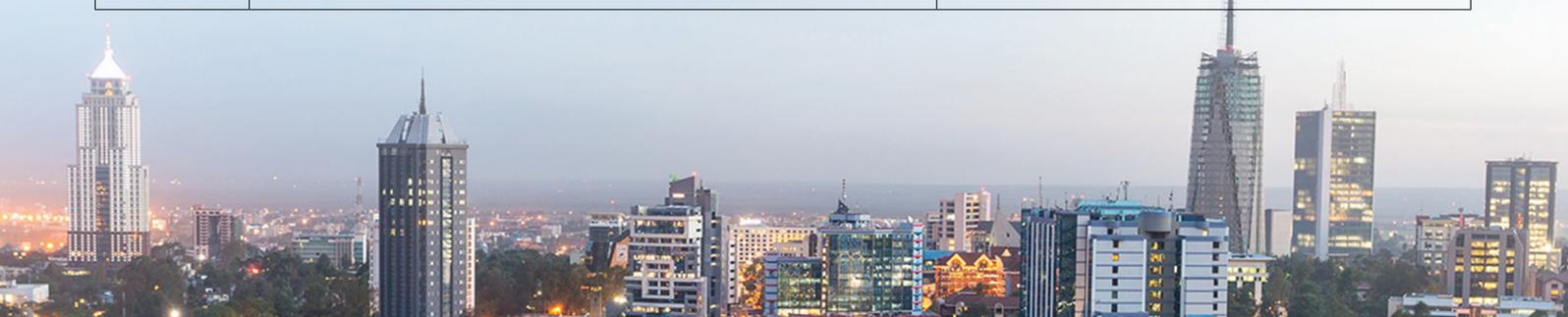


The AERC Senior Policy Seminar (SPS XXV)

The AERC will host the twenty fifth series of the Senior Policy Seminar (SPS XXV) on **29-30, March 2023** with a broad theme **Human Capital Development in Africa**. Four papers will be presented followed by a policy roundtable. The roundtable will be a mix of policy makers, paper presenters, non-state, and private sector actors. The four papers will be in the following broad topics synthesized from the ‘Human Capital Development in Africa’ research project.

Proposed Topics for Senior Policy Seminar

Theme	Papers	Working Title
General Paper	Human Capital and Economic Growth Strategy for Africa: A Life-Cycle, Economy-Wide Framework By Lant Pritchett, Centre for Global Development & Harvard University, USA	A Lifecycle, Economy-Wide Framework for Human Capital in Africa By Lant Pritchett lant_pritchett@harvard.edu
Health	Early-Life Human Capital Investments in SSA By Jere R. Behrman and Claudia Vazquez	Human Capital Investments and Economic Growth in Africa By Jere R Behrman jbehrman@sas.upenn.edu
	Fertility Change and Human Capital Growth in Africa By Tom Vogl, University of California San Diego, USA	
Labour Markets	Foreign Direct Investment and Human Capital Development in Africa By Phyllis Papadavid, Sherilyn Raga and Dirk Willem te Velde, Overseas Development Institute	Human Capital Accumulation in Africa: Drivers, Consequences and Way forward By Germano Mwabu gmwabu@gmail.com
	Activating Untapped Human Capital in Africa By Kenneth Leonard, University of Maryland, USA	
	Human Capital Accumulation, Household Prosperity, and Social Inequalities in Africa By Germano Mwabu, Francis Baye, Olusanya Ajakaiye and Others, University of Nairobi, Kenya, University of Yaoundé II, Cameroon and African Center for Shared Development Capacity Building, Nigeria	
Education	The Career Progressions of Head Teachers and School Coordinators By Adrienne M. Lucas, University of Delaware, NBER, J-PAL, and CGD	Education in Africa: Career Progressions, Gaps in Learning Outcomes and Responding to the Learning Crisis By Adrienne Lucas alucas@udel.edu
	Responding to the Learning Crisis: Structured Pedagogy in Sub-Saharan Africa By Benjamin Piper, RTI International	
	Gaps in Learning Outcomes across Africa By Noam Angrist and Stefan Dercon, Oxford University Blavatnik School of Government	



The four main objectives of the Senior Policy Seminars are:

1. To identify possible areas of policy-oriented research for the AERC-funded researchers to consider.
2. To improve prospects for policy involvement by the AERC-funded researchers.
3. To increase the AERC visibility in the policy community, highlighting the growing capacity in the region for policy research.
4. To provide an opportunity for policy makers and researchers to exchange their experiences and views on macroeconomic policy.

These are achieved in four ways:

- By synthesizing and disseminating the results of the AERC-funded research to senior policy makers.
- By generating an interaction between the policy makers and the AERC-funded researchers on the results of existing AERC research.
- By encouraging sharing of experiences among policy makers, on the lessons and details of economic policies.
- By receiving feedback from policy makers on the key current policy-related research issues in Africa.

The concrete outputs of the seminar are expected to be:

- Major input into the AERC's policy-oriented research agenda in the form of suggestions for key priorities in each of the policy areas examined.
- Ideas for methods and structures to promote closer collaboration among policy makers and researchers, both within individual countries and collaboratively across the continent.
- Wider dissemination of the AERC materials to policy makers, and ideas for forms and methods of dissemination most convenient to them.
- Proposals for how to follow-up the seminar.
- A communique.
- A report of the proceedings.
- A book-length volume on the papers presented.

Expected Outcome of the senior policy seminar (SPSXXV)

- Raised awareness and knowledge among senior policy makers, private sector, and non-state actors on the role of human capital development in Africa through evidence-based research.
- Identification of enabling government policies for human capital development, and exchange of country-specific experiences through a roundtable discussion.
- Enhanced relationship between researchers and policy makers by bringing them together to discuss key policy research issues on human capital development.
- Provide an opportunity to policy makers and researchers, along with the private sector and non-state actors, for uninterrupted dialogue on a set of key human capital development issues considered significant to policy.
- Equip African policy makers in decision making using up-to-date research findings.

Format

- Four papers addressing issues on human capital development in Africa will be presented.
- In this senior policy seminar (SPSXXV), the four papers will emanate from an AERC research project.
- A roundtable discussion of senior policy makers and other stakeholders will be held.
- There will be a robust discussion and exchange of ideas.



Annex

Themes of Previous AERC Senior Policy Seminars

Theme	Dates	Venue	Participants
Economic Research and Policy Making in Sub-Saharan Africa	March 1995	Nairobi, Kenya	40
Financial Sector Reforms, Domestic Resource Mobilization, and Investment in Africa	November 1996	Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire	48
Fiscal Policy in Africa	October 1997	Accra, Ghana	52
Revenue Mobilization in Sub-Saharan Africa	February 2000	Gaborone, Botswana	56
Macroeconomic Policy and Poverty Reduction in Africa	February 2002	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	60
Financing Pro-Poor Growth in Africa	March 2004	Kampala, Uganda	63
Poverty, Growth, and Institutions	March 2005	Cape Town, South Africa	66
Governance and Pro-poor Growth in sub-Saharan Africa	March 2006	Dakar, Senegal	72
Managing Commodity Booms in Sub-Saharan Africa	February 2007	Yaoundé, Cameroon	78
Climate Change and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa	April 2008	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	80
The Global Financial Crisis and Its Implications for the African Economies	April 2009	Lusaka, Zambia	92
Bank Regulatory Reforms in Africa: Enhancing Bank Competition and Intermediation Efficiency	March 2010	Mombasa, Kenya	72
Natural Resource Management in sub-Saharan Africa	March 2011	Maputo, Mozambique	103
(a) Health, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in sub-Saharan Africa	March 2012	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	107
(b) Challenges Associated with the Development of Oil Sector in Uganda (Special Policy Seminar)	February 2012	Kampala, Uganda	160
Youth and Unemployment in Africa	March 2013	Kigali, Rwanda	113
Capital Flight from Africa	April 2014	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	101
Agriculture in Africa's Transformation: The Role of Smallholder Farmers	March 2015	Maputo, Mozambique	90
Financial Inclusion in Africa	March 2016	Nairobi, Kenya	100
Industrialization in Africa	March 2017	Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire	121
Rethinking Regional Integration in Africa	March 2018	Kampala, Uganda	122
Fragility of Growth in African Economies	March, 2019	Harare, Zimbabwe	131
Agriculture and Food Policies for Better Nutrition Outcomes in Africa	March, 2020	Abuja, Nigeria	117
The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies	March, 2021	Virtual	307
Climate Change and Economic Development in Africa	March, 2022	Virtual	397
Human Capital Development in Africa	March, 2023	Hybrid	----

