Social Sciences and Policy Making in Africa: A Critical Review

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Introduction

A number of social scientists and organizations have, over the years, reflected on the evolution and problems of the social sciences (Mkandawire 1989; Ake 1983; Oyugi 1989; Katorobo 1985; Jinadu 1985; Amin et al 1978) and the relationship between the social sciences and development in Africa.[2] However, the need for an appropriate understanding of the relationship between social sciences and policy making in Africa and the prevailing crisis in the state of this relationship make it more urgent than ever before that the social science community in Africa should reflect collectively, in a more systematic and critical manner, on this particular problematique and on its ramifications and future implications.

This paper is intended to stimulate the debate within the aforementioned frame by providing an assessment of the state of the interface between social science and policy making in Africa and offering some perspectives on how this relationship should be perceived, evolve and be deliberately changed in the 1990s and beyond.

Why and What Social Science Research for Policy Making in Africa?

In approaching the subject of the relationship between social science and policy making, one is obviously and painfully aware that the mission of social science research ought not to be predominantly restricted to policy making aspects. Social sciences are to advance the quality and stock of

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1 The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author and should not be attributed to the UN Economic Commission for Africa or the United Nations.

2 CODESRIA has been in the forefront of addressing this issue. CODESRIA and DSRC of Khartoum University organized a conference on 'Social Science, Research and National Development' in Africa in Khartoum in 1978. CODESRIA, inter-alia, also organized several colloquia on the role of social sciences in Africa. Recently, the Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division of the UN Economic Commission for Africa organized a workshop in Rabat in September 1992 on the theme 'Enhancing the Interface between Government Policy Making Entities, and Universities and Research Institutions in support of Economic Reform and Development in Africa.

knowledge as well as inform and facilitate action. It does not pay to argue in either or terms. Generally, however, it has been the former role which has tended to be espoused more readily and argued and defended more vigorously by many critics and observers.[3]

Yet, in a continent as impoverished and beset by a host of serious interlocking economic, political and social problems as Africa, the latter aspect ought to take on special significance. In attempting to deal with the daunting challenges of improving human conditions, facilitating, bringing about and managing economic recovery and development; dealing with unfolding processes of social and political transition; and facing a myriad of other political, social and economic problems, governments and decision-makers at large can ill afford to ignore their indigenous social science expertise and 'think-tanks' or neglect to take advantage of indigenous research efforts in making informed judgements and decisions. Conversely, Africa's social scientists cannot afford to stay aloof from the realm of policy making and the possibility of employing the tools and analysis of their trade to offer pragmatic contributions on how to deal with societal problems and challenges.

The majority of African countries are currently mired in serious interrelated economic, political and social crises and it could well be argued that the way out of these crises and the way forward with the tasks of achieving human-centred development, democratization, nation building and economic revitalization can only be based on an understanding of the problems and application of appropriate policies within a context that is grounded in African realities, heritage and potentials. Herein, indeed, lies the need for and urgency of utilizing social science research in a more effective and systematic manner for the purposes of policy making as well as creating opportunities for more effective interface between researchers and policy makers.

Yet, social science research for policy making purposes has come to be viewed by many in less than favourable terms. Some authors have conveniently ignored the issue altogether, others have warned of the danger of putting too much emphasis on it while a few have even judged it as a factor

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3 Consider for example this definition of social sciences 'The purpose of the social sciences is to describe, analyze, explain and predict social phenomena..... It goes without saying that just as aeronautical engineers have a mission to make sure that planes fly safely in the skies, social scientists also have a mission to make sure that people do have some good understanding of the social processes in which they are involved and the implications that the changes that occur in such process have on the lives of people.

responsible for undermining the future of research and teaching in African universities.[4] These views have prevailed for some time now for a variety of reasons, but often as a result of associating research for policy making purposes largely with the use of short-term consultancies for the same purpose. This is particularly so since consultancies have often tended to lead some social scientists to confine themselves to searching for solutions to problems within a predetermined policy frame, propose 'quick-fix' solutions without giving due consideration to the long-term aspects of problems and produce results based on shoddy data, analysis and tools.

However, this is a very limiting view and definition of policy-oriented research, and it would not be fair or useful to restrict it to this particular function. Policy making should essentially be perceived as a process through which informed decisions are made and implemented. Viewed as such, it then becomes essential for the policy maker to assimilate the complex inter-related aspects and factors having a bearing on a particular decision, weigh the various options that are open for her or him as well as the limitations, possibilities and implications thereof; appreciate the opportunities and costs of alternative options; consider the forces that are likely to resist or facilitate the adoption or implementation of alternative options; take into account the long-term implications of alternative options; create the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of the chosen option; and monitor and assess the progress made in and impact of the implementing of the decision.

If the process of policy making is perceived as such, it becomes apparent that the domain of policy-oriented research is much broader than what is often assumed to be the case and that definitely there is much more to policy-oriented research than consultancy work. Hence, policy research should not be looked down upon as an inferior type of research.

A second implication of the foregoing is that for social science research to be meaningful for policy making purposes or for it to be 'consumed' by a decision-maker, it does not have to be initiated or even commissioned by the latter. This is particularly true of that phase of the policy making process where policy makers need to gain knowledge of, understand and take stock of the underlying factors that have a bearing on a potential decision. But it is equally true of research which is relevant to other phases of the policy making process. In many instances, self-driven and self-motivated policy-oriented researchers and organizations have been able to make contributions, which proved to be particularly useful for policy making purposes, without these having been commissioned or initiated by decision-makers.

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4 The prevailing view during the 1970s and 1980s among many social scientists and leading research organizations in Africa was essentially one of scepticism of the value of the so-called 'instrumentalist' or 'developmental' social sciences.

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Thirdly, while governments and the public sector remain the main consumers of policy research, they should not certainly be the sole clients. Social science research ought to equally have meaning and utility for decision-makers in the business community, politicians and organizations of civil society at large. Conspicuously, the role of social sciences in the non-governmental context has unwarrantedly been neglected in the hitherto debate.

Fourthly, policy-oriented research on the one hand and basic and applied research on the other hand could well and should be mutually reinforcing. If undertaken properly, policy-oriented research should require the rigorous application of the same tools used in research intended to advance knowledge and should also build on and borrow from such basic or empirical research. Conversely, the opportunities offered by policy-oriented research - in terms of access to classified and often difficult to obtain data and information - should be invaluable for enhancing the quality of all social science research in general.

If all these factors are taken into account, there ought to be better appreciation of the nature and utility of social science research for policy making purposes. This, however, is not to imply that policy-oriented research in Africa has been free from problems and pitfalls. The tendency to link such research endeavours to forecasting and predictions, to unduly influence and manipulate research results and to concentrate on the immediate and short-runs has been ominously present and has often been detrimental to the reputation of research and researchers as well as to the credibility and transparency of policy makers. Nevertheless, on the whole and particularly at this juncture of Africa's history and the evolution of the social sciences in Africa, policy-oriented research should, in spite of obvious deficiencies in current practices, receive due attention and enhanced status and relevance.

Interface Between Social Science and Policy Making: The Formative Years of the 1960s and Early 1970s

The nature of the interface between social science research and policy making in Africa has evidently varied from one country to another. However, overall and through the years, this relationship can at best be described as turbulent and paradoxical.

In the early post-independence years, African governments adopted rather enthusiastic and positive attitudes towards institutions of higher learning and the research community in general. They considered it as a necessity[5] as well as matter of national pride and consolidation and

5 In 1958 total enrolment in African universities was only 10,000 students, 65 per cent of whom were from Ghana and Nigeria. In 1960 only a handful of countries had inherited

assertiveness of the newly won independence to expand and establish new institutions of higher learning and also to encourage indigenous research in the social sciences. Indeed, throughout the 1960s, institutions of higher learning were expected to perform the urgent task of producing and training the manpower needed to Africanise the civil service as well as development and other aspects of nation building. Together with this, governments also sought to encourage a more active interface between the academic community and the policy making establishment and welcomed and solicited inputs from the former for the purposes of policy formulation and implementation.

Furthermore, the late 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed vigorous attempts on the part of institutions of higher learning — obviously with the blessing of governments — to establish specialized institutions that were predominantly of a policy-oriented nature. Thus, research and/or training institutions such as the Development Studies and Research Centre (DSRC) (1976), University of Khartoum; the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) (1965) University of Nairobi; the Bureau of Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning (BRALUP) (1967) and Economic Research Bureau (ERB) (1965), University of Dar-es-Salaam; Centre for Social and Economic Research (CSER), (1973) Zaria; Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) (1969) University of Ghana; Centre Ivorien de Recherches Economiques et Sociales (CIRES) (1971) University of Abidjan; the Institute of Development Research (IDS) (1972) Addis Ababa University and others came into being. The statutes of these institutions clearly reflected the bias towards policy making in their operations. In some instances, as in the case of the DSRC of the University of Khartoum, the link between the university and the development effort was explicitly enacted in the statutes of some institutions.[6] A number of development centres, which had already been in existence, such as the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research NISER (1950) and Makerere Institute of Social Research (1948) in Uganda, became more actively involved in policy research and advice.

More reinforcing to this trend had been direct actions by a large number of African governments which went out of their way to establish semi-independent institutions, outside the framework of higher learning institutions, to produce policy-oriented social science research and serve as fora for policy

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university colleges in British colonies. There was not a single university in French territories, aside from two emerging institutions in Zaire (UNDP 1993).

6 The following was emphasized as the mission of the DSRC: 'The Centre will lay particular emphasis in its interdisciplinary programme on high-priority issues of socio-economic development with a view to leaving, whenever possible, direct impact on policy making and policy implementation'.

debate. Some of these were established as national research councils or institutes e.g. the Economic and Social Research Council in Sudan (1970); Institute of National Planning in Egypt (1960); and Centre de Recherches Economiques Appliquees (CREA) (1975) in Algeria. In other cases, research institutions were established as affiliates of government ministries e.g. Institut d'Economie Quantitative (1968), Ministry of Planning Tunisia; and Institut National de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquee (INSEA) (1961), Planning and Regional Development Secretariat in Morocco.

Most of these centres concentrated their activities on socio-economic and development research. Nevertheless, many did deal with other aspects of social science research. A larger number of what is commonly known as NIPAs, (national institutes of public administration) were also established during that period in almost every African country. These were usually founded outside the frame of government ministries, but were overseen by and had strong links with a parent ministry or department usually dealing with issues of administrative reform. While their main function was the training of civil servants, they were also expected to contribute policy-oriented studies in the areas of public administration and management, decentralization, local government and administrative reform.

Most of the social science research generated by the main stream university departments and faculties during this period was of a basic, investigative and occasionally creative nature. Nevertheless, main stream academicians did contribute as well to research which could be characterized as being of an applied and policy-oriented nature. Researchers dealing with economic and public administration issues generally had better access to and rapport with policy makers and had also succeeded in producing a lot of policy research in these fields.[7]

The specialized development and social science centres were actively engaged and did a reasonably good job in producing research that was directly relevant to policy making purposes during that period. Many institutes and researchers in these institutes came to be actively associated with the preparation of national development plans which became quite fashionable during that period of time (Rasheed 1978; Senga and Migot 1978).

On the whole, the 1960s and early 1970s could be characterized as a period of mutual tolerance and amicable cooperation between the academic community and the policy making entities. Funding, although sometimes limited, continued to flow from and views of academicians were solicited by the latter, while the former readily obliged and often took pride in being

7 See for example various papers of the following two publications: Oyugi 1989; Katorobo 1985; Jinadu 1985.

associated with the honour of contributing to the crafting of national policies and exposure to the lime light as a result thereof.

This, however, is not to infer that this period was free from attempts by some governments to utilize research to justify predetermined ends and to legitimize their rule, or that opportunism on the part of some researchers to align themselves with discredited regimes did not exist. Indeed, an intense debate ensued in the 1970s on 'establishment oriented and supported social sciences' and 'critical social science', the relationship of the former to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions on the continent and the possible contributions of the latter to the amelioration of the situation.[8]

While this might be true in some instances, the relationship between the two sides was, remarkably enough, characterized by mutual accommodation and willful cooperation. The then prevailing perception that both the academicians and decision makers were on the same side of the struggle for nation building and indigenization of governance and development policies helped to smooth the relationship and encourage cooperation.

The Regional Dimension

It is important to recognize that already during this period, social science research did not confine itself to national borders. That same period saw the proliferation of regional and sub-regional social science organizations and associations acting as networking and umbrella structures to bring together researchers at the national level and foster the advancement of social sciences in general and/or in particular fields. Examples of this were the establishment of the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) (1973); The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) (1971); and The African Association of Political Scientists AAPS (1973). While these organizations and associations mainly co-ordinated, solicited, encouraged and published research of a general and basic nature in their respective fields, a great deal of their activities favoured policy-oriented type of research.

What is often blatantly neglected in dealing with the subject of social science research and policy making in Africa is the fact that a significant body of policy-oriented research has been generated by a number of African regional organizations, particularly the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the African Development Bank (ADB). Although these efforts have become

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8 These issues were vigorously debated at CODESRIA/DSRC conference on the theme *Social Science, Research and National Development in Africa* referred to earlier. Selected papers from that conference appeared in a special issue of Africa Development, Vol III, No. 4 1978. During the 1970s CODESRIA strongly advocated the need for and supported 'critical social science' in Africa (Bujra and Kameir 1992).

more intensive in recent years, they already started to assume importance during the early 1970s.

Many background studies of ECA in the early 1970s seeking solutions to Africa's development problems culminated in the adoption of pathbreaking decisions by the legislative bodies of ECA and OAU. These have in turn further intensified the search for appropriate policies to deal with social and development problems and challenges. One could recall in this regard 'Africa's Strategy for Development in the 1970s' adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers in February 1971 and the 'African Declaration on Co-operation, Development and Economic Independence' which was adopted by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 1973. The work which perhaps triggered a lot of subsequent policy research on the need for indigenous development was the 'Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa', which was adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECA Conference of Ministers in May 1976. This document argued forcefully for the need for national and collective self-reliance as a basis of self-sustaining and internally generated development and economic growth and the deliberate establishment of local industries to utilize the available agricultural and mineral resources as well as produce producer goods for industry, agriculture transport etc. (Rasheed and Sarr 1991).

Equally significant, and also often unrecognized, have been the initiatives which ECA took to establish a host of training and research institutions, among them social science institutions, in a deliberate effort to create indigenous African thought and capacity in major fields. Among these one ought to mention the African Institute for Development and Planning (IDEP); the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW); the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD); Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI); Institut de formation et de recherche demographique (IFORD); and the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS). Some of these institutions have, on their part, made valuable contributions to indigenous research, including policy-oriented research.

The Crisis of the 1980s: Retreat from Indigenity

Beginning with the second half of the 1970s and until the present, readiness to solicit and use social science research for policy making purposes has waned progressively and almost ceased to exist as related to certain areas. Indeed, the amicable relationship and attitude of mutual tolerance which characterized the interface between academia and bureaucracy in the immediate post-independence era has soured badly and has given way to increasingly strained relationships of suspicion, mistrust, antagonism and sterile

lack of cooperation. A number of reasons have been responsible for this state of affairs.

1. As the economic and social crises deepened and as governance in the majority of African countries came to take on an autarchic, undemocratic, repressive and often militarist nature, many social scientists found themselves, as it were, on the other side of the fence. They chose to openly criticize governments and public policies and to offer alternative views on policy issues and solutions to socio-economic and political problems, which have not been favoured by the latter. Many governments could not tolerate this criticism. They neglected and declined to actively solicit the views and research inputs of national think-tanks, particularly as related to the primary areas of policy setting or policy prescriptions. While a number of social scientists have continued to produce research that was relevant to policy making purposes, such efforts have often been willfully ignored. Where research has produced divergent views, it has usually been considered as subversive. Evidence has also indicated that even when solicited by governments, the rate of adoption of recommendations made by social scientists was dismal (ECA 1992). Only ad hoc consultancy work has had a better chance of being more readily accepted by governments and policy makers. Indeed, social scientists have been accused of having failed to influence change in Africa. However, the reasons for this are not so simple and the fault is normally not totally that of the social scientist.

2. The illegitimate, undemocratic and corrupt nature of many regimes and the manner in which they have practised repression, stifled opposition, mismanaged the economic and political affairs of their countries and often appropriated the financial and natural resources of their nations have caused social scientists to become more active and vocal critics of their governments and the policies thereof. As one expert observed:

   > *Attainment of independence accelerated processes of social differentiation, intensified the struggle for economic and political power and generally exposed the irreconcilable divergences in interests that had been concealed by the nationalist imperative of unity against the common enemy* (Mkandawire 1989).

   Many governments have not tolerated what they readily saw as unacceptable criticism and undisguised opposition. They sought to quell this through restriction of academic freedom, stifling of dissent and resort to the intimidation, expulsion, detention and even liquidation of the staff

of academic and research institutions.[9] These trends, together with the frequent closures of academic institutions have soured the relationship between academia and bureaucracy badly and has further contributed to the creation of a climate of mutual intolerance and mistrust.[10]

3. Freedom of research has come to be more frequently curtailed. In many countries measures have been instituted to intimidate researchers and to condition and control research. In some countries it would not be possible to undertake research without prior clearance from the state and, at least in one country, from the head of state himself (Maliyamkono 1992; Oyugi 1989).

4. With the intensification of the economic crisis and the cuts in educational budgets, and particularly research budgets and subventions, which became a standard component of the adjustment recipe, many think-tanks have been starved of resources. Furthermore, governments have not been particularly eager to fund research the results of which could well prove to be critical of governments policy directions and orientation. This has, in turn, adversely affected the productivity of researchers and research institutions, both in terms of the quantum and quality of policy research. A great deal of research and policy research in particular has been made possible through external support. While many donors have refrained from influencing research efforts, this has not generally been the case.

5. The drastic fall in the real earnings of academic staff and researchers in many countries, as a result of the spiralling inflation and massive repeated devaluations, has virtually caused academicians to join the ranks of the poor. In many an African university salaries of academicians are well below a dollar a day, which is the standard poverty line cut off points. The resultant preoccupation with the immediate problems of survival - through consultancies, extra loads of teaching and sometimes moonlighting outside the domain of the teaching and research vocation -

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9 The threats to academic freedom was the subject of a symposium organized by CODESRIA in Kampala in 1990 on the theme *Academic Freedom, Research and the Social Responsibility of the Intellectual in Africa.* As part of revisiting Kampala Declaration, which was adopted by the participants of the symposium, CODESRIA published long lists of African academics in detention, university closures, African academics dismissed or expelled and shooting and assassination of academics during 1992-1993 in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, No. 3, 1993, pp.3-4.

10 In this regard one author observed: *In many African countries, the state has become increasingly hostile to the discipline of Political Science. In some instances the hostility has assumed paranoid proportions. The study of politics is equated with subversion and opposition, and regarded as a hotbed of political unrest. In many single-party regimes in Africa, the university is viewed suspiciously as the informal opposition party* (Mugyenyi 1989).

> have rendered research, and particularly policy research, unattractive to many academicians and have further contributed to the debasement of the quality of research. This has, in turn, served to fuel the criticism, by many governments and policy makers, that indigenous researchers have not been capable of producing good quality research, a criticism which has further helped to affect the morale in research institutions badly and created added tension between the two sides. Only a dwindling number of researchers have continued to produce policy research regardless of the obvious perils and have managed to keep lines of communications open with politicians and decision makers. Commissioned policy research has generally been restricted to requests for the execution of specific consultancy assignments.

This state of sterile interface came to a head with the intensified and widespread adoption by an increasing number of African countries, since the beginning of the second half of the 1970s, of structural adjustment programme (SAPs) enforcing externally formulated development policy frameworks. Significant to recognize during this phase is the fact that as governments came to accept SAPS, the claim of Bretton Woods institutions to superiority of their knowledge over that of Africa's social scientists and African governments as regards Africa's own problems and how to go about solving them has thus received formal acknowledgement. The progressive and eventually comprehensive conditionalities which have been put in place within the framework of these policies, linking resource flows, debt relief and co-financing to SAPS, have ensured that collective pressure, by the Bretton Woods institutions and the donor community, on Africa to adhere to these imported, and presumably superior and more sensible, policy frameworks, would work. With this, the continent has virtually lost its ability to think for itself, and Africa's social science has ceased to influence the policy making process in any meaningful manner.

This, what I would like to call 'Policy making dependence syndrome' has further been reinforced through the ongoing policies and practices of technical assistance and technical cooperation in Africa, which have tended to bypass and undermine the utilization of indigenous expertise and think-tanks and entrench expatriate control over policy advice and policy implementation. Over 75 per cent of an annual expenditure of nearly $4 billion worth of technical assistance in Africa goes towards maintaining over 100,000 so-called expatriate experts who are supposed to advise African governments and assist them with the implementation of development projects.

The stringent cross conditionalities that have been imposed on African countries have further meant that indigenous expertise has deliberately been kept at bay. Donor supported economic reform packages often dictate, and in reality almost always succeed in ensuring, that experts from institutions of

donor countries be used as consultants. Obviously, these expatriates are expected to and placed there to support the externally generated and donor-driven policies and policy frameworks, i.e. another dependence reinforcing factor.

It is particularly disturbing to observe that while the vast knowledge and expertise of African experts are being ignored, while these indigenous experts have been vastly underpaid — thus driving them to emigrate or waste their talent in performing demeaning jobs in an effort to survive — and while indigenous think-tanks have been starved of funds, each of these resident foreign experts costs on average of $300,000 annually (UNDP 1993, 245). Imagine what a small share of the personnel and equipment components of technical assistance to Africa could do to strengthen and help to effectively utilize existing capacity in Africa's higher learning and research institutions. More painful and bordering on the obscene is the fact that a large number of these so-called experts lack even basic education! In this regard a UNDP study observed:

> *The technical cooperation surveys carried out in Burundi found that 34 per cent of technical assistance personnel in the country were not university graduates. In areas such as agriculture, these personnel could have been replaced by nationals because graduates from the agriculture faculty were beginning to face employment constraints* (UNDP 1993, 7).

Although for years the deficiencies of technical assistance, as related to undermining indigenous capacity building and utilization, have been recognized by the donors themselves, no meaningful actions have been taken to redress this situation. Recently, the record of technical assistance has been attacked, in no minced terms, by many (UNDP 1993; Jaycox 1993; UNPAAERD 1989; Jolly 1989).

Needless to stress is the observation that while many indigenous social scientists and think-tanks have been extremely concerned about the efficacy and impact of SAPs and economic reform programmes and have, on their own initiatives, evaluated and assessed these programmes, rarely have efforts been officially made to associate them with the formulation of these policies and programmes or the debate thereon. Even with the mounting evidence exposing the economic inadequacies of SAP and their adverse social and human impacts, indigenous social scientists and 'think-tanks' have not been called upon to evaluate the impact of these programmes or participate seriously in their modification or the search for appropriate alternative policy frameworks and strategies. Indeed, local research and researchers have been shunned even in the case of the formulation of so-called 'home grown' adjustment and economic reform programmes. Those researchers who have continued to be vocal in their opposition to and advancement of

alternatives to the standard recipes of SAPs have often been labelled as being out of touch, dirigiste, irrelevant, obstructionists and sometimes even outright subversives.

Thus, on the national scene, the dependence of governments on donor-driven policies and policy frameworks as well as foreign expertise became the hallmarks of the 1980s and early 1990s. Governments did not care much to make extensive use of indigenous social science findings or tap the expertise of indigenous think-tanks. Except for well defined consultancies and self-initiated contributions, policy-oriented research has generally remained unsolicited and underutilized. On the whole, the impact of indigenous research on policy making has been negligible.

Significant as well is the fact that these trends have contributed to the demise of the capacity for policy research within the government structures themselves. Simultaneous with the foundation of development institutes in the 1960s and early 1970s, it was fashionable to establish policy units and research departments in government ministries in Africa. Aside from acting as data gathering and rudimentary policy analysis units, these entities used to interact quite actively with outside researchers and act as convenient and logical links between the research community and bureaucracy. With the wholesale importation of policy frameworks and data from abroad and the demise of long- and medium-term planning, the need for and usage of the services of these policy and research units waned progressively. Many such units were left to die a natural death or have virtually been dismantled.

The Regional Scene

The intensification of the economic and social crises on the continent has created a salutary effect on social science research at the regional and sub-regional levels. The search and call for the adoption of alternative development and economic reform measures and governance modes have become more pronounced and intense.

Taking the case of CODESRIA and OSSREA, it is instructive to observe that while their constitutions did not specifically list policy research among the priorities of the activities of these organizations, yet not a small part of their work could conveniently be classified as relevant to policy making. CODESRIA's congresses, multinational and national working groups and colloquia have been particularly instrumental in putting forward useful policy-oriented research of a generally good quality. Both organizations have also kept the debate on the role and content of social science and the need for the indigenization of social sciences in Africa very much alive.

The ECA and OAU have become more vocal and forceful during this latter period in advocating alternative policies to deal with Africa's socio-economic and political crises, both at the regional and national levels. Important initiatives in this regard include the preparation of major strategies such as the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos (1980); the

Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Human Focused Approach to Socio-Economic Recovery and Development in Africa (1987); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) (1989); the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development (1990); Strategic Agenda for Development Management in Africa in the 1990s and Beyond (1993); and Africa's Human Development Agenda for the 1990s (1992). Most of these strategies were based on background research contributed to not only by the staff of ECA but also and mainly by African social scientists from outside the organization. Much of this work has been published (Adedeji et al 1991a:1991b).

While African governments have formally adopted many of these strategies, they have, in many instances, gone ahead to implement diametrically opposite policies and strategies. Even sectoral strategies, such as contained in the documents of the two Industrial Development Decades for Africa (IDDA) and the UN Transport and Communication Decade for Africa (UNTACDA), have remained largely unimplemented. The reasons for this are varied. However, SAPs, the conditionalities attached to them and the acute need by African countries for the financial resources and debt relief - which could only be forthcoming through the strict adherence to SAPS - have left African countries with little or no room for manoeuvre to implement the policies they themselves have formally adopted! Although the international community, at the level of the UN General Assembly, has also endorsed many of these African-conceived regional strategies - such as the Lagos Plan of Action, the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) and AAF-SAP, these did not serve as policy frameworks to guide the policies of the international community towards Africa. The following observation on one such African regionally emphasized strategy by a World Bank's staff member could perhaps give a clue as to why this has been the case:

> *Regional integration and cooperation had been a favourite subject of African development thinkers and a key element in the Lagos Plan of Action and several other documents drawn by Africans concerned with development. But the approach to regional integration had found no favour whatsoever in the Bank because it was regarded as going against the principle of international free flow of goods and capital on which the Bretton Woods institutions were founded* (Agarwala et al 1993, 12).

If these attitudes on the part of African countries and Africa's partners alike continue to prevail, even the recently adopted UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community will likewise remain dead letters.

In the case of Abuja Treaty, indications are already emerging to the effect that Africa's donors are partial to and are more ready to support alternative arrangements and modalities for regional economic co-operation in Africa. These have been more commonly referred to in some cases as the 'variable geometry' approach to regional and sub-regional economic cooperation and integration.

A number of other organizations, institutions and associations which have been established during this period - such as the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA) (1980), the Southern Africa Political Economy Series Project (SAPES) (1987), the Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP) (1977), and the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS) (1990) have also made important contributions to policy research.

Thus, while there has been no dearth of policy-oriented research at the regional level and while a significant body of research leading to the elaboration of major macro-economic and sectoral development policies, this indigenous research has been largely ignored, for the purposes of policy making and translation into actual policies, by African governments as well as the international community.

Recent developments in the social science research scene, which will definitely have far-reaching implications, are currently unfolding. Increasing efforts are being made to establish donor funded and donor controlled alternative research groupings and think-tanks. The issue here is not only that indigenous capacity is being bypassed, starved of funds and allowed to rut but more seriously it is also the question of the implications of the creation of well-funded and well-paid constituencies to propagate, advocate and support non-indigenously conceived development policy frameworks and the establishment of structures, parallel to already existing ones, to impart policy advice to policy makers.

Significant policy-oriented research in Africa has been generated by international research, UN and other Africa-focused organizations during the past two decades. Two broad trends in this regard are distinguishable. There are those organizations which have tended to utilize the services of local researchers and have generally shied away from attempting to influence the outcome of research and, there are on the opposite side other organizations which have generally preferred to generate the policy research themselves. Sometimes these organizations have hired African counterpart researchers. Nevertheless, they have in these cases often identified the areas of and defined the methodology for research and have also jealously guarded and retained the ultimate shaping of the outcome of such research. The UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, DTCD and FAO have usually tended to belong to the first category, while the World Bank is an example of the latter.

The World Bank prefers to prepare its economic reform packages, and even its policy reports on Africa, internally without much consultations with or inputs from African social scientists. This attitude, as related to major policy reports which the Bank prepared on Africa, has been described by a Bank's official as follows:

> *The history of the Bank's Africa reports can be traced back to 1979, when the African Governors of the Bank requested the President of the Bank to examine Africa's economic predicament and prepare an appropriate programme to help African countries. Since the initiative came from the Africans, it was expected that the process of report preparation for such a program as well as the report itself would be in empathy with African perspectives. The actual process, however, turned out to be more top-down than participatory. Some inputs were invited from experts, but the content and tone of their contributions were incompatible with the major thrust of the report. As a result, African inputs were largely ignored and not published in any form for the benefit of outside audiences. When the report was nearly finished, it was presented for comment to some select groups in Africa but without expectations that this would lead to any major modification.*
>
> ..... *In 1981, the Bank published Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action, written by Bank staff under the leadership of an external consultant, Elliot Berg.*
>
> ..... *A fairly short report, Sub-Saharan Africa: Progress Report on Development Prospects and Programmes, was done in 1983 largely for an internal Bank audience and to inform the donor community about some of the changes African governments were making in response to their economic crisis.*
>
> ..... *Then, in 1984, famine struck Africa. With the prospect of millions of people dying of starvation, there was a worldwide clamour to help Africa and the Bank was persuaded to prepare another report [Towards Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Programme for Action (1984)] to reflect on African problems and suggest possible solutions. The report had a tight deadline of six months and there was very little time for consultation with Africans. The consultations that did take place were largely a formality, and no African inputs were reflected in the report.*
>
> ..... *In response to repeated African requests, the Bank decided to prepare a report on the debt problems of Africa. ..... Since external debt is in an area of principal concern to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the focus and thrust of this report was transformed into a general financing proposal and published as Financing Adjustment with Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1986-90 (1986).*

> *... Once again, there was very little participation of Africans, and consultations with them were largely pro forma* (Agarwala *et al* 1993:4-7).

In terms of actual impact on policy making, it has been the World Bank, in association with the IMF, which has been vastly successful in influencing policy making and actually virtually dictating policy reform frameworks for the reasons indicated earlier. Indeed, the policy recommendations of organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO and UNCTAD, proposing variations of and alternatives to SAPS, have met with little success in African countries and, while the World Bank has been quite sensitive to them, they have had little impact in actually influencing the macro framework of SAPs.

In a break with its normal tradition, the World Bank commissioned - as a result of pressure by the African Governors of the Bank - a number of studies by Africans as part of the preparation of its Long Term Perspective Study (LTPS) 'Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth (World Bank 1989). These views have been taken into account in the final, though not the preliminary, versions of the study and have also been published separately in companion volume. Important however to recall in this regard is the observation that the broader and much welcome approach of the LTPS has not influenced 'new generations' of SAPS, that are currently on ground, in any meaningful manner. It is interesting, in this regard, to note that the foreword of the LTPS states the following:

> *A central theme of the report is that although sound macroeconomic policies and an efficient infrastructure are essential to provide an enabling environment for the productive use of resources, they alone are not sufficient to transform the structure of African economies. At the same time major efforts are needed to build African capacities to produce a better trained, more healthy population and to greatly strengthen the institutional framework within which development can take place. This is why the report strongly supports the call for a human-centred development strategy made by the ECA and UNICEF* (World Bank 1989).

Perspectives for the 1990s and Beyond

The complexities of the policy making process require that all those who are involved in this process, particularly governments, should appreciate the value of, commission and encourage the flow of high quality policy-oriented research and policy alternatives arrived at independently and objectively outside the framework of governmental structures.

However, as outlined in the preceding section, the hitherto experience of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s has amply demonstrated that African

governments have virtually abdicated their responsibility for and have also lost control over the process of policy making for development and economic reforms on the one hand, while the indigenous social science community and institutions have largely been denied the opportunity, by the same governments, to contribute to that process. Reinforcing to these patterns has been the tendency by outsiders to create parallel institutions and form alternative research groupings, mainly to buttress the prevailing economic reform paradigm and donor-driven policies, rather than strengthen existing indigenous capacities and support more open-minded and versatile contributions by researchers to policy making.

The implications of these emerging trends are pretty serious, both for the outcome of socio-economic development efforts and the future of indigenous social science for policy making purposes in Africa. Persisting inflexibly with adjustment as an approach to development would only deepen the on-going socio-economic crisis in Africa. At the same time, underutilizing and undermining indigenous social science capacity for policy making tantamounts to setting off a time bomb which would not only cripple that capacity, but could well seriously undermine indigenous capacity for all types of research. These trends would also further deepen the current state of sterile and antagonistic interface between policy makers and the social science community.

The seriousness of these emerging trends and their implications should compel all concerned to think strategically and act strategically in countering and attempting to reverse these trends. Such a strategic approach would, first and foremost, call on the African social science community to re-examine its stance, on the role of social sciences in policy making, in a fundamental and critical manner.

1. To start with, the pitfalls and the disadvantages of policy-oriented research have been over exaggerated and touted for too long in academic works and gatherings across Africa. This attitude ought to be reversed and the flogging of policy research needs to come to an end. What is at stake at present is not the issue of policy-oriented versus 'creative', 'basic' or 'critical' research, but rather the burning issue of indigenous policy-oriented research versus externally generated and externally-driven policy research.

   As mentioned earlier in section II of this paper, academic versus policy research is a false and a non-issue at this particular juncture of time. Academic research is important, but it is not sufficient by itself and is certainly no substitute for policy research. More crucially, African social scientists should not, as it were, vacate the field for outsiders to prescribe policies for Africa's own development and societal change. Therefore, social scientists and social science research institutions should not become inward looking. Indeed, they must strive to address and must

continue to focus with more vigour on policy-oriented research. In doing so, they must become proactive and should not only wait for research to be commissioned by policy makers. They should initiate policy research on their own volition. These institutions also have responsibilities towards their societies to seek out and exploit opportunities as well as build bridges for cooperation with policy makers in an effort to contribute to and hopefully influence policy making.

2. Perceiving policy research in much broader terms than has hitherto been the case ought to make such research more attractive and meaningful to African social scientists. Policy-oriented research should not only focus on prescriptions of solutions to problems and should, more crucially, go beyond that to lay the foundations for informed decision-making by policy makers (providing the basis for policy making); propose alternative approaches to dealing with policy issues both at the macro and micro levels; explain the implications of these alternatives; evaluate the impact of policies; and analyze the factors making for the failure or success of these policies.

3. African social scientists need to exploit more effectively the opportunities brought about by the pressure to democratize and open up African societies for a greater degree of participation, transparency and accountability in order to make more meaningful contributions to policy making. Important to stress here is that policy-oriented research is not only meaningful for and should not be directed solely to governments. Parliamentarians, people's organizations (trade union, women, youth and grassroots organizations etc.) and NGOs have a great need for policy research not only to help them shape their own policies and decisions, but also to assist them in influencing and evaluating the outcome of the processes of national policy making. Policy research could play a crucial role in strengthening these institutions of civil society and assisting them to carry through their roles as advocates and forces of change. Social scientists must devote greater attention to this hitherto neglected and critical dimension.

4. While it is ultimately the responsibility of institutions of higher learning and governments to provide adequate funding and support to national research centres, the autonomy and degree of freedom that these centres could enjoy do depend, to a great extent, on their ability to generate funds from external sources. Aside from funds which they could mobilize from non-conditionality attaching donors, they should strive to find ways and means to self-fund, recover costs and generate resources from internal sources.

   Funds generated from consultancies and commissioned policy research would not only encourage the latter, but could greatly help in supporting

and strengthening basic and empirical research in general. The efficacy of consultancies and commissioned policy oriented research should be re-evaluated and re-defined in this context. The problem here is not the term 'consultancy', but rather the manner in which that assignment is conducted. If carried out properly, consultancies could lead to the preparation of respectable pieces of work.

5. The credibility and utility of indigenous policy research are a function of the quality of that research. While on the whole one could judge the quality of policy research as satisfactory, indigenous research has not been free from problems. Indeed, this has been pointed to in several sources. Commenting on the quality of research undertaken by the winners of research competitions, the Executive Secretary of OSSREA observed:

   > *Research has been criticized from various perspectives. It is concluded that besides being insignificant, problems that have been the subject of investigation have generally lacked an adequate theoretical setting. Researchers also poorly design and employ inadequate data analysis procedures* (Ahmed 1993).

   Similar remarks have also been made by other observers. Aside from the reasons given above, quality has suffered because many African researchers have concentrated on the quick production of superficial research and reports requested by donors. These have been largely based on predetermined policy framework of these donors. It is important, therefore, that adequate and urgent attention must be given to the quality of policy research, particularly the aspects of intellectual honesty, impartiality and the scholarly nature of the work.[11]

6. High quality and relevant policy research as well as better chances for appreciating, understanding soliciting and applying policy researches by policy-makers are also a function of the education and training that both the would be producers and consumers of policy researches would undergo in preparation for their respective roles. As such, it is of utmost urgency that Africa's institutions of higher learning should give more

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11 Particularly damaging have been the instances where a number of social scientists have abandoned intellectual honesty to legitimize the policies and even the existence of military and undemocratic regimes. K K Prah has graphically described one such instance in the following terms: *The glib acceptance of state ideology as a basis for sociological analysis has its own perils. No better example can be found in contemporary Africa than Ethiopia where during the last three months the ruling regime has changed rhetoric to the possible academic embarrassment of a horde of intellectuals who in the past too faithfully and uncritically accepted state ideology as scientific reality* (Prah 1989).

emphasis in their course offerings and curricula to the aspects of policy research and policy analysis.

7. Africa's regional and sub-regional research organizations and associations, particularly the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organization of Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA), the Southern Africa Political Economy Series (SAPES) and others such as the Third World Forum, the African Academy of Sciences, the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), the Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP) and the African Association of Political Science (AAPS) etc., have a major responsibility to both encourage and support policy-oriented research.

   i) Their role must change qualitatively to give greater importance to policy research and to the dissemination of the results thereof more widely and effectively to policy makers. The record of almost all umbrella organizations in the dissemination of research and interface with policy makers has not been encouraging in this regard (Vylder and Ornäs 1991, 63).

   ii) They also need to shift emphasis away from networking activities to a more aggressive approach aimed at forging closer links with national research institutions, not only for the conduct of research but also and more importantly to help build, sustain and ensure the effective utilization of the capacities of these institutions.

   iii) A strategic alliance needs to be forged urgently among Africa's regional and sub-regional research consortia and organizations to ensure the primacy of African thought and contributions to social science and the promotion of social science research for policy making purposes. Avoidance of competition, better division of labour, greater coordination in the conduct of research, the effective dissemination of research results, the harmonization of long- and medium-term plans and programmes, events, congresses and meetings and measures designed to control and improve the quality of research should be among the basic cooperation modalities of such an alliance.

It is extremely important for this purpose that an overarching umbrella association should be formed to bring together all Africa's regional and sub-regional research institutions, organizations and associations to achieve the foregoing. Continent-wide congresses could, inter-alia, be organized at reasonable intervals by African organizations and consortia to harmonize work programmes and research plans and reflect strategically on the state of social science research and research for policy making in Africa.

Africa's intergovernmental regional and sub-regional organizations - such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank (ADB) - have an historic responsibility to perform and role to play in encouraging and producing indigenous policy-oriented research and advocating the need for the implementation of the results thereof. They also need to support indigenous researchers; strengthen research institutions; advocate to governments the need to recognize the crucial role of national and regional 'think-tanks' and the usefulness and relevance of indigenous research for policy making; and to sensitize donors to the need for them to refrain from creating parallel institutions and capacity and to support the strengthening and effective utilization of existing capacities and institutions.

While many donors have tried to blatantly influence the direction and outcome of research in Africa, a few of them have been reasonably neutral in this regard and have also made significant contributions in support of indigenous policy research and institutions. To cite a few examples, 60 per cent of CODESRIA's budget in the early 1980s and about 35-40 per cent of its budget in the 1990s has been covered by the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries(SAREC). Other major supporters of CODESRIA include the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ford Foundation and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Support to particular projects came from the Norwegian government, Rockefeller Foundation, Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the Dutch government and Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. OSSREA's budget has been mainly covered by the Ford Foundation, IDRC, SAREC, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. 92 per cent of SAPES total income in 1991 was in the form of grants received from outside donors, mainly SIDA and Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) but also HIVOs of Holland, the Ford Foundation, SAREC and Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) (Sawyer *et al* 1993). These and other donors have also provided untied support to national institutions and other regional associations of research. These donors in particular and other donors known for giving fairly unconditional grants for research have now even greater responsibility in further backing indigenous African research for policy making purposes and supporting and strengthening existing institutional capacities at the national and regional levels.

The quantum and quality of policy research depend a great deal on the climate within which research is conducted. In this regard, African governments bear primary responsibility towards creating the conditions that could encourage policy-oriented research and improve the interface and cooperation between policy makers and the research community. The uncooperative and hostile attitudes that have been adopted by the majority of

African governments towards the institutions of higher learning and research must radically change in the years to come. Unless this happens, the damage that has been afflicting indigenous research capacities will have very serious implications in the long run not only for research, but also for the very process aimed at the indigenization and sustainability of socio-economic development and the capacity to understand and cope with social and political change in Africa.

It is one thing to prescribe what ought to be done, and quite another to expect that these prescriptions would be implemented. Obviously, governments must come to realize the importance of taking advantage of and utilizing indigenous research for policy making purposes; turning the ad hoc nature of the interface, dialogue and cooperation between the government and the research community and centres into an institutionalized process; providing adequate funding to research institutions and particularly for policy research; providing adequate remuneration and incentives to researchers; relaxing controls over the institutions of higher learning and research by respecting the freedom of thought and academic freedom; and putting an end to the rife instances of manipulation, intimidation, sacking and persecution of academicians.[12]

Whether these recommendations would be welcomed and adopted by governments depend a great deal on the very nature of the state itself and the interests it represents; the orientation of its developmental, social and political objectives; and the extent to which the state is vulnerable to external pressures by donors and development partners. Obviously, as governance becomes more democratic, representative, transparent and accountable, this should provide a window of opportunity for better interface between the social science community and policy makers and for more effective utilization of indigenous policy research. While, under these circumstances, the climate for indigenous policy research may improve, there is no guarantee that the results of research would actually be utilized if the syndrome of dependence on external sources for policy orientation continues to prevail.

These problems notwithstanding, and indeed because of them, there is now more reason for the indigenous research community, civil society as a whole and African regional and sub-regional organizations, institutions and associations to keep the pressure on governments by addressing policy issues, producing quality research relevant for policy making purposes, strug-

12 For comprehensive recommendations on how cooperation between governments and the academic and research community could be strengthened see ECA (1992). CODESRIA has been mounting a tireless effort in defence of academic freedom. The issue was recently debated at Kampala Conference on Academic Freedom, 1990 and a declaration was adopted by the participants on that occasion.

gling for the freedom of thought and academic freedom and contributing to the restoration of the viability of Africa's institutions of higher learning and the strengthening of indigenous research capacity.

Equally important is the need to exert continuous pressure on the international community, and particularly the international financial institutions, to loosen their control over the process of development policy making in Africa, stop the creation of parallel capacity and recognize the value of indigenous policy-oriented research and support to indigenous institutions. It is tantalizing to note in this regard that the shortcomings of current donor policies have been amply recognized by them and yet no serious steps have been taken to reverse the situation. The vice-president for Africa Region of the World Bank has recently stated the following in an address at a conference in Virginia:

> *Now it's my contention that the donors and African governments together have in effect undermined capacity in Africa; they're undermining it faster than they are building it, or at least as fast* (Jaycox 1993).

He went further to add:

> *People go around saying the World Bank imposes policies. Now this has got to change because we are not imposing anything. We're supporting a tiny minority of people in those countries who know what they're doing and we agree. But the fact is in many countries they're not capable yet of putting together plans which will solve their problems. Now that's the fundamental reality, and I say the way we're going about it is not working either. The idea that we can provide this from 8,000 or 10,000 miles away is ridiculous. .... We are now insisting that the governments generate their own economic reform plans. We'll help, we'll critique, we'll eventually negotiate and we'll support financially those things which seem to be reasonably making sense, but we're not going to write these plans. We're not going to say: Here you are, do this, and we'll give you money. That's out. So for the minsters and governors here, this is a wake-up call on that. We're not going to do this any more, but you're going to have to find that domestic capacity* (Jaycox 1993).

Similarly, many evaluations by the OECD countries and the UN system have underscored the same concerns and the need to build up and effectively utilize indigenous capacity.[13] Only time would reveal whether these

13 See for example UNPAERD Secretariat, UNDP, DAC, World Bank (1989); OECD, *Development Cooperation - Report of the Chairman of DAC*, DAC 1990; UNDP (1993).

pronouncements will now be translated into serious action. The danger to watch for, however, is whether these initiatives would focus on building up an African constituency to justify, support, back-stop and elaborate policies within the framework of SAPs in particular and donor-conceived and donor-driven policies in general; and there is no telling or guarantee that this would not be the case. The African countries have been challenged to take ownership of their economic reform programmes and development strategies. If they are to do so in any genuine manner, there is no alternative for them but to tap on and enhance internal capacities for research, policy analysis and policy formulation within governmental structures as well as in institutions of higher learning and research at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Conclusion

It is inevitable that African social science, grounded on African experience and reality, should contribute to the continent's advancement and solutions of its manifold socio-economic and political problems. Indeed, without this contribution, it is highly improbable that appropriate policies and strategies capable of achieving these objectives will ever be devised. From how to achieve economic recovery, sustainable development, effectively manage the economy to enhancing national reconciliation, fostering the democratic process, strengthening the institutions of civil society and strengthening popular participation in the economy, polity, society and governance there is no viable alternative to indigenous social science. It is bad enough that African countries lack certain critical skills, but it is utterly intolerable, unexplainable and unjustifiable that governments do not tap on whatever meagre resources that exist and put them to judicious use. There is a growing consensus that sustainable development and socio-economic transformation cannot take place in Africa without indigenization of the development process and investment in self-reliance. The contribution of indigenous social science research to these strategic objectives is crucial and indispensable.

At this critical juncture of Africa's history when the continent has lost, to a large degree, both the ability and initiative to think for itself and shape its destiny; when many governments — because of the poverty of their nations — have chosen or were constrained to adopt reform programmes and political and economic conditionalities of dubious basis and often disastrous consequences; when the wisdom and expertise of indigenous think-tanks, researchers and experts are being willfully ignored; when the existing indigenous capacities for policy research and policy analysis are being

bypassed, allowed to rut and, on occasion, dismantled; when parallel institutions and research organizations are being created and financially buttressed by outsiders to influence thinking and research and orient them to particular directions; when all of this is happening, Africa's research community, institutions and organizations have an historic responsibility to think and act strategically to encourage policy-oriented research and enhance the chances for its utilization by governments, the business community and civil society as a whole as well as to loosen the stranglehold of outsiders on research and minimize their influence on policy making.

In the years to come, the African social science community and institutions must venture — more aggressively — into those fields and areas of research that are of direct and pragmatic impact on and meaning for the lives of the majority of the people in Africa. Focus ought to be shifted to policy-oriented research that would help, inter-alia, to imaginatively devise policies that would combine the need for adjustment with the need for the transformation of the continent's economic, social and political structures, improve the quality of the lives of the people, alleviate poverty, better manage the African economies and assert the primacy of human development, structural transformation of the African economies, popular participation in development, democratization of polity, society and the economy, the establishment of peace, security and stability, dealing with the problems of the transition to democracy and the achievement of regional and sub-regional economic cooperation and integration.

Of late, there has been much decrying of how marginalized a continent Africa has become. A sure recipe for cementing that calamity over the long-run is the marginalization of indigenous research, researchers and structures of research. The challenge ahead can hardly be spelt in more clearer terms.

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