

# Creating and Using Knowledge for Policymaking in Africa

## Reflections from the "Chief Economists of Government Initiative"

**Digital Development Dialogue**

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# Production of economic knowledge about Africa faces a misallocation problem

**20,000**

African professionals leave for Western countries each year

**35%**

of all ODA to Africa (\$43bn) spent on expatriate professionals



# Production of economic knowledge about Africa faces a misallocation problem

This talk

- How does the **Think Africa Partnership/Chief Economists of Government Initiative** approach this misallocation problem?
- What has this approach added to the COVID-19 response?
- What could this suggest for 'creating and using knowledge for policy making in Africa'?



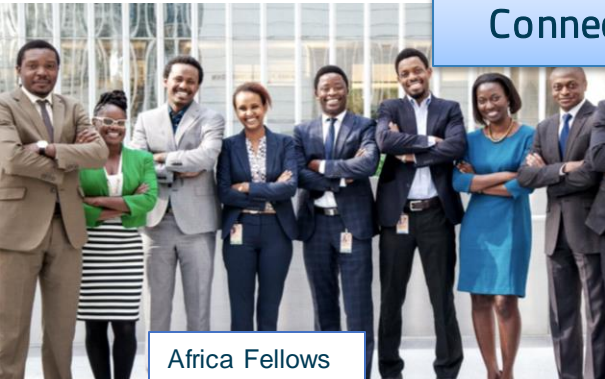
# Think Africa Partnership does not solve problem of lack of capacity, rather problem of coordinating existing capacity

1.  
African students,  
scholars and  
universities

2.  
Domestic  
and regional  
think tanks

3.  
Chief economic  
advisors to  
heads of  
executive

Connecting existing capacity through platforms for peer learning



Africa Fellows



ACET peer learning workshop



African economic advisors and their German counterpart



# TAP builds links between the supply and demand of economics research



## Pillar 1: Amplifies the voice of African scholarship

- AERC Visiting Scholars
- African Centers of Excellence Public Policy MPP
- Africa Fellows program: Over 3,500 applications every year, demand exceeds supply from WB and IFC, feedback from managers is stellar

## Pillar 2: Strengthens 'knowledge to policy' platforms

- Support to the African Center for Economic Transformation as the Compact With Africa secretariat
- Peer learning platforms on key topics (DRM, PSD, PPP and SEZs)
- Transformation Leadership Panel (incl. AFR VP)
- Partnership managed by GovGP

## Pillar 3: Enhances policy advice and impact on country outcomes

- **Chief Economists of Government** initiative builds a peer-learning network of economic advisors to heads of the executive



# Presidential economic advisors are influential sources of demand for home-owned economic policy



19 advisors at the launch of the network at the first Africa Chief Economists of Government annual Forum at the University of Oxford in February 2019



- 40 advisors (one per country) in peer network of chief economic advisors to head of executive
- 40% of chief economic advisors play Presidential advisory role despite not being formally designated as such
- Peer exchange and knowledge building activities and support



# There is huge uncertainty about the scale and trajectory of the COVID-19 shock

**How many people in sub-Saharan Africa could die from the COVID-19 pandemic in the next year?**

- UNECA 3.3 million
- WHO 190 thousand
- LSHTM ~10million

**What will growth (recession) look like in Africa in the aftermath of COVID-19?**

- World Bank -2.1 to -5.1%
- IMF -1.6%
- UNECA 1.8 to -2.6 %

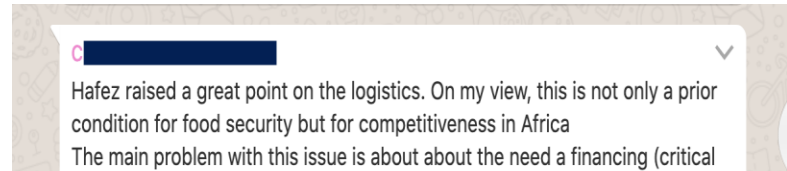


# CEoG network has been an important platform for peer-learning

- Biweekly (now monthly) webinars
- Very lively WhatsApp group complemented by email exchanges, one-on-one calls
- More than 50 questions aggregated with evolving answers – expert interviews, policy briefs, data



*CEoG Covid-19 webinar in April 2020 with Albert Zeufack (Chief Economist) and Hafez Ghanem (Vice President) World Bank, Africa Region*



*Excerpt of an on-going WhatsApp discussion*





# Better allocation of economics knowledge production about Africa?

- We are still in the middle of the crisis
- Countries are experimenting in real time
- Trusted, network of peers means that policy lessons can be shared quickly
- Policy ideas get feedback and vetting through discussion and exchange
- Further work on recovery strategies with ACET



40 countries in sub-Saharan Africa with an advisor in the CEOG network



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## Thank you!

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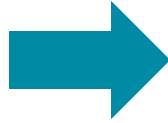


## Additional Slides



# Home-owned ideas sustain better outcomes through more effective government

Home-*owned* ideas and peer learning



Allow government to be more effective



And support an environment that sustains reforms

- We focus on supply and demand for economic knowledge uptake
- And stronger linkages between the two

- Governments integrate domestic and international ideas more effectively, e.g for development plans

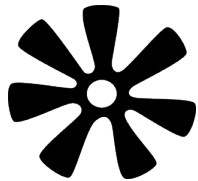
- Better counterparts to development partners

- Better leveraging financing (IDA, IBRD, FDI, PPP, Other debt)

- ✓ Virtuous cycle of raised bar for policy vetting at heart of government

- ✓ Empowered and informed voices engage in public debate and scrutiny

- ✓ Creating a constituency to advocate for reforms to be sustained



Ashanti Adinkra symbol representing "wisdom, creativity and the complexities of life"



# How does the CEoG Initiative support economic advisors?

## Teams:

- Connect advisors to early-career pipeline through the World Bank Africa Fellows program
- Developing mid-career CEoG Fellows program
- Creating a corps of economists in government - *'talent factory'*

## Tools:

- CEoG Data Helpdesk provides assistance to source and use data.
- Access to network licenses for statistical software.
- MACMOD partnership to provide macro-modelling support to advisors and staff

## Terms of Reference:

- Most common request: "How is the advisory function organized in other countries?"
- Directly supporting 3 countries to institutionalize chief economist role

### Outcomes

- Better informed counterparts, stronger policy vetting and coordination
- Better uptake of knowledge and evidence by government
- Institutionalization of function across political cycles



# Partners of the Think Africa Partnership

