Call for Papers

The AERC, in collaboration with Cornell University, is organizing “Bottom-Up Intervention and Economic Growth in Africa.” This conference is motivated by the observation that while macro level policy reforms in Africa has addressed many of the economic distortions, its payoff in terms of growth and poverty reduction has been disappointing, to say the least. One reason for this may be that Africa is faced with many constraints to growth at the micro and meso levels. If this is the case, then addressing these constraints along with macro level reforms is likely to benefit poverty reduction and growth directly. Addressing these constraints, especially those faced by the poor, will improve the well being of the poor and also have positive feedback effects on the well being of the non-poor and growth generally.

The objective of this conference, therefore, is to explore the feedback effects of a range of specific bottom up interventions on growth in general. The interventions considered might include those in health, education, community development, safety nets, and gender equity, among others. A key feature of these interventions is that they operate in the first instance at the micro and meso levels, but they also have macro level consequences for economic growth. The conference will discuss theoretical, empirical, and policy oriented papers that investigate these feedback effects in rigorous manner.

While we expect the papers to meet the highest quality standards in terms of scholarship, there is need to ensure that the conference goes beyond a simple gathering of academics and scholars. The objective is therefore to foster interaction and dialogue between academics and policy-makers to ensure the relevance of the conference in promoting more enlightened decision-making in the African context. This will be achieved through first, the discussants being drawn largely from policy-making communities. We would also organize one or more round tables that will serve as forums to assess the contribution of the evidence presented to the information needs of policy-makers, and to provide guidance on further research needs.

The following are illustrative of the issues to be covered by the conference:

- Impact of infectious disease such as HIV and malaria on dependency ratios, and how that in turn affects savings rates, capital available for investment of future cohorts, and economic growth
- Gains from reducing malnutrition including the direct benefits in terms of improved productivity, as well as indirect effects as mediated by schooling and cognition and the subsequent effects on labour productivity and economic growth

- Effects of the spread of literacy among poor farmers on costs of communication of information and transactions by the private sector and government and their contributions to greater productivity and economic growth

- Effects of the adoption of improved technologies by poor farmers on productivity, and the associated impact on food prices and on input costs for agro-processing industries

- Efficacy of village-level groups (e.g., producer coops, microfinance groups, women's associations) in improving market access, terms of trade for the poor, profitability, investment, and growth

- Efficacy of women's empowerment programmes through legal, property rights, and other initiatives on agricultural productivity and the adoption of new technologies

- Influence of provision of infrastructure (transport and communications services) in poor regions on resource allocation, production efficiency and growth in poor areas and the spillovers to national levels as price signals are transmitted across regions of the country and across national borders

Please send substantive proposals (5-7 pages) or completed papers, to “Research” Research@aercafrica.org by November 30, 2006. Decisions will be communicated by January 31, 2007. The final versions of the selected papers should be submitted to Research@aercafrica.org by March 31, 2007. Submissions by African scholars are particularly welcome.

The travel and accommodation costs of one participant per paper selected will be met by the conference.

**Output:** Special Issue of a journal, or a volume with an academic publisher.