



Origins, Expansion and Evolution of the PEP

From Building to Promoting Research Capacities in the South: an Integrated Approach

Origins: In 2002...

The **Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) research network** arises from an IDRC project initiative (MIMAP), which had fostered a collaboration between researchers from Université Laval (Quebec, Canada) and the Angelo King Institute (AKI) of De La Salle University (Manila, Philippines) – the two first “PEP partner institutions”...

Funding: Initially, the PEP project was funded exclusively by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada

Mission: **Building the capacity and expertise of local researchers in developing countries**, in the application of cutting-edge methodologies for the analysis of policy issues related to poverty, and social and economic development in their home countries.

Method: **Using a manifold support program, based on a “learning by doing” approach**, including financial, technical and scientific training/mentoring/assistance (both distance and “live”), peer-review process, international networking, etc.

Objective: **To build an international network of researchers based in developing countries who have the expertise, resources and reputation to contribute to national/international academic and policy debates around development issues in the South**, i.e.:

- to provide a local, country-relevant empirical basis for policymakers to design and implement appropriate policies to tackle poverty and development issues in their home countries.
- to address the general issue of the quasi-total absence of Southern voices/experts in such debates (as well as in the leading development economics journals), and the fact that most national governments in developing countries regularly turn to Northern-based consulting firms for advice regarding policy formulation and/or implementation in their countries (rather than local experts, who usually lack the reputation and thus credibility).

Plus, by providing support directly to (promising young) individual researchers, regardless of institutional affiliations, who are allowed and enabled to define their own research agenda, **PEP also provides opportunity for independent research to be conducted following priority issues identified exclusively at the local level.**

Expansion: Since 2002...

PEP has supported a total of:

513 developing country researchers

- 43% women, 30% under 30, average 36 years-old
- creating a growing and gender-balanced pool of locally-based Southern experts in the analysis of poverty and development issues, for now and the future

172 research projects

- 235 research working papers, 95 policy briefs, 70 national policy conferences
- 85 presentations in international conferences, and 48% of studies and findings published as an article in peer-reviewed scientific journals

PEP activities have expanded:

Geographically PEP has provided support in **49 different countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America**, (see [geographic coverage](#)), both leading to and resulting from the **establishment of two additional regional offices**, housed in partner institutions based in Africa (2005, CRES – Dakar, Senegal) and Latin America (2007, GRADE – Lima, Peru).

Thematically PEP-supported research projects have been **covering an ever-growing number of themes and policy issues**, from child welfare to fiscal policies, trade and globalization, education, health, gender, labor markets, inclusive growth, impact of crises, etc.. Find some of PEP research themes, [here](#).

Methodologically PEP now **offers a unique variety of cutting-edge methodologies for researchers to choose from, be trained in and apply;**

- **such as** macro-micro modeling and simulation techniques, multidimensional poverty/distributive analysis, community-based monitoring systems, experimental and non-experimental impact evaluations (including the use of randomized controlled trials, RCTs), etc.

The development of several of these tools and techniques – valued and acknowledged worldwide by the development research community – have resulted from applications in the specific context of PEP-supported research in developing countries, and innovations yielded by its very own team of international experts.

PEP is thus considered worldwide as a source of leading and unique expertise, both in terms of research capacity building and innovative scientific approaches

Institutionally **PEP has considerably expanded its institutional base, not only in terms of regional offices (now 4), but also funding sources, collaborations and institutional networking**

While seeking to increase its autonomy through diversification of its sources of funding, PEP has been multiplying the number of its partners, including collaborative and donor institutions. The list of current PEP partners includes:

AusAID, CIDA, DFID, IADB, IDRC, IFPRI, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM...

not counting the multiple collaborations sprout in the context of individual projects at the national and regional levels - either with other research institutes, government agencies and NGOs in beneficiary countries, other national agencies for international development, and several international organizations.

Vocationally In recent years, most of PEP-supported research projects have been carried out in the context of **special initiatives or studies commissioned by PEP's various new partner and donor institutions** - see [PEP Special Initiatives](#).

PEP is being increasingly **called on to mobilize and supervise teams of local researchers in developing countries, to produce evidence to be used for policy making and/or advocacy around either general or specific issues of interest** - such as in the case of the global financial crisis, child poverty, teen pregnancy in LA, climate change, social protection, inclusive growth strategies, etc. Find more information and some results from such initiatives via "[PEP Special Reports](#)".

And in terms of policy outreach: Reflecting the considerations of its several partners and donors, as well as in order to achieve its ultimate objective of policy influence, PEP has gradually led its supported projects and research initiatives to be **more responsive to the specific policy needs and issues of the environment** they sprout from.

Granted researchers have been increasingly encouraged (supported and monitored) in **consulting with local and national policy makers and stakeholders**. Also, increased focus and resources have been devoted to the **development of appropriate and effective dissemination activities** – to increase chances of policy influence. According to a 2011 survey, **25% of recent PEP findings have been taken up to assist in policymaking at the national level**.

Evolution: Today...

PEP has changed its name (but not its acronym!) for Partnership for Economic Policy

To reflect the evolution that has resulted from the broadening scope of PEP activities, as outline above, as well as the devolution of its leadership from an initial North (Canada)-South (Philippines) collaboration to a full global partnership of institutions in Africa, Asia, Latin and North America

Now building on ten years of experience in supporting research work in the South, as well as on a network/pool of more than 500 locally-based researchers trained in the use of the most advanced techniques for the conduct of high-quality development research,

PEP's role has now evolved to include the PROMOTION of the capacities and expertise it has contributed (and continues to) build in developing countries

The increasing demand from international institutions for PEP to lead initiatives involving local expertise also testifies to the **global need for a reputed supra-national research institution to provide the necessary infrastructure for Southern experts to participate in (and bid for) major international research initiatives**, contribute to establish their national and international reputations and level the playing field with their Northern counterparts.

PEP is now, and thus, moving towards the next natural and necessary step of becoming a (legally incorporated) "PEP Global Think Tank" (PEP-GTT)

The PEP-GTT will be established as a permanent resource for national governments, regional, multilateral and/or international organizations and development partners, to tap in when looking for high-quality scientific evidence to be produced from a both locally-based and expert perspective.

"As a global think tank involving primarily, but not exclusively, developing country researchers, PEP will become a major tool to mobilize existing capacity and provide a stronger voice to Southern experts. By catalysing their in-depth knowledge of local contexts, a PEP Global Think Tank (PEP-GTT) will favour new and more relevant perspectives on major development challenges worldwide."

John Cockburn, PEP Executive Director