For strengthening impact evaluation capacities in East and West Africa

1st annual progress report

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Presented by: Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)

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For strengthening impact evaluation capacities in East and West Africa

In 2018, PEP was granted funding by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to support a series of activities aimed at strengthening local capacities for rigorous impact evaluations using experimental methods in East and West African countries.

The grant has two main objectives. First, it comprises a series of “institutional investments” within PEP to ensure its sustainability over time, especially the PEP “PIERI group” in charge of supporting locally-led impact evaluations in developing countries. Second, it will reinforce existing activities related to development of capacities - including training, mentoring and engagement with local stakeholders – for the implementation of rigorous impact evaluations (IE) aimed at informing specific policies and programs in East and West African countries.

Below is the first report submitted to Hewlett to describe activities undertaken and progress in achieving outputs/outcomes over the first year period (09 July 2018 to 08 July 2019).

1. Activities and outputs

The activities and outputs to be achieved follow the grant’s two core objectives, and can thus be divided into two main categories: one related to “institutional investments”, i.e. to ensure long term PEP-PIERI sustainability, and another related to “research”, i.e. activities aimed at supporting and strengthening local capacities for the conduct of rigorous IE in selected countries.

Below are listed the activities and outputs achieved over the first year of grant implementation, as was committed in the PEP proposal to Hewlett:

1.1. Institutional investments:

- 1.1.1. Increase the human resources to support sustainability of:
  - PIERI
    - Hired a full time Research Officer to assist PIERI Research Director. The research officer took office in September 2018, and is based at CEDLAS, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, in Argentina;
    - Increased mentoring and coordination hours for PIERI Research Director
    - Increased short-term hiring of 4 PIERI resource persons for specific needs in the research projects.
  - PEP
    - Hired a full time “Resource Mobilization Manager” (RMM), with the objective of working towards diversifying the funding base and explore new funding partnerships. While the role was initially handled by an interim officer, the position was filled - in January 2019 by a full-time RMM, based at the PEP Head Office/Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.

- 1.1.2. Enhance PEP and PIERI visibility
  - Participation of PEP-PIERI Research Director - to promote the work/approach of PEP/PIERI in supporting locally-led IE research in developing countries – in two strategic conferences in Africa:
    - Africa Evidence Network 2018 Conference in Pretoria, South Africa (September 2018)
    - First conference of the West Africa Capacity-building and Impact Evaluation (WACIE) Program in Cotonou, Benin (January 2019) – where the PIERI Research Director also promoted the launch of the PEP call for Expressions of Interests (EOIs) for Government IE mentoring projects (see 1.2.2)

1 Find out more: https://www.pep-net.org/about-pieri
Organization of a special PIERI conference during PEP’s 2019 Annual Conference on the theme “Integrating policy evaluation into policy design”. The event featured a keynote presentation, followed by a panel discussion involving various international experts and practitioners, who shared first-hand experiences related to the theme.

➢ An audience of over 140 people from 44 countries - including researchers, international experts, stakeholders, decision-makers, donors and development partners – had an opportunity to ask questions and add comments at the end of each session. Both sessions were also streamed live on PEP’s YouTube channel, and the videos have since been viewed by over 460 people (as of July 1, 2019)

1.2. Research:

- 1.2.1. Training:
  o A first online training capsule (including four modules) on the basics of experimental research was refined by the PEP-PIERI staff (and delivered in May 2019, see below), as part of the objective to consolidate and extend PEP’s existing online training in IE (equivalent to a one-term graduate course).
  o Training was also delivered as part of the customized advisory support provided to applicants to the government mentoring program (see below).

- 1.2.2. Government mentoring program:
  o A call for expressions of interest (EOIs) for the new PEP program for Impact Evaluation Mentoring for Governments in East and West Africa Program was successfully launched on January 28, 2019, resulting in submission of 52 EOIs from government institutions in 21 different countries, including 31 submissions from low-income economies and fragile/conflict situations.
    ➢ In addition to launching in the context of the WACIE Conference, in collaboration with 3ie, PEP also reached out to various institutions to increase the call’s visibility and reach.
  o A first round of evaluation resulted in the selection of 12 EOIs for development of full proposals (including the implementation of a field experiment project). All members of these 12 applicant teams were required to complete an online training course on the basics of experimental IE research methods in April 2019, before submitting their full proposal. 96 of the 104 participants completed successfully, and all 12 teams qualified sufficiently to be retained.
  o The detailed evaluation of the 12 full proposals resulted in the shortlist of 8 teams who were invited to present their proposals at the PEP AGM in Cape Town in May.
  o Each shortlisted applicant team was provided technical feedback by email before the conference, to help them prepare their presentation for the meeting, and further individual meetings were held between PIERI resource persons and applicant teams during the Conference to discuss various technical and other feasibility issues.
  o A final round of evaluation resulted in the selection of 6 proposals for support (in Benin x2, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Zambia), whose implementers will receive training as well as ongoing customized advisory support and mentoring for the design and conduct of a rigorous experimental IE project. These 6 projects involve a total of 41 “researchers”, or team members. All selected teams (listed in Annex A) received their acceptance letter and grant contract in June.

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2 Combined with the sessions dedicated to present and discuss, both collectively and individually, the project proposals of the 8 shortlisted teams.
3 Watch them here: [https://youtu.be/SQ08XyMrBy8?t=1835](https://youtu.be/SQ08XyMrBy8?t=1835)
4 The call was shared via personalized emails to institutions working in IE in Africa such as UNICEF, African Development Bank, IFPRI, etc. Personalized emails were also sent to previous PIERI researchers and their universities. Also, several bi-lateral meetings were held the year before during the African Evidence Network Conference in Pretoria, September 2018.
5 This final evaluation was conducted in collaboration/consultation with Peter da Costa, technical advisor to the Hewlett Foundation’s Global Development and Population Program, who was present during some of the presentations and individual meetings.
1.2.3. Research grant plus:
   o PEP is currently supporting 4 Randomized Control Trial (RCT) and 2 Field Experiment (FE) projects through its unique/traditional research “Grant Plus” mechanism, as part of the ongoing PAGE II programme. In 2019, PEP mobilized new funding from IDRC to support a new (3rd) round of PAGE II projects, but the limited timeframe of this round did not allow to include experimental IE research. However, PEP is in discussion with UNDP on possible collaboration to support IE studies in Africa.
   ➢ Furthermore, it is important to note that the 6 government mentoring project teams also benefit from various features of the Grant Plus mechanism, thanks to the strategic combination of events from the two grants’ (Hewlett & PAGE II) calendars. These include various training workshops, as well as sessions dedicated to discuss presentations of other experimental IE research projects from around the world (such as during the PEP Annual Meeting in Cape Town, in May 2019).

1.2.4. Contribution to the AEN-led scoping study of IE capacities in Africa:
   o PEP contributed to this scoping study through 1) advisory support from PIERI Director, and 2) circulation of the survey within its network of followers and researchers in the region. Advisory support included the provision of names for prospective contacts, an in-depth interview with AEN team and the revision of the online survey. Circulation of the survey was done by mass email dissemination accompanied by the write up of personalized emails encouraging PIERI researchers to answer the survey.

2. Progress in achieving outcomes

As a result of this grant, PEP’s experimental impact evaluation (PIERI) program will have contributed to partially reducing the gap in terms of capabilities and demand for locally-led impact evaluations from local governments and international organizations in East and West Africa. More importantly, the grant will help achieve PEP’s long-term goals and vision to become a center of excellence promoting local capacity and research in developing countries, and especially low-income economies.

The initiative is thus progressing well in achieving these outcomes:

1) Not only have the activities already contributed to improving local capacities for IE research design in at 10⁶ different African countries (through online training and customized advisory support), but the government mentoring program itself, starting with the call for EOIIs, contributes to raising awareness (on the needs and requirements for rigorous IEs to inform public policy decisions) directly within the demand side, while creating new synergies between local researchers and government institutions.

2) In addition to new funding received from IDRC over the past year, PEP has also been increasingly called upon to discuss potential collaborations with various institutions - most of whom have shown particular interest in the government mentoring program. This is also due, in great part, to the work of new resources employed in PEP to support fundraising activities. Plus, the activities of the PEP PIERI group have been expanded, and the group itself strengthened in terms of operational capacity and technical expertise (with the recruitment of a full-time research officer and mobilization of new resource persons)

3. Changes that may affect work/plan

While PEP aims at increasingly focusing its activities in low-income economies and fragile/conflict situations, the frequent instability of the institutional environments in these countries poses a high risk in terms of program delay and resource allocations. All projects selected for support under the government mentoring

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6 Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Cote D'Ivoire, Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Nigeria, Togo
program will be led in countries categorized as low-income countries/fragile situations, and over 2018-2019, it was noted that some of these countries were experiencing an incipient drift towards anti-democratic tendencies, particularly in West Africa. In Benin, in particular, where the program was launched and two projects are supported, recent episodes of political unrest have been followed closely by PEP and candid communication about these matters will be prioritized in two-way conversations between mentors and mentees. So far, we have the highest assurance that there is no need to worry about the situation in Benin.

4. Lessons learned and related alterations

Importance of strategic visibility:

A very significant lesson learnt during the past year is the importance of increasing PEP’s visibility in impact evaluation circles:

- Launching the call for EOIs of the Impact Evaluation Mentoring for Governments in East and West Africa program during the WACIE conference in Benin was crucial, not only to reach a strategic audience of potential applicants, but also to increase PEP’s visibility as a key player in the region and the international IE community.
- Also, the various meetings held between PIERI Director and government officials (eager to increase IE capacity), multilateral financial organizations, and other NGOs working in the field, throughout Africa, contributed to promote the PEP model (and impact), not only potential collaborators, but also more generally as a model to follow in IE support practices.

Activities oriented towards increasing visibility of PEP’s model and activities will be continued in the future.

Lessons from working in fragile contexts (including through previous PEP programs):

PEP now cumulates several years of experience in supporting research and local capacity building in LIEs and fragile situations. The lessons learned will lead PEP to do the following, as part of the activities undertaken under this grant:

- Make sure that project deadlines are adapted to, and realistic in, the contexts in which the teams are working, and that the calendars allow sufficient time for contingencies.
- Help research teams plan for contingencies, i.e. think ex-ante what changes could take place in their contexts that might affect their work/tasks and compromise the timely completion of the project
- Ensure the team leaders are in constant contact with the mentors through several channels: regular skype interactions, study visits, field visits and participation in AGM conferences.

5. Dissemination

So far, PEP has disseminated information and outcomes related to this initiative through:

- The participation of the PEP Executive Director and PIERI Director in high-visibility international conferences, as well as high-level institutional meetings, to discuss/promote the PEP model, including news features introduced as part of this grant (such as the government mentoring program)
- The launching of the government mentoring program in the context of the WACIE conference and through various regional and international web platforms.
- The recording of the presentation sessions (of the shortlisted government mentoring project proposals), of which the files have been shared with non-attending team members.

And finally, all teams selected for support under the government mentoring program have been informed of PEP’s requirements for dissemination of projects’ findings and outputs, as part of mandatory deliverables of the PEP research grant contract agreement.7

7 PEP has only recently emitted these contracts, which the teams have yet to sign and return – i.e. acknowledging and agreeing to fulfil these requirements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/output indicators</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Achieved as of July 2019</th>
<th>Progress (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term outcome/impact 1:</strong> Better policy evaluation and design in East and West African countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 1.1:</strong> Enhanced institutional capacity to conduct and use IE in African countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1.1:</strong> Number of African countries with government units mentored in implementing experimental IE projects.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 (ongoing)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1.2:</strong> Number of individual African government units mentored in implementing experimental IE projects.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 (ongoing)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1.3:</strong> Number of consultation meetings between local researchers and policy stakeholders, either to assess IE demand or to inform design and progress of supported IE project in African countries</td>
<td>3 per selected country (3 x 5 = 15)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1.4:</strong> Number of occurrences of IE research findings used to inform specific policy debates and/or decisions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 1.2:</strong> Enhanced local technical capacity/expertise to conduct rigorous IE in African countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.2.1:</strong> Number of local African researchers trained in basic IE methods and project design through PEP online courses and distance advisory support</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 per selected country**</td>
<td>96 in 10 countries**</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.2.2:</strong> Number of local African researchers trained in advanced IE methods through PEP “in-class” (or in person) training activities – e.g. PEP Schools, study visits, fields visits, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 per selected country (x6 = 24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.2.3:</strong> Number of local African researchers mentored in the application of IE methods for evaluation of existing policies through intensive distance support*** by PEP-PIERI resource persons</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 per selected country (x6 = 36)</td>
<td>41 (ongoing)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.2.4:</strong> Number of new opportunities for researchers to apply their PEP-gained knowledge/skills – e.g. new research contracts, or peer-to-peer knowledge transfers – in their home countries</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 occurrence per 4 trained (supported) researchers (41/4 = 10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.2.5:</strong> Number of occurrences of external (non-PEP) acknowledgement of the researchers’ expertise, e.g. through contracts, promotions, consultations, and other career events</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 occurrence per 2 trained (supported) researchers (41/2 = 20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Long-term outcome/impact 2**: Building PEP as a center of research excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome 2.1: Enhanced implementation capacity and sustainability for PEP-PIERI</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 2.1.1</strong>: Number of RCT/FE projects supported by PEP thanks to new (co-)funding received for PEP-PIERI</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 2.1.2</strong>: Number of new PEP staff members hired</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 2.1.3</strong>: Number of new PIERI resource persons recruited/mobilized</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Output 2.2.1: Number of international conference participations | 2 per year (6) | 2 (year 1) | 33% |
| Output 2.2.2: Number of conference and knowledge-sharing events organized to promote PEP-supported work/approach for locally-led IEs, or IE projects’ outcomes. | 1 per year (3) | 1 | 33% |

*Information about these activities will be available in August 2019, with submission of their first technical report by selected government project teams (conditional to the release of the first grant payment). We expect that all (6) selected teams will have undertaken such consultations.

**This target was set out in the PEP proposal to Hewlett, but based on a different objective of selecting 2 countries. As a result of the government mentoring program, 104 researchers from 10 different countries (from 12 selected EOs invited to develop as full proposals) were able to benefit from the PEP online training courses in IE methods, as well as from customized advisory support to improve the design of their IE project proposals. 96 of them completed the online courses successfully.

*** Distance support is mainly provided through skype calls of 1 or 2 hours, 2 or 3 times a month, in average - depending on the teams’ needs.

****In July-August 2019, PEP will initiate discussions with DFID regarding new funding to be (likely) granted in 2020, and which will allow PEP to select and support a new cohort of experimental IE projects over the coming years.
ANNEX A

**Tanzania**: The effect of mobile phone text messages reminder on property tax compliance
➢ This project is put forward by the Simiyu Administrative Region with the aim to test whether SMSs help boost compliance and revenue regarding property taxes.

**Guinea-Bissau**: Business Training and Awareness Campaign for the M-CADJU Service
➢ The campaign program is implemented jointly by the **General Directorate for Forecasting and Economic Studies (Ministry of Economy)**, the **Cashew Regulatory Agency** and the **Statistics Directorate (Ministry of Agriculture)**. It consists of a combination of training sessions and provision of real-time information about the prices of cashew for farmers via cellphone. The project aims to evaluate the training and information components of the program via a multiple treatment arm design.

**Benin**: Citizen participation and mobilization of local resources in Benin: The case of built and unbuilt property taxes
➢ This project is led by the **General management of taxes, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)** in Benin. The initiative consists of a mechanisms experiment to see whether citizens subjected to training and information about the importance to pay property taxes end up showing better compliance than citizens receiving only information.

**Benin**: Projet pilote d’amélioration de la qualité de gestion technique de la production de soja dans le Pôle de Développement Agricole 4
➢ This project is led jointly by the **Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (MESRS)** and the **Laboratoire d’Analyse et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Economiques et Sociales (LARDES)**. It consists of a pilot program for the improvement of techniques for the production of soya beans in the Agricultural Development pole #4. The project aims to evaluate the training and inputs supply components of the program via a multiple treatment arm design which will also consider impact based on the gender of the farmer.

**Cote D’Ivoire**: Étude d’impact de l’insertion socio-économique des jeunes vulnérables
➢ This project is led jointly by the **Bureau de Coordination des Programmes Emploi (BCP-Emploi) du Ministère de la Promotion de la Jeunesse et de l’Emploi des Jeunes** and the **Office du Service Civique National (OSCN) du Secrétariat d’Etat chargé du Service Civique** in Cote D’Ivoire. The program consists of a nationwide “resocialization” and insertion initiative devised for vulnerable young people, aged 16 to 35. The project will evaluate the program’s impact on resocialization and labor outcomes.

**Zambia**: Impact evaluation of community results-based financing in health
➢ The Community Results-Based Financing (RBF) program for maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) is an initiative of the **Ministry of Health** in Zambia, and aims at improving health delivery systems and utilization of MNCH and nutrition services in project areas. The project will evaluate the effect of the RBF on maternal health by testing the impact of paying a fee to neighborhood health committees whenever they manage to bring a woman for antenatal health care within the first trimester.