CEDRES
Enhancing research impact by adapting to policy environments

By redesigning its policy forum, Burkina Faso’s Centre d’études, de documentation et de recherche économiques et sociales (CEDRES) is becoming a prominent voice in national political dialogue.

“IT IS NOT A MATTER OF JUST SAYING WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO HEAR. SEDECO IS ABOUT SCIENTIFIC TRUTH AND MOVING OUR COUNTRY IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.”
CEDRES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TALADIDA THIOMBIANO

SETTING THE SCENE — CEDRES, a university-based think tank in Burkina Faso, has long been recognized as a centre of research excellence. However, prior to joining the Think Tank Initiative in 2008, CEDRES hadn’t been able to invest in communicating its research effectively to policymakers and civil society. As a result, the organization lacked visibility in the policy community, which limited its ability to have an impact on economic growth and poverty reduction.

At the same time, the political environment was ripe for influence and receptive to the results of scientific research. Burkina Faso was increasingly committing to targets aimed at economic growth, social progress, and poverty reduction in line with the Millennium Development Goals and its national 2006–2008 Priority Action Plan aimed at reducing poverty. However, policymakers lacked the evidence on which to base effective policies. With support from TTI, CEDRES was able to take advantage of this opportunity to engage more effectively in policy debate and set out to inform and influence national policies.

WHAT CEDRES DID — In 2009, using core funding provided by TTI, CEDRES redesigned its policy forum known as Semaine du Débat Economique (SEDECO) in order to foster more effective political dialogue. Whereas previously SEDECO was held at a university and catered primarily to a student audience, it adopted a new approach aimed at political influence and effective communications with targeted audiences. This week of debate now aims to facilitate reflection and an exchange of ideas between experts and the public on economic issues. The new forum proved very successful and provides a vehicle for CEDRES to better disseminate its research results, targeting key policy- and opinion-makers, as well as civil society.

The forum was such a success that SEDECO has become an annual event. It is popular with politicians and other national policy makers, which has served to enhance the visibility and credibility
of CEDRES. Through their exposure at SEDECO, several CEDRES researchers have become members of government technical committees and regional organizations such as the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union, the Central Bank of the States of West Africa, United Nations organizations, and the World Bank. CEDRES was also invited to attend or facilitate meetings organized by prominent stakeholders including parliamentarians and civil society organizations.

CEDRES has built on the value of SEDECO, using the annual event to create other platforms for discussion and dialogue. For example, in December 2010 CEDRES launched an international colloquium on sustainable agricultural development in Africa. The forum was attended by more than a hundred participants, including individuals from Asia, America and Europe.

THE OUTCOME — Today SEDECO is recognized by the Government of Burkina Faso as a major policy dialogue event, with the Prime Minister and influential Ministers participating and official government documents frequently citing conclusions from SEDECO. CEDRES also receives funding from the Prime Minister’s Office for both SEDECO and its own operations, including expanded workspaces and resources for researchers.

In 2013, CEDRES held the seventh annual SEDECO in Ouagadougou, with a focus on best practices and theories related to the country’s new development framework, the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development (Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Développement Durable-SCADD). CEDRES’ scientific research demonstrated the importance of environmental considerations for economic growth, and these results led the government to integrate fifty environmental indicators into its five-year plan SCADD plan. The Minister of Economy and Finance was on hand to open the event and congratulated CEDRES on its performance and quality reporting in recent years, citing the African Development Bank’s recognition of CEDRES as one of Africa’s top five research centres.

For more information on the Centre d’Études, de Documentation et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales visit www.cedres.bf

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