# African Policy Implementation Impact Lab:  Report on Similar Policy Labs and What They Do

Only a few of the labs found focused on the implementation phase of the policy process. Nonetheless, the list of 10 policy labs below covers a broad range of labs that share similarities with the African Policy Implementation Impact Lab (AfPEIL) that we are developing.

## 1. FSI's International Policy Implementation Lab – Stanford University[1]

Purpose: "supports impact-oriented international research, problem-based teaching, and long-term engagement with urgent dilemmas around the world."

Scope: "will support ventures that are grounded in cutting-edge, policy-oriented research on a specific topic of international relevance (e.g., arms control, refugee protection, global health, or education in rural China) and which share at least one of two characteristics:  (1) They involve long-term engagement with the implementation of policy, either through appropriate external partnerships or through other channels that have an impact on how policies are implemented, and (2) They connect their research agenda to interdisciplinary, problem-based education opportunities (including interdisciplinary classes and mentored student research), allowing students to work closely on a relevant policy problem and its implementation dimensions."

Initial objectives (in progress):

- "Facilitating ties with selected external organizations, helping to manage ongoing relationships with external organizations, conducting research on appropriate partners, and connecting partners to different entities within FSI and Stanford.
- Connecting faculty with Stanford resources for practical advice and help in dealing with on-the-ground challenges encountered in working in developing countries.
- Analyzing and articulating the characteristics that breed the most successful external relationships and partnerships.
- Assisting with data visualization and analysis (which could be useful not only in studying the implementation process but also in exploring the rationale behind particular policy changes in a manner that can help policymakers understand the stakes of their decisions).
- Helping faculty to design distinctive (graduate/professional or upper-division undergraduate) interdisciplinary classes focused on concrete policy problems related to faculty research projects and partnerships.
- Identifying and facilitating opportunities for enhanced student learning on international policy implementation through internships, fellowships, or other activities.

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[1] Stanford University. (2014, March). *FSI's International Policy Implementation Lab*. Stanford University. https://fsi.stanford.edu/docs/fsis_international_policy_implementation_lab

- Creating, cultivating, and sustaining a Lab identity and community among all participants that facilitates the exchange of ideas, best practices, and data across Lab projects.
- Playing a convening role by identifying and gathering faculty from across FSI and campus who have intersecting interests and who might benefit from collaboration.
- Developing a campus-wide network of Lab allies and experts who help advance the Lab's goals with key colleagues at Stanford and provide the technical expertise needed for Lab projects.
- Writing cases on projects and the policy implementation process.
- Assisting with external communications to help draw attention and new resources to specific Lab projects.
- Assisting with identifying and obtaining new sources of funding."

Example of project: Leadership Academy for Development (Frank Fukuyama), which "trains government officials and business leaders from developing countries to help the private sector be a constructive force for economic growth and development […] So far, LAD programs have been run in Costa Rica, South Africa, Kenya, Burma, and Singapore."

## 2. Research on International Policy Implementation Lab – American University[2]
RIPIL Purpose: "investigates pressing topics in international peace, security, development, and humanitarian response to translate rigorous research into real policy solutions. To achieve this aim, RIPIL creates partnerships among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to identify important research questions, conduct rigorous research on these questions, and engage policymakers and practitioners throughout the research process."

RIPIL Scope: "Questions of performance, accountability, and power in the implementation of international peace, security, development, and humanitarian policy."

RIPIL Example of the project: Rule-Breakers or Innovators? Bureaucratic Effectiveness in Global Governance, "seeks to identify the characteristics of staff of multilateral organizations and aid donors who bend or break bureaucratic rules in the pursuit of innovative peacebuilding, development, or security-related engagement with fragile and conflict-affected states. This project is supported by the Folke Bernadotte Academy and received a pilot grant from the U.S. Institute of Peace. (PIs: Susanna Campbell and Hilary Matfess)."

Bridging the Gap Purpose: "Promotes scholarly contributions to public debate and decision-making on global challenges and U.S. foreign policy."

Bridging the Gap Scope: "Problems of concrete importance to governments, think tanks, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and global firms."

Bridging the Gap Objectives:

[2] Bridging the Gap. (2022). *Research on International Policy Implementation Lab (RIPIL)*. Bridging the Gap. https://bridgingthegapproject.org/ripil/

- "Conduct professional training programs that prepare scholars of all ranks to develop policy-relevant research projects and disseminate their findings to audiences and communities beyond academia
- Create new opportunities for policy-relevant scholarship, including through the Bridging the Gap Series with Oxford University Press, that are deeply respected inside research universities as well as useful to policy and decision-makers
- Connect members of the Bridging the Gap network with practitioners and policy influencers, and foster the network's continued growth
- Foster discussions with university leaders and highlight models designed to bolster support for and the legitimacy of policy-relevant scholarship and public engagement within academia"

## 3. The Policy Lab – Brown University[3]

Purpose: "Bring together experts from government, universities, and community organizations to collaborate on research tailored to inform decisions about how to improve policies and programs across the state."

Objectives: "Our dynamic approach integrates policy decision-makers from step one, conducting our research and iterating on our goals with frequent feedback from agency partners rather than independently producing research and attempting to get buy-in after the fact."

Theoretical framework: Theory of change, evidence-based policy-making.

Scope: Generating evidence to fill knowledge gaps; Integrating that evidence into planning, budget, procurement, and performance management processes; Building coalitions across government, universities, and community organizations to support evidence-based policy.

Example of project: "Topics such as COVID-19 outreach and state budgeting."

## 4. Public Policy Lab – USA NGO[4]

Purpose: "We partner with federal and municipal agencies to research, design, and test new public services. We also work with philanthropies and academic institutions to develop human-centered strategies for social innovation."

Objectives: "Our expert researchers, designers, and strategists work closely with government agencies to frame goals, conduct research with stakeholders, prototype new service programs, and plan for implementation with confidence. We're committed to feasible improvements that enhance public satisfaction, improve the bottom line, and produce better outcomes."

Scope: Children, digital, economic development, education, health, housing, justice, seniors, transport, veterans, with city govt, with federal govt.

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[3] Brown University. (2022). *About Us*. Brown The Policy Lab. https://thepolicylab.brown.edu/about/
[4] Public Policy Lab. (2022). *About Us*. Public Policy Lab. http://publicpolicylab.org/about-us/

Method:

- Phase 1 – Discover: "We begin projects by researching to understand the current state of a service system. We engage with service providers and users, visualize people's experiences and activities, and identify shared needs."
- Phase 2 – Design: "In collaboration with the public, front-line staff, and policymakers, we collaboratively design new policies or service offerings. We turn our research insights into design objectives and then develop and test prototypes of new potential programs and tools. At this phase, we also define a theory of change to guide subsequent evaluation."
- Phase 3 – Evaluate: "Before scaling up, we pilot new service offerings to ensure their efficacy. Small-scale real-world implementations allow us to debug program activities so that new programs can be scaled up with confidence that any design, technological, regulatory, and human resource requirements have been addressed." Their implementation activities include feasibility review, real-world testing, evaluation, up-scaling, and implementation planning.

Example of project: Collaboration in the Public Realm project in partnership with the NYC Department of Transportation and NYC BID Association "to design ways to increase proactive two-way communication between NYC DOT and BIDs, so the needs and challenges of local businesses can be increasingly incorporated into transportation planning, community outreach, and policy implementation."

## 5. Policy Impact Lab – Lithuania NGO[5]

Purpose: "Helps public, private, and third-sector organisations to design, implement and evaluate development-oriented policies and programs. We are passionate about contributing to evidence-based policies and processes that foster more just, equitable, and sustainable societies."

Objectives: "functions as a hub for skilled professionals from various backgrounds to collaborate on policy research and evaluation. We always seek to engage new research associates and work with increasingly diverse clients."

Scope: Policy research; Evaluations and impact assessments; Monitoring and programme support; Infographics: from visual summaries of report findings to layout for reports, graphic PPT presentations, and video.

Example of project: Study on employment models within the social economy, which studies "the existing models for employment of persons with disabilities throughout Europe, with a specific focus on Norway, Lithuania, Germany, Spain, and Belgium (Flanders)."

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[5] Policy Impact Lab. (2022). *Policy Impact Lab*. Policy Impact Lab. https://www.policyimpactlab.com

## 6. Impact and Innovation Unit – Government of Canada[6]

Context: The Centre for Policy Innovation and Public Engagement (CPIPE) has cataloged government-led labs.

CPIPE Purpose: provides a forum for the pursuit and promotion of interdisciplinary research, education, and professional applications relating to public policy innovation. The mission of the Centre is to promote collaborative, interdisciplinary research, teaching, learning, and partnership opportunities relating to innovative policy solutions around a range of topical, contentious, and difficult social issues.

8 labs focusing on implementation, 4 of which are funded by the federal government (underlined): CityStudio (p.6); Innovate Barrie (p.11); Behavioural Insights Unit (p.16); Policy Innovation Hub (p.21); Canadian Coast Guard Foresight & Innovation HUB (p.24); Environment and Climate Change Canada's Innovation and Youth Engagement Division (p.25); Impact and Innovation Unit (p.27); Innovation Lab (p.28).

The most relevant/similar lab is the Impact and Innovation Unit because it is the only one funded by Global Affairs Canada, which may be interested in funding our lab.

Impact and Innovation Unit Purpose: "driving a shift in the way that the Government of Canada uses new policy and program tools to help address complex public policy challenges. With a focus on "the how", the IIU supports departments to build results-driven approaches that aim to improve outcomes for Canadians."

Impact and Innovation Unit Objectives: "Through its flagship initiative, Impact Canada, the IIU focuses on improving outcomes for citizens using a set of innovative instruments (e.g., challenge prizes, pay-for-success, behavioural insights) designed to achieve greater public value in program and service delivery. In general, we seek to engage a diverse range of actors to help solve societal problems, focus on initiatives and experiments that lend themselves to measuring impact rigorously, and strive to maintain high standards and validity in applying these instruments."

Impact and Innovation Unit Scope: Systems-level actions that are helping to accelerate the adoption of innovative, outcomes-based approaches; Pathfinder projects that address barriers to innovation and experimentation and improve results through a series of targeted initiatives to implement Impact Canada; Signature initiatives designed to help revitalize our workforce, build new skillsets, and continue to strengthen leadership at all levels of the public service.

Examples of projects: Smart Cities Challenge Program Stream; Clean Tech Impact Program Stream; Responding to Canada's Opioid Crisis; Indigenous Homes Innovation Initiative; Whale Innovation Challenge; and Canada Learning Bond.

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[6] Ryerson University. (2019, July). *The Emergence of Policy Innovation Labs in Canada: Cataloguing Government Led Labs*. Centre for Policy Innovation and Public Engagement. https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/cpipe/documents/The_Emergence_of_Policy_Innovation_Labs_GOV_LED_LABS_July_3_2019.pdf

## 7. Policy Lab – UK Government[7]

Purpose: "To make policymaking more open" by providing "policy teams with practical support to better understand the people they are trying to reach, and work with them to co-design new solutions."

Objectives: "We use design, data, and digital tools and act as a testing ground for policy innovation across government. Our support is best suited to tackling intractable, complex, systemic policy problems that require fresh thinking and can lead to potentially transformative solutions. We sit in the Cabinet Office but serve the whole of government, primarily responding to requests from policy teams."

Scope: delivering new policy solutions through inspiring practical projects; building the skills and knowledge of the policy profession and wider civil service; inspiring new thinking through our writing and experiments.

Example of project: 20 small and big projects so far. E.g., "Large projects, like homelessness, can run from three months to a year and involve working intensively with service designers, ethnographers, data scientists, and subject specialists. We broadly follow the double diamond process: define, discover, develop, and deliver. The discovery stage typically involves some form of ethnographic insight, captured in film or on paper; often combined with data science. In the development stage, we work with people affected to prototype and test new solutions. We then offer support to departments in taking these ideas to scale (the delivery bit)."

## 8. Employment Lab in Morocco – Harvard University[8]

Context: The lab is one of Harvard University's Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) initiatives.

EPoD Purpose: Foster economic development by engaging with policy actors through "Rigorous, on-the-ground embedded research" and "Innovative, evidence-driven capacity building".

EPoD Approach: Smart Policy Design & Implementation (SPDI). SPDI steps are (1) identify, (2) diagnose, (3) design, (4) implement, (5) test, and (6) refine.

EPoD Example of the project: Training Policymakers to Use Evidence, where "EPoD employs a blended learning model to teach practical skills for using data and research."

Employment Lab in Morocco Purpose: to "spur innovation related to labor programs and address core employment issues in Morocco."

Employment Lab in Morocco Objectives: "seeks to create a culture of evidence-based policymaking through rigorous impact evaluations and capacity building in collaboration with a wide range of public and non-governmental organizations."

Theoretical framework: Theory of change, evidence-based policymaking.

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[7] UK Government. (2022). *About Policy Lab*. GOV.UK. https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/about/
[8] Harvard University. (2022). *The Employment Lab in Morocco*. Harvard Evidence for Policy Design. https://epod.cid.harvard.edu/initiative/employment-lab-morocco

Employment Lab in Morocco Scope:

- "Identify policy priorities: The Employment Lab works with policymakers to diagnose key policy challenges—especially those compounded by COVID-19—as well as identify data and highlight and prioritize knowledge gaps.

- Build capacity for evidence use: The Employment Lab hosts training workshops and events on how to generate and use evidence in policymaking. Successive tailored trainings are delivered to researchers, civil service trainees, NGOs, and government officials at various levels to create a broad understanding of how evidence can be used in policy and program design.

- Conduct impact evaluations: Together with its policy partners, the Employment Lab co-designs and implements a portfolio of rigorous impact evaluations using mixed-method research tools that address the identified policy priorities.

- Share evidence to inform policy: The Employment Lab disseminates research results to a wide range of stakeholders through a large-scale policy symposium, policy briefs, and online communication channels."

Employment Lab in Morocco Example of project: Includes COVID-19 economic recovery projects like the mission of the "Education and Training for Employability" project under the 2017-2022 MCA-Morocco Compact II, funded by Millennium Challenge Corporation."

## 9. Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy – USAID[9]

Purpose: "seeks to enhance the ability of local policy research organizations to conduct high-quality food security policy research and influence food security policy more effectively while becoming increasingly self-reliant."

Objectives/Expected outcomes: Local centers' capacity is strengthened around self-defined priorities; Strong links are created between global and regional/national research priorities; Decision makers at local, regional, and global levels demand more empirical research as an input into their decision-making; Improved policies and programs generate sustained, inclusive agricultural and rural transformation.

Scope:

- "Competitive selection of Centers for Policy Leadership: The Lab will competitively select three African and one Asian agricultural policy research center as Centers for Policy Leadership (CPLs). These CPLs will be integrated into the work of the Lab. The Lab will assist these centers with a rigorous self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses for achieving success in the policy ecosystems in which they operate. This assessment will provide the basis for a self-designed capacity development plan for each CPL; the Lab will then provide each CPL with direct financial grants to pursue this plan.

[9] Feed The Future. (2022). *About*. Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy, Research, Capacity and Influence. https://www.canr.msu.edu/prci/about

- Active mentoring of researchers: A mentoring approach to all research, pairing researchers from CPLs with high-level researchers from the Lab's partner institutions. Expansion of Cornell  University's STAARS program (Structural Transformation of African Agriculture and Rural Spaces) into STAAARS+, which adds Asia and expands the pool of fellows and mentors.
- Annual research conferences: Lab research will be presented and special capacity-building activities carried out at the ReNAPRI annual research conference, held during November each year in a host country from the network.
- An emphasis on partnerships: PRCI will actively partner with regional and continental bodies such as AGRA, AfDB, and others to maximize the impact of its work.

Example of project: No specific example. Project themes include Inclusive agricultural and rural transformation (including for women and children); Healthy food systems; and Resilience.

## 10. Policy Lab – Netherlands NGO[10]

Purpose: "The use of new data sources and technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence offers opportunities for policymakers to gain new insights and respond better to societal developments. TNO has developed a methodology that can be used to experiment with this way of making policy: the Policy Lab."

Objectives: Use of new data sources as sensor data and technological developments for policy development; "Multidisciplinary approach: including data science, legal, domain-oriented, etc.; Involving citizens and other stakeholders ('co-creation') and carefully weighing different values".

Scope:

1. Methods and models: "Explore new data sources and technologies and their impact on policy";
2. Experimentation and co-creation: "Joint setting up of experiments and involving different stakeholders";
3. Impact and learning: "Implementation, expansion and monitoring of data-driven policy. This approach can be applied to issues by going through all three phases or by exploring one of these phases in depth."

Example of project: Pilot Youth Policy Rotterdam, which aims "to arrive at a better policy model aimed at developing socio-emotional skills and preventing young people from ending up without education or work. To this end, various data sources (from the Centre for Youth and Family, CBS - the Dutch, and the Municipality of Rotterdam) are linked and a combination of statistical methods and Machine Learning is used to explore which factors are decisive for the socio-emotional development of young people. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations supports the experiment to develop a new methodology for data-driven policy."

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[10] TNO. (2022). *Policy Lab: Developing data-driven policies*. TNO. https://www.tno.nl/en/focus-areas/strategic-analysis-policy/expertise-groups/strategy-policy/policy-lab-developing-data-driven-policies/

## Others

Despite not being labs, there are research centers, think tanks, and NGOs that could help us define the work of our policy lab. The following is an example:

### ECDPM – Netherland/Belgium Thinktank[11]

Purpose: "To make policies in Europe and Africa work for inclusive and sustainable development."

Objectives: "Our independent policy experts contribute sharp analysis, thorough research, and fresh ideas. But making policies work requires stepping off the sidelines too. It means working closely with the people who create, implement, or are impacted by policies. We bring different groups around the table, smooth the way for debate, and make sure everyone's voice is heard. We provide advice and training and design practical solutions together."

Scope:

- Research and analysis: "We provide thorough policy research, sharp analysis, and fresh ideas."
- Advice and training: "We provide practical policy advice, training, and support."
- Events: "We organize and speak at debates, conferences, and workshops."
- Partnerships and dialogue: "We connect people, broker partnerships and create space for dialogue."
- Expert information: "We provide background information to our partners and the media."

Example of project: "Our focus is on EU foreign policy and European and African policies related to conflict, migration, governance, food security, regional integration, business, finance and trade." Their section on African institutions and regional dynamics addresses AfCFTA and includes policy briefs and maps on the topic.

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[11] ECDPM. (2022). *About ECDPM*. ECDPM. https://ecdpm.org/about-ecdpm/