

RE-PILOT STUDY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICA POLICY IMPLEMENTATION LAB

Executive Summary

Background:

In September 2021, the Institute of African Studies (IAS) and the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA), with financial support from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) hired a Research Assistant named Jeremy Cotton to work under the supervision of Profs. Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba and Yiagadeesen Teddy Samy to conduct a pilot study to determine the feasibility of establishing the African Policy Implementation and Effect Lab (APIEL) at Carleton University.

The Problem of Policy Implementation in Africa

The APIEL was proposed to contribute intellectual and innovative approaches to addressing the challenges of policy implementation in Africa. This is against the backdrop of many policies that have been adopted at the continental and regional levels, and which remain unimplemented. A 2016 report by the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) indicates that since the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its successor, the Africa Union (AU), there are over forty treaties and protocols that have been adopted but have not been fully implemented.

The lack of implementation of these treaties and protocols undermines the development potentials and aspirations in Africa. It is expected that by using digital technology, and a multi-stakeholder as well as multidisciplinary approaches the APIEL can use evidenced-based research to provide a cost-benefit analysis of implementing the decisions of the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to African leaders and other stakeholders in the development process. Such analysis may prompt African governments and other decision-makers to implement policies that benefit African citizens. The rich and diverse parade of faculty members at Carleton University provides a strong justification for the establishment of the Lab at the University.

The Term of Reference

Mapping of the existing protocols and treaties of the African Union and Regional Economic Communities in the African Continental Free Trade Area



- Mapping the seven pillars of Boosting Intra-African Trade.
- Identifying the political economy factors responsible for hindrances to the implementation of treaties and protocols of the African Union and Regional Economic Communities.
- Identifying policy implementation think tanks in Africa.
- Identifying similar Labs in other regions as well as the work that they perform.
- Conducting library research on the theory and practice of policy implementation.

Existing Protocols and Treaties of the African Union and Regional Economic Communities

Since the formation of the OAU in 1963 through to the transition to the AU in 2002, the continental organization has adopted several protocols and treaties geared towards the promotion of regional integration, economic growth, and political development. In this regard, more than 40 treaties and protocols have been adopted. However, less than fifty percent of these have been ratified or implemented. Appendix 1 shows the categories of treaties and protocols that have been adopted and the various stages in signature and ratification by member states. Concerning regional integration and trade development, while state parties have signed and ratified most of the treaties, implementation remains a major problem. The challenge with implementation also applies to other important protocols such as the establishment of the African Monetary Fund, the Africa Mineral Development Center, and the most recent African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Although the latter has the highest level of signature of member states at 90%, and 69% ratification, implementation remains a critical issue. There are seven protocols to the AfCFTA, which form an integral part of the treaty, once adopted. They are negotiated in three phases.

The lack of implementation of treaties and protocols is not limited to the AU. RECs on the continent also have the challenge of non-implementation of treaties and protocols. The AU recognizes eight RECs. Each of these RECs has formulated various protocols on issues of migration, regional integration, governance, and democracy. Our mapping and exploratory exercise show there are differences among RECs in the level of implementation of various protocols. As indicated in Annex 1, this study highlights some of the protocols that have been adopted and are being implemented by three RECs namely, the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS), East Africa Community (EAC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Apart from the costs involved in negotiating and adopting these protocols, the lack of implementation led to the loss in the socioeconomic and political benefits that motivated the adoption of the various treaties and protocols. The lack of implementation of treaties and protocols at continental and regional levels underscores the need for the APIEL.

Political Economy Factors Responsible for Non-Implementation

Various political and economic factors have affected the lack of implementation of the protocols and treaties at continental and regional levels. Lack of political will, limited institutional capacity, weak bureaucratic capacity, multiple commitments, and insufficient data constitute critical impediments to the implementation of protocols and treaties adopted by member states of the AU and RECs. Despite the existence of continental and regional agreements, consideration for national interests continues to define the extent to which member states of the AU are committed to the implementation of treaties and protocols.

While national interests may be important, they become suboptimal when they undermine collective decisions to achieve developmental outcomes such as a higher level of regional integration, free movement of goods and services, free movement of people, and a higher level of accountability. Consideration for the maximisation of the interests of the elites also affects the extent to which regional and continental policies are implemented. Political or economic reforms generally create winners and losers - if private or public sector workers see that regional integration will lower their power or economic opportunities, they will resist regionally agreed issues. Differences in the national laws of member countries and the protocols or treaties that they sign at the continental and regional levels constitute another impediment to the implementation of such treaties. Mistrust among member states and the differences in national capacities to derive benefits from regional protocols and treaties tend to undermine the implementation of such treaties.

Additionally, given the overdependence of both the AU and RECs on external funding, donors sometimes dictate the agenda in these institutions. This leads to the question of ownership of some of the core issues on which member states adopt protocols and treaties. In the absence of such ownership, there will be little incentive for implementation. The APIEL can play a very important role in addressing these political economic problems through its depoliticized engagement with stakeholders in Africa. Policy dialogues involving top government officials at national, regional,

and continental levels will be part of the key activities of the Lab. Through these Policy dialogues, stakeholders will be presented with evidence-based research, which will demonstrate the benefits of implementing various protocols agreed to by member states.

Limited Political and Bureaucratic Capacity for Implementation

Most of the protocols and treaties adopted at the continental and regional levels remain unimplemented due to limited political and bureaucratic capacities for implementation. The inability to connect the various protocols to the overall development goals of member countries creates reverse incentives for implementation. Similarly, bureaucrats at the national and regional levels in Africa are generally overstretched as they attend multiple meetings and engage in numerous projects. This calls for capacity building on issues of trade integration, harmonization of policies, doing cost-benefit analysis of regional integration programs, and implementing decisions made at RECs and the AU. The Lab will continue to bridge this gap through the training of bureaucrats, and joint supervision of PhD students and postdoctoral fellows between Carleton University and partner universities in Africa.

Similar Policy Labs in Other Regions

There are many Labs that focus on policy formulation. Very few are focused on policy implementation. In Africa, none exists that focuses on policy implementation currently. As indicated in Annex3, some of the Labs that focus on policy implementation include the following:

A. Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI) 's International Policy Implementation Lab – Stanford University. Its purpose is:

- To support impact-oriented international research, problem-based teaching, and long-term engagement with urgent dilemmas around the world
- 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 technical expertise needed for Lab projects

B. Research on International Policy Implementation Lab – American University

The purpose of the Lab is to investigate pressing topics in international peace, security, development, and humanitarian response to translate rigorous research into real policy solutions. The Lab adopts a multi-stakeholder approach by creating 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. It also addresses problems of concrete importance to governments, think tanks, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and global firms

C. The Policy Lab – Brown University

This Lab involves policymakers in the design of their research agenda from the beginning to the end. It brings 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 of Rhode Island.

D. Public Policy Lab – USA NGO

The Lab partners with federal and municipal agencies to conduct research, design, and test new public services. It also works with philanthropies and academic institutions to develop human-centered strategies for social innovation

E. Impact and Innovation Unit – Government of Canada

The purpose of this unit is to provide a forum for the pursuit and promotion of interdisciplinary research, education, and professional applications relating to public policy innovation. The mission of the unit 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. There are eight implementation Labs within the Impact and Innovation Unit. The Impact and Innovation Unit is focused on 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 unit supports departments to build results-driven approaches that aim to improve outcomes for Canadians

F. Employment Lab in Morocco – Harvard University

This Lab uses the Evidence for Policy Design approach to foster economic development by engaging with policy actors through “rigorous, on-the-ground embedded research” and “Innovative, evidence-driven capacity building”. The approach further includes Smart Policy Design & Implementation (SPDI). The SPDI steps are (1) identify, (2) diagnose, (3) design, (4) implement, (5) test, (6) refine

G. Policy Lab – Netherlands

The Lab is focused on the use of new data sources and technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence. It offers opportunities for policymakers to gain new insights and respond better to societal developments. It adopts a multidisciplinary approach including data science, legal, domain-oriented, etc. By adopting technology such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, this Lab is similar to the APIEL.

Conclusion

This pilot study has found out the existence of various treaties and protocols that have not been implemented at the AU and RECs levels. It has also examined some of the political economy factors that undermine the implementation of these treaties. The study also found that there are think tanks in Africa that AFPIL can work with to contribute to building capacity for the implementation of policies and decisions of the continental and regional organizations. The study further found out that although there are different Labs in universities and research institutions in different parts of the world, none exists in Africa.

The existence of different Labs, mostly in developed countries shows their increasing importance in addressing the quality of policy and ensuring their implementation. It also shows the centrality of research as the basis for ensuring that policy delivers value to the citizens. The Labs work with Think Tanks in their various communities. The AFPIL will be the first of its kind that focuses exclusively on Africa. It will seek to work in partnership with similar Labs to deliver on its goals.

The uniqueness of the Lab lies in the use of digital technology (such as artificial intelligence and machine learning) to track the decisions of the AU and RECs and apply the same technologies in justifying the implementation of protocols, treaties, and policies. The technologies will help to foster data-driven and evidence-based policymaking, and ultimately improve the implementation and enforcement of those policies.

One of the main challenges to implementing regional integration policies in Africa is the limited consultation and communication with the people. By fostering multi-stakeholder engagements, the AFPIL will help to address this by ensuring the involvement of civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and community leaders on key issues of trade integration, informal trade, gender, and employment and mobility of people.

The questions that arise from these studies are:

- How can the AFPIL contribute to the capacity for the implementation of policy in Africa?
- What are the knowledge bases required to ensure the implementation of AU and REC decisions?
- What are the innovative ways to address the challenges of non-implementation of policies?
- How can technology be used to foster the implementation of decisions of the AU and RECs?
- How can policy dialogues and multistakeholder engagements help to persuade member states of the AU and RECs to implement decisions and policies?