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Evidence in decision-making: Understanding the influence of research in African policy landscape

Insights from stakeholder surveys

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1. Introduction

In the complex system of policymaking, decisions are not made in a vacuum. The backbone of effective decision-making lies in the robust utilization of research-based data, evidence, and analyses (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007). These elements are critical at every stage of the policymaking process, from the initial setting of the agenda and the formulation of policies, through to their implementation and subsequent evaluation. The ability to draw on evidence enables policymakers to identify critical issues, evaluate solutions, make informed decisions, efficiently allocate resources, and garner public support for reforms through evidence-backed arguments (Head 2008; Shillabeer, Buss, and Rousseau 2011).

While the pivotal roles that information and research play in shaping policies is well-recognized, there is a lack of understanding about the origins and channels through which decision-makers access this vital resource. Addressing this gap is especially crucial in the fields of agriculture, food security, nutrition, and economic development—areas that are fundamental to the well-being of nations and their citizens.

Within this context, the mission of the Innovation Lab for Policy Research Capacity and Influence (PRCI) is both relevant and critical. The mission of PRCI is to bolster the roles and capacities of selected local policy research organizations (referred as Centers for Policy Leadership or CPLs in short) in shaping agriculture and food security policies. The crux of PRCI's mission lies in its commitment to making CPL-conducted research a pivotal source of

Key Messages

1. Both government and non-government stakeholders prefer institutional reports and policy briefs for credible information.
2. The visibility of CPLs like EPRC and ISRA-BAME is high in their respective countries due to their long-standing presence, while newer institutions like PiLAF face recognition challenges, albeit ranking improves with direct prompts.
3. Stakeholders prioritize trust in analysis, innovative research, longevity, and event hosting in ranking research institutions. Social media presence is considered less crucial, with preferences shifting over time and varying by country.
4. Stakeholder engagement with CPLs varies by type and country, with targeted stakeholders being more involved.
5. CPLs receive high marks for credibility, quality, and research timeliness but need to focus on enhancing their communications, outreach capabilities, and policy influence. Stakeholders specifically suggest CPLs continue their effective research, improve specific sector research, and enhance communication strategies.
6. Stakeholders' perceptions on the degree to which agriculture and food security policymaking depends on evidence and research show progress and regression across stakeholder groups and countries, highlighting the nuanced nature of policy influence and the need for prioritized engagement.

information for policymakers, thereby enhancing the impact of evidence on policy decisions. By fostering greater self-reliance among the CPLs, PRCI aims to enhance their research quality, their ability to impact national and regional policy discussions, and their sustainability in doing so. The underlying theory of change posits that by strengthening institutional capacities, CPLs will be better equipped to produce superior research and wield greater influence.

To realize this vision, it is imperative to understand the pathways through which policy-makers access and utilize information. Knowledge of these channels would enable CPLs to tailor their research outputs and institutional activities to meet the specific needs and preferences of policymakers, ensuring that their findings are not only relevant but also actionable. Consequently, this Report elaborates on the results of two rounds of targeted surveys of policy makers and stakeholders conducted within the fields of agriculture, food security, nutrition, and economic development to better understand these channels. The surveys were conducted in three countries—Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda—where PRCI has actively engaged with the following CPLs: the Innovation Lab for Policy Leadership in Agriculture and Food Security (PiLAF) (Nigeria), Bureau d'Analyses Macro-Economiques, Institut Sénégalais de Recherches Agricoles (ISRA-BAME) (Senegal), and the Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC) (Uganda). The surveys seek to scan the research landscape in these countries and to understand where the CPLs fit in this landscape. They also aim to uncover the information sources and channels that policymakers and stakeholders turn to when they need advice for agriculture and food security policies, reasons policymakers rely on that source, insights into the effectiveness of CPLs' current practices, and identify strategies for CPLs to position themselves as key influencers in the policy arena.

Next, we briefly describe the three CPLs, detail the research methods and data, and offer a summary of results. We end with a discussion of the emerging insights from the stakeholder surveys and implications for CPLs in generating credible, relevant, and influential research.

2. About the three CPLs

The three CPLs share a commitment to rigorous and high-quality research to inform decision-makers on agricultural and food security challenges. But they also differ in several important characteristics. BAME, part of the Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute (ISRA) and supported by the Senegalese government for 40 years, conducts cross-disciplinary research both nationally and regionally (including a focus on the Sahelian region). EPRC, housed at Makerere University for three decades, stands as the sole CPL with membership to the African Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ANAPRI). The newest, PiLAF at the University of Ibadan, founded in 2020, aims to be a premier center in agricultural and food security policy research.¹ It is worth noting that these CPLs' distinct characteristics—organizational setting, longevity, and network affiliation—may significantly influence their perceived credibility, visibility, and peer standing within the national policy arena.

3. Method and Data

This Report presents the results of surveys conducted with two groups of stakeholders in each of the three countries. Group 1 consists of a general sample of stakeholders that were contacted to participate in two survey rounds—2021 and 2023. Group 2 consists of stakeholders targeted by the CPLs, who were interviewed only in the second-round surveys conducted in 2023. For each, the method of sample selection and data collection is described below.

¹ PiLAF is a product of collaboration between the Centre for Petroleum, Energy Economics and Law (CPEEL), which was first selected as the CPL, and the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development (DAERD) both in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

General Sample Survey (Group 1)

The aim of this survey was to reach a broad spectrum of individuals from the public sector, NGOs, the private sector, research institutions, and donor agencies—all of whom play a pivotal role in the country's policy landscape. To this end, over hundreds of distinguished individuals in each country were identified and targeted for participation. The criteria for selection were based on their influential positions—such as Executive Directors and Heads of Departments/Divisions—as well as their active involvement in past policy events and forums, marking them as central figures in the discourse of policy implementation in their respective countries.

The method of engagement with these stakeholders was twofold. First, approximately 20 individuals from the list, mostly from the government sector or individuals in high position with organizations that play an important role in policymaking, were personally contacted for in-depth virtual interviews, while the remainder were invited by email to share their insights through an online survey using the same questionnaire. This strategic approach was employed in both the rounds of data collection: the first took place between September and October of 2021, and the second spanned from November 2023 to January 2024. Several questions from Round 1 were repeated in Round 2 to make them comparable across the two time periods. However, in Round 2 a few questions were added to collect some consistent new information across Group 1 and 2.

The virtual interviews in both the rounds were facilitated by consultants based in the country or region. These consultants not only had extensive experience in conducting stakeholder interviews but also had a deep understanding of the subject matter. The consultants' familiarity with the stakeholders and the nuances of the policy environment in their respective countries was instrumental in eliciting candid and insightful responses, thus enriching the overall findings of the survey.

The first round elicited responses from a total of 32 stakeholders in Uganda, 48 in Senegal, and 66 in Nigeria. The follow-up round in 2023 closely mirrored this pattern, achieving a response rate from 30 individuals in Uganda, 52 in Senegal, and 48 in Nigeria. Although, the same pool of respondents was approached for the survey in both the rounds, we did not track the respondents as the surveys were anonymized. In the analysis, we treat the two rounds of surveys as cross-sectional.

Survey of Targeted Sample (Group 2)

This survey, only conducted in round 2, focuses on a select group of stakeholders from organizations that CPLs had earmarked to influence during their strategic planning process that took place under the PRCI project. We asked each CPL to provide a list of 5 to 10 specially chosen stakeholders, identified for their potential to shape and drive policy conversations within their respective domains.

Efforts were made to reach out to these key individuals to conduct virtual interviews, which were conducted by the same consultant who interviewed Group 1 respondents. This continuity in interviewer was a strategic choice, ensuring a consistent approach and depth of understanding across the interactions.

For these targeted stakeholders, a distinct questionnaire was developed, tailored to extract precise information pertinent to each CPL's strategic goals. While this questionnaire was unique to this subset of stakeholders, it was crafted to maintain a degree of continuity with the Group 1 survey, including some overlapping questions to allow for comparative analysis.

This targeted survey effort was rolled out over the same time as Group 1 survey—i.e., from November 2023 to January 2024. Response rate varied from 7 in Nigeria and Uganda to 9 in Senegal, with a total of 24 completed interviews.

Table 1. Stakeholder profile by country—General sample, 2021 and 2023

| | Percentage of respondents | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|---------|------|--------|------|
| | Nigeria | | Senegal | | Uganda | |
| | 2021 | 2023 | 2021 | 2023 | 2021 | 2023 |
| Number of respondents | 66 | 49 | 48 | 52 | 32 | 30 |
| Male | 72% | 76% | 69% | 69% | 69% | 73% |
| Main sector of employment | | | | | | |
| Government | 33% | 35% | 29% | 35% | 53% | 50% |
| Private sector | 37% | 18% | 29% | 18% | 31% | 23% |
| Research sector | 23% | 31% | 29% | 31% | 0% | 0% |
| NGO/CSO/Donor/Other | 17% | 16% | 13% | 16% | 16% | 27% |
| Main area of expertise | | | | | | |
| Agricultural development | 52% | 53% | 38% | 38% | 44% | 50% |
| Food security | 8% | 14% | 6% | 21% | 9% | 10% |
| Economic development | 8% | 6% | 17% | 15% | 28% | 20% |
| Other | 15% | 12% | 31% | 23% | 10% | 10% |
| Unspecified | 17% | 14% | 8% | 2% | 9% | 10% |
| Primary responsibilities | | | | | | |
| Management/Executive Duties | 41% | 47% | 41% | 42% | 47% | 53% |
| Research/Development | 17% | 18% | 17% | 29% | 19% | 13% |
| Outreach/Extension | 14% | 8% | 14% | 0% | 13% | 10% |
| Operation/Implementation | 9% | 8% | 9% | 17% | 9% | 13% |
| Other | 5% | 10% | 16% | 10% | 3% | 3% |
| Unspecified | 15% | 8% | 6% | 2% | 9% | 8% |
| Belongs to an organization that plays following role in a working group/ task force/ committee on agriculture or food security | | | | | | |
| As a leader | 36% | 41% | 10% | 35% | 28% | 38% |
| As a member | 47% | 39% | 50% | 40% | 56% | 55% |
| Respondent is a political appointee or reports to a political appointee | 29% | 26% | 21% | 27% | 9% | 10% |

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the general sample's respondent profiles, while Table 2 focuses on the targeted sample. Predominantly male, these respondents primarily possess expertise in agricultural development and food security. Approximately half hold management or executive roles, with the remainder engaged in diverse functions such as research, outreach, operations, among others. Most are affiliated with organizations influential in policy formation, participating in various policymaking groups. A quarter of the sample holds political appointments or directly reports to such appointees.

In the general sample, government employment accounts for 35-40%, with 60-65% representing the private sector, research, NGOs, donors, and other sectors. This distinction between government and other sectors is crucial in our analysis, which separates results into government and non-government sectors for clarity.

Table 2. Stakeholder profile by country—Targeted sample, 2023

| | Number of respondents | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------|--------|
| | Nigeria | Senegal | Uganda |
| Total number of respondents | 7 | 9 | 7 |
| Male | 4 | 9 | 6 |
| Main sector of employment | | | |
| Government | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Private sector | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Research sector | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| NGO/CSO/Donor/Other | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Main area of expertise | | | |
| Agricultural development | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| Food security | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Health and nutrition | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Primary responsibilities | | | |
| Management/Executive Duties | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Research/Development | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| Outreach/Extension | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Public/government relations | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Belongs to an organization that plays following role in a working group/ task force/ committee on agriculture or food security | | | |
| As a leader | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| As a member | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Respondent is a political appointee or reports directly to a political appointee | 2 | 3 | 3 |

4. Summary Results

Source of Information

When in need for reliable and credible information about agricultural development and food security in their respective countries, **institutional reports are most preferred source of information** by both government and non-government actors, followed by policy briefs (Figure 1). Journal articles are not a high priority source of information for government actors. These results are consistent across both the years. Respondents from non-government sectors are more likely to engage with social media than government sector respondents, while the latter rely more on information provided from other government institutions and NARS (in 2021), blogs (in 2021), and news outlets (in 2023).

Top Research Institutions and the Reasons Why

When stakeholders were asked without prompts to name the top research institutions for domestic agricultural development and/or food security, **the visibility and recognition of CPLs varied by country** (Figure 2). EPRC in Uganda consistently ranked high, while ISRA-BAME's visibility in Senegal improved notably between 2021 and 2023. PiLAF in Nigeria, however, was not listed in the top ranks for either year. Yet, when stakeholders were given a list that included CPLs, they commonly ranked BAME, PiLAF, and EPRC as top institutions (Table 3). These results are consistent across both groups of stakeholders—general sample and targeted.

Figure 1. Primary type of information relied on by decision makers, 2021 and 2023 (% of respondents across all countries by type)

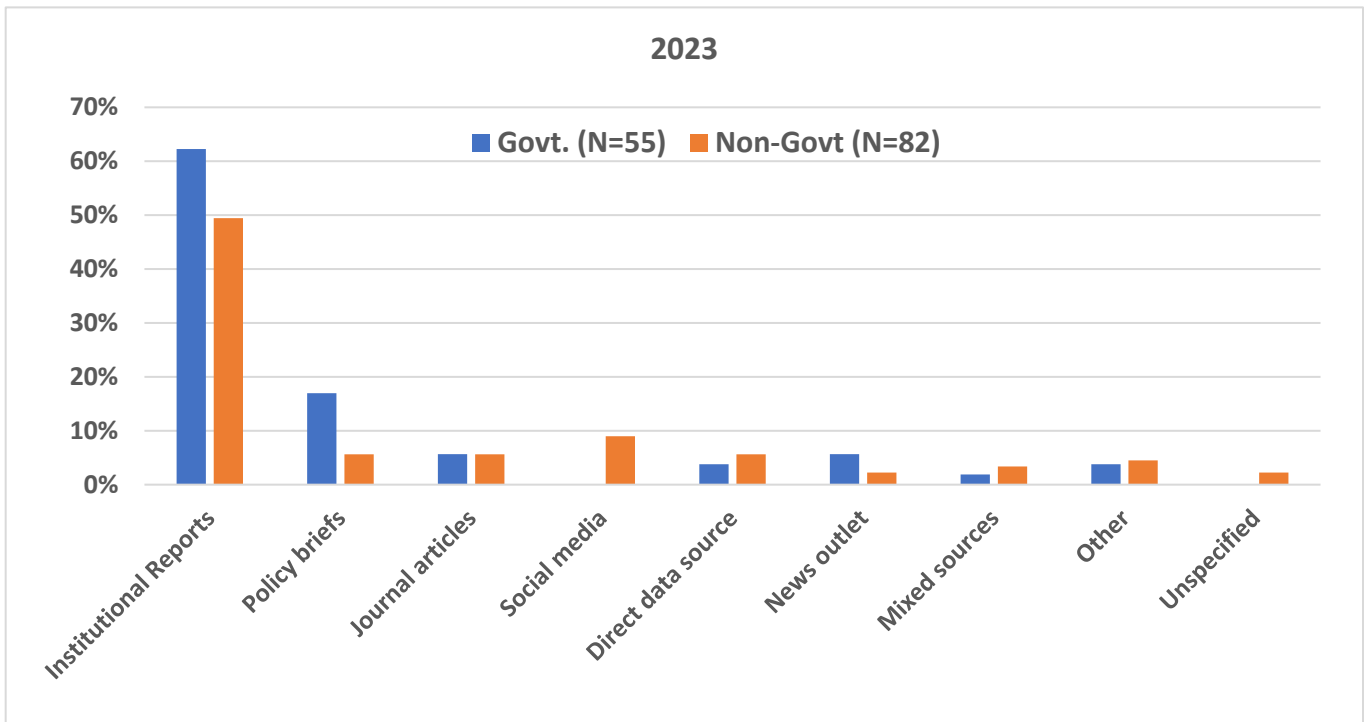
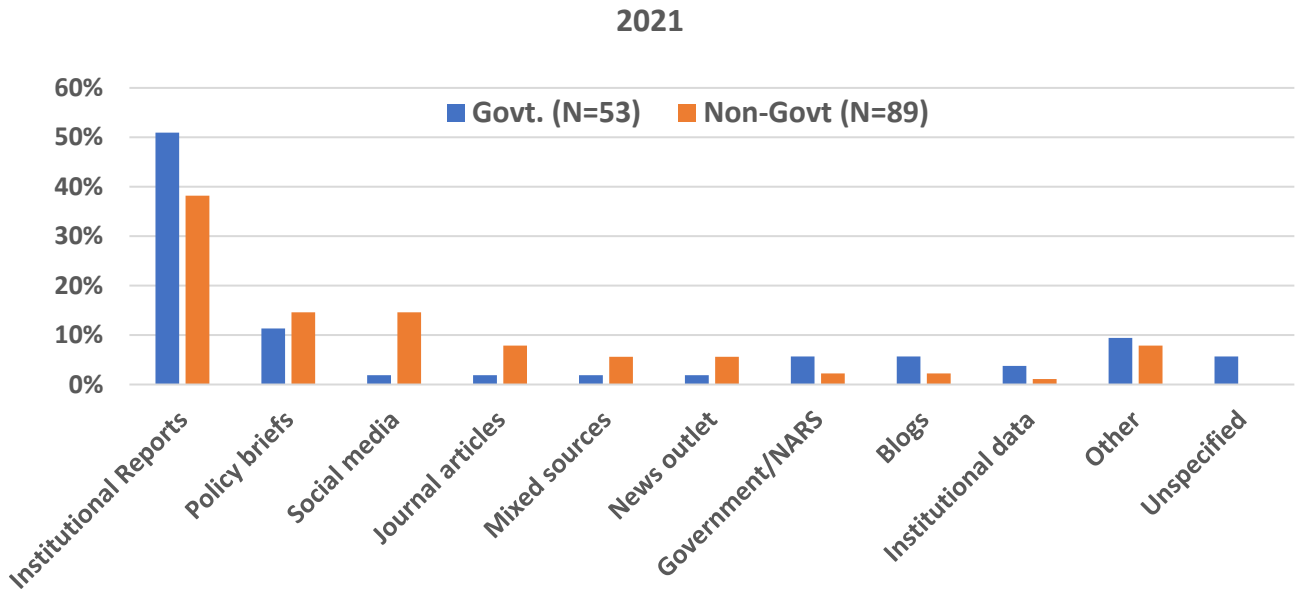


Figure 2. Five most mentioned top 3 research institutions on domestic agricultural development and/or food security in 2021 and 2023, by country/region (open-ended)

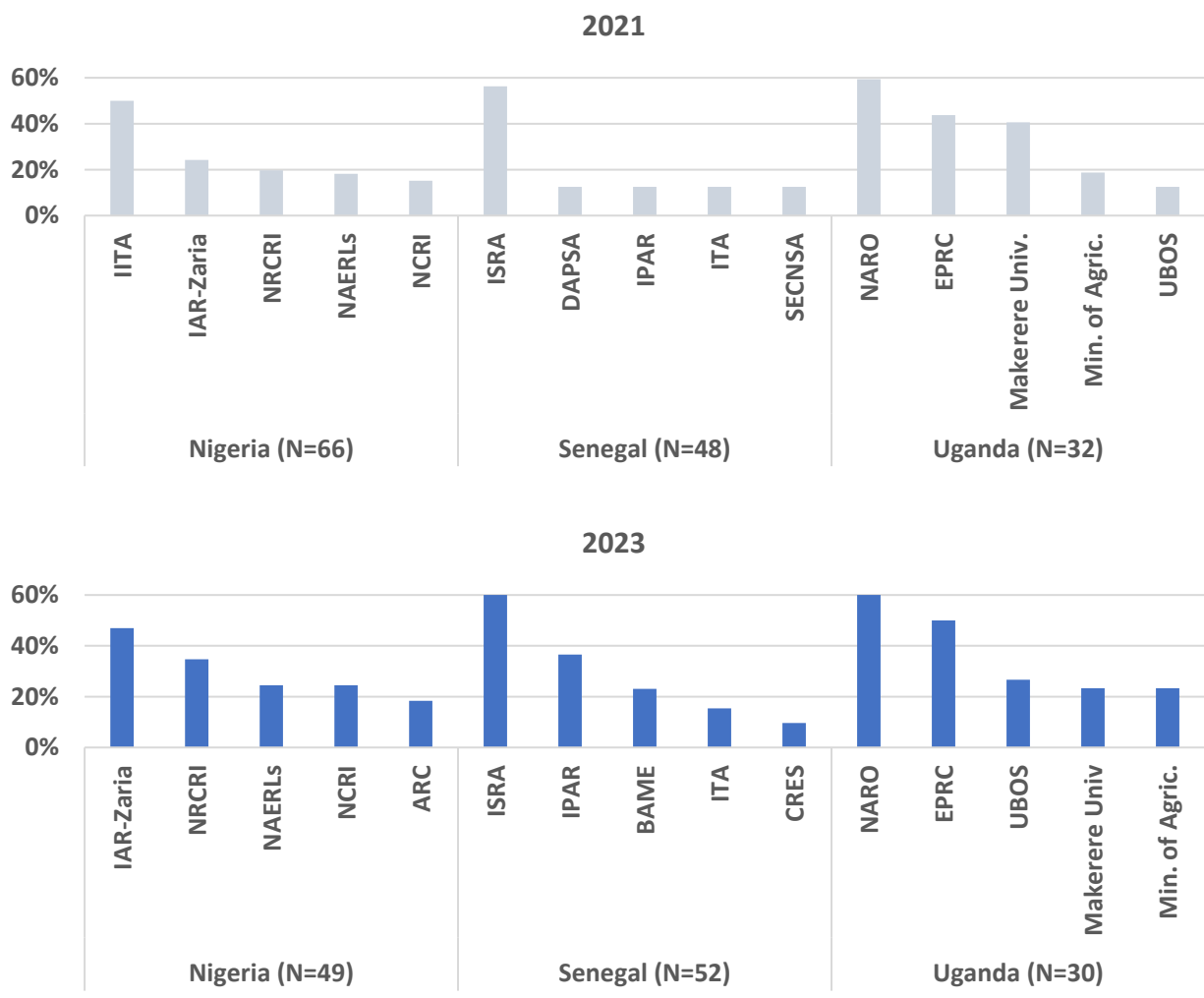


Table 3. Ranking of CPLs relative to other national research institutes when presented with a list of institutes to rank (general sample, 2023)

| Rank | Nigeria | Rank | Senegal | Rank | Uganda |
|------|--------------|------|------------------|------|----------------|
| 1 | IAR, Zaria | 1 | ISRA-BAME | 1 | NARO |
| 2 | PiLAF | 2 | ISRA (non-BAME) | 2 | EPRC |
| 3 | NRCRI | 3 | DAPSA | 3 | UBOS |
| 4 | APRNet | 4 | IPAR | 4 | Makerere Univ. |
| 5 | NCRI | 5 | SECNSA | 5 | PADRI |
| | | 6 | CRES | | |



Reasons for ranking institutions as top vary across countries and have shifted over two years across the three countries. In both Nigeria and Uganda, 'Trust in quality and independence of analysis' was the number one reason in 2021, but this was replaced in 2023 by 'Generates innovative research on important issues.' In Senegal, it was the opposite. Figure 3 displays various reasons respondents from all three countries gave in 2023 for why they prefer certain research institutions, arranged from most to least significant. Figure 4 shows how these reasons changed across the countries from 2021 to 2023. **Trust in the quality of analysis, innovative research generation, the institution's longevity, and frequent event hosting are the top four considerations.** In contrast, an active social media presence is deemed one of the least important reasons in both years (Figure 4). There are, however, nuanced differences in the importance of these reasons by country. For example, innovative and multi-disciplinary research is a significantly more important reason cited by stakeholders in Uganda and Nigeria, and presence in social media and visually appealing and user-friendly websites were cited relatively more by stakeholders in Senegal (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Reasons for selecting an institution as top research institute, 2023, by country

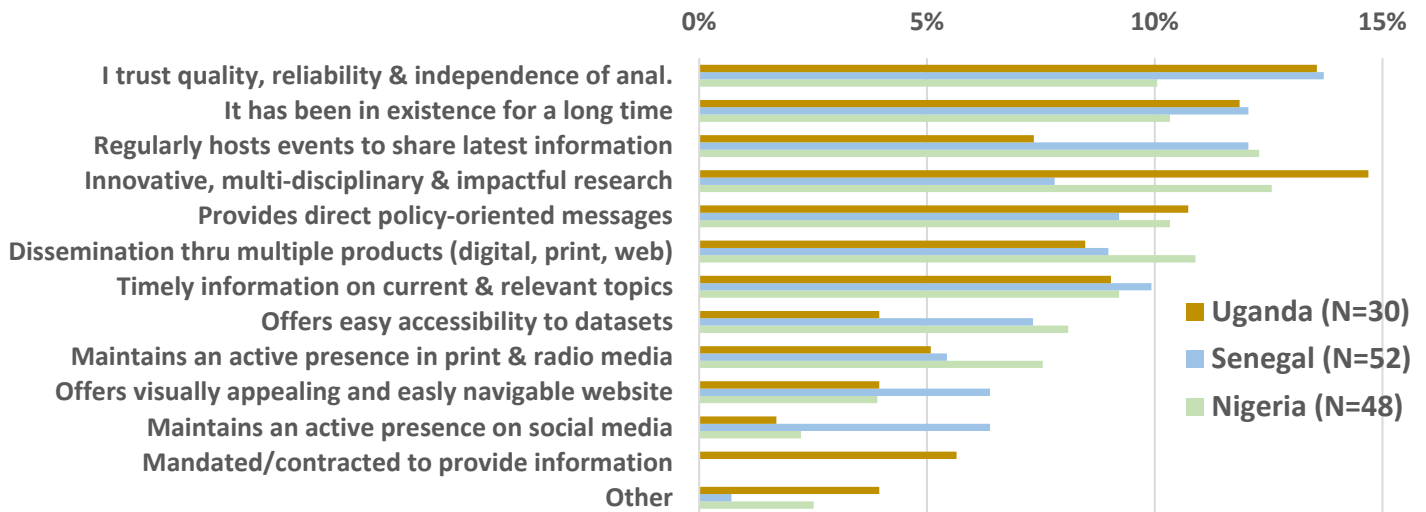


Figure 4. Reasons for selecting an institution as top research institute (across all countries), 2021 vs. 2023

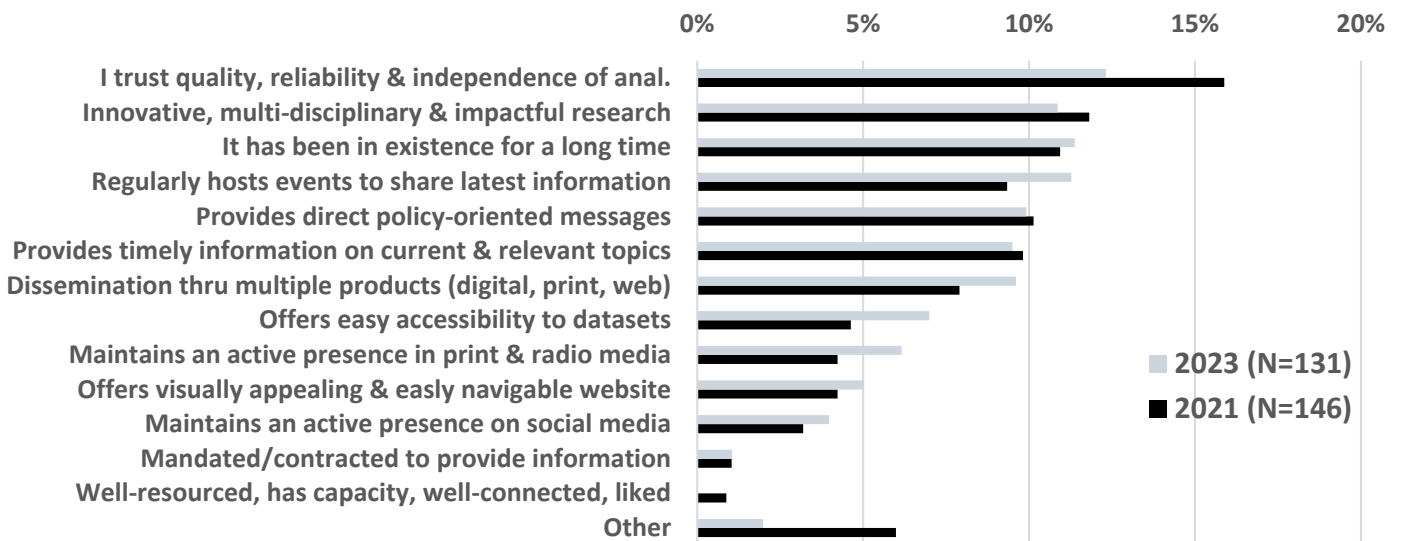
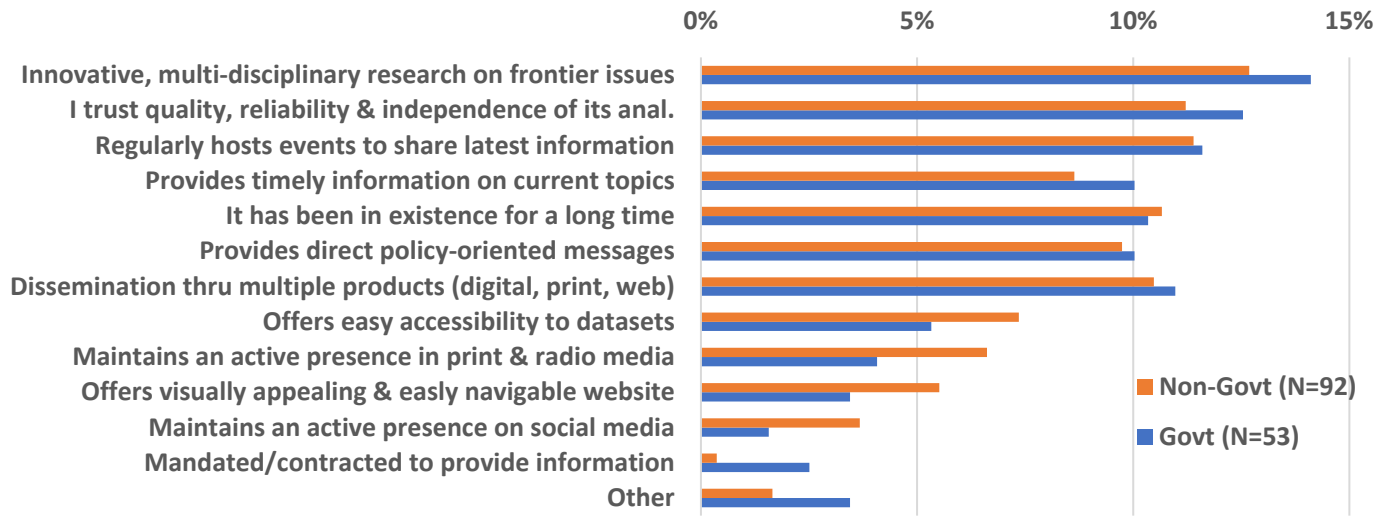


Figure 5. Reasons for selecting an institution as top research institute (across all countries), government vs. non-government respondents in 2023



There was agreement among government and non-government stakeholders on the value placed on innovative research, trust in analysis quality, and event hosting (Figure 5). **Government stakeholders more frequently cited timeliness and direct policy relevance, while non-government stakeholders valued accessibility to data, visually appealing and user-friendly websites, and media presence.** This varying importance of reasons across countries and stakeholder groups suggest that when aiming to become a top research institution, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy. Institutions must adapt to specific policy environments and the specific sets of audiences that they want to address. Instead of trying to excel in all areas (i.e., timeliness, policy-oriented messaging, website quality, and social media presence), institutions might instead focus on key areas most valued by their primary target audiences to maximize impact.

Most Cited Institutions by Communication Modes

When stakeholders were asked without prompting about receiving communications (newsletters, direct messages, or attending seminars) related to agriculture and food security from various institutions in the past 12 months, **the acknowledgment of CPLs in these roles varied** (Figure 6). PiLAF was not recognized in this context for either year. In 2021, BAME in Senegal was scarcely mentioned, except by a few as a seminar organizer, but in 2023, it was acknowledged across all communication forms, especially in direct messaging and as a seminar host. EPRC consistently emerged as the most frequently cited source for newsletters, direct communications, and seminars attended by stakeholders in the past 12 months, in both 2021 and 2023.

Stakeholder Engagement with CPLs—Familiarity and Utilization of Resources

We asked stakeholders about their familiarity with and utilization of CPL resources, observing differences by stakeholder type and country. **Familiarity was notably higher among targeted stakeholders,**² with BAME and EPRC being more recognized in their respective countries than PiLAF in Nigeria, indicating a **correlation between familiarity and institutional longevity** (Figure 7). Specifically, in Senegal, targeted stakeholders had longer awareness of ISRA-

² The one exception in the case of Uganda corresponds to a respondent who was a replacement from within the same organization as the person referred to us by EPRC. Note that in analysis focused specifically on CPLs, observations from respondents not familiar with a CPL are excluded.

BAME compared to the general sample, suggesting a deeper, long-term engagement. Conversely, in Uganda, a larger proportion of targeted stakeholders were familiar with EPRC for 3-5 years, unlike the general sample, who knew them for longer.

Figure 6. Percentage of time a CPL was mentioned as the source of communication or as an organizer of seminars in the past 12 months, 2021 vs. 2023, by country (general sample respondents)

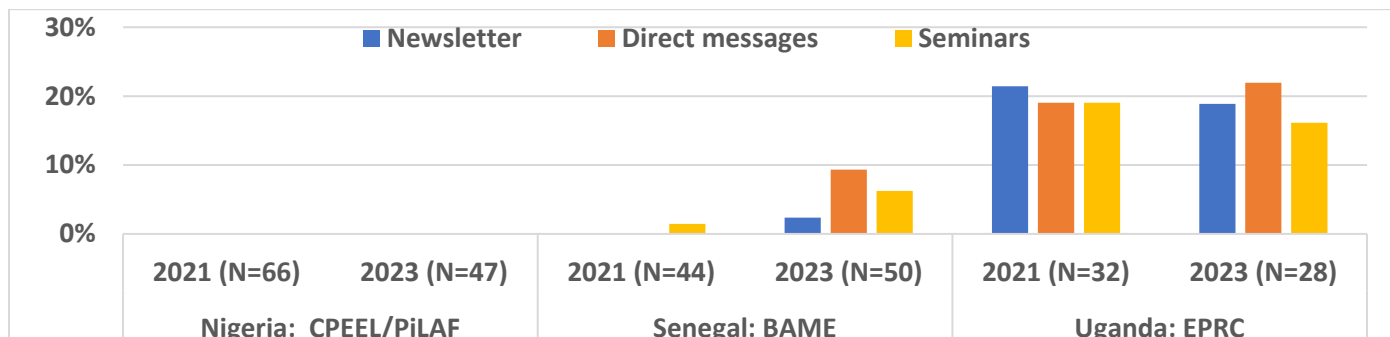
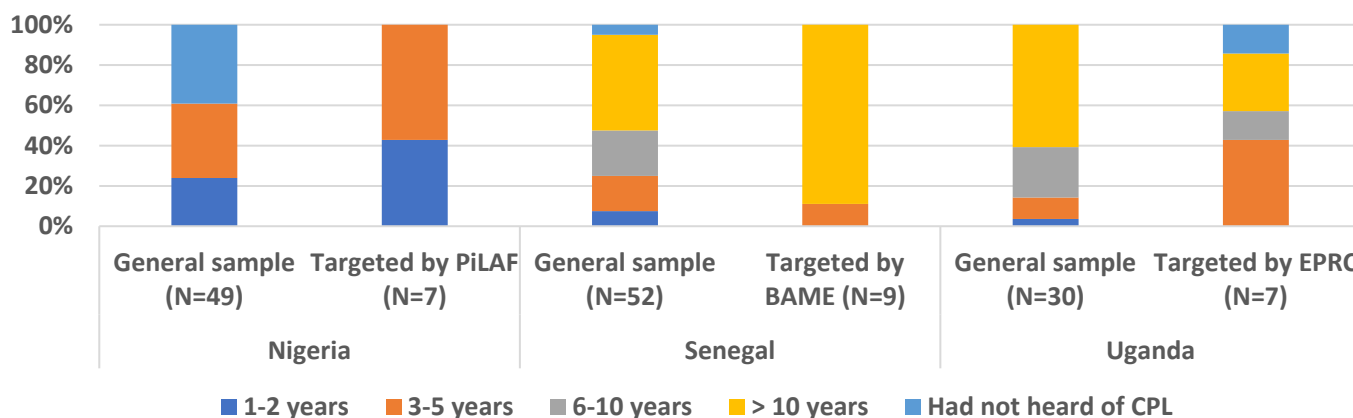


Figure 7. Length of time stakeholders have known the work of CPLs: Responses by two groups of respondents, 2023



The importance of research-based evidence in decision-making is underscored by stakeholders' use of such information. The general sample's usage of data/research/information from any institution in the past year varied, with higher engagement among targeted stakeholders across all countries (Figure 8). When focusing on CPL-specific data/research/information, **a significant portion of respondents reported using CPL-generated resources 'at least sometimes' in the past 12 months**, showcasing encouraging engagement, especially among targeted stakeholders (Figure 9).

Stakeholder Ratings of CPLs and Perceptions of Progress

In the 2023 survey, respondents familiar with CPLs rated them on various dimensions such as credibility, quality, timeliness, influence of research, communication, outreach capacity, and overall reputation. They also evaluated whether these aspects improved over time. **Generally, CPLs received high to medium ratings**, showing progress in most areas (represented by darker shaded cells in the first two columns in Figure 10). However, some stakeholders identified **communications, outreach, and, in Nigeria and Senegal, the influence of research on policy as areas needing improvement** (relatively darker shaded cells in these dimensions in the last two columns in Figure 10), highlighting these as critical focal points for future endeavors.

Figure 8. Number of times in the past 12 months, stakeholders have used any type of data/research/information from ANY institutions for evidence-based decision-/policy-making related to agriculture development, food security, and nutrition (average across all respondents in a given country, by two groups)

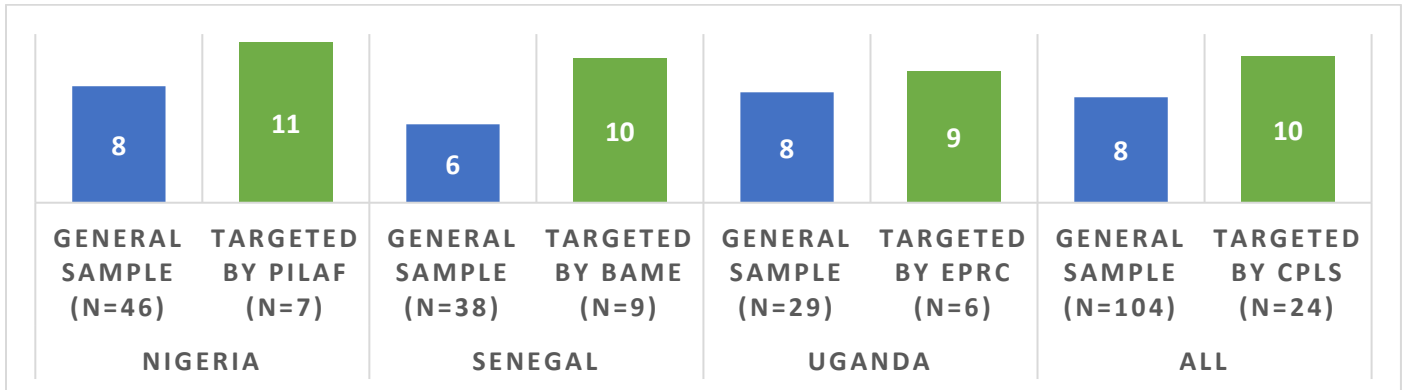
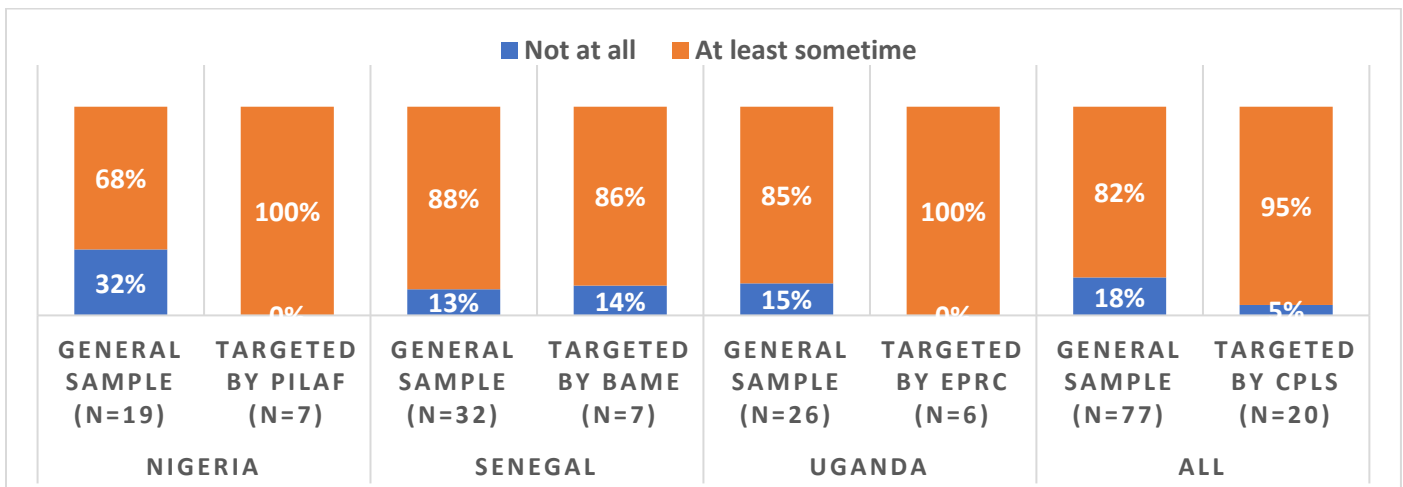


Figure 9. In the past 12 months, how often respondents have used any type of data/research/information specifically from CPLs for evidence-based decision-/policy-making related to agriculture development, food security, and nutrition (conditioned on using any information and having known the CPL)?



Stakeholder Engagement with CPLs: Familiarity with Research and Communication Experiences

Stakeholders' engagement with CPLs can be gauged by how much stakeholders are familiar with research topics on which CPLs have focused, if they can associate those topics with CPLs, and whether they routinely contact CPLs with requests for data/analysis/information. Research topics on which CPLs have recently worked include PiLAF's work on poultry and farm implements, ISRA-BAME's research on food system resilience and sustainable agriculture, and EPRC's studies on the sugarcane sector and nutrition. Familiarity and association levels with these topics vary, with **stakeholders in Senegal and Uganda generally more engaged than those in Nigeria** (Figure 11). Additionally, stakeholder contact with CPLs for data and analysis reflects **differing levels of engagement across countries**, with a high satisfaction rate in Senegal and Uganda, but lower in Nigeria (Table 4). The type of information requested from CPLs, summarized in Table 4, provides a glimpse of what type of research-based evidence stakeholders are looking for and reflects the **diversity in demand for information by decisionmakers**.

Figure 10. Stakeholder's current rating of CPLs and their perception of direction of change/progress in seven dimensions (number of respondents across both the samples)

| Current rating>>> | High or Medium | | Low | |
|--|----------------|------|-----------|---|
| | Increased | Same | Decreased | |
| Nigeria: PiLAF | | | | |
| Credibility of research | 15 | 11 | 0 | 1 |
| Quality of research | 15 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Timeliness of research | 9 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Influence of research on policy makers | 11 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| Communications capacity | 13 | 8 | 0 | 2 |
| Outreach capacity | 16 | 5 | 0 | 4 |
| Overall reputation | 15 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Senegal: ISRA-BAME | | | | |
| Credibility of research | 28 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| Quality of research | 26 | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| Timeliness of research | 27 | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| Influence of research on policy makers | 10 | 18 | 0 | 6 |
| Communications capacity | 13 | 14 | 2 | 8 |
| Outreach capacity | 11 | 14 | 1 | 8 |
| Overall reputation | 29 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| Uganda: EPRC | | | | |
| Credibility of research | 19 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Quality of research | 23 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Timeliness of research | 15 | 8 | 0 | 3 |
| Influence of research on policy makers | 16 | 8 | 0 | 1 |
| Communications capacity | 17 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| Outreach capacity | 13 | 8 | 0 | 6 |
| Overall reputation | 24 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

Note: This figure shows stakeholders' rating of CPLs in 2023 as high, medium, low in 7 dimensions (rows) and their perception of direction of change in these ratings since they have known the CPL. Darker cells indicate high frequency and lighter shade indicates lower frequency. Darker cells under the Green columns are areas of positive change/progress; darker cells under the Red columns are areas of concerns.

Figure 11. Targeted stakeholders' familiarity with research topics on which CPLs have recently focused, and if that topic was associated with CPLs

| | Nigeria: PiLAF (N=7) | | Senegal: BAME (N=9) | | Uganda: EPRC (N=7) | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--------------------|
| | Topic 1 | Topic 2 | Topic 1 | Topic 2 | Topic 1 | Topic 2 |
| | Poultry sector policies | Farm implements manufacturing sector | Food system resilience and agricultural value chain | Favorable social and inst. environ. for sustainable agriculture... | Relationship between the sugarcane sector, food security and poverty | Nutrition security |
| Percentage of targeted stakeholders who had... | | | | | | |
| 1) READ any research on the topic report/publication in the past 2 years on the topic | 57% | 14% | 100% | 89% | 100% | 75% |
| Among those that had read, how many identified CPL as the conductor of that research? | 0% | 0% | 75% | 50% | 83% | 25% |
| 2) ATTENDED SEMINARS or research forums in the past 2 years on the topic | 57% | 43% | 100% | 100% | 83% | 25% |
| Among those that had attended, how many identified CPL as the organizer of the event | 25% | 0% | 33% | 33% | 100% | 0% |

Table 4. Stakeholders' contact experience with CPLs: Opinions of targeted sample

| Nigeria (N=7) | Senegal (N=9) | Uganda (N=6) |
|--|---|---|
| Over the past 12 months, have you ever contacted anyone at <CPL> with a request for any kind of data, information, analysis, or research outputs? (% Yes) | | |
| 57% | 100% | 50% |
| Type of information requested | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles of animal husbandry and veterinary officers in livestock development Policy direction on organic agricultural policy Fertilizer used by different crops Paper on standards of feed mill operations in the state | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on animal production Information on the rice and onion sector Data and documents on agricultural policies Data on food systems Information about crop modeling Data on agricultural yield Data on the economy of agricultural households | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question on whether sugarcane growing has contributed to poverty among farmers in Eastern Uganda Sugar Industry analysis looking at issues of farming and food security and poverty Sugarcane profitability |
| How satisfied were you with the response? | | |
| 3 out of 4 satisfied | All satisfied | All satisfied |

Strategic Performance and Enhancement Recommendations for CPLs

Targeted stakeholders evaluated CPLs against seven aspirational goals from their strategic development process they underwent using the PRCI's Policy Influence Capacity Advancement (PICA) exercise. **There is broad agreement on CPL's performance on most of these goal statements** (reflected in shaded cells under 'completely agree' and 'mostly agree' columns, in Figure 12). Despite general consensus on positive performance, **some goals in each country received mixed responses**, highlighting concerns over policy linkages, capacity for policy evaluation, government collaboration, communication strategies, and responsiveness to agricultural and food security issues. These identified gaps offer CPLs clear directions for enhancing their effectiveness and impact in the future.

Figure 12. Stakeholders' level of agreement on the performance of CPLs on specific outcomes identified by each CPL as aspirational goals in their institutional strategy

| | Completely agree | Mostly agree | Mostly disagree | Completely disagree | NA/DK |
|--|------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| NIGERIA (N=7) | | | | | |
| <u>All in agreement...</u> | | | | | |
| PiLAF has the technical capacity to undertake rigorous evidence-based research that can influence policy. | 2 | 5 | | | |
| PiLAF organizes periodic stakeholder consultations with key stakeholders in the Agricultural & Food Security Space in Nigeria | 4 | 3 | | | |
| PiLAF has capacity, strength (both organizational & technical), and ability to actively engage in policy agenda setting and design | 1 | 6 | | | |
| <u>Most agree, but a few disagree or not sure...</u> | | | | | |
| PiLAF has developed linkages with policy makers & specialized agencies | 3 | 3 | 1 | | |
| PiLAF has capacity, strength (both organizational & technical), and ability to participate in policy evaluation and reform | 1 | 5 | 1 | | |
| Research findings are disseminated to stakeholders through virtual meetings and regular exchange of emails | 1 | 3 | | | 3 |
| Organizes annual workshops where food security issues are discussed by experts across the country | 3 | 3 | | | 1 |
| SENEGAL (N=9) | | | | | |
| <u>All in agreement...</u> | | | | | |
| ISRA-BAME is actively involved in the M&E of public ag policies with technical ministries | 6 | 3 | | | |
| <u>Most agree, but some not sure...</u> | | | | | |
| ISRA-BAME has strong collaborations with operational units of the Government General Secretariat. | 3 | | | | 6 |
| ISRA-BAME has capacity, strength (both organizational & technical), and ability to participate in policy evaluation and reform | 2 | 1 | | | 6 |
| ISRA-BAME does joint programming with Ministry of Agriculture | 5 | 2 | | | 2 |
| ISRA-BAME has institutionalized cooperation between public, private, national, and int research think tanks, univ and research centers. | 6 | 2 | | | 1 |
| ISRA-BAME has strong partnerships with other think tanks and universities in Senegal | 7 | 1 | | | 1 |
| ISRA-BAME engages in systematic consultation with policy makers and has strong involvement in policy design with the provision of research-based evidence) | 5 | 3 | | | 1 |
| UGANDA (N=6) | | | | | |
| <u>All in agreement...</u> | | | | | |
| EPRC serves as a reliable knowledge broker and spearheads more Uganda-led research | 4 | 2 | | | |
| EPRC serves as a trusted knowledge broker by leveraging national and international relationships and partnerships | 3 | 3 | | | |
| EPRC actively involves stakeholders throughout the policy-making process | 2 | 4 | | | |
| EPRC generates quality evidence through application of cutting-edge methodologies to influence the ag, food, and nutrition security system. | 2 | 4 | | | |
| <u>Most agree, but a few disagree...</u> | | | | | |
| EPRC has well defined outreach and communication channels with a diverse set of stakeholders | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 1 |
| EPRC responds in a timely manner to topical emerging issues on agriculture and food security in the country | 2 | 3 | 1 | | |
| EPRC strategically conducts joint research with government ministries, departments and agencies such as the National Planning Authority, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Forestry | 1 | 4 | 1 | | |

Table 6. To become the country's leading economic and development policy think tank, these are the suggestions from stakeholders on things CPLs should continue to do, should discontinue, and do new things that it is not currently doing (Opinions of targeted stakeholders)

| Nigeria: PiLAF (N=7) | Senegal: BAME (N=9) | Uganda: EPRC (N=6) |
|--|--|--|
| Should continue to do... | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work on agricultural mechanization • Consult the National Agriculture Council on policy issues • Liaise with government • Active policy research in the agriculture sector • Aggressiveness of their effort in seeking data to complement their research findings • Stakeholder engagements • Enlighten policy makers on research findings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen research on the livestock economy • Work on current issues • Continue research on food systems, nutrition, and breeding • Continue communication of results • Strengthen the quality of research • Continue to do useful research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to stakeholders. Involve stakeholders • Interaction with various stakeholders |
| Should discontinue... | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from Ibadan to the Centre of Government (Abuja) where policies are made | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to all calls for tenders, partnerships, which leads to a loss of credibility • Fleeting recruitment of researchers • Lack of visibility on research projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out there – go beyond Makerere |
| New things it should do... | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at other aspects of agricultural mechanization • Regularly follow up on their submissions to government. • Have an office in Abuja to centrally serve Nigeria • Collaborate effectively with established policy researchers in the agriculture sector • Emphasize seeking data physically through direct contact more than virtual explorations • Expand their team • Disseminate research to policy makers and other stakeholders with newsletters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain young researchers • Work closely with other actors in food systems (i.e., industry, nutrition community) • Strengthen the team with senior researchers • Do scientific publication • Have a coherent scientific program • Coordinate a technical working group on the identification of research priorities and ensure good coordination between the different research and data production institutions to inform the processes of developing agricultural and agricultural policies and strategies. food and nutritional security • Research on agro-ecology • Extension of research throughout the country • Recruitment of scientific experts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate presentation of outcomes to stakeholders • Increase the visibility and research capacity • Do more outreach • Do more communication and sensitization of research • Share results with more policy makers • Broaden the people who receive their research • Do assessment of whether their research outputs are used; Understand who are the users of their research findings |

To position themselves as leading economic and development policy think tanks, stakeholders were asked to recommend what CPLs should continue to do, discontinue, and initiate new activities not currently undertaken. Table 6 outlines these recommendations for each CPL. Suggestions include **continuing effective agricultural research and policy consultations, improving research on specific economic sectors, and enhancing communication strategies**. Stakeholders recommend **discontinuing practices that could hinder credibility and call for new actions such as expanding research scope, increasing visibility, and fostering collaborations**. Stakeholder feedback emphasizes the **importance of strategic engagement with policymakers, the recruitment of experts, and the broad dissemination of research findings** to inform policy and strategy development.

Stakeholder Perceptions on the Broader Policy-making Context

To gauge the broader policy-making context in which CPLs operate, in 2021 and 2023, stakeholders were asked to evaluate the degree to which agriculture and food security policy making in their country depends on evidence and research across four dimensions—timeliness, quality, use, and capacity. In each of these dimensions, respondents assessed the degree to which evidence-informed policymaking exists on the scale of: (1) not yet present, (2) emergent, (3) expanding, (4) advanced or (5) institutionalized. In 2021, academics viewed the incorporation of evidence into policy skeptically, while government respondents were notably positive (Figure 13). Over two years, perceptions varied, showing both progress and regression across stakeholder groups and countries. Notably, NGO/donor perceptions improved universally, while government, private sector, and academic views showed mixed trends. The evolving perceptions among stakeholders about the policymaking environment underscore the intricate and nuanced nature of policy influence. This variation indicates that no policy landscape is flawless, suggesting a need for CPLs to strategically prioritize engagement across different dimensions and stakeholder groups to effectively influence policy. This strategic focus might lead to more effective engagement with government entities in certain contexts and with the private sector or NGOs/donors in others.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The stakeholder surveys, conducted in 2021 and 2023 and summarized in this report, explore the research landscape in three African countries. These surveys were motivated to better understand—a) the information sources used by policymakers; b) the institutions they turn to when they need advice for agriculture and food policies, reasons why, and where CPLs—PiLAF in Nigeria, ISRA-BAME in Senegal, and EPRC in Uganda—fit in this landscape; and c) stakeholder engagement with CPLs, their familiarity and utilization of resources and communication experiences. Additionally, these surveys also d) explore the degree to which agriculture and food security policy making at the country-level depends on evidence and research to better understand the broader policy making context.

Based on the results summarized in this report, we highlight the following key takeaways and implications.

Main Takeaways

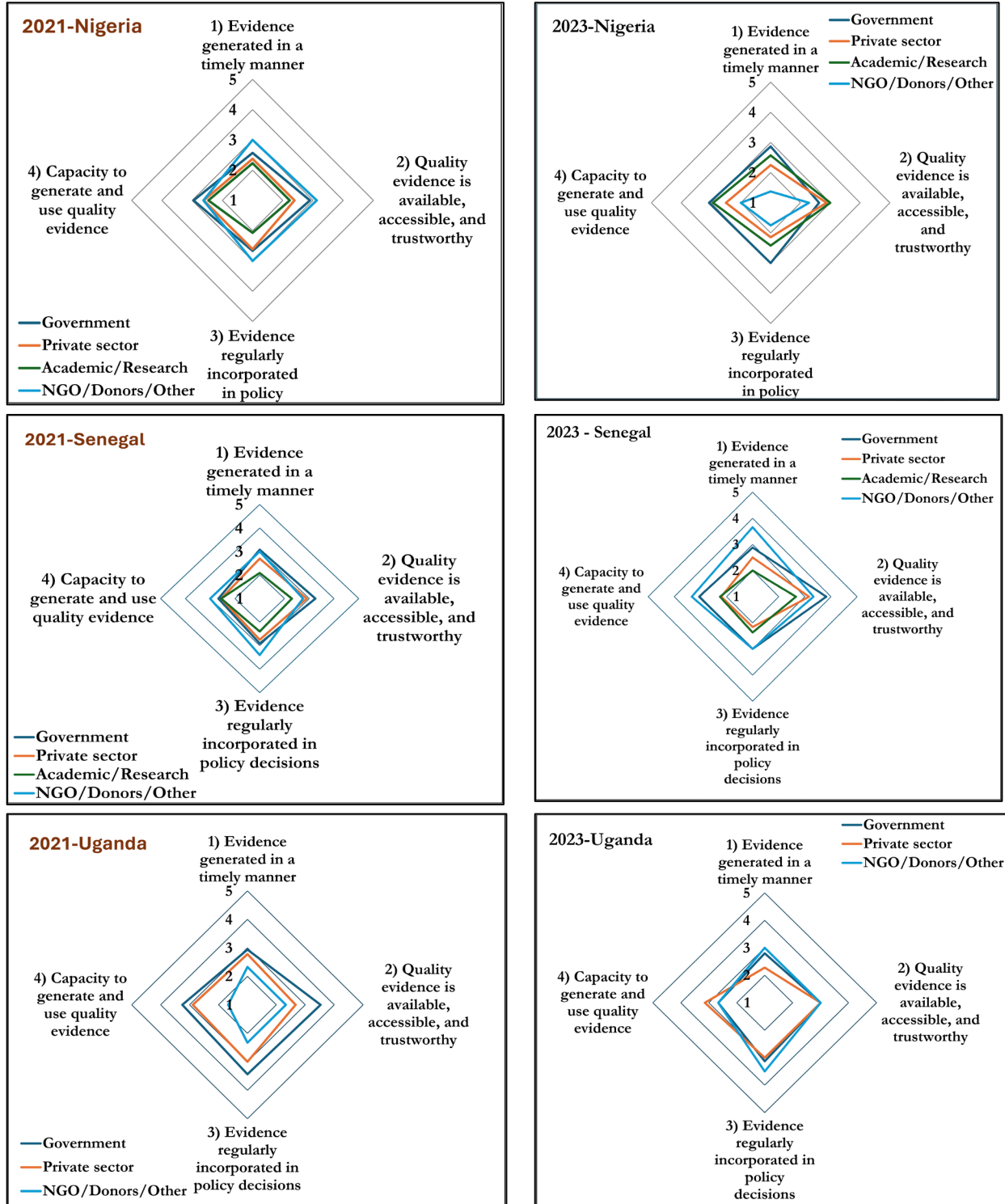
First, despite growth in social media and blogs, **institutional reports and policy briefs are still highly preferred sources of information** by both government and non-government actors. Government actors show less engagement with journal articles and social media compared to non-government actors.

Second, the **visibility and recognition of CPLs vary by country**. While long-existing institutions like **EPRC in Uganda and ISRA-BAME in Senegal have high visibility, PiLAF, a relatively new institution in Nigeria is less recognized**. However, when stakeholders are presented with a list that includes CPLs, CPLs generally rank high in all three countries.



Figure 13. Opinions of different stakeholders on 4 dimensions of the degree to which agriculture and food security policy making in the country depends on evidence and research, 2021 and 2023

This figure shows average ratings on the scale of: 1=Not yet present; 2=Emergent (i.e., efforts have recently started); 3=Expanding (i.e., efforts in this area have increased / intensified and a momentum has built); 4=Advanced (i.e., substantial progress has been achieved and country is closer to reaching this state); 5=Institutionalized (country is already doing/practicing this).





Third, the qualities that attract decisionmakers to particular institutions as sources of credible information **are multi-faceted and vary between government versus non-government actors and marginally also across countries.** Trust in analysis quality, innovative research, institution's longevity, and event hosting to share research results are among the more valued qualities cited by stakeholders across countries and both the years. In general, social media presence remained less important.

Fourth, stakeholder acknowledgment of CPLs in disseminating agriculture and food security information through newsletters, direct messages, and seminars varied significantly, with PiLAF rarely mentioned, BAME's visibility in Senegal improving notably by 2023 across all communication forms, and EPRC consistently cited as the most frequent source for such communications in both 2021 and 2023. Also, stakeholders' familiarity and utilization of CPL resources show differences by stakeholder type and country, with **targeted stakeholders generally more engaged and familiar than stakeholders from the general sample.**

Fifth, CPLs are rated positively in credibility, quality, timeliness, and influence of research, indicating progress in most areas. However, areas like communications, outreach, and research influence on policy need improvement, especially in Nigeria and Senegal.

Sixth, targeted stakeholders broadly agree on CPLs meeting most of their strategic goals, with room for improvement in policy linkages, evaluation capacity, and communication strategies. Stakeholders recommend CPLs to continue impactful research, enhance sector-specific studies, and expand engagement and visibility efforts to solidify their position as leading policy think tanks.

Finally, stakeholders' perceptions on the degree to which agriculture and food security policymaking depends on evidence and research show both progress and regression across groups and countries. This highlights the **nuanced nature of policy influence and the need for strategic engagement.**

Implications

Based on these results, we draw following implications for CPLs

1. **Tailor communication strategies:** CPLs should adapt their communication strategies to target audience preferences, focusing on institutional reports, policy briefs, and direct communications like seminars and newsletters.
2. **Enhance visibility and recognition:** To increase visibility, CPLs should emphasize innovative research on important issues, trustworthiness, and active engagement through events. They should also address the gap in social media engagement, especially in contexts where it's valued more.
3. **Focus on stakeholder-specific needs:** Different stakeholder groups value different attributes. Government stakeholders prioritize timeliness and policy relevance, while non-government stakeholders value accessibility and user-friendly resources. CPLs need to tailor their offerings to these preferences.
4. **Strengthen research influence on policy:** Despite positive ratings in several areas, CPLs need to focus on improving their influence on policy, communications, and outreach. Engaging more effectively with policymakers and stakeholders can enhance this influence.
5. **Strategic engagement and collaboration:** CPLs should strategically engage with various stakeholder groups, considering the broader policymaking context and the evolving perceptions of evidence-informed policymaking. Collaborating with government entities, private sector, NGOs, and donors in targeted manners can amplify their impact.

6. **Leverage stakeholder feedback:** CPLs should take stakeholder feedback into account to refine their strategic goals and activities. This includes continuing effective research, discontinuing less impactful practices, and initiating new actions to expand research scope and increase visibility.

In summary, the results and their implications for CPLs are multifaceted and highlight the complex interplay between information sources, stakeholder perceptions, communication strategies, and the broader policy-making context. By addressing these areas, CPLs can better position themselves as leading institutions in economic and development policy research, effectively influencing policy and contributing to agricultural development and food security in their countries.

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| ANAPRI | African Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes |
| APRNet | Agricultural Policy Research Network |
| ARC | Agricultural Research Council, Nigeria |
| BAME | Burea d'Analyses Macro-Economiques |
| CPEEL | Centre for Petroleum, Energy Economics and Law |
| CPLs | Centers for Policy Leadership |
| CRES | Consortium pour la Recherche Economique et Sociate |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| DAERD | Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development |
| DAPSA | Direction de l'Analyse, de la Prévision et des Statistiques Agricoles |
| EPRC | Economic Policy Research Center |
| IAR | Institute for Agricultural Research, Zaria |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| IITA | International Institute of Tropical Agriculture |
| IPAR | Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale |
| ISRA | Institut Sénégalais de Recherches Agricoles |
| ITA | Institut de Technologie Alimentaire |
| NAERLS | National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services |
| NARO | National Agricultural Research Organization |
| NARS | National Agricultural Research System |
| NCRI | National Cereal Research Institute |
| NGO | Non-government Organization |

- NRCRI National Roots Crops Research Institute
- PADRI Policy Analysis and Development Research Institute
- PICA Policy Influence Capacity Advancement
- PiLAF Innovation Lab for Policy Leadership in Agric. & Food Security
- PRCI Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Policy Research, Capacity, and Influence
- SECNSA Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire
- UBOS Uganda Bureau of Statistics

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