

Strengthening Think Tanks Project
*Building Resilience of Low and Middle-Income Country Research
Institutions in the Global Evidence Ecosystem*

Workshop Concept Note and Agenda

23–25 March 2026

[Glee Hotel](#), Nairobi, Kenya

About the Strengthening Think Tanks Project and Workshop Overview

Despite significant investment in research for development to address global issues, this research is not necessarily taken into account in decision-making processes. There are several contributing factors to this challenge. These include the difficulty of translating evidence into action due to differing communication styles among researchers, practitioners and policymakers, and the misalignment of priorities between academic communities and policymakers. There is also a need to produce more actionable, policy-oriented research that decision-makers can effectively use to design better policies, as well as varying levels of value and trust that policymakers place on research evidence. Additionally, there is a strong asymmetry in knowledge production between highly developed countries and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This imbalance reinforces existing inequalities and constrains the generation and uptake of locally grounded evidence tailored to specific contexts and coherent with Global South priorities and perspectives.

In this context, the **Strengthening Think Tanks Project** — led by [Southern Voice](#), the [African Economic Research Consortium](#), and the [Institute of Development Studies](#) — has been implemented alongside a Cohort of 14 think tanks in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa. The project's main goal is to increase the capacities of research institutions in the Global South to play a more influential role in developing timely, relevant and locally-grounded evidence that impacts local policymaking as much as global decisions.

Following a year of co-creation and active engagement, the **Strengthening Think Tanks Project** has developed a *Resilience and Sustainability Self-Assessment Framework*. This Framework consists of six pillars¹ that capture the core dimensions involved in strengthening organisational capacities of Global South institutions. The Framework has been turned into a Tool that the 14 Think Tank Cohort has already applied to self-assess their performance across each pillar, identify priority gaps, and define concrete actions for improvement, which will be furtherly discussed in the workshop.

¹ The six pillars are: 1) People, Leadership and Organisational Culture; 2) Sustainable Finance and Tactical Administration; 3) Learning and Innovation; 4) Research Quality and Dissemination for Impact; 5) Strategic Partnerships; 6) Institutional Communication. For more information on the Self-Assessment Framework, see Annex I.

This workshop will bring together think tanks, research institutions, development agencies, foundations and decision-makers to jointly advance the common goal of strengthening Global South leadership in the field of equity in research for development and to close the evidence-to-action gap. This will be achieved by defining concrete actions that will be translated into a roadmap and action agenda, based on strong connections and lasting relationships.

Workshop Objectives

1. **Share experiences and learnings** across the 14 Think Tank Cohort in their processes of completing the Self-Assessment Tool, discuss their approaches to engaging their staff in the assessment process, and offer insights on potential areas of opportunity to refine the Self-Assessment Tool further, as well as exploring scaling up its use beyond the institutions currently involved in the pilot.
2. **Define strategies** for addressing priority areas in advancing the resilience and sustainability of think tanks within the Cohort. These strategies will be translated into concrete actions to strengthen their capacity moving forward.
3. **Co-create** a roadmap and action agenda by defining the role that each of the stakeholders can play in advancing the development of stronger research institutions in the Global South to enhance equity in research for development and close the evidence-to-action gap.

Workshop Outcomes

1. **A refined Resilience and Sustainability Self-Assessment Framework and Tool**, incorporating the experiences and areas of improvement identified by all the think tank participants.
2. **Priority areas identified for collective action**, through the elaboration of a comprehensive pathway.
3. **A co-created roadmap and action agenda**, with specific and aligned commitments that address common goals, a long-term shared vision and priority areas agreed as a result of the sessions. This process will be enriched by insights from participant stakeholders on strategies for scaling up and disseminating the Self-Assessment Framework and Tool across the Global South, enabling more research organisations to engage with them.

Agenda

Monday, March 23rd

Internal Meeting: the 14 Think Tank Cohort members will engage in working sessions to discuss the findings from the implementation of the Resilience and Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool and identify priority areas to keep strengthening their capacities.

8:45 — 9:00	Registration at the lobby
9:00 — 9:30	Welcome and setting the scene
9:30 — 10:00	Key Insights and Findings from the Self-Assessment Tool Implementation
10:00 — 11:15	First Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing experiences, learnings & trends.• How to improve the Self-Assessment Tool in order to support greater resilience?
11:15 — 11:30	Tea and coffee break
11:30 — 13:00	Second Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we strengthen the resilience and the role of think tanks in today's rapidly changing context to maximise their impact?• How can we use the learnings from the Self-Assessment Tool to guide these efforts?• What strategic priorities — based on the trends of the Self-Assessment Tool — we must address to position ourselves for the role we aspire to play and the impact we want to have?
13:00 — 14:00	Lunch
14:00 — 14:20	Official Photo of the Think Tank Cohort
14:20 — 16:00	Addressing Priority Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working session 1: based on the discussion held during the first half of the day, we will collectively discuss actions to address the priority areas defined.
16:00 — 16:20	Afternoon tea and coffee.
16:20 — 17:40	Addressing Priority Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working session 2: concluding the definition of priority areas.
17:40 — 18:10	Conclusions of the day and next steps

Tuesday, March 24th

During the workshop, stakeholders will join the discussions for knowledge sharing about the **Strengthening Think Tanks Project and the Findings of the Self Assessment Tool**. Together with the Think Tank Cohort, we will collectively develop a roadmap and action agenda.

8:45 — 9:00	Registration at the lobby
09:00 — 9:30	Arrival and coffee
9:30 — 10:00	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the workshop. • Workshop Methodology.
10:00 — 11:30	Presentation of the Resilience and Sustainability Self Assessment Framework and Tool, and Findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and findings of the Self Assessment Framework and Tool. • The think tanks' role and shared priorities: What has the use of the Self-Assessment Tool revealed about these? • Q & A.
11:30 — 12:00	Tea and coffee break
12:00 — 13:00	Building the roadmap to strengthen think tanks' capacities. Step 1 of the forcefield analysis. The role of think tanks in the evidence ecosystem: Perspectives from the stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on the context, challenges and opportunities for think tanks, funders, development agencies, and the roles they play today in the evidence ecosystem.
13:00 — 14:00	Lunch
14:00 — 14:15	Official Photo of the Workshop
14:15 — 15:50	Building the roadmap to strengthen think tanks' capacities. Step 2 of the forcefield analysis: Envisioning the Future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-create a shared vision about how to transform the evidence ecosystem and the role that think tanks play in this, considering the findings of the Self-Assessment Tool. • Identify approaches for scaling up the Self-Assessment Tool.
15:50 — 16:10	Afternoon tea and coffee
16:10 — 16:40	Reflections and conclusions of the day
18:30 — 20:00	Group Dinner

Wednesday, March 25th

09:00 — 9:30	Arrival and coffee
9:30 — 9:45	Recap and objectives of the day
9:45 — 11:15	Building a roadmap to strengthen think tanks' capacities. Step 3 of the forcefield analysis: Designing an action agenda to make the future a reality. Part 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identifying the actions and enablers needed to achieve a shared vision, as well as the constraining factors that need to be overcome.
11:15 — 11:30	Tea and coffee break
11:30 — 13:00	Building a roadmap Step 3 of the forcefield analysis: Designing an action agenda to make the future a reality. Part 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identifying implementation strategies and potential alliances.
13:00 — 14:00	Lunch
14:00 — 14:45	<i>Energising Activity</i>
14:45 — 15:45	Mobilising for Change: Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">Presenting the final roadmap and action agenda.Sharing the next steps from the perspectives of the diverse stakeholders.Identifying spaces for reaching influence and impact to position the Self-Assessment Tool and the roadmap.
15:45 — 16:00	Tea and coffee break
16:00 — 17:00	Conclusion and final reflections
17:30 — 18:30	Closing toast and live music