



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

Think Tanks and Successful Policy Engagement: What Works?

Lessons from ACBF's Experience

- I. Environment and nature of policy engagement business
- II. ACBF's models for supporting Think Tanks
- III. Achievement & challenges of supported Think Tanks
- IV. Lessons learned
- V. Synergies and value for money
- VI. New modalities for working with TTs

By
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A FOUNDATION CREATED 20 YEARS AGO TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE
INDIGENOUS CAPACITY IN AFRICA IN RESPONSE TO THE SEVERITY OF
AFRICA'S CAPACITY PROBLEM AND THE CHALLENGE TO INVEST IN
INDIGENOUS HUMAN CAPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Name: The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

Headquarters: Harare, Zimbabwe

Type: Independent International Organization

Date of Establishment: February 9, 1991

Founding Institutions: African governments, 3 sponsoring institutions
(African Development Bank, World Bank, United Nations Development
Programme), and bilateral donors

THE FOUNDATION IN BRIEF

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

- **39 African members:** Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- **10 non-African members:** Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
- **4 institutional members** (African Development Bank, World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme) and the International Monetary Fund

I. Environment & nature of policy engagement business

Demand for policy analysis

- Policies for economic recovery and to build financial resilience
- Policies to generate employment, particularly for youth
- Policies to attract local private capital flows, particularly infrastructure finance
- Trade finance policies in the face of decline in demand for exports
- Agricultural policy to manage food price shocks & pressure from falling commodity prices for exports
- Policies of domestic finance, managing local currency, hedging, dealing with remittances and engaging the Diaspora

Nature of policy engagement

- Complexity and change: seeking policies for long-term shifts in behavior and skills, attitudes and motivations, processes and practices, rules and norms both formal and informal
- Interactions: adjustments in policy design and implementation to accommodate how people interact with each other, technology and change
- Context: depends on starting points and is impacted by history and aspirations and expectations, so it is highly local but dependent on long-distance effects

Yet 17 countries have zero to 3 TTs; 18 countries have 4-11 TTs (35 countries in Africa have on average less than 4 TTs each). Only a select few countries have twelve or more TTs. ACBF supports 39 TTs in 25 countries

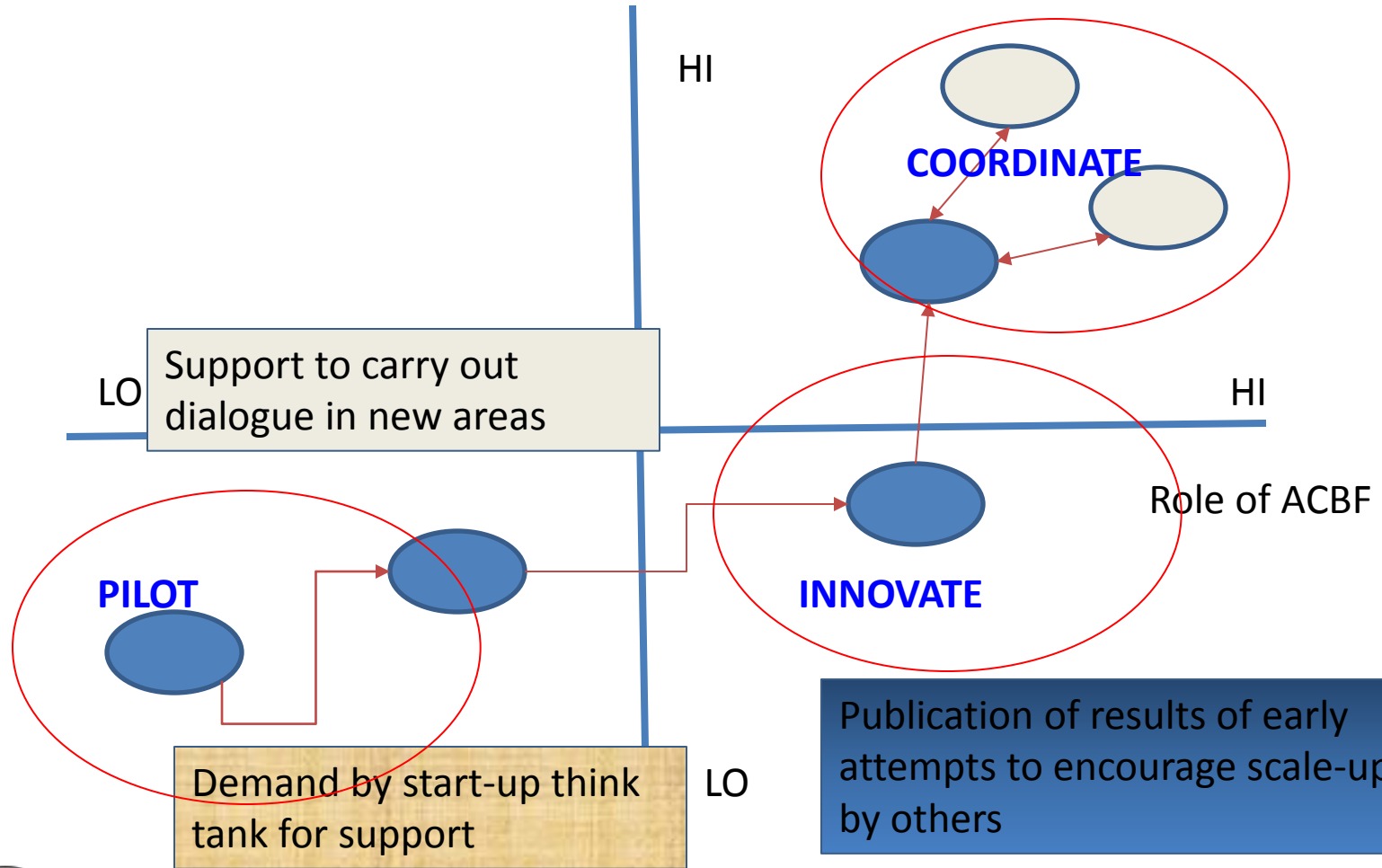


II. ACBF Models: Startup Capital at Strategic Entry Point

Example: MINDS

Crowding-in other supporters at country and international level, including private sector

Role of other Partners



II. ACBF Models: Networking to Scale

Role of other Partners

Organizational: networking of African Policy Institutes Into a Forum

Individual: using staff of TTs in External Reference Groups and in Strategic Studies Groups

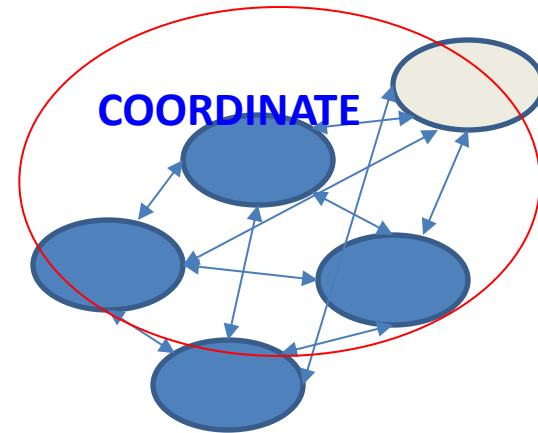
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Country: supporting country level knowledge networks

Regional: Networking TTs at the Regional Economic Community level

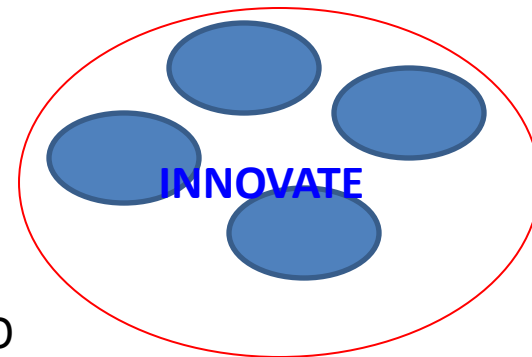
Institutional: Engaging TTs on large-scale change through the ACI

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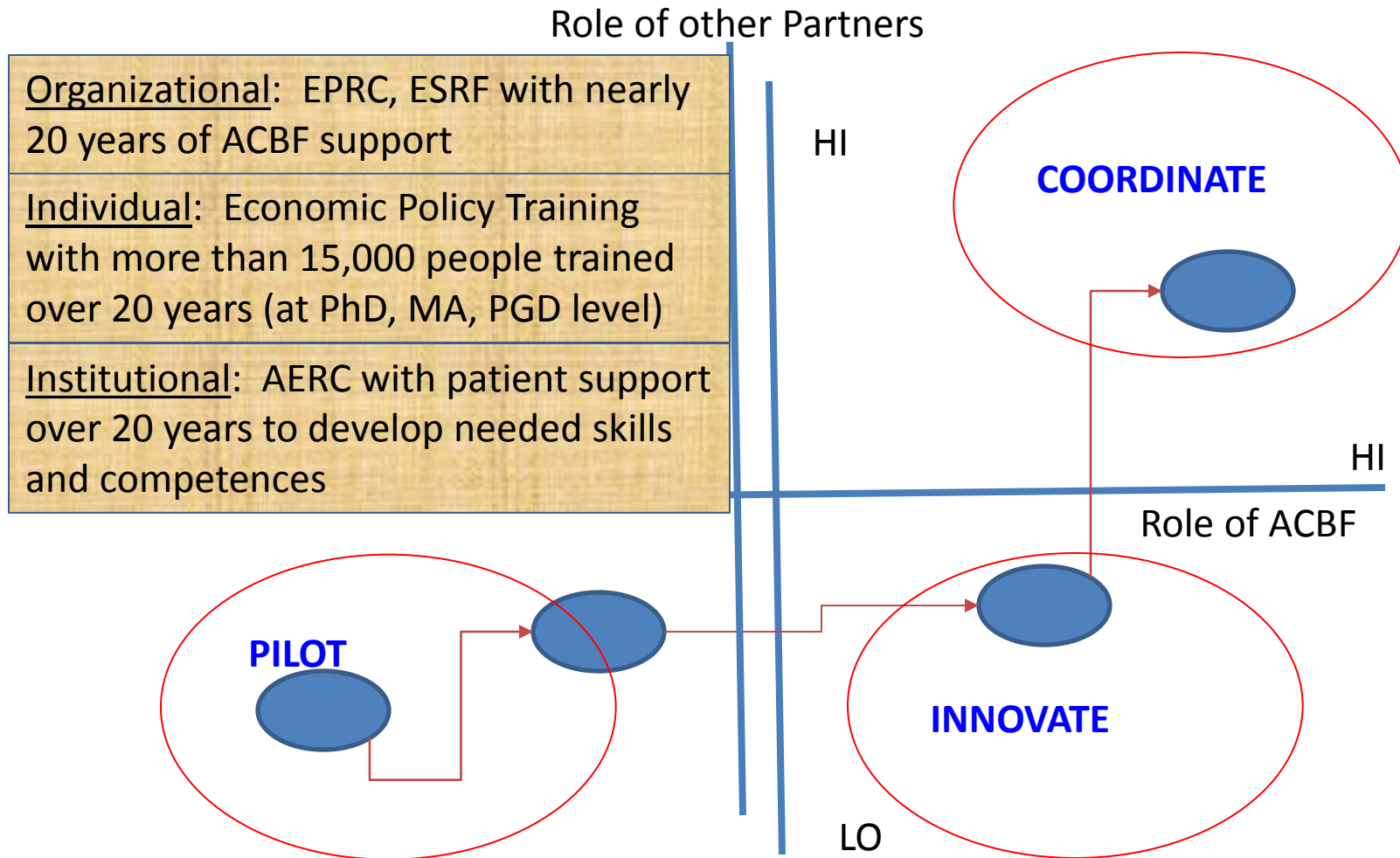
Role of ACBF



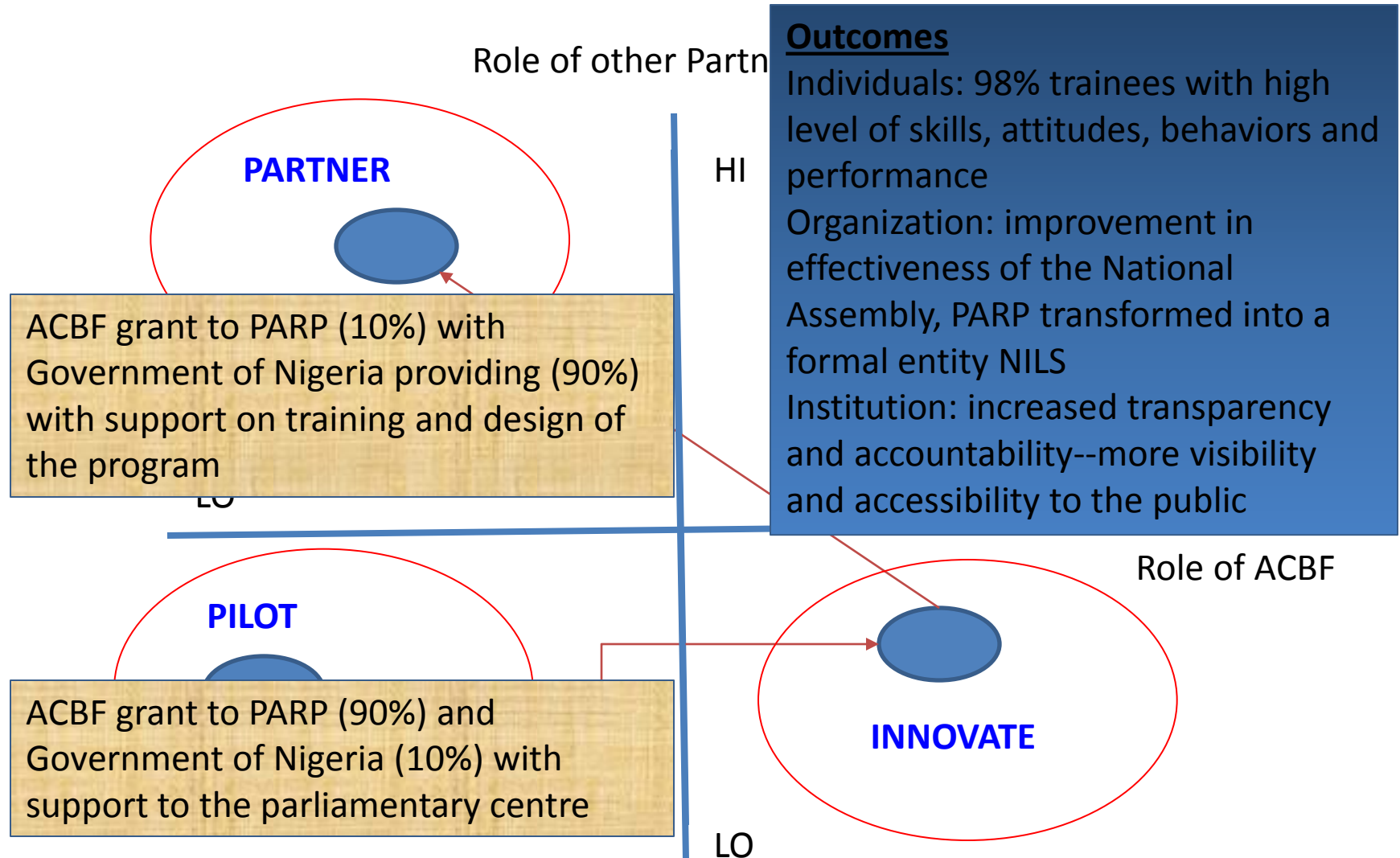
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II. ACBF Models: Patient Capital for Success



II. ACBF Models: Support Dynamic Oversight Entities



II. ACBF Models: Partnerships for Learning & Analysis

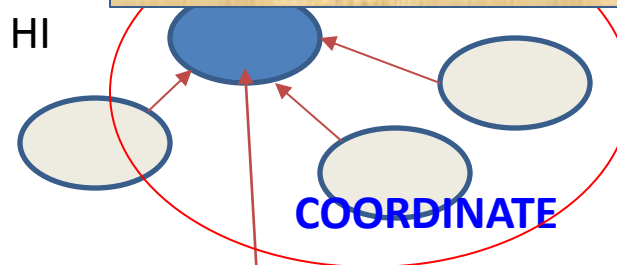
Role of other Partners

Other donors finance EDRI in 2009:
UNDP, IFPRI, Japan, Gotenburg
University, Think Tank Initiative

Outcomes

Individuals: 29 staff trained at MA and PhD level to work for the TT Organization: 97% retention rate of qualified staff; data analysis capability, policy inputs
Institution: sustained policy analysis with impact

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Role of ACBF

PILOT

ACBF grant to EDRI in 2001

INNOVATE

LO



III. ACBF Models: What is a successful Think Tank?

Factors of success

Organizational:

- Ability to meet objectives and demands of stakeholders (outputs)?
- Technical (academic) quality of the research?
- Ability to attract and retain quality staff?
- Visibility and reputation?

Institutional:

- Effective use of the research for policy making (advocacy, legislative changes, publications, teaching, other research)?
- Access to influencers in policy, academia, media
- New knowledge generation, creative ideas, innovation
- Networking and inclusion with academic and policymaking communities, civil society, private sector

Societal:

- positive changes resulting from the efforts of the TT in implementation of the policies derived from the research?
- space allocated to policy analysis as a way of contributing to monitoring of the quality of and improving existing policies?
- Financial sustainability (government support, endowment, fees, donations, earned income)?

Citation of success

Overall Global Excellence:

- AERC ranked in top 30 worldwide and Economic Policy; AERC and CODESRIA in top 30 international development worldwide

Overall Regional Excellence:

- 17 ACBF supported ranked in top 50 in Africa;

Thematic Excellence:

- AERC in top 30 in economic policy
- FANRPAN in S&T

Special achievements:

- OSSREA in innovative policy and greatest impact
- CODESRIA in social media
- EPRC and EDRI best university affiliated
- EDRI best government affiliated

Need to do more on visibility and communication; attracting and retaining staff; better links with universities; use of social media, and financial sustainability

Source: Rankings from University of Pennsylvania on the Global Think Tanks, 2011 and 2012 and own analysis



III. ACBF Models: Efforts and lessons for supporting TTs

Lessons for Founders & Funders

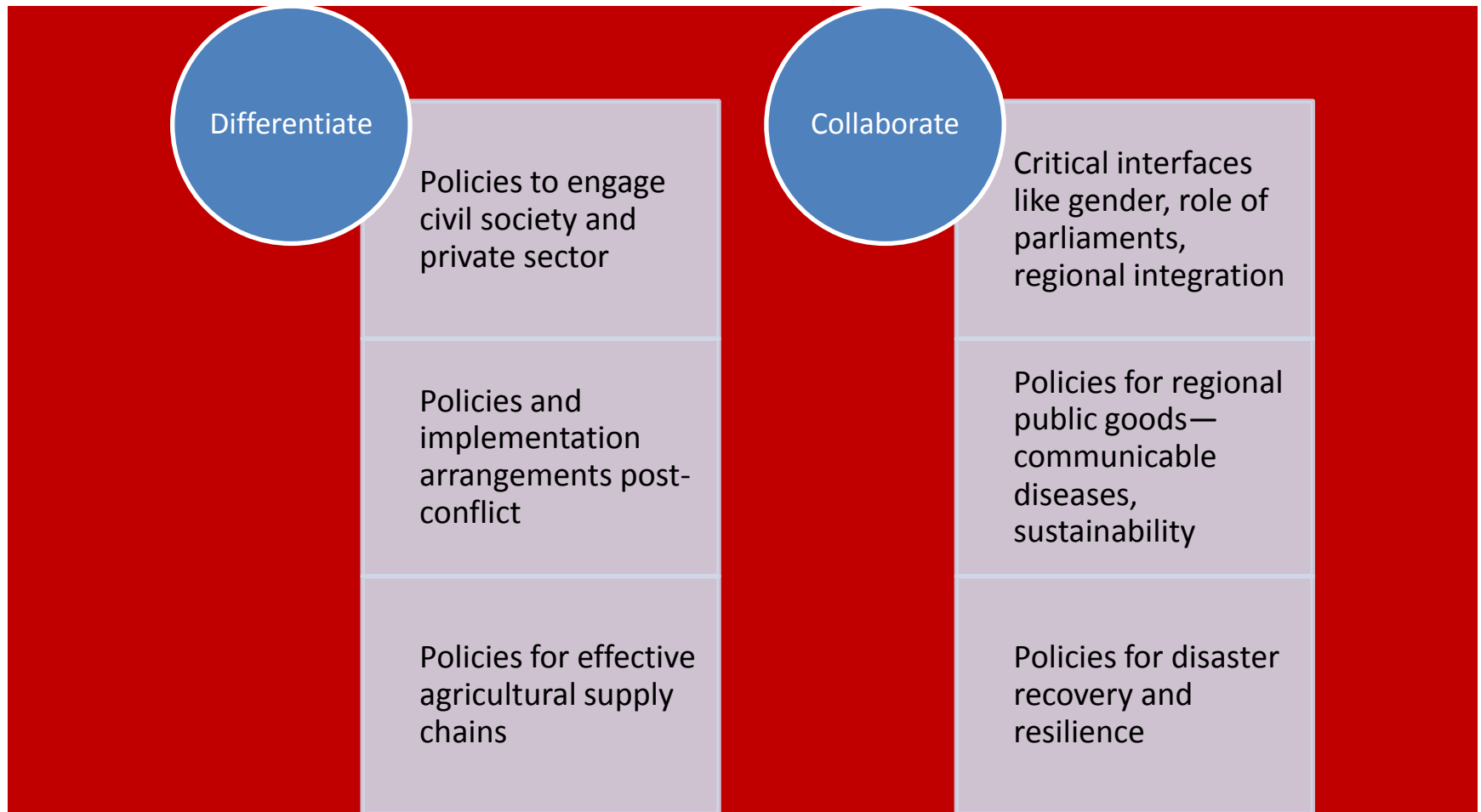
Other Efforts

- Attracting private sector financing—CocaCola and AMICAAL in Swaziland
- Linking TTs to other networks (AAU)
- Working in partnership with top rated TTs globally (4 out of 30)
- PIC Forum to learn and share
- Use of TTs in own work (ACI)

- Concentration: only two SSA TTs made it into top 50 worldwide ranking, which is a threat to ownership of the policy design and command of policy implementation
- Autonomy: independence from budgetary and political cycles allows TTs to stretch beyond issues of the moment
- Patience: sustained support and attention to issues of capacity is key, it allows innovation and impact
- Local knowledge: solutions organically grown from local environment requires first rate indigenous research, analysis and design, and linking TTs to universities
- Space for change: processes that facilitate learning, innovation lead to original solutions—role for social media
- On the job learning: peers learning from each other in real practical settings

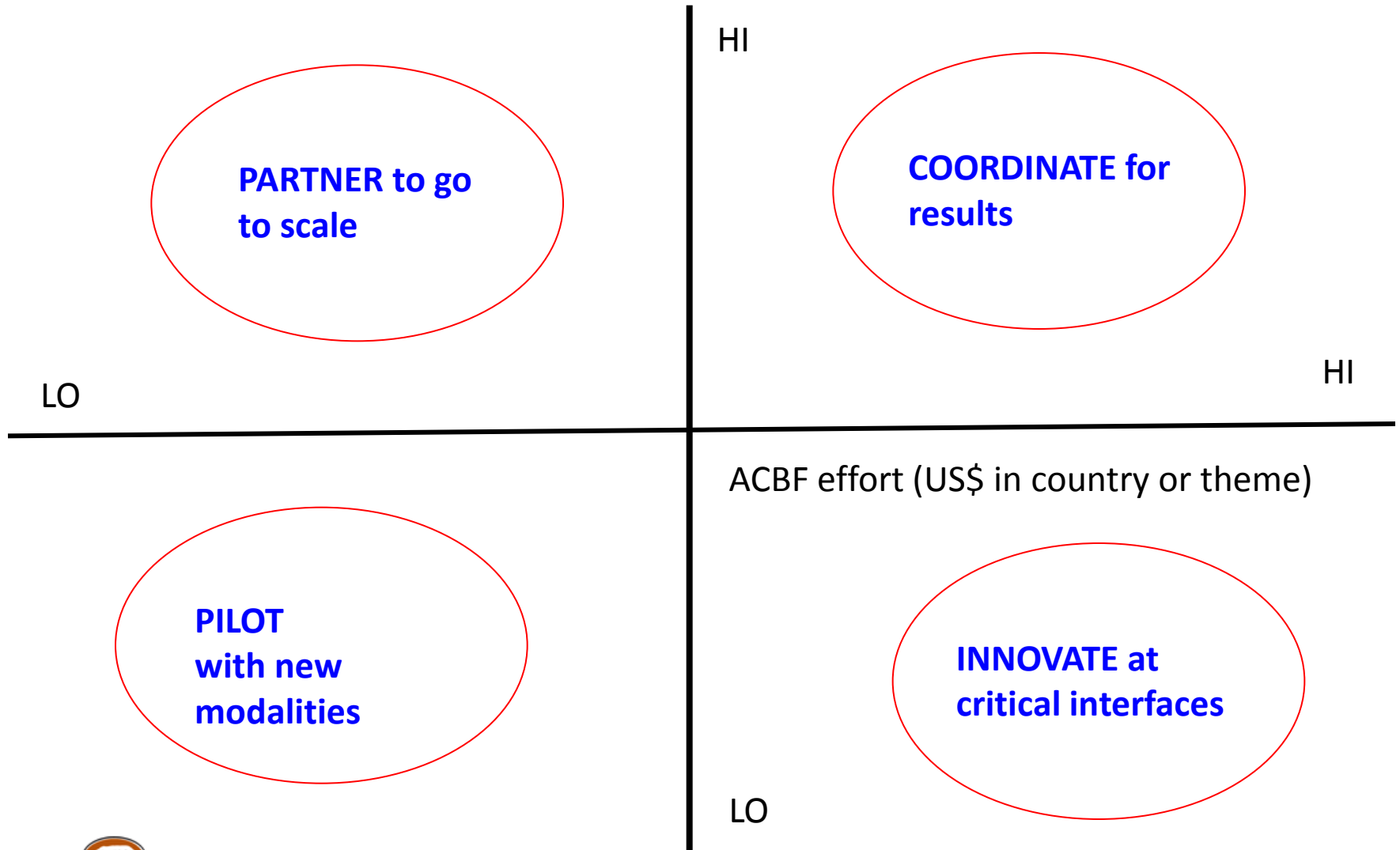


IV. ACBF lessons: Choices for Think Tanks



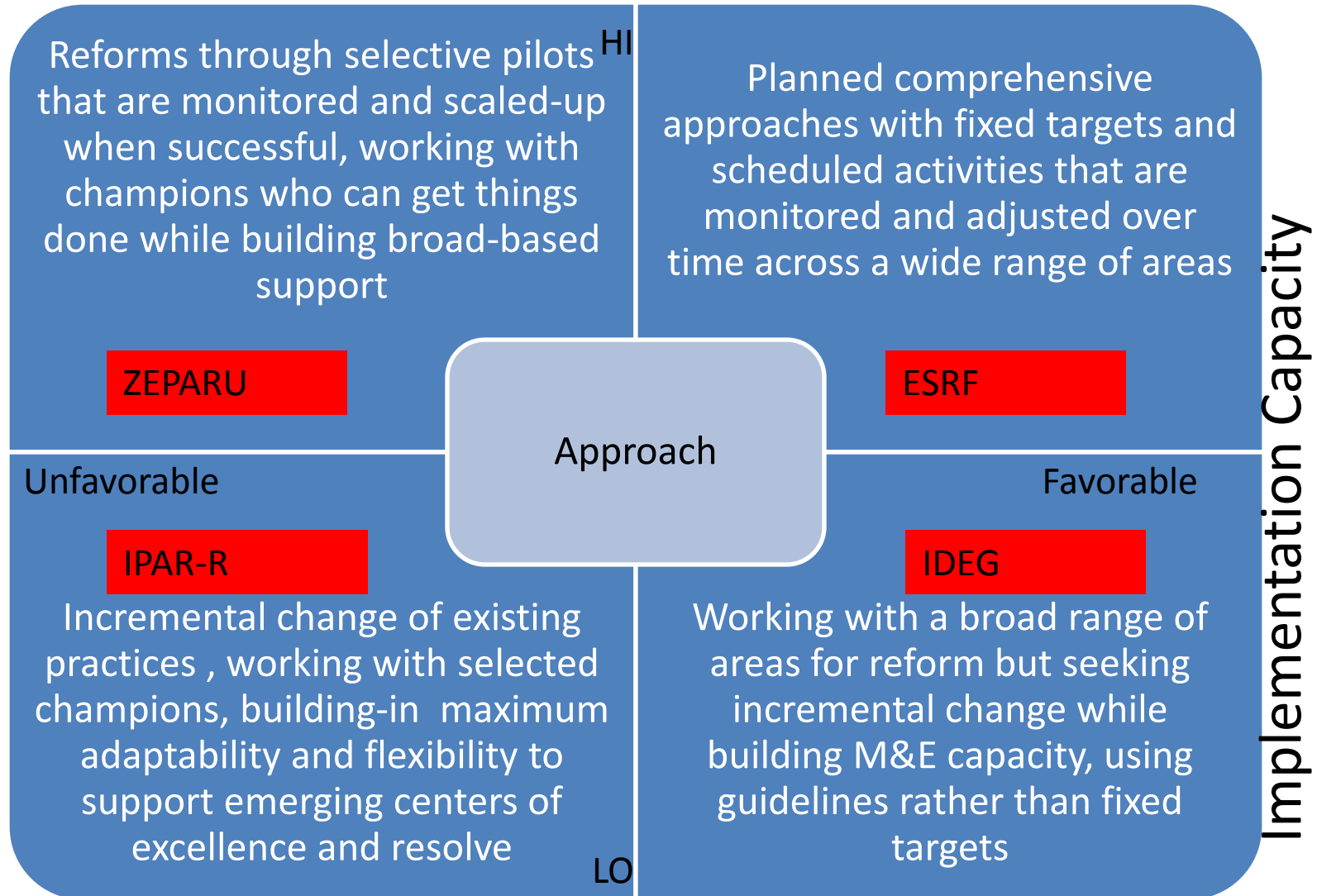
IV. ACBF lessons: Where to support?

Competition or contestability (share of actors in the country or theme (%))

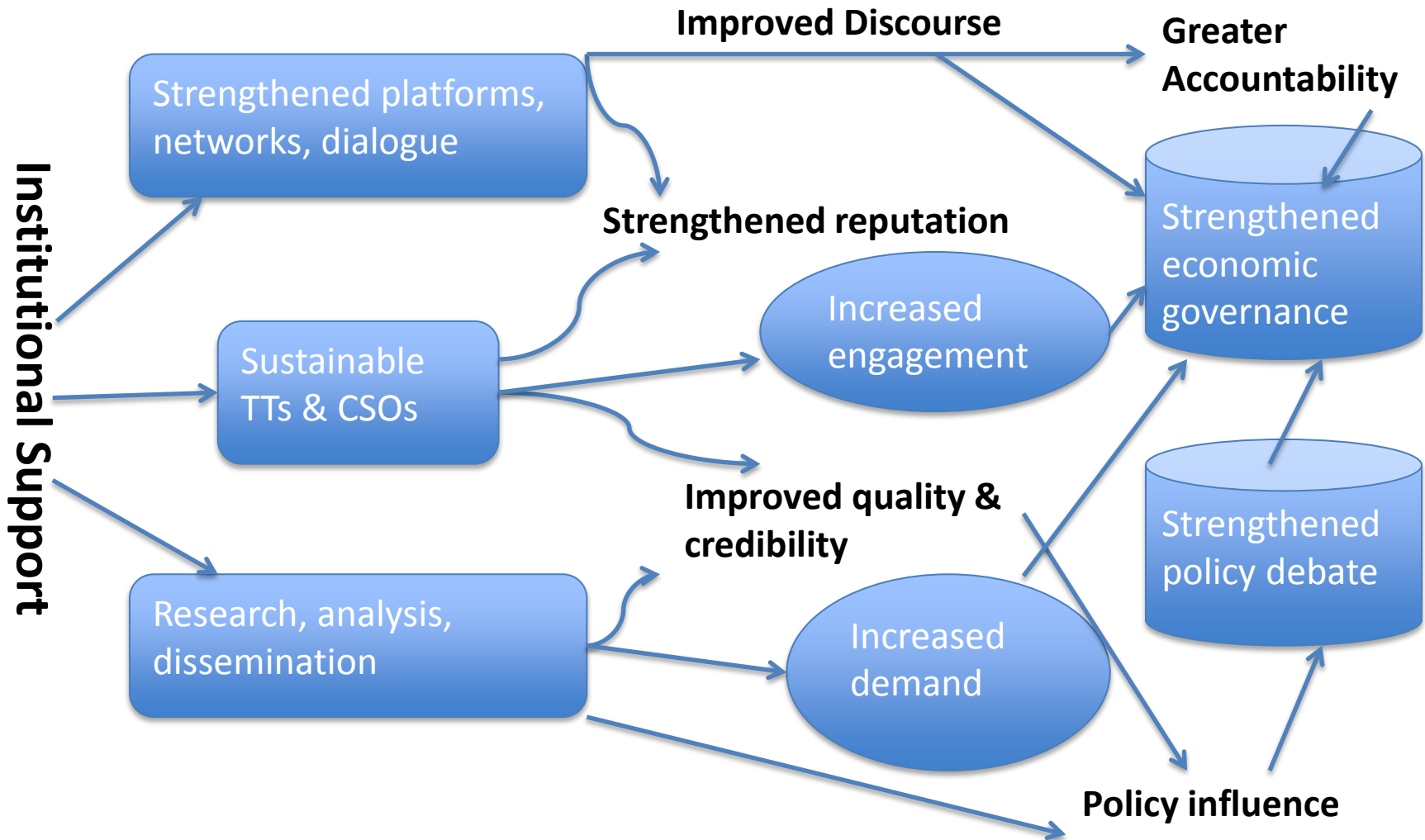


IV. ACBF lessons: What to support?

Political Environment



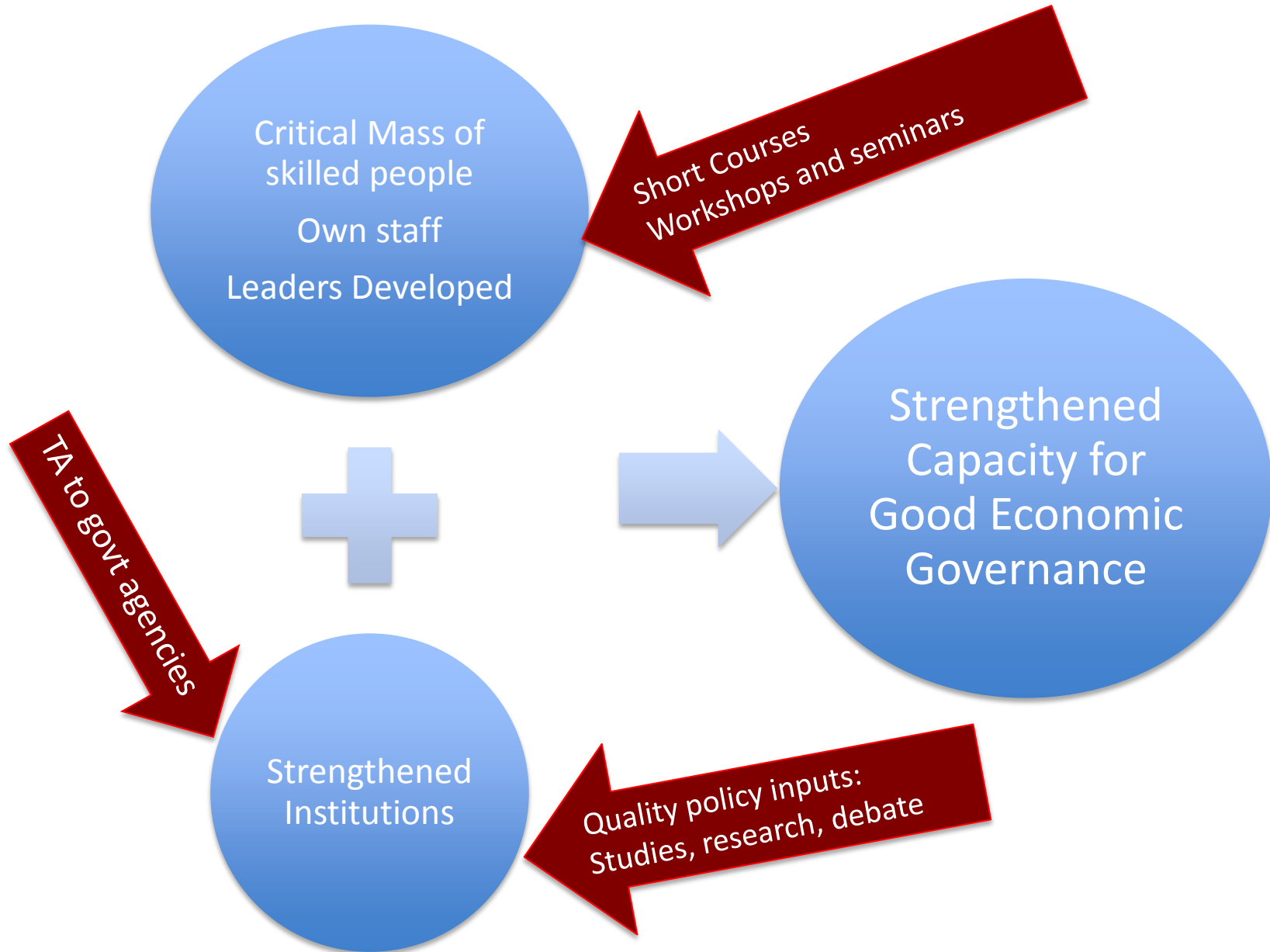
V. Synergies and Value for Money



Source: Independent Evaluation of SMTP II



V. Synergies and Value for Money: TT Change Model



V. Synergies and Value for Money: Demonstrated Impact of TTs

Full service TT

Focus on Institutional Strengthening

Varied contribution to Government vs Others

TT	Staff Strength	Institutions Strengthened	TA to Govt	Leaders trained	Policy Studies	% Govt Commissioned	Courses, workshops, seminars
CAPOD	12	40	3	35	13	77%	23
IDEC	20	3	1	8	20	10%	5
CAMERCAP II	7	43	0	0	5	100%	45
EEA/EEPRI	36	25	3	0	10	10%	20
KIPPRA	54	7	24	577	81	38%	83
CERCAP II	17	38	32	174	10	70%	21
CMAP II	13	0	0	0	11	27%	6
CAPED	12	10	6	77	10	70%	2
CEPOD II	22	18	20	10	13	85%	14
EPRC	5	8	5	85	40	68%	10

TA to support skills gaps in Government

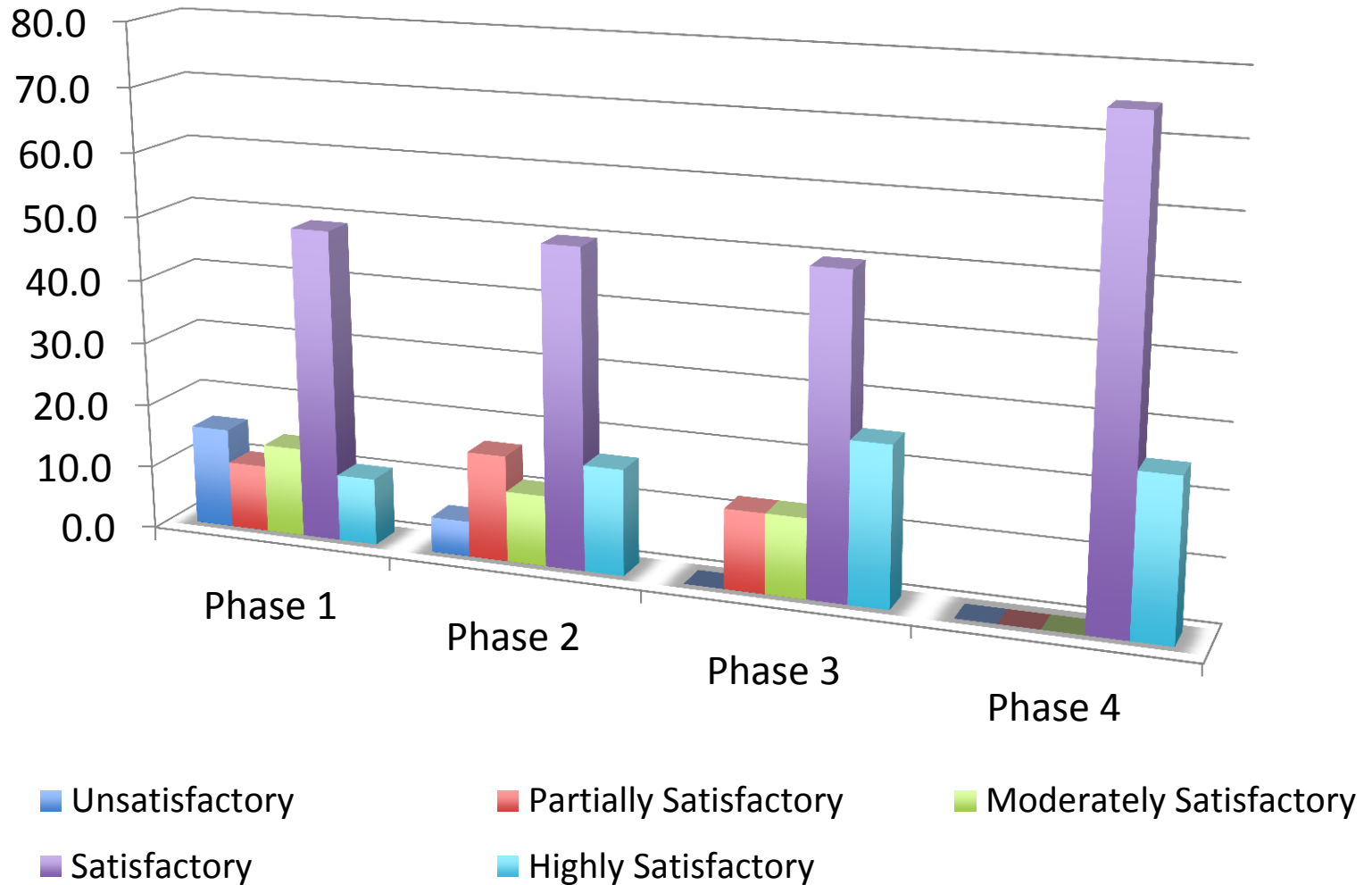
Leadership with skills and access to ideas

Regular skills updates

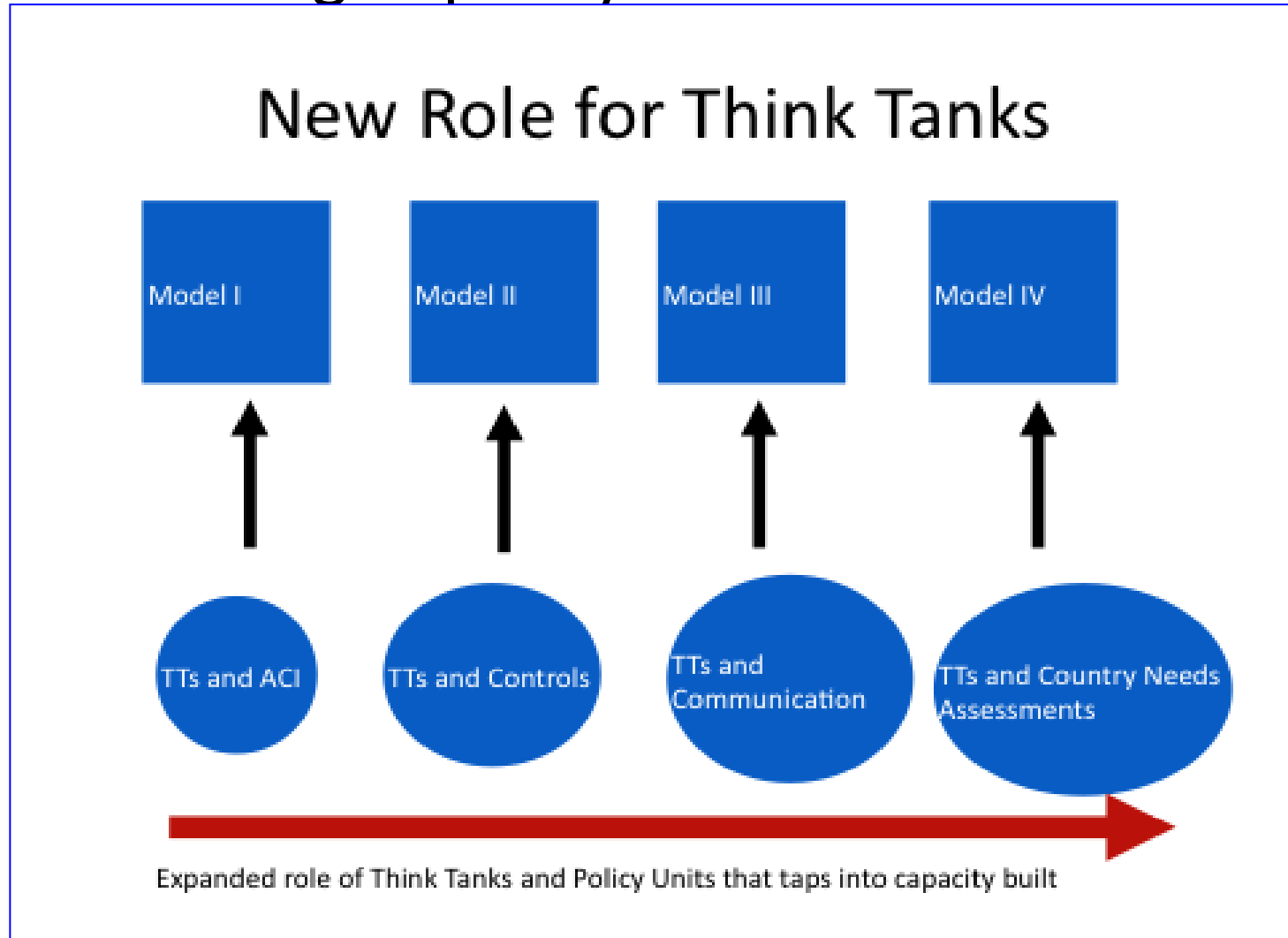
V. Synergies and Value for Money: Overall Achievements by Think Tanks According to ACI 2013

Indicator	Total	Average per Think Tank
Total number of staff	316	15
Number of institutions strengthened	256	12
Number of technical assistance to government agencies	110	5
Number of leaders trained	973	45
Number of policy studies, research completed	321	15
Number of policy studies, research commissioned by Government	152	7
Number of publications disseminated	206	10
Number of short courses organized	92	5
Number of workshops/seminars organized	202	10

VI. New Modalities for Working with TTs: Long-Term Support Lowers Risk



VI. New Modalities for Working With TTs: Utilizing Capacity that has been Built



New Roles for Think Tanks: Utilizing Capacity that has been Built

- From macroeconomic policy analysis to sectoral policy analysis
- From national policy support to regional and continental policy support
- Support to the creation of policy analysis capacity in fragile states
- Data collection and analysis for the CPIA

