CASS, Center for Advanced Social Science
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Mission Statement

CASS, Center for Advanced Social Science is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit think tank concerned with improving the scientific base of management and public policy in order to advance the development of Africa. CASS came into existence in January 1992 following the end of a 6-month planning period.

The crisis of underdevelopment in Africa is so acute that it has become life-threatening for millions of Africans and a formidable barrier to the self-fulfillment of still many more. Africa lags so far behind, it is barely relevant in the international market-place and it is now in danger of delinking entirely. Prospects of becoming a going concern in the international system are so poor that defeatism has now compounded the problems of development in a vicious circle of regression. There is, therefore, an urgent need for deep, imaginative thinking to find more effective ways to proceed.

CASS exists to promote this objective by:

(a) conducting research of the highest quality on issues of development;

(b) inculcating necessary scientific and technical skills to critical groups such as policy makers, researchers and managers;

(c) providing advisory services to governments and private organizations;

(d) disseminating knowledge through seminars, symposia, conferences, briefings, workshops and the mass media.

Specifically, the Centre promotes fundamental and applied research on development problems in Africa. It endeavors to produce knowledge by solving practical problems.

CASS supports the production of knowledge in Africa in order to ensure the availability of knowledge, which addresses Africa’s capacity to use received knowledge effectively. At the same time, it strongly supports applied research because it cannot otherwise fulfill in a practical way, its mission of being an engine of progress in Africa.

The Centre places the highest premium on effectiveness in the pursuit of its mission. It tries to maximize effectiveness by adopting an integrated approach. Its programs, projects and activities are interrelated, mutually reinforcing and articulated to produce cumulative effects.
The research activities of CASS fall into three categories: public policy, governance and democratization, and the international system. The close relation of public policy on the one hand and governance and democratization on the other, especially in the African context is now generally recognized. This is reflected in the emerging consensus that the African crisis is as political as it is economic, that it cannot be contained in the absence of profound political renewal in the form of democratization.

These two concerns are, in turn, closely tied to the dynamics of the international system. The susceptibility of Africa to the pressures of the international system continues to increase as Africa weakens under the pressure of economic crisis. Now more than ever, the economic and political prospects of Africa depend on her ability to maneuver deftly in an infinitely more complex and difficult international system. The possibility of development and political stability would appear to depend as much on external factors as on internal factors.

Each of the three areas of research and research and activity constitutes a program area. This separation is without prejudice to the integrated approach. Indeed it is a means of realizing it. Just as all the major program areas are related, so are the projects and activities of each program flow from a particular concern, a clearly stated problematique. Each project, each activity, is selected as an aspect of a probable solution to the problematique, a criterion of selection which ensures their relatedness.

**CASS PROGRAMS**

A. **Program on Public Policy**

The problematique which this program addresses is how the conception, making and implementation of public policy might be improved to maximize development, peace, and security in Africa. The projects and activities are classified into two broad areas:

i. **Public Policy Enhancement**

The broad concerns of work in this area include issues of conception, selection, policy-making and implementation, the information and knowledge base of policy, policy analysis, scientific skills and methodologies for public policy-making, implementation and monitoring.

ii. **Production, Reproduction and Environment**

Studies of systems and techniques of material production in industry, commerce and agriculture, in the formal and informal sectors with particular reference to their developmental and environmental import. Studies of population, their growth rate, shifts and spatial distribution and their implication for development and the ecological system. Studies of policy options for maximizing efficiency in the production, distribution and use of energy, the development of technology and its interface with productivity and environmental protection.
B. **Program on Governance and Democratization**

This program will address the constraints on governance performance and democratization. How and what can be done to facilitate social solidarity and effective realization of common purpose including individual and group rights security and development and the reduction of conflict, and strengthening of conflict resolution mechanisms? These concerns are researched under three broad themes:

i. **Studies of administrative, governmental and political structures and processes with particular reference to their formative influences and dynamics and their implications for accountability, participation, the consolidation of the civic culture and democratic stability.**

ii. **Studies in democratization.** These studies try to deepen understanding of the nature, historical origin and the impetus to democratization in Africa. Special attention will be paid to the enabling environment of democracy, particularly:

(a) the character and development of Civil Society;

(b) culture;

(c) economic conditions;

(d) conflict resolution strategies;

(e) the international system.

C. **Program on the International System**

This program focuses mainly on the following problematique:

§ **What are the salient features and dynamics of the contemporary international system?**

§ **What are their implications for peace, security and sustainable development in Africa?**

§ **How might their negative impact on Africa be minimized and their positive effects maximized and harnessed?**

Studies of the international system are conducted under two broad categories:

i. **The Changing International System**
This category of studies examine the dynamics for the evolving world order. In particular they attempt to define what the salient changes are, where their impetus comes from, and what they signify.

Changes are studied comprehensively with special interests being paid to:

(a) geographical and strategic changes

(b) developments in Science and Technology especially as they affect production and the balance of economic and military power.

(c) international coalitions, regional blocks, economic unions and development agencies.

(d) the Political Economy of World Commerce, Finance and Industry.

ii. The Impact of International System on Africa

Studies of how specific changes in the international system impact on Africa with particular reference to their effects on Africa’s access to market technology and investment, their implications for Africa’s strategic significance as well as her peace and security.

Studies of African responses do the pressures of the international system and how to increase their effectiveness, including forms of political, military and economic cooperation and integration, stability and security in the light of domestic and external constraints and opportunities.

1. Organization and Utilization of Research

The Centre seeks suitable individuals and sets up research consortia or networks to work on aspects of its research program. The consortia and networks may be local, national or international. Researchers are usually signed on for specific research projects and on a part-time basis.

There is a special category of researchers known as fellows. They are sponsored by CASS to undertake research for a limited period on a full-time basis. Individuals, research teams or networks may also apply to CASS for funding of research projects relevant to the research program of CASS.

The Centre is highly interested in the utilization of its research output as a means of fulfilling its mission.

The research output of CASS is usually published as books, monographs, scientific papers in journals, occasional papers, position paper, etc. As much as possible, popular
versions of important aspects of CASS research are carried in the print and electronic media.

The research findings of CASS are the subject of public lectures, seminars, symposia, special briefings for officials and interest groups and short training programs.

2. **Education and Training**

   This function is carried out through conferences, symposia, seminars, lectures, short training courses, briefings. These are used to disseminate research findings, to inculcate skills, encourage interaction between researchers and policy-makers and to explore salient problems and probable solutions.

3. **Advisory Services**

   CASS constitutes and makes available small consortia of specialist to African governments and private organizations who need help for solving particular problems.