

ATAF / ICTD Research methods training and dissemination workshop

Wednesday 10 – 12 May 2017

Venue (To Be Confirmed)

Research Methods Training and Dissemination workshop

The African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) and the International Centre for Tax and Development (ICTD) are organising the second edition of the Research Methods Training and Dissemination workshop for researchers involved in the area of taxation. This workshop is the key capacity building activity of the African Tax Research Network (ATRN) taking place every year after the ATRN annual Congress. This year, there will be offered two Research Methods Training and Dissemination workshops in two languages (English and French) **from 10 – 12 May 2017 (venue to be confirmed)**. The courses aim at strengthening the research capacity of researchers who are already working in the area of taxation and development but who feel their work could be improved with more rigorous and internationally accepted methods. The training aims at providing an opportunity to reflect on the researchers' work in a critical way; rather than being a theoretical introduction to entirely new methods. This will ensure a "hands on" learning where researchers will think about their own work more rigorously and will receive practical feedback on how to improve their research. Furthermore, a dissemination and publication session is intended to provide useful tips and tools to publish the research papers as academic peer-reviewed articles and to communicate the key findings to broader policy audiences.

Dates	Wednesday 10 – Friday 12 May 2017
Places	20 people (10 English and 10 French)
Fee	Applicants selected through a competitive process will be fully funded
Application deadline	20 March 2017
Languages	The course will be offered in two languages: English and French. Participants should be proficient in at least one of the two languages and be able to follow and take active part in course discussions in the respective languages.
Location	To be Confirmed
Entry Requirements	The candidate must submit a research paper in progress (this can be a first draft or a detailed proposal). Participants are encouraged to submit their final papers to the double-blind review process to be presented in September at the 2017 ATRN Annual Congress and will be required to submit them for consideration to the ATRN Working Paper Series and Policy Briefs.
Selection Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Papers with relevant topics to African Tax Administrations/African Tax Policies 2. Gender sensitivity 3. Junior/mid-career researchers (PhD/Masters students) 4. African researchers (based in Africa) 5. Regional symmetry

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. How well the paper is generally written 7. Whether the main message and the research goals of the study are clear/relevant/important/innovative etc. 8. The usage of quantitative or qualitative methods that have a good chance to be published AFTER participating in the research methods training
Target Audience	This course targets junior to mid-career researchers who are working on a paper in the area of taxation. Interested researchers will also be part of the ATRN Network and some of them would have already presented a first draft of their paper at the ATRN congress. Researchers that are currently not part of the ATRN Network are also welcome, but they must apply to the course by submitting a research paper in progress along with the application form.
Trainers	The trainers for this course are internationally recognised experts in the field of research in taxation, with a mix of a proven-track research and teaching records as well as extended practical experience in developing countries.
Application and logistics	Participants will need to apply by filling in the online application form, selected participants will be fully funded (travel, accommodation, subsistence expenses) by ATAF and ICTD.

Course Content

Sessions & Topics	Main Issues Covered
Session 1 Quantitative methods	This will include basic tools and principles for data analysis, such as research design, sampling, the effective use of descriptive statistics, identification, methods to establish causality.
Session 2 Qualitative methods	This component would focus on research design, interviews, focus groups, and qualitative data collection in the field.
Session 3 Dissemination and publication	This session aims at providing useful tips and tools to publish the research papers as academic articles and to communicate the key findings to broader audiences.

Qualitative methods

This seminar seeks to support participants in creating and critiquing qualitative research designs and methods, with participants invited to explore the techniques, uses, strengths, and limitations of these methods. After briefly reviewing elements of concept formation and research design, the session will cover three key topics.

First, we will discuss interview and field research techniques, including techniques for semi-structured, in-depth, expert, and elite interviews, as well as focus group discussions. Attention will be given to interpreting testimonies for truth telling and evasion. Second, participant observation will be explored as a method for examining and interpreting power dynamics and group relations. Third, we will discuss methods and best practices of archival research and interpretive text and content analysis.

After reviewing these concrete skills, we will discuss philosophy of science and research ethics issues relevant to qualitative research, with a particular focus on issues that may arise in the realm of research on taxation. Attendees will receive constructive feedback on their own papers and qualitative research designs, with illustrations provided through exemplar studies that employ qualitative methods in the field of research on taxation in Africa.

Quantitative methods

The quantitative methods will include basic tools and principles for data analysis, such as sample design, the effective use of descriptive statistics, identification, and methods to establish causality. It will focus broadly on two areas, namely, survey design and data analysis from different sources.

Survey design is an important stage in quantitative research and deficiencies in design cannot always be corrected by analysing data. The quantitative methods will start with discussions on basics of sampling design. It will cover issues of sample size, stratification, multi-stage clustering and probability proportion to size sampling. The data analysis part will focus on the discussion of the use of descriptive statistics as a tool that provides useful first insight into the data and as a tool that gives preliminary checks (preparation) for more robust analysis. The main discussion will be about establishing causation using both experimental and observational data. The discussion on causality will look at the role of experiments in establishing causality, in particular, random assignment as a tool to solve the selection problem. Random assignment is not always feasible either for ethical or practical reasons. Therefore, the session will also discuss instrumental variable estimation, regression discontinuity, difference-in-difference, and other methods.

Dissemination and publication

This session will cover, among others, the following topics:

- **Publishing your research in academic journals:** this session will consist primarily of a research presentation format for publication in academic journals, including common outlines of academic papers (qualitative and quantitative), the importance of presenting a focused research question that is sufficiently answered in the paper, transparency in the methodology, how to manage large annexes and the basics of the peer-review process, among other topics. It focuses on journals and publications most likely to accept articles on issues of taxation, review protocols for submission, and mention some “back doors” to getting published.
- **Locating research in real-world debates:** some practical tools and tips will be provided so that publications translate into real-world implications. The session will look at the different kinds of influence that are possible from research, drawn from real examples pertinent to taxation policy and tax systems. It will also look at how to locate one’s research within current and future debates about taxation.
- **Articulating the significance of research:** Tips at how to formulate a policy argument from one’s research covering different forms of argument, illustrated by examples from the ICTD and elsewhere, e.g. that an important taxation issue has been neglected, that a current policy is likely to fail, or that there is a common misunderstanding about a particular issue, etc.
- **Research Dissemination to wider audiences:** This session will provide tips on how to ensure that published articles reach a wider audience. Using examples from the ICTD and elsewhere, we shall demonstrate how working papers can be translated into policy briefs and blogs, which are more accessible to policy makers and other members of the public. We shall also have a discussion on how to ensure that reducing research findings into policy Briefs and blogs still captures the important messages in the original papers from which these summaries are extracted.