

IGC economist thrives on producing research that influences government policy

*The **International Growth Centre**, based at LSE in partnership with Oxford, aims to promote sustainable growth in developing countries. In this post, IGC's in-country economist in Zambia, Herryman Moono reflects on how politicians can be invaluable partners for researchers.*

One of the most exciting days of my academic life was in February 2011 when I found out that I would be the IGC's in-country Economist for Zambia after finishing my studies at Oxford University.

With that in mind, I could not wait for the end of the academic year to head back home, to help facilitate growth research into policy, and excitedly so, in my home country.



A Zambian mine

Settling back in was quite easy and I set about tackling my first project which was reviewing mining taxes in Zambia. This was of great personal interest given the political and economic nature of mining taxation as well as the trade-offs it presents to policy-makers.

Within a few months of my return home, a change of government presented both an immense challenge and opportunity for policy research and engagement for my work.

We were able to build a good rapport with the new Zambian government which later took on some of our policy recommendations regarding mining taxation.

My experience so far shows that strict economic analyses ignoring the political landscape are likely to end up as a mere academic exercise with little effect on policy.

In my developing country, and I suspect in many others too, political decisions supersede economic analysis, and therefore, as researchers, it is imperative to get as close as possible to the political sphere if our recommendations are to be acted upon.

This is not easy, but not insurmountable, and as IGC Zambia, we have had invaluable opportunities of engaging with senior political players who have bought into our research agenda

and have further requested research guidance on other growth-related areas too, particularly in the sphere of employment creation.

So far, the IGC has provided an opportunity to understand the political economy aspect of applied growth research as well as bring out challenges and opportunities for development research in the setting of a developing country.

More importantly, this has been an opportunity for learning and adapting to a new kind of research that directly feeds into the growth agenda.

I can confidently say that this has so far been the greatest experience of my young career in development economics and I look forward very much to the future!

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