In order to sharpen their skills and acquaint them with recent instrument for the assessment of the four traditional BECANS benchmarks across the States in Nigeria, the field officers were on Thursday October 16, 2014 trained in Abuja to commence the survey of the third cycle – BECANS III.

The four benchmarks capture the business environmental factors that affect doing business in Nigeria namely: infrastructure and utilities; regulatory services; business development support and investment promotion, and security. The four areas of survey are considered crucial for business investment growth in Nigeria. A number of the factors are within the ambit of direct influence by state governments, but a few others need the provision of enabling environment and legislation for them to be instituted by the private sector.

The BECANS instrument usually administered to both the private and public sector institutions is backed up with documentary evidences mostly received to support claims by both the public and private sector on almost every indicator. The instrument is programmable and in many cases, assessor’s judgement is required to admit or reject a piece of evidence. The guidance manual which was used for the training seeks to explain the concept underlying the four benchmark areas, as well as the associated measures and indicators.

Welcoming the participants selected from the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, the Executive Director, Dr Ifediora Amobi said the Institution had consulted and deliberated with all the critical stakeholders including the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Finance, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, National Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission, and others to ensure their buy-in. He added that the Organised Private Sector, the

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Dr. Bryant C. Ralph has enriched the library of AfriHeritage with world class publications in international journals and textbooks. The resources were received on the 2nd of May, 2014. The Executive Director, Dr. Amobi described the gesture as a welcome development, saying this would be the first time such publications were received through an international personality of a caliber of Dr. Ralph of Brookings Institution.

Speaking on behalf of the Board of Directors, Management and Staff, Dr. Amobi poured encomiums on Dr. Ralph for considering the Institution in such a humanitarian gesture. He said the resources, would go a long way in serving the teeming library users, particularly, the associate fellows who have seen AfriHeritage library as the centre of intellectual pursuit in Sub Saharan Africa. These new resources would form part of the new resources that could be accessed through the Institution's digital library section.

A senior fellow in the Economic Studies program at the Brookings Institution, Dr. Ralph's primary fields of expertise are international economics, monetary economics and macroeconomic policy.

Prior to joining Brookings, Bryant was director of the Division of International Finance at the Federal Reserve Board and the international economist for the Federal Reserve's Federal Open Market Committee. He has frequently participated in advisory groups and served as consultant to organizations such as the Federal Reserve, the U.S. Treasury, the Congressional Budget Office, the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, and the National Science Foundation. He has also served in teaching capacities, as a professor in International Finance at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and as a program director for the SEANZA Central Banking Course.

During 1995-97, Bryant served as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. Queen Elizabeth selected him as a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1990 and an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1996. During 1996, he was the Professorial Fellow in Monetary Economics in New Zealand, based at the Reserve Bank of New Zealand and the Victoria University of Wellington. In 1989 and 1990 he was a Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Monetary and Economic Studies at the Bank of Japan. In 1983 he was the first recipient of the Distinguished Fellowship in International Banking and Finance at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. In 1969 he was awarded an International Affairs Fellowship to England by the Council on Foreign Relations.

Some of Bryant's latest books include - Turbulent Waters: Cross-Border Finance and International Governance (Brookings, June 2003) and Crisis Prevention and Prosperity Management for the World Economy (Brookings, June 2004). He is a co-organizer of a Brookings project, The Global Dimensions of Demographic Change, which carries out research on the consequences for the world economy of population aging.

Born in 1938 in Colorado, Bryant received his bachelor's degree in History, the Arts and Letters from Yale University in 1960. As a Rhodes Scholar, he received a B.Phil degree in Economics from Oxford University in 1963. In 1966, he was awarded a Ph.D. in Economics from Yale University. He is married to Coralie Bryant, and has three daughters and four grandchildren.

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) Senior Programme Specialist, Dr Diakalia Sanogo, was on a monitoring visit to the Institution between 20 and 23 November, 2014. Issues related to TTI Phase 1 project closing procedures, phase 2 expected outcomes as per AfriHeritage’s objectives agreed on and included in the IDRC Project Approval Document (PAD) among others were discussed.
As a way of demonstrating its commitment to extending the frontier of knowledge, AfriHeritage on June 24, 2014 played host to the Policy Analysis and Research Group of the Department of Economics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Giving a pep talk, the Executive Director, Dr. Ifediora Amobi charged the students to begin to prepare for the world ahead of them by developing soft skills that would equip them for the tasks ahead. He said such skills would make them employable in the future, adding that their work experience starts from whatever they could do during their schooling. He said, “You have the responsibility to develop soft skills for the highly competitive work environment in Nigeria. You should learn how to mix academic with life as it is in the developed countries, that is my charge for you today”.

A research assistant, Mr. Chinedu Ossai who took the students on “Green Growth and Sustainable Development: A review” was ably assisted by his colleagues, Miss Chizoba Obidigbo and Mr. Ogudu Kalu Uko to enlighten the students on issues related to Green Economy and Development. Earlier, the students were taken through the different department of the Institution by Mr Ogudu Kalu Uko to familiarise them with the process of research, library management and communications.

In another development, the Executive Director was also in the Department of Economics, UNN on the invitation of PARG to speak on “Graduate Employment and Employability Challenges” on August 15, 2014.

The Workshop was conducted as a result of the recognized need to enhance the credibility of TTs in the eyes of their stakeholders especially their donors and beneficiaries as a result of poor financial management. Linked to the challenges surrounding the need for TTs to ensure independence in their work was the related need to promote the organization’s financial sustainability.

AfriHeritage, CRES Collaborate on Capacity Building

AfriHeritage in collaboration with Senegal based Consortium Pour la Recherche Economique et Sociale (CRES) has organised a workshop that brought together TTI’s funded and one-non funded institutions operating in West Africa with the focus on their financial and administration management.

The Workshop, with theme: “Managing Think Tanks: Role and Importance of Financial and Administrative Management”, was held between July 8 to 10, 2014 at Dakar, Senegal and attended by 20 participants from 10 think tanks in West Africa including Dr. Diakalia Sanogo and Gladys Githaiga of TTI, Kenya.

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BECANS III: AfriHeritage trains field officers

relevant Civil Society Organisations; the Non Governmental Organisations would be involved at different stages of the BECANS III project.

BECANS intends to inform, influence and stimulate policy and institutional reforms for better business environment across Nigerian States; to engender mutual learning, peer review and dissemination of best practices among Nigeria’s state governments; and to provide systematic framework for regular self-monitoring and benchmarking of policy and institutional reforms by state governments.

The Coordinator of BECANS III project, Professor Jones Lemchi said the Institution was embarking on the project to provide scientific evidence for assessing business environment in Nigerian states in on-going-basis. Prof. Lemchi said the outcome of the study would also provide investment information for domestic and foreign investors among others, adding also that when the state governments see the document as a peer review mechanism, they would see the need to improve on the different factors that influence the business environment in their various states.

Among other participants at the training of the field officers from the 36 States and FCT were BECANS III Technical Working Group, the in-house research staff and other support staff.