The number of poor people in Africa continues to rise despite macroeconomic policy reforms in the past 20 years in many sub-Saharan African countries. The HIV/AIDS crisis compounds this problem.

Strategies and Analysis for Growth and Access (SAGA), a project of Cornell and Clark Atlanta Universities, funded by a cooperative agreement with USAID, brings together key personnel having extensive experience in Africa as researchers, teachers, policy makers, and consultants, to offer a different approach. We believe that macroeconomic reforms are only part of the basis for growth and poverty reduction—what is missing is a “bottom-up perspective.” We are focusing on the capabilities of individuals, households, and communities—their productivities, their vulnerabilities, their institutions, and their environment.

Without access for all Africans to education and health services, goals for growth and poverty reduction cannot be fully realized.

Without access to markets and institutions that help the poor protect themselves against the vagaries of nature and the marketplace, they will remain trapped in poverty.

Without access to local and national governments that permit their voices to be heard, the interests of the poor may be absent from policy making.

Our project differs from typical research projects in that both the research and the technical assistance components are demand driven, responding directly to needs and interests of our African colleagues. We seek considerable input from African policy makers, stakeholders, and researchers in developing the activities of this project.

SAGA’s goals are to conduct high quality, policy relevant research, and to increase African capacity to
We selected our geographical focus—Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Uganda, and the West African region—from countries with USAID country missions and groups of countries comprising regional missions, and with commitments to working with the local members of The Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA). Because our research is demand driven, setting our research agenda began with lengthy consultations with our African partners to ensure local involvement and requires a continuing dialogue. Here are some highlights of our ongoing SAGA research activities:

1. Conduct policy oriented research on economic growth equity and poverty alleviation
2. Strengthen selected African economic research institutes
3. Expand the pool of highly trained African economists
4. Facilitate linkages between US and African researchers

SAGA is divided into 3 major components: research, technical assistance, and a competitive grants program.

COLLABORATIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The research component of SAGA has 4 broad themes: (1) education; (2) health and nutrition; (3) risk, vulnerability, and poverty dynamics; and (4) empowerment and institutions. Our aim is to better understand the economic, social, institutional, and natural constraints that keep Africa’s poor from prospering in the context of growth-oriented reforms.

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In Ghana, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) is collaborating with SAGA. A workshop held in Accra in October 2002 with a range of stakeholders and the USAID mission led to plans for (1) a volume of papers written primarily by local Ghanaians on “Understanding Poverty in Ghana”; (2) a proposal to collect and analyze panel data sets for Ghana at the community level; (3) building bridges between quantitative and qualitative analyses of poverty; and (4) analysis of land tenure issues.
The SAGA-Kenya research program is organized as a set of subsidiary research projects conducted by a consortium of research institutions around two core, interrelated themes: “Reducing risk and vulnerability in rural Kenya” and “Empowering the rural poor.” The SAGA-Kenya team will begin releasing policy briefs and with coordination of the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR), convene major policy conferences in the summer of 2004.

In Madagascar, an initial participatory workshop was organized with Centre d’Etudes Economique (CEE). Research focus includes rural poverty dynamics and vulnerability, and the role of decentralization of public health services and education.

Cornell and the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), Uganda’s SISERA partner, have established studies of poverty dynamics; multidimensional measures of poverty changes over time; time saving benefits of clean water supply; tax incidence, especially of local taxes like the graduated tax and market fee; and multidimensional poverty comparisons in different regions based on income and nutritional status.

In South Africa, working with the Development Policy Research Unit (DPRU), we have helped develop their research strategy, centered on: 1) a research proposal to SISERA on education, labor markets and poverty in post-Apartheid South Africa; 2) a research proposal to SAGA-Cornell on comparing poverty and standards of living in 1995 and 2000; and 3) a volume of papers on poverty ten years after Apartheid.

Our consultations in the West African region, focuses on low educational attainment, lagging cognitive skill development, and the large gender bias in schooling. A survey of households, communities, and
We are providing technical assistance to SISERA partner institutes on a demand-driven basis. Such technical assistance includes:

- **Uganda Survey Data Analysis Workshop** in Fall 2002, brought together researchers from EPRC and neighboring SISERA institutes, Makere University, and the Bank of Uganda to develop skills for survey analysis. We also included participants in a day-long consultation with government representatives, donors, university faculty and the press, to define specific policy-relevant research topics.

- **Technical Assistance for Education Analysis in Senegal** provided training in household, community, and school-level questionnaire design to examine education outcomes, planning and design of sampling procedures and data analysis. The SAGA team worked directly with researchers from the Centre de Recherche

We are also engaged in a cross-country analysis to evaluate HIV prevention programs using Demographic and Health Survey data to examine changes in behavior and knowledge in response to the awareness of the epidemic as they relate to socioeconomic variables and location (rural v. urban). This analysis will aid decision making in how best to target education and prevention programs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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Stephen Younger provides hands-on technical assistance at the SAGA Workshop on Poverty and Inequality in South Africa.
en Economie Appliquée (CREA). Leopold Sarr, will remain in Senegal through August 2003, managing and implementing the household survey being conducted by the Ministry of Education and CREA.

- **A Workshop on Poverty and Inequality** for faculty at South Africa’s historically disadvantaged universities was held June 23-July 4, involving 25 participants and staff from Cornell, DPRU and the National Institute for Economic Policy (NIEP).

**COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM**

Cornell and Clark Atlanta Universities invite research proposals from U.S.-based Ph.D. students and faculty in economics, agricultural economics, and other closely related fields to be carried out in selected African countries. The program facilitates the collaborations of U.S. and African researchers by:

- Fostering productive relationships between U.S-based researchers and SISERA-based researchers
- Supporting policy-oriented research of the highest quality on SAGA-related themes
- Promoting the research of women and minorities who are under-represented in the economics profession.

Grants cover costs of travel, research-related expenses (e.g., data collection) and stipends to cover daily lodging and food ($5,000 - $20,000). For more information, contact the SAGA/Research Grants Office at CAU.

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