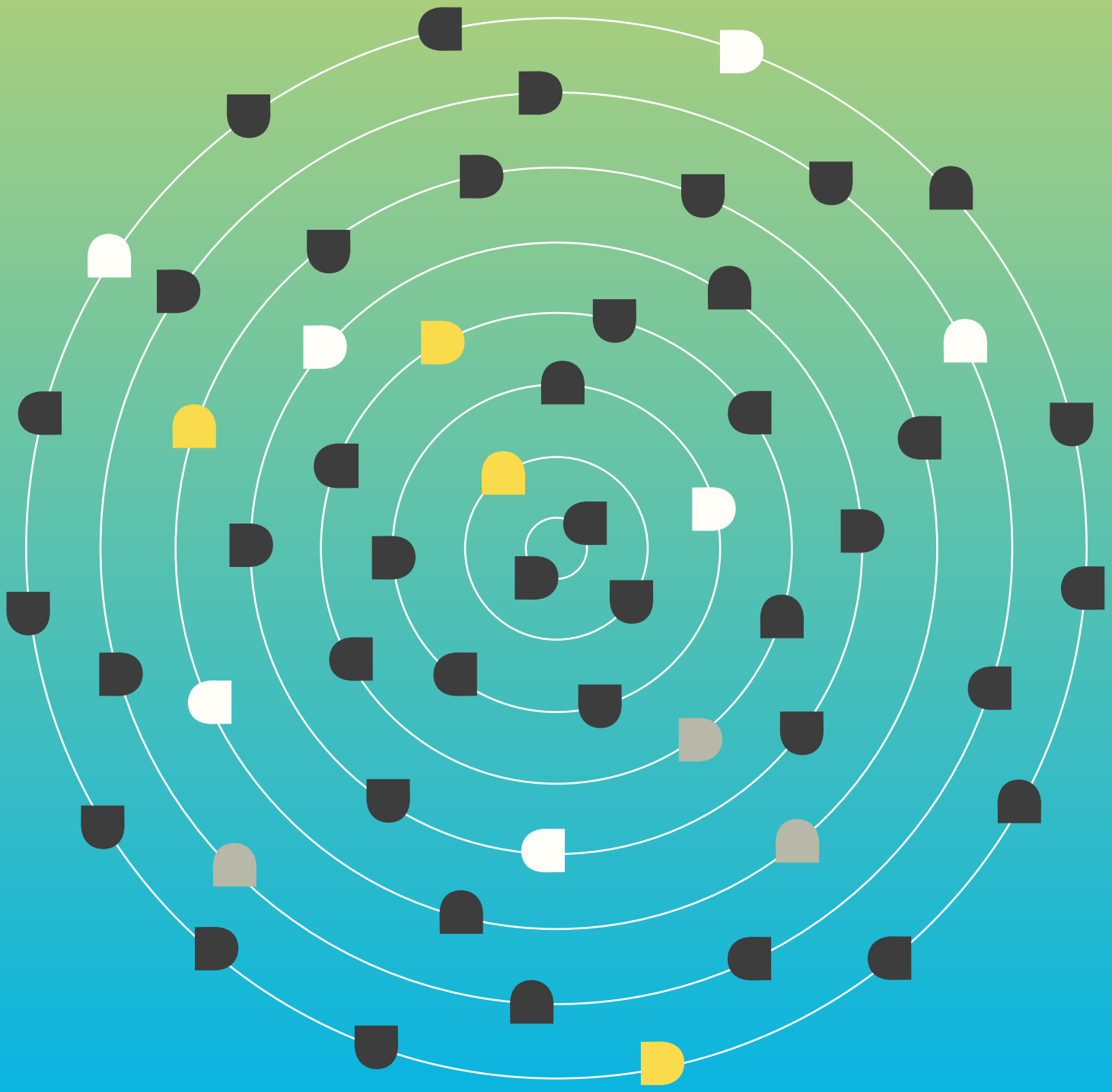
OTT
A global consultancy
and platform for change

OTT Think Tanks to Watch 2026



The OTT Think Tanks to Watch 2026 is the second edition of a peer-recognition exercise based on nominations from think tanks and sector professionals. It highlights organisations that, in the view of their peers, have implemented noteworthy practices, innovations or impactful work.

This list is **not a ranking**; it **is not a list of the "best"** think tanks. We did not apply any technical performance, output or impact assessment criteria. Inclusion is based exclusively on nominations from peers and members of the On Think Tanks (OTT) community, rather than an independent evaluation. This choice reflects OTT's ongoing reflection on the impact of think tank rankings and the challenges of developing them.

Through this list of think tanks to watch, we wish to both celebrate think tanks and encourage collaboration within the community. Every year, we expect the list to change, and the information shared about each think tank to be better, more insightful and more useful. As always, this publication is made possible by the long-term support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, as well as support from the Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stiftung Mercator, and GIZ on behalf of BMZ.

The document lists organisations by subregion – based on their headquarters location and, where relevant, their primary geographic focus – and alphabetically within each subregion. It also includes a link to their entry on the OTT Directory and role-based tags that allow users to search for similar actions among think tanks. Here, you can find the activities covered under each of these categories.

You can search the database and read about the methodology at onthinktanks.org/thinktankstowatch.

Explore our interactive library of initiatives from the 2025 and 2026 OTT Think Tanks to Watch editions. Discover practical ideas, innovative approaches and experiences you can learn from and adapt to your own context: onthinktanks.org/think-tanks-to-watch-initiatives.

What this second edition shows

A peer-nominated list also shows where the community draws the boundaries of the field: nominators decide what counts as a think tank and what work deserves attention. We aimed to feature organisations not on the 2025 list, so we considered organisations from last year only if they received two or more nominations; for them, we asked only about new work.

In 2025, we still included organisations that did not respond to our follow-up survey, with an asterisk, and the OTT team wrote their blurbs. This year we did not do that. Many of the nominated organisations are new to us, and we did not think it would be right to decide on their behalf which practice deserves to be shared. The list therefore includes only the organisations that told us themselves what they wanted to share with their peers.

Table of contents

Anglosphere 3

East & South-East Asia 5

EU & EFTA 7

Latin America & the Caribbean 9

MENA 12

Non-EU Europe & the Caucasus 13

South Asia 14

Sub-Saharan Africa 16

Anglosphere

Cato Institute

United States
cato.org
OTTD profile

The Cato Institute is a US public policy research organisation grounded in the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace. Its work shows how a think tank can combine large policy packages, focused research and long-running comparative datasets. Its 2026 Handbook on Affordability brings together specialists across housing, health, energy, education, transport and financial regulation and sets out more than 100 market-oriented proposals intended to lower living costs through competition and increased supply. Cato's research on legal immigration documents the narrow routes available for permanent migration to the United States and has been used in policy, media and legal debates. It also co-produces the Human Freedom Index with the Fraser Institute, measuring civil and economic freedoms across countries using a wide range of indicators. These examples illustrate a consistent model: develop clear frameworks, assemble evidence across sectors and package it in forms designed for policy-makers, researchers and public debate.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

The Center for Global Development (CGD)

United States and United Kingdom
cgdev.org
OTTD profile

CGD is a non-partisan think tank based in Washington and London that works to address global poverty and development challenges. Its work shows how research can be paired with sustained engagement to build momentum around policy problems. On childhood lead poisoning, CGD convened researchers, funders and practitioners, helped identify evidence and financing gaps, and contributed to the development of a wider field of action rather than stopping at publication. In European development finance, work with Lion's Head Global Partners identified underused guarantee resources and practical reforms to the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+); subsequent European Commission changes freed significant funds for development without increasing the budget. CGD has also supported the global push for health taxes on tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks through evidence, briefings, partnerships and engagement around specific international policy moments. Across these cases, CGD combines technical analysis, coalition building and targeted policy engagement to move evidence towards implementation.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Chatham House

Think Tank to Watch 2025

United Kingdom
chathamhouse.org
OTTD profile

Chatham House is an international policy institute working on geopolitical and global challenges through research, policy engagement and convening. Its 2026 London Conference mixed on-the-record plenaries with smaller sessions, some under the Chatham House Rule, and gave speakers from Brazil, Ghana, Mexico, Qatar and Zambia, among others, a leading role in debating the future of the international order. As the UK reduced its aid budget, Chatham House analysed where remaining resources could have the greatest effect and argued for stronger coordination and a clearer public case for international action. Its Venezuela work combined legal and political expertise, parliamentary evidence, expert convening and briefings to UK and US decision-makers on issues including the rule of law and conditions for free and fair elections. Together, these practices show how a think tank can link high-level convening, specialist research and direct engagement with policy-makers across domestic and international arenas.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Ember

Think Tank to Watch 2025

United Kingdom
ember-energy.org
OTTD profile

Ember is an energy think tank that uses data and analysis to inform policies accelerating the transition to a clean, electrified energy system. Its work shows how targeted data products can make fast-moving energy changes understandable to policy-makers, investors and wider audiences. In Spain, Ember analysed how the falling influence of gas on power prices helped explain why consumers were more insulated from the 2026 fossil-fuel price crisis. Its annual China Energy Transition Review combined data with on-the-ground perspectives to show that clean electricity is increasingly taking on core functions of the Chinese economy, and was followed by briefings with Chinese officials and embassies. Across South-East Asia, Ember's modelling and data-led research are being used to translate technical questions about electricity systems into clearer evidence on costs, energy security and policy choices. Together, these examples demonstrate a consistent practice: identify the data most relevant to live policy debates, analyse it quickly and rigorously, and communicate the implications in a form that can support decisions.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence

ODI Global

Think Tank to Watch 2025

United Kingdom
odi.org
OTTD profile

ODI Global is a think tank that advises global leaders on driving positive change, turning evidence and expertise into actionable strategies for a more resilient, just and equitable future. Its recent work links research and convening with direct policy engagement. Through the Advisory Panel on the Future of Humanitarian Action, co-convened with the NEAR Network, it published a vision paper calling for a shift from an overly centralised humanitarian 'ego-system' to an 'ecosystem' built on existing networks of solidarity. Its report on multilateral development banks, produced with the African Center for Economic Transformation, CEBRI, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations and the South African Institute of International Affairs, captures the views of nearly 900 officials from 125 countries on 11 multilateral development banks (MDBs) and has been discussed with MDB leaders and shareholders. On climate finance, its work helped sustain the coalitions behind the new Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, and the recommendations of the Expert Review on Debt, Nature and Climate, which it co-hosted, were included in the Financing for Development outcome document and the G20 Declaration on Debt Sustainability. These examples show a think tank combining evidence, coalition building and sustained engagement to shape international reform.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Stimson Center

United States
stimson.org
OTTD profile

The Stimson Center combines policy research with field experience and engagement across a wide range of international security and governance issues. Its recent work demonstrates how different formats can match different policy problems. The report The Accountability Gap examines cyber-enabled fraud through legal frameworks on trafficking, financial crime and cybercrime, identifying gaps across international, regional and national systems and constraints on effective implementation and enforcement. Its Mining in Mainland Southeast Asia dashboard turns dispersed information about mining operations and river basins into an interactive tool that helps users analyse environmental risks across borders. The Responsible AI Fellowship, developed with Microsoft's Office of Responsible AI, convenes stakeholders from developing countries to examine how artificial intelligence is being used and what responsible approaches should look like in different contexts. Together, these examples show Stimson combining legal analysis, data visualisation and structured fellowship models to make complex transnational problems easier to understand and govern.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles; Innovation & future-oriented roles

Wales Centre for Public Policy

United Kingdom
wcpp.org.uk
OTTD profile

The Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) bridges research and decision-making by ensuring evidence and expertise are accessible and usable for policy-makers, practitioners and public service leaders in Wales. Its recent work illustrates both demand-led policy support and systematic reflection on knowledge brokering itself. In Swansea, WCPP has examined poverty stigma and its effects on whether people access services, combining lived experience with other forms of evidence to address a dimension of poverty that is often overlooked in programme design. For the Welsh Government, WCPP was commissioned to explore practical options for the devolution of probation, an example of the Centre responding directly to a live policy question with structured evidence synthesis. A small research team within WCPP adds a further layer by studying the organisation's own knowledge-brokering practices and their effects on policy and practice, recently supported by a new Embedded Impact Researcher. Together, these examples show a Centre treating evidence use as both a service to government and a subject for continuous learning and improvement.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

East & South-East Asia

Center for Indonesian Policy Studies (CIPS)

Think Tank to Watch 2025

Indonesia
cips-indonesia.org
OTTD profile

CIPS is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan Indonesian think tank that develops practical policy reforms informed by research and analysis. Its work illustrates how evidence can be combined with stakeholder perspectives to shape debates on food systems and the future of work. MAPAN (Masa Depan Pangan) brings farmers and fishers into discussions about Indonesia's food system and uses their frontline experience to inform community-led reform, helping connect rural realities with national governance. Over the past year, CIPS also developed a policy framework that classifies gig workers into four tiers based on autonomy and bargaining power, giving lawmakers a diagnostic tool to extend social protection without undermining flexibility. The brief has become a widely cited reference in parliamentary deliberations on the proposed Gig Work Bill and in the media. Together, these examples show CIPS using research not only to diagnose problems but also to provide practical frameworks that policy-makers can apply to complex, fast-changing policy areas.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence

Center for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives (CISDI)

Indonesia
cisdi.org
OTTD profile

CISDI is a centre of expertise combining research, advocacy and participatory programmes to strengthen Indonesia's health system. Its work demonstrates how varied research methods can be linked directly to policy and behaviour change. An Empty Packs Survey in six major cities used discarded cigarette packs to estimate illicit cigarette consumption and identify differences between cities, providing evidence for tobacco-control advocacy and enforcement strategies. The Keluarga Berimun immunisation campaign combined digital communication with community engagement; evaluation found mothers exposed during pregnancy more likely to have fully immunised children, showing the value of tailoring communication to different stages of decision-making. CISDI has also applied a Nutrient Profile Model to more than 8,000 packaged foods, creating evidence that can support clearer regulation of products high in sugar, salt, fat or artificial sweeteners. These examples show CISDI combining innovative measurement, public communication and policy engagement around major health-system challenges.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence

Kaleka

Indonesia
kaleka.id
OTTD profile

Kaleka is an Indonesian women-led non-profit that combines action research and systems transformation to develop, test and scale solutions for regional bioeconomies. Its work shows how research, livelihoods and environmental protection can be designed as one system. The Gawi Bapakat Sustainable Village Initiative links payments for ecosystem services with village-level commitments to protect nature and human rights, while connecting communities to infrastructure, processing and markets. Tani Baik is a farmer-led learning platform that combines online courses, regional learning centres, access to inputs and certification, and support for aggregation and higher-value markets so that training can translate into income. The Kolibri Alliance brings together grassroots and Indigenous-led organisations and focuses on what happens after rights are recognised: strengthening community institutions, sustainable resource management and regenerative local enterprises. Together, these initiatives demonstrate an applied model of think-and-do work in which evidence is tested through real economic and ecological systems and scaled through networks.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Lembaga Penyelidikan Ekonomi dan Masyarakat, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Universitas Indonesia (LPEM FEB UI)

Indonesia
lpem.org
OTTD profile

LPEM FEB UI is an Indonesian research institute with a long record of evidence-based policy analysis, government advisory work and impact evaluation. Its recent projects show how economic research can be applied to major national transitions and public investments. A collaborative study on Indonesia's energy transition examines emissions and their macroeconomic effects as well as how decarbonisation affects different groups, helping policy-makers consider distributional consequences alongside overall economic outcomes. Research on the Free Nutritious Meals programme analyses how one of Indonesia's largest recent social investments can be financed and localised in ways that are fiscally sustainable, accountable and responsive to local conditions. LPEM has also supported Indonesia's investment authority (INA) in developing an independent framework for measuring the socioeconomic impact of its investment portfolio beyond financial returns. These examples show how the institute combines macroeconomic modelling, programme design and impact assessment to bring evidence into high-value policy and investment decisions.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

PSHK
Pusat Studi Hukum & Kebijakan Indonesia

Pusat Studi Hukum dan Kebijakan Indonesia (PSHK) / Indonesian Centre for Law and Policy Studies

Indonesia
pshk.or.id
OTTD profile

PSHK is an independent think tank focused on legal reform, including legislation, courts, parliamentary monitoring, civic participation and civil-society resilience. Its work reflects a longstanding commitment to making law and policy-making more evidence-based, participatory and accountable. The National Conference on Civil Liberties brings together researchers, activists, students and practitioners through an open call for papers, parallel discussions and public recommendations, creating a recurring knowledge platform rather than a one-off event. PSHK's sister institution, the Indonesia Jentera School of Law, translates experience from legal research and advocacy into formal education, linking practitioner teaching, skills development, internships and scholarships. PSHK has also taken its long experience in legislative monitoring into a regional collaboration to develop an Asian Parliamentary Openness Index. Together, these initiatives show how research, education, public engagement and regional peer learning can contribute to better policy-making while nurturing the next generation of legal reformers.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip)

Austria
oiip.ac.at/en
OTTD profile

The Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) is an independent research institute focused on international politics, combining academic and policy-oriented research from a Central European perspective. Its recent work shows how a think tank can diversify the formats through which it shares expertise. The oiip Academy offers executive education for professionals, diplomats, journalists, students and civil society representatives seeking to deepen their understanding of global and regional developments and political risk. Its annual REFLECTIONS magazine brings together contributions from recognised experts, oiip researchers and younger fellows around major geopolitical themes. Conceived as an accessible alternative to a traditional academic journal, REFLECTIONS combines analytical depth with a magazine-style approach, making informed perspectives on international developments available to a broader audience. In 2026, oiip also convened a major conference on rebuilding Europe's post-war security architecture, marking the culmination of a self-initiated collaborative project that brought together a diverse network of European think tanks without dedicated project funding. The conference gathered experts from think tanks, international organisations, universities and civil society and presented jointly developed policy recommendations. Together, these examples illustrate how oiip combines research, education and convening to inform European debates.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Carnegie Europe

Belgium
carnegieendowment.org/europe
OTTD profile

Carnegie Europe provides interdisciplinary expertise and independent analysis that brings together national, regional and global perspectives to help European policy-makers understand and respond to global challenges. Its practices illustrate how organisational standards, policy research and public debate can reinforce one another. Carnegie Europe tracks gender representation across public events, podcasts and publications and has maintained close to parity across around 2,450 public-facing roles between 2019 and 2026, treating representation as an operational metric rather than a one-off commitment. Its work on "gradual integration" developed a structured approach to giving EU candidate countries staged access to parts of the single market before full accession, contributing to a wider policy debate on enlargement. The Head-to-Head series, launched in 2026, creates space for speakers with genuinely different views to debate a single question about Europe's future. Together, these examples show a think tank using internal practice, agenda-setting research and deliberative formats to strengthen the quality and diversity of policy discussion.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

ECDPM

Netherlands
ecdpm.org
OTTD profile

ECDPM is an independent European think tank that helps policy-makers and practitioners in Europe and elsewhere design and implement policies that support sustainable development and mutually beneficial international relations. Its work demonstrates the value of combining deep thematic expertise with practical analytical tools. On critical raw materials, ECDPM has examined the issue from industrial-development, economic and geopolitical perspectives, helping connect European demand with questions about value creation and development in partner countries. Drawing on a decade of work on EU–Africa and intra-African trade agreements, it has also developed and applied methods for analysing how agreements are implemented in practice. On the European Union's long-term budget, ECDPM created a tool to help audiences understand the global implications of negotiations over roughly €2 trillion in spending. These examples show a think tank translating complex policy processes into frameworks and tools that help decision-makers see trade-offs, implementation challenges and international consequences more clearly.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Global & collaborative roles

EQUALIS

Denmark
equalis.dk/en
OTTD profile

EQUALIS is an independent Danish think tank working to advance gender equality through data, analysis and evidence-based solutions, collaborating across sectors to turn knowledge into concrete change. Two recent tools show how it translates broad social objectives into measurable action. The Diversity Barometer 2026 tracks gender equality across Denmark's labour market, bringing complex data together in an accessible format that allows progress to be compared and monitored over time. The S-key is a digital toolkit designed for companies, helping them approach social sustainability strategically by turning data into clearer priorities, goals and measurable actions. Although the two products serve different audiences, they share the same underlying approach: make social outcomes visible, establish practical metrics and give decision-makers tools they can use rather than relying on general commitments. This is a useful example of how a think tank can combine research and digital product design to help organisations move from recognising a problem to tracking and managing change.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Innovation & future-oriented roles

Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)

Switzerland
gcsp.ch
OTTD profile

GCSP is an internationally recognised centre of excellence that combines executive education, diplomatic dialogue, policy work and global fellowship in peace and security. Its initiatives show how a policy institution can create structured tools and incubate new ideas alongside traditional convening. The Peace Matrix, developed with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, provides a framework for exploring routes from de-escalation and a settlement in Ukraine towards a wider European security architecture, helping organise a complex debate around practical components and choices. The Creative Spark incubator supports promising peace and security initiatives and helps turn early ideas into durable organisations and projects. GCSP also developed a Ceasefire Toolkit outlining options for a sustainable ceasefire in Ukraine when the topic was still taboo; policy-makers reported using it. Together, these examples show a focus on applied problem-solving: convening the relevant communities, translating expertise into tools, and supporting new initiatives until they can operate beyond the original research or discussion setting.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Instituto Juan de Mariana (IJM)

Spain
juandemariana.org
OTTD profile

IJM is a Spanish liberal think tank that combines policy research with public communication, community-building and large-scale events around ideas of individual liberty, free markets and limited government. Its work shows a particularly diversified model of engagement. Desheredar España turns a systematic review of accumulated regulation into concrete proposals for deregulation, while the recurring Impuestómetro translates tax analysis into a recognisable public product with substantial media reach. The opening of IJM's first regional office in Alicante extends the organisation's community beyond Madrid, investing in a physical space for local relationships and discussion. In 2026, it also co-organised the Madrid Economic Forum, bringing economic ideas to around 7,500 participants. These examples show how a think tank can combine technical policy work with recurring communication products, decentralised community-building and major public events to reach different audiences rather than relying on a single route to influence.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence

Polis180

Germany
polis180.org
OTTD profile

Polis180 is a grassroots German think tank that seeks to bring new voices and ideas into foreign and European policy. Its practices focus particularly on lowering barriers to participation for younger people. Generation Z (eitenwende) combines research, Policy Labs and dialogue to examine the foreign-policy views of young Germans and create routes for those views to enter debates in which they are often underrepresented. Polis kocht! uses small cooking evenings with politicians and experts to create a more informal setting for substantive discussion, reducing the distance between established policy actors and younger participants. The Polis Blog offers members a low-barrier route into publication through concise commentary supported by peer review, enabling people without extensive publishing experience to contribute to public debate. Together, these initiatives show how a think tank can treat participation as an organisational design challenge: changing the format, setting and editorial process so that new people can enter and shape policy conversations.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI)

Czech Republic
pssi.cz
OTTD profile

PSSI works to strengthen democratic institutions and address unconventional security threats, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, while also training new generations of security professionals. Its recent work shows how a think tank can help turn emerging security concerns into usable frameworks and sustained policy communities. The DISRUPT project, developed with Alliance4Europe and the Association for International Affairs (AMO), addresses the gap between identifying influence operations and deciding how to respond, organising action around a Prepare, Disrupt and Mitigate framework and providing practical guides, templates and workflows developed through consultation with more than 170 practitioners. PSSI has also built a long-running international community around space security. Its ninth Prague Space Security Conference in 2026 brought together government, military, industry, academic and policy actors from Europe, the United States and Japan. Together, these initiatives show a think tank combining applied tools with repeated convening, helping fragmented communities develop shared language, relationships and response options in areas where policy is still evolving.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Latin America & the Caribbean

Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP)

Chile
cepchile.cl
OTTD profile

CEP is an independent Chilean think tank that combines research, policy proposals and open debate in support of liberal democracy. Its work stands out for maintaining several complementary channels between evidence, public opinion and policy discussion. The Encuesta CEP is a nationwide, face-to-face probabilistic survey that provides a long-running source of data on public attitudes and helps anchor political and social debate in comparable evidence. Voces del CEP combines a monthly newsletter with a high-level seminar series, creating a regular format for analysing current affairs and connecting research with wider audiences. CEP also publishes Estudios Públicos, its peer-reviewed, open-access quarterly journal, providing a platform for more in-depth academic and policy work. Together, these practices illustrate how a think tank can build influence through a portfolio of recurring products: one that measures public opinion, one that interprets current developments and one that sustains longer-term intellectual debate.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence

Centro de Estudios, Derecho y Sociedad - Dejusticia

Colombia
dejusticia.org
OTTD profile

Dejusticia is a Colombia-based research and advocacy organisation working to strengthen the rule of law, to advance social and environmental justice, and to promote human rights in Colombia and the Global South. Its work shows how socio-legal research can contribute to both emerging policy debates and wider public discussion. Dejusticia has helped position care as a right through publications, public events and engagement with universities, grassroots organisations, media and international forums, contributing evidence and legal analysis as governments and regional institutions consider new care policies and standards. It has also sustained a strong public profile as a source of analysis on constitutional and human-rights issues; in the 2026 Opinion Panel by Cifras y Conceptos it was identified by opinion leaders as Colombia's most admired NGO for the fifth consecutive year. These examples reflect a model in which research is closely connected to public argument, coalition building and legal change, allowing Dejusticia to contribute both to specialist debates and to broader understanding of rights-based policy issues.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC)

Think Tank to Watch 2025

Argentina
cippec.org
OTTD profile

CIPPEC is an independent, non-partisan Argentine think tank producing applied research and policy recommendations to support a more equitable and developed country. Its recent work demonstrates how a think tank can build structured policy agendas around complex reforms while creating spaces for dialogue with practitioners. On artificial intelligence, CIPPEC developed a research and policy agenda focused on governance in the justice system and public administration, bringing evidence to a rapidly evolving area of state capacity. It has also developed a comprehensive proposal for pension reform, using sustained technical work to address a politically and fiscally difficult policy challenge. In education, its Dialogues for Teaching convened 14 discussions with experts and stakeholders on teacher education and careers, complemented by RaD.Ar, an open data platform on teaching in Argentina. These examples show CIPPEC combining technical analysis, policy design and structured deliberation to move from problem identification towards feasible reform options.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence

Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo - Transparencia Internacional Ecuador

Ecuador
ciudadaniaydesarrollo.org
OTTD profile

Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo (FCD), Transparency International's chapter in Ecuador, works to promote and defend the rule of law, democracy and transparency. Its initiatives show how monitoring can be linked to participation and institutional reform in a restrictive civic environment. Its Citizens' Freedoms Observatory has documented 40 alerts on civic space restrictions since 2023 and links monitoring to advocacy and practical tools, including a compliance guide for the Social Transparency Law; this approach contributed to preventing a 2026 bill that sought to criminalise statements against officials from being debated in Congress. Through Ley Viva, FCD led a participatory process to co-create a legislative proposal aimed at strengthening protections for human rights and environmental defenders. Its Ojo a la Fiscalía initiative created a shadow process around the selection of Ecuador's Attorney General, applying independent scrutiny to an important public appointment and helping citizens follow the process. Together, these practices illustrate a model of democratic accountability that combines evidence collection, public communication, participatory lawmaking and oversight of institutions.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence

Fundación Datalat

Ecuador
datalat.org
OTTD profile

Fundación Datalat is an Ecuadorian non-profit that uses data, research and technology to strengthen digital rights, citizen participation and evidence-informed decision-making across Latin America. Its projects show how data governance can connect to practical participation. Through +Datos +Transparencia, it works on both sides of the data ecosystem: supporting ministries to adopt data governance models while its Al Dato Open Data Observatory monitors open data and produced the State of Open Data in Ecuador 2025 report. With GAD 4.0, it helps local governments implement Decidim, an open-source participation platform, and sustains the effort through a community of practice for public institutions. CuirData creates a pipeline for citizen-generated data from LGBTIQ+ communities to enter public-policy processes, helping address evidence gaps while strengthening participation by groups often excluded from official data systems; the UN Statistics Division recognised it as an Impact Story. These examples show how a think tank can combine technical infrastructure, capacity-building and participatory methods so that better data leads to more inclusive decisions.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP)

Peru
iep.org.pe
OTTD profile

IEP is an independent research institution producing social-science evidence on Peru and Latin America and contributing to public debate and policy-making. Its initiatives show how a think tank can broaden both access to research infrastructure and participation in knowledge production. IEP Bus offers shared national survey capacity, allowing organisations to place questions in a common instrument and obtain rapid, nationally representative public-opinion evidence without commissioning a full survey; during the 2026 electoral cycle, it supported frequent public reporting on voting intentions and political attitudes. With Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana, IEP promoted El Estado en el Territorio, a dialogue process contributing to a new decentralisation agenda and connecting national reform discussions with how the state actually operates across different parts of Peru. Voces Digitales contra la Polarización works with young voters in different cities to co-create evidence-based content, treating them as participants in communication rather than simply an audience. These examples show how IEP broadens who can produce, access and use evidence, connecting research with public debate and decision-making.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence

Instituto E+ Transição Energética

Brazil
emaisenergia.org
OTTD profile

Instituto E+ is an independent Brazilian think tank producing applied research on energy transition and green industrial transformation as drivers of socioeconomic development. Its work shows how research can be closely connected to national and international policy agendas. Instituto E+ helped shape and advance the Belém Declaration on Green Industrialization, helping connect climate ambition with industrial development, productive capacity and value creation in the Global South. E+ also contributed evidence and stakeholder perspectives to Brazil's National Industrial Decarbonization Strategy (ENDI), approved in 2026 after more than 300 public-consultation contributions. The institute has also helped develop, test and disseminate the concept of "powershoring" in Brazil's policy debate, locating production where clean, affordable energy can support competitive low-carbon manufacturing. This work illustrates a think tank positioning energy transition not only as an environmental agenda, but also as a question of industrial strategy and economic development.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Instituto Millenium

Brazil
institutomillenium.org.br
OTTD profile

Instituto Millenium is a Brazilian think tank that connects experts, decision-makers and citizens around ideas related to freedom, institutions and sustainable prosperity. Its work demonstrates how a policy organisation can turn broad principles into concrete analytical and reform tools. Its Shared Urban Renewal Areas (ARCs), inspired by business improvement districts, provide research, legal opinions and model legislation that helped six cities, including São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, advance ARC-based laws. The Brazil chapter of the Index of Bureaucracy in Latin America measures the administrative burden faced by small and medium-sized enterprises, converting an often abstract complaint about bureaucracy into comparable evidence. Its Strategic Education Guide and reform framework, developed with PwC Brasil, bring together analysis and practical policy proposals on the future of Brazilian education in a structured package for debate and implementation by new authorities. Together, these initiatives show a think tank working across very different sectors while using a similar method: define the institutional problem, create a framework or metric that makes it visible, and translate the analysis into specific options for reform.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Libertank

Colombia
libertank.co
OTTD profile

Libertank is a Colombian classical-liberal think tank founded in Medellín that combines research and policy work with leadership training, corporate education and media. Its recent practices show a distinctive emphasis on experiential learning and diversified audiences. LíderLab is a three-level transformation programme for young people, with four-day bootcamps at each level built around original simulations that let participants experience the trade-offs of economic freedom rather than only hear arguments about them. Through Libertad y Éxito, Libertank delivers workshops inside companies, reaching employees and managers who are rarely the primary audience for think tanks; the programme also forms part of the organisation's revenue model. Sin Permiso turns research, columns and policy work into roughly 20-minute YouTube episodes of political analysis, allowing one body of evidence to travel across formats and reach a wider public audience. Together, these examples show how a small think tank can connect ideas, education, communications and income generation, extending its work beyond conventional reports and policy events.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

MENA

Middle East Council on Global Affairs

Qatar
mecouncil.org
OTTD profile

The Middle East Council on Global Affairs (ME Council) is an independent, non-profit policy research institution focused on geopolitical and socioeconomic issues in the Middle East and North Africa. Through its bilingual commentary platform, Afkar, and its evidence-based policy research, the ME Council provides accessible, rigorous analysis of regional developments and their implications, including short-term policy outlooks over the next three to six months. The ME Council also promotes dialogue and knowledge-sharing through regular Arabic- and English-language webinars and podcasts covering regional affairs, technology, culture, and economics. Its commitment to inclusive knowledge-sharing extends to initiatives such as the Doha Health Initiative for the Global South, launched in partnership with the Gates Foundation to promote South–South cooperation, policy exchange, and capacity-building. The initiative includes an annual convening in Doha and executive education programmes in Global Health Diplomacy and AI-Enabled Global Health Practice, bringing together participants from more than 12 countries. Together, these efforts amplify regional perspectives in global policy discussions through bilingual research, dialogue, and international collaboration.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Solidar Tunisie

Tunisia
solidar-tunisie.org
OTTD profile

Solidar Tunisie is an independent Tunisian think tank working across sustainable development, natural-resource management, socioeconomic development and public policy. Its work shows a strong interest in methods that make policy processes more iterative, measurable and connected across sectors. Through the Tunisian Public Policy Consortium, Solidar applied Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation to household and similar waste-management challenges, using an approach built around locally defined problems, experimentation and learning rather than importing a fixed solution. The Tunisian Observatory of Public Policies provides a platform for collecting, organising and monitoring public-policy information, creating infrastructure for more evidence-based scrutiny and follow-up. Solidar has also produced a simplified guide to the Nexus approach linking water, energy, food and ecosystems, helping decision-makers consider resource interdependencies rather than treating sectors separately. Together, these examples show a think tank combining participatory problem-solving, monitoring infrastructure and systems thinking to improve how policy is designed and implemented.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Innovation & future-oriented roles

Non-EU Europe & the Caucasus

Caucasus Research Resource Center - Armenia Foundation (CRRC-Armenia)

Armenia
crrc.am
OTTD profile

CRRC-Armenia is an independent research foundation producing policy-relevant evidence to inform decision-making and social development in Armenia and the wider region. Alongside its research role, it is investing in organisational systems that make knowledge work more consistent and sustainable. It has developed a Process Architecture that connects resource management with six core organisational processes in a single decision-based framework, clarifying responsibilities, handovers and review loops across research, fundraising, communications, recruitment, procurement and organisational development. The aim is to reduce silos and preserve institutional knowledge rather than relying on informal routines. Entering its 2026–2030 strategic cycle, CRRC-Armenia is also expanding how it communicates evidence, including approaches that connect data, research and art to make findings more accessible to different audiences. This combination of methodological rigour, process management and creative knowledge translation offers a useful example of organisational innovation inside a research institution, showing that strengthening internal systems can be part of strengthening external impact.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS)

Kosovo
legalpoliticalstudies.org
OTTD profile

GLPS is an independent, non-partisan public policy organisation working on politics, law and economics. Its work shows several ways civil-society research can strengthen accountability and rights. Through its Centre for Strategic Litigation, GLPS uses carefully selected legal cases to advance human-rights protection and create wider precedents beyond individual disputes. As Kosovo's implementing partner of the Western Balkans Reform and Growth Monitor, led by the Think for Europe Network, GLPS brings civil-society scrutiny to national reform agendas under the EU Growth Plan, creating independent evidence on implementation across countries. CorrWatch has applied sustained monitoring to key areas of public governance with support from the British Embassy in Pristina, helping make institutional performance more visible. Together, these practices show a think tank operating across research, law and oversight: producing evidence, testing rights through litigation and following implementation closely enough to identify whether promised reforms are taking place in practice.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

South Asia

Aapti Institute

India
aapti.in
OTTD profile

Aapti Institute is a research and advisory organisation working at the intersection of technology and society, examining how people interact and negotiate with technology offline and online. Its work shows several creative ways to make complex technology questions tangible. "In the Pipeline" turns research on the working conditions of data workers behind AI into a participatory game, helping audiences understand the instability and trade-offs faced by workers in platform supply chains. Aapti has also mapped digital financial fraud across India, developing a taxonomy of perpetration tactics and a framework for identifying vulnerabilities at user, product and structural levels. Through Resilient Technologies (ResTech), a year-long study of community-built technology in migratory contexts, Aapti created a live, crowdsourced repository of initiatives. Together, these examples show how Aapti combines rigorous research with participatory methods and practical tools that make emerging technology debates more accessible and actionable.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Innovation & future-oriented roles

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI)

Pakistan
cpdi-pakistan.org
OTTD profile

CPDI is an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit civil society organisation working on peace and development issues in Pakistan through research-based advocacy and capacity-building. Its work shows how advocacy can be sustained well beyond a single project. Through its Budget Research, Media Training and Literacy Programme (2024–2026), CPDI launched a free, eight-chapter online budget literacy module that remains live after the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) grant concluded, and in April 2026 its network of 63 partner organisations ran more than 60 district media briefings, reaching an estimated 1,700–1,900 people. CPDI was also part of the national campaign to eliminate trans fats, and the Associated Press of Pakistan named it among the organisations credited for the 2025 standard, which expanded in phases from six product categories in 2023 to nationwide coverage. Its Right-to-Information advocacy combines policy research, public awareness, capacity-building and information requests that test government compliance, and intersects with a 2023 Supreme Court ruling affirming the constitutional right to access information, in a case brought by CPDI's Executive Director. Together, these examples show research and advocacy turned into durable public goods and binding regulation.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations

India
gatewayhouse.in
OTTD profile

Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations is a Mumbai-based foreign-policy think tank working on geoeconomics, geopolitics, energy, security, history and multilateral affairs, while also offering foreign-policy education. Since its foundation, it has nurtured a robust community of private-sector support. Its work shows the value of combining long-term research programmes with international convening. Gateway House has mapped economic corridors and investments across Asia since 2013, creating a sustained evidence base for understanding Chinese investment flows in India and its neighbourhood, including under the Belt and Road Initiative. It is also a founding member of the Körber Emerging Middle Powers initiative, contributing to an annual multi-country expert survey on how influential states outside the traditional great-power grouping are reshaping international affairs. In 2026, Gateway House hosted a side event at the Munich Security Conference in association with India's Ministry of External Affairs, taking its research into a major global policy forum. Gateway House was also an early convener of the Think20 (T20) in India, hosting the country's first T20 meeting in 2015, inaugurated by then Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan. These examples demonstrate how a think tank can build distinctive expertise over time and then use international partnerships and convening to connect that expertise with decision-makers.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Martin Chautari

Nepal
martinchautari.org.np
OTTD profile

Martin Chautari is a research and policy institute in Kathmandu that promotes academic inquiry, public debate and critical discussion on contemporary social and political issues in Nepal. Martin Chautari runs the country's longest continuously operating institutional discussion and seminar series on Nepal, bringing together academics, policy-makers, activists and citizens in regular open dialogue. These discussions sit alongside empirical research on themes including media, education, social inclusion, governance and democracy, as well as books, journals, research outputs and policy briefs. The organisation also supports intellectual engagement and capacity-building for younger researchers and marginalised voices. This combination is worth noting because it treats knowledge infrastructure itself as a long-term public good: maintaining spaces where evidence can be debated, building research capacity and publishing work that allows ideas to circulate across academic, policy and civic communities.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Capacity & institutional development

Pokhara Research Centre

Nepal
pokharacentre.org
OTTD profile

Pokhara Research Centre is a public-policy research institute that aspires to become a leading think tank in Nepal. Its recent initiatives combine communication, youth engagement and problem-solving formats. The Con@10 Virtual Exhibition converted a physical exhibition into an interactive 360-degree digital environment, preserving research outputs and making them accessible beyond the original location and event. The Youth in Policy and Governance Fellowship places emerging leaders closer to provincial legislative and policy processes, helping bridge the gap between young people and sub-national institutions. The Gandaki Agriculture Hackathon 2025 brought together youth, tech innovators, agricultural experts and universities to work on practical agricultural challenges through a collaborative innovation format. These examples show an organisation experimenting with how policy knowledge is experienced and produced: using digital tools to extend the life of research, placing young people inside governance processes, and creating multi-stakeholder spaces where policy problems can be addressed collaboratively rather than by researchers alone.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME)

Think Tank to Watch 2025

Pakistan
primeinstitute.org
OTTD profile

The Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME) is an independent, non-partisan Pakistani think tank advancing public policy reform through economic research, stakeholder engagement and public education. Its first National Taxpayers Convention offers an example of how a think tank can create a new constituency-centred policy forum around a technical issue. The convention brought together business representatives, salaried professionals, tax practitioners, economists and political leaders for 12 sessions involving 35 speakers, connecting lived experiences of taxation with competing political approaches and concrete reform proposals. Importantly, the process did not end with discussion: participants unanimously adopted a 15-point Charter of Demands and a 50-point Taxpayers' Bill of Rights covering issues such as simpler compliance, predictable taxation, fiscal transparency and protection against arbitrary treatment. The practice shows how convening can be designed to move from diverse perspectives towards a shared, actionable advocacy platform.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence

Sustainable Futures Collaborative

India
sustainablefutures.org
OTTD profile

Sustainable Futures Collaborative (SFC) is an independent Indian research organisation working on climate change, energy and environmental policy, with a focus on the systemic changes needed for a sustainable, just and resilient transition. Its recent work shows how it brings overlooked dimensions into mainstream policy debates. An exhibit on indoor heat, unpaid domestic work and how women adapt highlights how conventional heat policy can miss exposure inside homes and the unequal burden on women performing unpaid work. SFC's air-pollution research argues for placing health outcomes at the centre of policy design, using health not only as a reason to act but also as a basis for choosing and prioritising interventions. At the sub-national level, SFC is working with the Chhattisgarh government to rethink the institutional architecture for climate action, recognising that climate goals cut across departments and levels of governance. What connects these examples is a focus on reframing policy problems so that climate and environment institutions respond to how risks are lived.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

Sub-Saharan Africa

African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET)

Think Tank to Watch 2025

Ghana
acetforafrica.org
OTTD profile

ACET is a pan-African economic policy institute supporting Africa's long-term growth through transformation, combining research, policy advice and convening. ACET's flagship African Transformation Report, African Transformation Index and African Women's Inclusion Index provide continental diagnostics, while Country Economic Transformation Outlooks translate these findings into tailored support for governments; recent work has informed national planning in several African countries. Its Youth Employment and Skills programme links research on technical and vocational education and training and job quality with a Youth Policy Lab that gives young Africans a direct role in proposing solutions to policy-makers. ACET also uses modelling to make debates on global financial architecture more concrete, translating reforms on debt, taxation and climate finance into estimates of possible human outcomes. These practices show how a think tank can connect research, policy design, participation and advocacy across national and global levels.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC)

Kenya
aphrc.org
OTTD profile

APHRC generates evidence, strengthens research capacity and engages policy-makers on health and development across Africa. Its work illustrates a broad approach to strengthening both institutions and evidence use. The Good Grant Practice Virtual Academy has turned APHRC's experience in grant management and financial governance into scalable training for African organisations, reaching thousands of learners and hundreds of institutions. Drawing on more than a decade of research and advocacy on breastfeeding in Kenya, APHRC contributed to the launch of the Human Milk Bank at Pumwani Maternity Hospital and continues to inform policies and programmes. Through the SAFE-T initiative on child, early and forced marriage, APHRC has also involved communities directly in interpreting research findings, adapting interventions and monitoring progress. These examples demonstrate how APHRC combines research, capacity strengthening, policy engagement and community participation to move evidence into practice.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

Afrobarometer

Think Tank to Watch 2025

Ghana
afrobarometer.org
OTTD profile

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that collects and analyses data on public attitudes on democracy, governance, the economy and society. Its core strength is turning comparable citizen data into evidence that can enter concrete policy processes. In South Africa, Afrobarometer findings were incorporated into the Medium-Term Development Plan 2024–2029, including baselines and targets related to public institutions, corruption and trust. In Ghana, its survey evidence has been cited in discussions about proposed reforms for the direct, non-partisan election of metropolitan, municipal and district chief executives. In Senegal, findings on young people's preference for entrepreneurship were used at the launch of the government's PAVIE II entrepreneurship programme. These examples show the value of sustained, credible public-opinion infrastructure. Afrobarometer creates a body of evidence that policy-makers can draw on to understand citizens' priorities and track change over time.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Bajeti Hub

Kenya
bajetihub.org
OTTD profile

Bajeti Hub is a Kenyan non-profit organisation working to strengthen transparency, accountability, participation and equity in national and sub-national budgeting. It combines research on public finance with citizen capacity-building and partnerships with governments and civil society. Its County Budget Transparency Survey has tracked the availability and quality of county budget information for more than a decade and recently added a timeliness measure, recognising that information published too late cannot support meaningful participation. Bajeti Hub's Regional Budget Hubs model decentralises budget advocacy through local civil society partners across Kenya's 47 counties, combining technical support, mentoring and locally generated evidence. It has also developed a free virtual course on civic education and public finance, later converting course material into videos to reach wider audiences. These practices show how a think tank can build an ecosystem around evidence, equipping citizens and local organisations to use public-finance information in real time.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development

Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)

Nigeria
cddwestafrica.org
OTTD profile

CDD is an independent research, training and advocacy organisation working on democracy, governance, peacebuilding and civic space. Its work shows how a think tank can combine research with operational tools in difficult political and conflict-affected settings. CDD pioneered election-focused fact-checking and real-time monitoring of misinformation and hate speech in Nigerian elections, including a social-media war room and a chatbot that allowed citizens to submit claims through WhatsApp and Facebook. In north-east Nigeria, its work on transitional justice and reintegration has supported the Borno Model and Operation Safe Corridor and informed approaches to former associates of violent extremist groups through research, dialogue and policy engagement. Through the Nigeria Anti-Corruption Agencies Strengthening Initiative, CDD has also used needs-based assessments and tailored support to strengthen anti-corruption bodies. Across these areas, CDD demonstrates how evidence, technology, field engagement and institutional capacity-building can be combined to address governance challenges beyond the publication of research alone.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA)

Nigeria
cseaafrica.org
OTTD profile

CSEA is a non-profit think tank that conducts independent, evidence-based research to improve development outcomes in Africa. Its recent initiatives place particular emphasis on building the capacity of policy-makers and practitioners to work with evidence. The Africa Data Governance Fellowship equips African policy-makers and experts to understand and engage with emerging questions around data governance, creating a cohort able to shape rules in a rapidly changing field. CSEA also convened the seventh Africa Emerging Markets Forum with the Central Bank of Nigeria and other partners, bringing together policy and expert communities around major economic questions. As sustainability partner for the Tobacco Control Data Initiative, CSEA provides impact-focused training that helps stakeholders use data more effectively for policy engagement and advocacy. Together, these practices show a think tank investing not only in producing research, but also in the people, networks and skills required for evidence to inform decisions.

Categories: Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Connected Development (CODE)

Nigeria
connecteddevelopment.org
OTTD profile

CODE is a civil society organisation that builds mobile and online platforms to strengthen citizen voices, close the feedback loop between communities and governments, and promote transparent, accountable governance across Africa. Its work, anchored in its flagship Follow The Money initiative, shows how citizen monitoring can move into government practice. Through the COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project, run with BudgIT and Global Integrity, CODE tracked emergency funds and health-facility readiness; in Nigeria, this led to a memorandum of understanding with the National Primary Health Care Development Agency, and in Kenya, its advocacy fed into new emergency-fund regulations. Through Project Trust and the earlier DeSPAAC project in Kaduna State, it developed tools for communities to nominate and track public projects, which legislators and Kaduna's State Universal Basic Education Board adopted in their own work. In Bauchi State, its Girl-Child Education Project, supported by the Malala Fund, combined school monitoring, mentorship and advocacy, contributing to a state roadmap for gender-responsive education planning. Together, these examples show a civil society organisation turning citizen oversight into changes in how public institutions work.

Categories: Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO)

South Africa
gcro.ac.za
OTTD profile

The GCRO is a partnership between the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits), the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). The GCRO works towards a vision for South Africa's economic heartland as a region that is functionally integrated, spatially coherent, competitive, environmentally sustainable, and socially and economically inclusive. The GCRO collects data, including through the Quality of Life Survey, South Africa's largest social survey, and benchmarks the city-region; provides policy analysis and support; undertakes applied research; and publishes critically reflective academic work under nine research themes. A recent occasional paper on whether the South African census and social surveys should include measures beyond the gender binary illustrates how the GCRO approaches emerging measurement challenges and offers both evidence-based research and policy advice for the benefit of all Gauteng residents. This is a useful example of a think tank addressing the foundations of evidence itself: not only analysing available data, but questioning whether official measurement systems capture the population accurately enough to support inclusive policy, planning and service delivery.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence

Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

Think Tank to Watch 2025

South Africa
issafrica.org
OTTD profile

ISS is an African policy think tank focused on peace and security, producing analysis intended to inform practical action. This regional think tank places a strong emphasis on working with institutions to translate research into operational change. ISS supported the development of the Gulf of Guinea Combined Maritime Task Force, launched in 2026 as an Africa-led naval cooperation mechanism. In South Africa, research and engagement around hotspot policing contributed to a pilot that reported a 31% reduction in contact crime and was subsequently incorporated into police performance monitoring. ISS has also helped revive the African Union Peace and Security Council's sanctions sub-committee after a long period of inactivity, strengthening an existing continental mechanism rather than creating a parallel structure. These examples illustrate how a think tank can operate close to implementation: identifying institutional gaps, supplying evidence and technical support, and staying engaged as recommendations are translated into systems, indicators and regional cooperation.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA Kenya)

Kenya
ieakenya.or.ke
OTTD profile

IEA Kenya is a think tank that provides a platform for informed discussion to influence public policy, promoting pluralism of ideas through open debate, research and public education on economic and topical issues in Kenya and the region. The Kenya Public Debt Real-Time Counter is being developed as an AI-driven fiscal-transparency platform using predictive modelling and machine-learning techniques to provide updated insights on debt, revenue, expenditure, population and GDP. IEA Kenya's Alternative Budget 2026/27 takes a different approach, presenting an alternative fiscal scenario across major revenue, expenditure and balance aggregates as a structured critique of the National Treasury's estimates. Together, these initiatives show how a think tank can combine real-time data tools with independent budget analysis, giving policy-makers more ways to examine public finances and debate fiscal choices.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Innovation & future-oriented roles

IPAR Think Tank

Senegal
ipar.sn
OTTD profile

IPAR is an independent West African policy research institute working at the interface of research, policy dialogue and development action on agriculture, food systems, land governance, rural transformation and the economic inclusion of youth and women. Its work shows how sustained evidence can travel from local diagnosis to national decision-making. Its study of post-harvest losses in the Podor department documented the failure of most existing storage and conservation infrastructure; parliamentarians cited the findings during the Prime Minister's general policy statement, and the Ministry of Agriculture created a technical commission on storage infrastructure with IPAR as a member. IPAR applies its evidence-informed approach across West Africa, strengthening data producers and users (Learning together to advance Evidence and Equity in Policymaking to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal - LEEPS) and leading research and policy dialogue on responsible AI, climate and cross-border trade. Its two decades of engagement with Senegal's framework agricultural law run from co-elaboration of the 2004 LOASP to a citizens' assessment of its implementation and, now, technical coordination of its revision at the Ministry's request. These examples show how a think tank can accompany a country's agricultural policy across its full cycle—elaboration, evaluation and revision—while building the local capacity that sustains it.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Capacity & institutional development; Global & collaborative roles

Leadership, Ethics, Governance and Strategies for Africa (LEGS-Africa)

Senegal
legs-africa.org
OTTD profile

LEGS-Africa is a pan-African think tank bringing together a new generation of African policy actors around governance, economic and social transformation. Its recent initiatives combine regular policy dialogue with experimentation around climate resilience and economic sovereignty. Monthly round tables create a recurring forum for discussion of public policies and programmes in Senegal, developed with public institutions, think-tank networks and non-state actors, helping keep evidence and debate connected to ongoing policy processes. The Blue Fund is designed as a mechanism to strengthen the socio-ecological resilience of coastal and artisanal fishing communities facing environmental and economic pressures associated with hydrocarbon development. LEGS-Africa has also initiated debates on economic and financial sovereignty, including hidden debt and the financing of Senegal's national transformation agenda. Together, these examples show a think tank using convening, policy research and institutional innovation to address questions that cut across economic governance, accountability, natural resources and community resilience.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Innovation & future-oriented roles

Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI)

South Africa
pari.org.za
OTTD profile

PARI is a South African research institute focused on the institutional constraints to effective governance and on strengthening democratic state institutions. Its work shows how research can move into co-design and implementation support. Through the COMPACT programme on public participation and local government, PARI moved beyond studying participation to working with municipal officials and communities to develop and test new tools for planning, accountability and service delivery. Its research on the affordability of basic services examined gaps in how free electricity and water support reaches low-income households, addressing a policy problem with direct implications for poverty and municipal finance. PARI subsequently provided advice to national institutions including the National Treasury and the Department of Cooperative Governance. Together, these examples illustrate a think tank staying involved after diagnosis: using research to identify institutional problems, working with practitioners to design responses and supporting public bodies as they consider or implement changes.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Political & civic roles; Advocacy & policy influence; Innovation & future-oriented roles; Capacity & institutional development

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)

Think Tank to Watch 2025

South Africa
saiia.org.za
OTTD profile

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) is an independent public-policy think tank working towards a well-governed, peaceful, economically sustainable and globally engaged Africa. Its role during South Africa's G20 presidency illustrates how a think tank can contribute to both agenda-setting and technical input into a global multilateral policy process. As one of three organisations appointed by the South African government to coordinate the T20 engagement group, SAIIA managed the production of evidence-based policy options that fed into official G20 task forces on issues including trade, digital transformation and sustainable development. As a founding member of the T20 Africa Group, it also helped amplify African research and policy perspectives, contributing to the deliberations that shaped the G20 Leaders' Declaration. SAIIA served as a G20 Resource Partner to the South African government, supporting working groups and review processes, and created a public digital G20 Resource Centre for policy-makers, civil society, media and researchers. Together, these practices show how a think tank can operate simultaneously as convener, technical adviser and public knowledge platform during a time-bound policy opportunity.

Categories: Knowledge translation & communication; Advocacy & policy influence; Global & collaborative roles

Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR)

Zambia
zipar.org.zm
OTTD profile

The Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) conducts research and policy analysis to inform public policy in Zambia. Its recent work shows how modelling, sector research and national transformation diagnostics can support different kinds of policy decisions. MicroZAMOD is a microsimulation tool that allows researchers and policy-makers to test how changes in taxes and social-protection policies could affect households and public finances, turning sophisticated modelling into evidence that can be used in real policy discussions. ZIPAR has also examined Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) as a potential driver of tourism and wider economic growth, broadening the policy conversation beyond traditional leisure tourism. Its Zambia Country Economic Transformation Outlook provides a comprehensive assessment of diversification, productivity, export competitiveness and well-being. Together, these examples show a think tank combining analytical tools, sector-specific research and economy-wide diagnostics to support both immediate policy choices and longer-term development strategy.

Categories: Knowledge generation & analysis; Advocacy & policy influence

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OTT Think Tanks to Watch 2026

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