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Capacity Needs for the Implementation of PRSs and Attainment of the MDGs

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1.   Building Capable, Democratic States in Africa

Capable, democratic states remain key to overcoming Africa's development challenges, especially poverty reduction or eradication. A key component of a capable state is the existence of effective and efficient institutions – state and non-state. There is strong evidence from the ECA Africa Governance Report (AGR), a 27-country study of the state of governance in Africa, that capacity deficits across state and non-state institutions remain enduring and continue to pose obstacles to poverty eradication. A capable state with a functional bureaucracy and educational system, efficient law enforcement mechanisms, credible and accessible judicial and legal systems, and inclusive and democratic decision-making institutions and processes, will be better at delivering services, engendering investor confidence, promoting private sector development, facilitating overall national and regional development and eradicating poverty.

The first generation Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) have led to important progress in a number of areas, such as mainstreaming and broadening the national poverty reduction efforts among African governments and institutions, creating new spaces for policy dialogue with civil society and the private sector, and focusing attention on aid relationships, notably donor alignment and harmonization. Regrettably, however, first generation PRSs did not sufficiently position capacity development at the fore in actions to address poverty. Instead, capacity issues were addressed indirectly in an ad-hoc fashion, driven largely by donor interests and restricted to economic policy-making institutions, when in fact, the success of the PRSs depended significantly on the capacities of various state and non- state institutions involved in the implementation of the PRSs. The approach to capacity development should have been more systematic and holistic, recognizing constraints that are internal and external to the process. Further, the approach needed to be African-owned and led, and designed in the context of an African-articulated, overall strategic vision.

The design and content of the Second Generation PRSs (SGPRSs), therefore, needs to address these issues explicitly as they are key to sustainable capacity development, an efficient/effective performance of state and non-state institutions and the realization of the overall PRS objective of poverty eradication. The remainder of this paper elaborates further on these issues, pulling together lessons learnt on institutional needs, gaps, and best practices for the incorporation in the design and implementation of actions in the Second Generation Poverty Reduction Strategies.

2.   Vision and Objectives of Capacity Development in Africa

The main vision on capacity building in Africa is focusing on promoting regional development through thriving and integrated national economies, a functional public sector and vibrant non-state sector. More specifically, the objectives of capacity development include the following:

Creating capable institutions that should minimally deliver three core functions, namely (1) administrate efficiently and with a minimal bureaucracy, (2) control corruption, and (3) maintain transparency and accountability.

Meeting the Millennium Development goals of reducing Poverty in Africa by the year 2015. Presently, achieving the MDGs is increasingly becoming very arduous for most African countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite an acceleration of economic growth to about 4.4 per cent in 2004, this rate still lags far behind the 7 per cent growth rate needed to achieve this goal. Furthermore, debilitating conflicts and wars in Africa continue to exacerbate human deprivation, social crisis and poverty, governance systems remain feeble, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is threatening the existence of state and society in Africa, and overall, the progress of development remains sluggish on the continent.

Promoting Self-Sustained Development. The objective of promoting an open and outward-looking, self-sustained development is key to the future of Africa. This requires a good industrial base, modern, technology-driven knowledge capital good social and economic infrastructure and a conducive, investment climate.

3. Basic principles of Capacity Development

Previous efforts at promoting capacity development in Africa have had a limited impact. Continuing poverty and underdevelopment in Africa attest to this fact. The limited success of previous efforts was largely due to the defective methods and strategies adopted. Below are the basic principles to be followed in promoting a meaningful capacity development process in Africa.

Capacity Development must be comprehensive, locally owned, and should drive technical cooperation needs. Capacity building must be demand-driven and approached in a systematic, comprehensive way, whilst feeding into the country's overall developmental strategy. As such, technical cooperation needs must derive essentially from the identified requirements of the country by national stakeholders. Capacity development within a strategic national development framework would be inter-sectoral and should embrace all sectors of national life: public sector, academia, private sector, and civil society. Dialogue among those stakeholders should be a basis of determining national needs and priorities. Effective capacity development must furthermore be built on a clear understanding of existing human resource and labour market constraints, educational needs in relation to labour market trends as well as the science and technology needs of the country.

Capacity Development must promote the indigenous/national knowledge base. Knowledge is a major component and sustainer of capacity development. A sustained capacity building effort must not only tap from existing local knowledge but must also aim at enhancing it. This requires that 'imported' knowledge fits the institutional context of the country being assisted. The approach hitherto has been largely to side-step indigenous knowledge under the assumption that either such knowledge does not exist or is irrelevant.

Capacity Development has to be guided by clear strategies based on country- specific realities. While it may be possible to have generic capacity gaps across countries with similar characteristics or at the same stages of development, designing what works and how it should be implemented has to be country-specific. For instance, many African countries suffer from the problem of corruption, but the strategy aimed at tackling it must recognize local peculiarities. In other words, flagging 'best practices' is a good incentive for reform in non-performing countries, but it is not enough to promote change in those countries. The socio-cultural and political realities of each context have to be considered in designing effective capacity development strategies.

Given the scale of implementing the SGPRSs the targets and principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness have to be implemented. Especially the targets relating to aligning aid flows to national priorities, strengthening the capacity by providing coordinated support, using country public financial management and procurement systems, avoiding parallel implementation structures, untying aid and making it more predictable, and undertaking mutual assessments. Thus, donors must not only align themselves with national priorities and strategies, but also make use of existing institutions and capacity rather than circumventing or undermining it. Although straightforward in principle it has so far been rather difficult in practice to coordinate donor support effectively along these lines.

Mutual review and accountability on the part of external partners and recipient countries for capacity development assistance results. New accountability frameworks are needed for both donors and recipients for monitoring capacity development support programmes to African countries. There are two levels of accountability. The first is for the two major stakeholders - donors and African governments to be accountable to their constituencies on capacity support programmes. By this, the intended beneficiaries – the people most affected – must be engaged and have a decisive voice in determining priorities, taking action and judging actual progress of those programmes. For the donors the taxpayers in their respective countries need to have full information on the nature of assistance and impact of their country's capacity development programmes for Africa. The second level is that there must be a mutual review process between the donors and African governments in designing appropriate instruments and criteria for measuring the impact and outcomes of capacity development programmes. It is through this that adequate evaluation and stocktaking can be made and capacity development programmes be better designed.

4.   Capacity Development and the SGPRS

Capacity development and capacity development strategies must be central to the SGPRS. As mentioned above, capacity issues were only addressed indirectly and in an ad-hoc fashion in the first generation PRSs. As a consequence, they failed to give prominence to the fact that the success of the PRSs will ultimately depend on the capacities of various institutions involved in the implementation of the PRSs. Therefore, capacity development strategies must be holistic, taking into account the internal and external constraints on institutional capacity building at the local and national levels and particularly the issue of ownership and context. The prevailing thinking by Africans and their development partners alike is that the failure of various poverty reduction strategies and programmes across African states, with, of course, country and regional variations, are attributable to weak institutional capacities. Here we pay particular attention to state institutions- the legislature, the executive and the civil service.

The dearth of holistic approaches or strategies to capacity development resulted in the ad-hoc, uncoordinated and unsystematic approach to capacity development, compromising meaningful results. The lack of a holistic or coordinated approach to capacity development led to different development agencies and capacity building institutions charting their own focus and priorities within the same countries. The implications include the wastage of resources, duplication of efforts and the incoherence and distortion of capacity building in many African countries.

This policy stance also resulted in poor performance among decentralized institutions, as the strategies of the national and local institutions were sometimes at odds with one another and in other cases, resulted in duplication and inadequate utilization of resources. The call for holistic approaches to capacity development is therefore a concern, which must be taken into account at national and subnational levels as well as by development partners for effective and efficient resource utilization and management. In view of the fact that poverty reduction strategies must evolve towards an overarching framework based on public-private partnerships a holistic approach must also take into account the capacities of non-state institutions. The limited capacities of the state, even at its optimal level of performance, make this an imperative.

The first generation PRSs also suffered from a limited appreciation and understanding of the challenges posed by internal and external constraints in crafting reforms or strategies for capacity development. It is equally important to make a clear and informed analysis of when the capacity gaps are a function of either internal institutional constraints or due to external factors. In many instances, this type of analysis has not been conducted and consequently, reforms have failed to make the desired impact.

5.   Internal and External Constraints on Capacity Development in Africa

What are the core internal and external constraints that have impacted on capacity development in Africa? The internal factors are specific variables peculiar to organizational performance. These include the human, material, financial and legal needs of the organization. Issues of recruitment, training, remuneration, organizational infrastructure, and the work environment are all internal factors of capacity building. For instance, within the context of parliaments, issues concerning the educational qualifications of the legislators, the infrastructure and quality of support staff are internal capacity factors affecting the performance of the legislature as an institution.

The external dimension to capacity building refers to the environmental context of the institution, which may undermine its internal capacity or efficiency. This relates to the prevalent economic, social and political environment in the country. For instance, a well-trained and professional media may be constrained by a restrictive environment in the discharge of its duties. The media may resort to self-censorship in order to avoid any confrontation with the government. Similarly, a private business firm that may have the requisite human, material and institutional capabilities for efficient performance may be severely constrained by the general economic environment and poor infrastructure, increasing the cost of doing business. Excessive regulation, complex and long legal procedures for enforcing a contract and widespread corruption are further capacity constraints that prevent the creation of productive activities, the opening up of new markets and the stimulation of innovation to meet consumer demand and employment creation.

An environment that is conducive to capacity development consists of an open political environment that promotes the flow of public information and unhindered circulation of ideas, knowledge and the exchange of experiences, insights and best practices. It is an environment that has a public policy community made up of diverse groups and interests in society who are stakeholders in the public policy process and engage it through discussions, debates and political pressure. Indeed, capacity building is a complex interactive process in which there is a strong interface between the strength and efficacy of state institutions, which have the primary responsibility for creating law and order, promoting transparency and accountability in the public sphere and delivering social services, with how other institutions of governance especially non-state institutions like the civil society, media, and the private sector are organized and function.

Although a number of African states have made some strides recently in addressing some of the issues raised above, the ECA African Governance Report suggests that capacities of state institutions in Africa remain weak and largely ineffective. Indeed, Africa's governance challenge is first and foremost an institutional capacity challenge as key institutions including the public sector, the judiciary and the legislature generally lack the capacity to act effectively and independently whilst being infused with a culture of patrimonialism and corruption that undermine efficiency and productivity.

6.   Africa's Ownership of Capacity Development Strategy

The issue of ownership of Africa's development agenda is a pervasive one, which cuts across all institutional realms. It is part of the reason why previous efforts have not succeeded or not been sustained. Capacity development strategies that are home-grown are much more likely to address the right issues and be effectively implemented as they are designed to take into account the country context and specificities. In addition, they are more likely to overcome the following challenges:

- The supply driven nature of capacity building initiatives. In most cases, it is the donor countries and institutions that determine capacity priorities, whilst also undertaking the planning and execution of those initiatives. The recipient countries are often weak or passive partners in determining the capacity building agenda. Hence, national commitment and ownership in those capacity projects are either weak or non-existent, making their sustainability unlikely. Beyond driving the capacity agenda, African governments should also coordinate and manage external partner assistance, recognizing that all development cooperation affects capacity processes and outcomes. African regional bodies will also need to play a growing role in the development of regional and national capacity.

- Using Technical Assistance (TA) as a strategy for implementing capacity building projects has often had adverse effects on local capacity, morale and ownership of those initiatives. TA traditionally relies on foreign expertise and thereby ignores or denies the existence of local expertise that can be developed to carry out those projects. And where local experts have been engaged they are often in a subsidiary position and far less well remunerated than foreign experts, creating tensions and demoralizing local personnel.

- Wherever possible, the support lent to capacity building initiatives should be of a programmatic nature, making use of existing country systems to ensure a sustainable impact. Too many interventions left no organizational legacy and had elements of self-perpetuating the dependency on providers whilst costs were totally out of line with indicators of domestic resource value.

- Capacity development so far tended to be concentrated on isolated technical aspects of development with governance institutions largely being ignored. What we now know with hindsight is that the development of the capacity of governance institutions is central to 'getting policies right', having the political commitment to implement them and for the public service to have the requisite capacity to realize them.

7.   National Strategic Visions

It must be stressed, however, that Africa's quest for ownership must also be tied to a number of preconditions, such as addressing its democratic governance deficits, for example. There must be continued progress towards an open society, political liberalization, the rule of law, and effective public sector management, including meritocracy and adequate incentives. Given the importance of an engaged civil society, citizens should also focus on the processes and space available for enhancing societal engagement in decision-making and accountability.

But more importantly, capacity development should be approached strategically as a vital part of a national strategic vision for growth and poverty reduction. New approaches need to be undertaken, requiring significant change in the habits and mindsets. Both the Africans and their partners must evolve towards developing holistic national capacity development strategies genuinely addressing the needs of not only the state, but also of non-state institutions and actors. National strategies must include a more pragmatic approach, addressing not only indigenous capacity development issues but also the retention of skilled manpower and a reversal of the 'brain drain'. African governments must provide strategic visions, based on the socio-political context of their societies as a means of engaging a wide range of actors in the ownership and evolution of capacity development agendas. The capacity development strategies and interventions of partners, on the other hand, must be guided by the imperative to strengthen the systemic capacities of countries and sub-regional bodies to assume meaningful and sustainable ownership of their development agenda. Moreover, partners must seek to provide harmonized and predictable support around the key systemic priorities to ensure that technical assistance programmes and projects promote synergies and sustainable local capacities. An Action Plan must thus be devised which addresses the challenges highlighted above.

8.   Capacity deficits of non-state actors

The burgeoning growth of civil society witnessed over the last decade in Africa is largely due to an unprecedented expansion and liberalization of the political space which has significantly increased the pressure on the state to enhance its performance in terms of economic management and the delivery of services. These developments have also increased the pressure on non-state institutions that have to scale up their own capabilities and compete for aid or government resources in the case of public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Indeed, many civil society organizations (CSOs) in Africa suffer from serious internal organizational weaknesses, including limited human and material resources, as well as poor internal governance and accountability structures. Due to their limited capacity and in order to have better access to resources they also often exhibit a strong urban bias in their activities. Indeed, most CSOs do not have an independent financial base and depend almost exclusively on donor funding which limits their autonomy in setting their own agenda and priorities. Finally, few CSOs have been able to engage and maintain a constructive dialogue with African governments as their relationships are not institutionalized and often fraught with mutual suspicion.

With respect to the private sector, capacity challenges include a weak capital base especially for small-scale industries. The informal sector also suffers from poor entrepreneurial capacity. Weak, restrictive and unpredictable regulatory regimes as well as a lack of institutionalized mechanisms for consultation and partnership with the government are further capacity impediments for the private sector.

9. Capacity issues and the way forward

9.1   PRS AND PRIORITISING SECTORAL CAPACITY NEEDS

It would be reasonable to expect PRSs to help prioritize capacity needs. There is some evidence that some PRSs did in fact do so, especially in the social sectors. Some countries (Uganda, Malawi, Lesotho, more recently Kenya and Zambia) have introduced free primary education, resulting in a surge student enrolment. At the same time, however, constraints on the number of trained teachers and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS have often led to oversized classes and a decline in teaching quality. PRSs and sector plans for education have provided a useful forum in which these needs have been given more attention, and for which funding has been more forthcoming.

In the health sector, staff shortages have also become critical, given that the required skill levels are more exacting, requiring longer training periods, and given that this sector has been disproportionately affected by the 'brain drain' phenomenon. It will indeed be critical to adopt and adapt strategies that address the question of retention of skilled manpower and to identify modalities for reversing the brain drain. In the short run the skills in the Diaspora should be tapped for short-term assignments, and relocation of skilled staff within countries should also be considered. A distinction must indeed be made between actual skills deficiencies and the inefficient utilization of existing skills, which may be due to other constraints, such as bad governance. In the longer run, both the public and the private sector need to be expanded to be able to absorb qualified professionals whilst offering them sufficiently attractive career prospects.

9.2   AN ACTION PLAN: INTRODUCTION

There is strong evidence that capacity constraints in most of the African governments are seriously hampering institutional capability to undertake systematic analyses of the causes and consequences of poverty, design and implement appropriate policies, and monitor their impact. Although each country context differs in its complexity, need and level of governance capacity, there are a number of urgent capacity development needs cutting across most, if not all, of the countries.

In general these capacity gaps assume human, material, legal and institutional dimensions including internal constraints, such as recruitment, training and retention of skilled personnel and efficient mobilization and utilization of resources, but also external constraints such as the socio-political and economic environment of each country, including donor practices.

9.3   THE LEGISLATURE

The legislative institutions and processes appear to be suffering as much from structural deficits as from internal capacity gaps. Indeed, governments across Africa increasingly tend to circumvent legislative oversight, reducing the role of Parliament to rubberstamp predetermined government laws and initiatives. This gradual erosion has most probably undermined the capacity of many African parliaments to exercise their control function over the Executive as demonstrated most critically by their lack of performance in terms of policy analysis and review, budget control, and the initiation or amendment of new bills, as well as a lack of consultation between legislators and their constituencies.

Action Plans/Activities

- Parliaments must improve their consultative capacity with all stakeholders in society including NGOs, professional groups, trade unions, and the private sector.

- Parliamentary oversight committees and independent regulatory authorities, such as the office of the Ombudsman, the Auditor General and non-state oversight bodies must be well resourced with skilled manpower and material resources to function effectively.

- The skills and knowledge of the members of parliament must be upgraded with regard to parliamentary procedures, rules and responsibilities, through continuous training. These may involve in-house seminar/workshops and secondments to other more established parliaments for a specified period.

- Tailor-made training must be provided for legislators who serve on specialized committees in order to gain specialized competencies.

- The competence and capacity of parliamentary committees must be improved through recruitment of professional staff to service those committees and their access to an information and research base necessary to provide such support services.

- Documentation centres must be provided with appropriate research materials on legislative matters.

- Law Review Commissions should be established in countries where they do not exist.

Botswana could serve as an example of a good practice for strengthening the capacity of African legislatures since it has taken significant steps to improve the capacity of its legislature and law making in the country. These include:

(i) The establishment of the Research, Information and Public Relations Division within Parliament. The creation of the Research Division was intended to enhance the capacity of the MPs by providing them with information that could enable them to participate effectively in policy debates.

(ii) A new legislative chamber was completed in 1995 to improve the physical infrastructure available to the parliament.

(iii) Computers and Internet facility have been provided for legislatures, and parliamentary staff offices are networked, but these are not yet linked to constituency offices.

(iv) There are plans to create a wide area network (WAN) between the research division and the MPs' constituency offices to improve efficiency in communication.

(v) Better conditions of service are been given to legislators in order to attract better-qualified people into politics, which includes a free-rent cost accommodation to members of Parliament.

9.4 THE JUDICIARY

There are also indications that the independence and relevance of the Judiciary in Africa appears to have been severely undermined in many countries, conveying a deep sense of crisis affecting the judicial institutions. In general, the operational effectiveness and credibility of the judiciary in most African countries has been severely constrained because of the fact that the executive determines the appointment, promotion and remuneration of judicial officers; unattractive incentives, limited infrastructure facilities, insecurity of tenure and the disconnect between the traditional and modern judicial systems, among others. Comprehensive justice system reforms simplifying judicial procedures and restructuring the recruitment, promotion, training and remuneration modes for judges, magistrates, clerks and legal officers are urgently needed to reinvigorate the accountability, performance, and public trust in the Judiciary.

Action Plan/Activities

- Guaranteeing the tenure of judges, subject to removal by independent judicial commissions for egregious violations.

- Continuous professional training for judicial officers including judges, court clerks and court registrars, upgrading of their ICT knowledge and establishment of training centres/institutes for the judiciary.

- Introduction and implementation of computerized case management system at all levels of courts especially the national and regional courts.

- Increasing budgetary allocations and allowing the judicial branch more control of its resources.

- Establishment of a legal aid council to provide legal support services to the poor and indigent in society who cannot afford the cost of litigation.

- Infrastructure development for the judiciary in terms of adequate court buildings, installation of modern equipment.

- Strengthening of the judicial service commissions, endowing them with independent powers to formulate and enforce professional ethics, investigate, expose and discipline erring judges, magistrates and other judicial officers.

- Providing resources for the judiciary in order to give more access to most citizens by translating legislative proceedings and major reports into local languages.

- Providing resources for the judiciary in order to facilitate the integration of the traditional and modern judicial systems, where applicable.

- Reforming and resourcing the office of the Public Prosecutor in order to ensure that cases are investigated and promptly processed in facilitating the efficient dispensation of justice.

9.5 AFRICA'S MEDIA

The role of non-state institutions in fostering and strengthening governance institutions to become more accountable, transparent and effective is widely recognized across African states. The media, in particular has blossomed as evidenced by the exponential growth of private media outlets. In most countries save for a few, the legal restrictions that have impeded media effectiveness are on the wane. However a number of challenges remain, chief of which is their limited human and material capacity.

Action Plan/Activities

- Ensure the promotion of professional responsibility and ethical conduct for media practitioners through establishing a code of conduct developed and enforced by the media industry itself. This will require the establishment of independent and well-resourced non-profit professional bodies to monitor and enforce the professional conduct of media parishioners.

- Provide centres for in-service training or secondment to institutions or media houses for advanced training.

- Assist media houses to upgrade their ICT, research and training facilities for professional journalists.

- Support for publication of newspapers and magazines in local languages.

- Support initiatives designed to reform and change laws that curtail the operational freedom of the media.

9.6   PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT AND CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

The AGR findings reveal that the quality of public sector management in most counties remains very weak. The studies further confirm that the problems facing public sector institutions appear to be generic in nature across the board: poor incentives, lack of adequate skilled manpower, a culture of patron-client relationships that undermine meritocracy.

An improved public sector performance – which is contingent upon increased capacity, improved incentives, and better functioning of public institutions – is a critical element of good governance and a vehicle for economic and social development. However, the solution lies in finding the "right fit" as countries differ from one another in their comprehensiveness of public sector reforms. While some programmes should be limited to capacity building or institutional change parts of the public sector, others should aim at more comprehensive reforms restructuring the public sector, involving multi-level capacity building and institutional changes relating to the civil service functions. Civil service reforms are indeed essential to promote the development of an efficient, effective, transparent, accountable, ethical, and performance- oriented civil service.

Action Plan/Activities

- Strengthening civil service reform programmes including the creation of inter-agency mechanisms to harmonize and rationalize policies.

- Improving expenditure management and control systems, implementation of procurement reforms, development of medium-term planning systems, strengthening of internal and external audit, modernization of cash management and financial management information systems.

- Improving the governance of the human resource, including the development of prototype policies on human resources, time management, and remuneration, the implementation of results oriented appraisal systems, the development of human resource information systems, and support for subsidiary regulations such as code of ethics and professionalism.

- Improving the merit based system in personnel issues of recruitment, promotion and deployment.

- Improving accountability and transparency through a parliamentary oversight and anti-corruption commissions.

- Strengthening of top-management systems through training of senior managers and officials in strategic planning performance measurements, top-management development, and value for money management.

- Building the policy and institutional capacities of regional and sub-regional governments through the development of basic civil service structures and systems.

9.7   DECENTRALIZATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The key to ensuring an efficient and effective delivery of services to the poor is to give them both voice and choice in the delivery of services. At the local level, however, institutions of for governance and participatory development remain weak even though local governments are of extreme importance, serving as a major means of empowerment, stakeholder participation, and enhanced accountability. Decentralizing the provision of public services to sub-national units or governments brings politicians and policymakers closer to clients and is therefore expected to render services more effective.

Experience has shown, however, that publicly provided services in Africa are rarely efficient because there is little or no channel of accountability between the providers and clients. Encouraging the participation of the private sector to complement public service delivery provides choice and competition which are key elements in the accessibility of services to the poor.

Increasingly, decentralization and building the capacities of local government, civil society organizations and private sector partners are critical to the effective delivery of services that meets citizen's needs.

Action Plan/Activities

- Providing management training, including human resource policies, procedures, and plans as in critical areas of local government service delivery.

- Strengthening programmes and mechanisms to foster local government partnership with private and non-profit sectors (through sub-contracting) of service delivery.

- Technical assistance and training for CSO participation including the development of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and alternative strategies for strengthening accountability at the local level.

- Strengthening of the financial management systems at the local level across sector or line ministries.

- Providing technical assistance and training for the establishment of regulatory oversight structures and institutions to ensure the quality and standards of services.

9.8   HARNESSING TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS

The majority of Africa's population resides in the rural areas, where the reach of the modern state is weakest, and where they continue to adhere to traditional forms of governance. In many African countries, traditional authorities provide the link between large numbers of people and modern forms of elected government. Many such traditional modes of governance and aspects of indigenous leadership are in accord with basic tenets of modern democratic values or have adapted to contemporary political realities particularly in the area of dispute resolution. The household surveys of the country governance studies indicated, for instance, that citizens in many African countries tend to trust traditional forms of dispute resolution more than official, legal forms of litigation.

While it is generally accepted that traditional governance has a lot to contribute, not all African countries practice similar forms of traditional governance. Three possible models of traditional governance exist in Africa: the highly centralized or absolute monarchies; kingdoms with limitation on the exercise of powers by the kings; and consensual systems of decision making in which traditional leaders preside over assemblies but they are essentially first among equals. Whatever the model, there is ample evidence to suggest that there is room for flexibility in tapping their authority and structures to advance the development and ease the burden on resource-strapped governments in Africa.

Action Plan/Activities

- Strengthening management capacities of chiefs, Queen mothers, and village elders to participate in the activities to improve health and fight HIV/AIDS, rehabilitate schools and build sanitation facilities in their communities.

- Providing resources – through the creation of community/private/public trust funds – for socio-economic development of communities.

- Partnering with traditional authorities to mobilize and empower communities to own the projects and manage them.

- Measures to support and bolster traditional judicial systems, which are readily accessible to the public.

- Strengthening traditional alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in resolving land, succession, criminal and civil cases.

Annex I: Knowledge Capacity Development in Africa and addressing the brain drain

Enhancing the knowledge generating and application capacity to address Africa's development challenges is critical to the success of SGPRS. Additionally, since Africa's development strategy must be multi-tiered (at the country and regional levels) the capacity to tap multi-country policy and programme synergies in the framework of consensus and shared platform for an Africa-led action agenda, are critical. In these contexts, certain key issues, which are elaborated below, must be explicitly addressed in the SGPRS.

The brain drain – the out-migration of African expertise is one of the most serious capacity issues and most of it has to do with the state of African public universities and the incentive structure and more specifically levels of remuneration for a tradable service – knowledge provision. As the State's subsidies to public universities dwindled, the institutions had to adjust – an adjustment manifested itself in many forms, including most painfully a falling standard of education, which has been a matter of grave concern in many African countries, failure to maintain existing facilities and services, unimplemented capital development programmes, inability of libraries to subscribe to journals or stock prescribed text-books, laboratory facilities that are in derelict conditions and poor staff remuneration, with tenured professors and lecturers being compelled to live below the subsistence level, forcing them to spend much of their time implementing survival plans – ranging from the sale of hand-outs to students, tendering for petty contracts, dabbling in local and national politics, engaging in consultancy and, if all else fails, looking for employment opportunities in overseas countries – the brain drain.

The brain drain and deterioration of public universities are further fuelled by political instability, fear of persecution, and the apparent preference for non- African "experts" in designing and implementing development co-operation programmes. These forces have undermined professional satisfaction of African talent and driven highly competent university professors into exile. These "academic refugees" have subsequently found their way to Ivy League institutions in North America, and Western European knowledge institutions. According to the Association of African Universities, over 100 African universities have watched their learning resources evaporate in recent years. As reported by the World Bank for the period 1990 to 1995, about 23,000 lecturers emigrated each year from African universities to countries where conditions were more congenial. The vacancy rates in the academic units of African universities range from 34 per cent to 50 per cent. Of the 1,708 African Ph D degree awardees in USA and Canadian Universities between 1986 and 1996, only 687 returned to Africa. It is no wonder that the "typical" African Public University has had to fight in an unprecedented manner, for its life.

On the positive side, adjustment has also taken the form of heightened cost-consciousness and opening the education services to private, full-fee paying students. Another positive development is in the broader knowledge industry. Because of the gross demand and supply asymmetry between knowledge needs of different segments of society and actual delivery of different knowledge products by knowledge-producing institutions, the deteriorating university facilities, the impact of the poor campus environment and inadequate financial rewards to the teaching and research staff, professional network organisations are mushrooming as a means for intellectual survival and income supplementation. The proliferation and pluralisation of knowledge-producing organisations, is a healthy development. The Knowledge Networks, such as the African Economic Research Consortium, are located at the frontier between knowledge generation and use, playing a dual role of production, intermediation and brokerage. Thus the clash of ideas and innovation to meet unfulfilled needs and expectations of private economic and business endeavours, the State and civil society groups, is a sign of a healthy society and should be supported in development strategies. Further, private provision of higher education is on the rise because of unmet demand.

The discourse above lends weight to the evolving orthodoxy that stresses the importance of pro-actively harnessing the potential and dynamic synergies between the analytic and inventive potential of academic institutions, the entrepreneurial and productive capacity of the private sector, the regeneration associated with a dynamic civil society, and a well-informed, active policy community. Towards this goal, weak links and gross asymmetry between knowledge needs of different segments of society and the endeavours of knowledge-producing institutions undermine the potential benefits from collaboration, no matter how much one may extol the virtues of partnerships among knowledge-producing institutions, the private sector, civil society and the State. Thus, strengthening the links between, and loop around, different knowledge sources, particularly Universities, "knowledge brokers" or "knowledge intermediaries" and the State, private sector and civil society – the potential beneficiaries of scholastic outputs – are key to enhancing the synergies between local knowledge use and knowledge generation in order to sustain the latter and strengthen local knowledge producing institutions. By drawing on, and otherwise, reinforcing, each other's strengths, the university, the private sector, civil society, including networked knowledge organisations, and possibly, the state, would be making important contributions to knowledge-based competitiveness of Africa and the continent's development.

Annex II: The Role of ECA in strengthening the nexus of knowledge-producing institutions, the Private Sector, Civil Society and the State

In the context of the discussion above, there is a critical need to build the capacity, to strengthen the nexus of knowledge-producing institutions, the policy community, including the State, Civil Society, and the Private Sector. A key component of a programme of action must be addressing the issue of out- migration from Africa of African expertise. In this regard, African must turn Africa's Brain Drain into Brain Bank.

Turning Africa's Brain Drain into Brain Bank and strengthening the knowledge Capacity of African Countries. It was pointed out earlier that current statistics estimate that Africa is losing a substantial number of African professionals annually through emigration. So long as Africans live in a global economy, they are subject to the forces of demand and supply. Africans with extra skills today will clearly be looking at the global market especially with the despicable working conditions in many African countries and higher education institutions. Africa's development partners can help stem the tide of brain drain, facilitate the tapping of African Diaspora expertise and improve Africa's knowledge capacity. Some specific measures are suggested below.

Creation of a Programme on "Diaspora Peace Corps". Many Africans in the Diaspora with highly technical skills are willing to return to the continent to work for a period. Through a programme modelled on the US Peace Corp, except for the recruitment process, skills would flow in the form of technical services to the recipient African country, but not funds to the government to pay for the services. Since expatriate salaries paid in-country create glaring distortions and resentfulness from nationally based staff, the Diaspora experts would be paid directly in their adopted countries of residence from a pool of funds put together by a consortium of donors. Positions to be filled in various African countries would be circulated in the Diaspora professional networks, such as the African Economics and Finance Association of the USA or AFFORD of the UK. The beneficiary country authorities would do the recruitment. Experts do not necessarily work in their countries of origin, but any African country.

Supporting the creation of Regional Centres of Academic Excellence. Carrying out research and generating new knowledge in certain fields, especially, in science and technology, may be beyond the resources of many single African countries. It may require the pooling of resources by a number of countries. Highly advanced centres of knowledge production, research, innovation and technology in different areas may be created in the five regions of the continent. They may include areas of HIV/AIDS research, science and technology, agriculture, mass information technology etc. These centres of excellence could be attractive to Diaspora experts to come back to the continent for sabbaticals or longer periods of service. Academics and researchers at national universities could also benefit from secondment to these centres – a factor that could mitigate some out-migration of talent.

A digital enhancement programme in knowledge centres. Many educational institutions in Africa from primary to tertiary do not have access to digital technology. Without it, fast and current information and knowledge cannot be acquired. Donors may assist in this regard by having a special digital enhancement programme for African countries. A time bound programme that makes it possible for a large proportion of academic institutions and knowledge centres, especially at the tertiary level in Africa, to have access to digital information through provision of internet facilities, on-line journals, etc.

Strengthening the link between science and technology faculties of African universities and research centres to industry. Linking new knowledge to innovation in industry and business is key to the sustenance of the social value knowledge products and in this process, research, science and technology constitute the baseline for innovation and development. Without it, societies remain stagnant in technology and production. Capacity development assistance could be in the form of construction of model industrial parks (with the participation of local manufacturers) attached to all regional centres of excellence proposed above and to selected faculties and universities of science and technology. African countries requiring funding for this programme should show commitment to it through a 3 national budget vote for applied research and technology development, which if judiciously used, may be a good starting point. But this step would not be enough. The government must make concrete and concerted efforts to create synergy between research and technology centres and the private sector that may popularize and commercialize the results of research discovery.

Other areas proposed for additional support to the preparation and implementation of nationals PRSs equally emanate from the foregoing discussion and complement the proposals made above in strengthening the nexus of knowledge-producing institutions, the private sector, civil society and the policy community, including the state. They are two ongoing initiatives of ECA.

(i) The African Development Forum (ADF) process provides continuous and on- going interaction of policy-makers, civil society and research networks and has become an instrument for increasing the demand and relevance of knowledge outputs of Africa's knowledge hubs to current, pressing societal problems, such as HIV/AIDS which the ADF 2000 focused on. It has become a recognized leader in the process of reaching consensus on key African development issues and the formulation of regional action plans, even though most of these are implemented at the country-level. It has also become a mechanism for the better focusing of donor assistance to priority areas defined by African stakeholders. Additionally, because the intellectual work underpinning the discussions and output of ADFs is done largely by African research and

policy institutions and networked knowledge organizations, the ADF has become an effective conduit for enabling research that otherwise would be unknown to policy-makers, to have direct application in policy-making.

(ii) The Africa Knowledge Networks Forum (AKNF) launched in August 2000. AKNF is also a demand-driven, capacity building initiative, which complements the ADF process. It aims to facilitate knowledge-sharing and research partnerships between professional networks, and between them and key knowledge end-users, including policy-makers, trainers at institutions of higher learning, civil society organizations and the private sector. Through technical support for IT-enhanced networking as well as participation by the knowledge networks in regular programmes of ECA (including research, advisory services, statutory policy conferences, the ADF process, seminars and workshops) the Forum facilitates continuous and effective interaction between research networks and policy-makers. It continues to generate demand-driven research relevant to practical policy issues.

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