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**Building, Strengthening and Effectively  
Utilizing Human Capacities for Sustained  
Development in Africa**





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is now a widespread acknowledgement that human capacity constitutes the core of development. In all cases, human capacity is created and nurtured by human beings who must, in turn, be invested with their own capacities to be able to do so. This document examines the situation in respect of human capacity building and proposes an actionable agenda, at the national, subregional and regional levels, for building human, infrastructural and institutional capacities.

Through the assessment of the performance of some human development indicators such as education, training, literacy, health and nutrition, employment and incomes, etc., it has been clearly established in this document that human capacity in Africa is extremely weak. Moreover, proper incentives are lacking for the accumulation of this critical capacity. Weaknesses are demonstrated in the low levels of literacy, the quality and spread of education, the poor health and nutritional status of the population, high levels of unemployment and underemployment and the surging brain-drain. Similarly, safe water and sanitation facilities, access to affordable housing as well as good governance and popular participation, which enhance human capacity, are deteriorating. The institutional and infrastructural support is also weak and disintegrating.

Human security, growth and development in Africa, without a doubt, depend on the extent to which Africans are able to develop, strengthen and sustain human capacities. The document identifies the major human development priorities in Africa as:

eradicating illiteracy; increasing access to education at all levels; improving the health and nutritional status of the population; upgrading and maintaining basic infrastructural facilities for building and strengthening human capacities; and creating and sustaining productive employment and income generation, all of which are components of the strategy for the overall objective of alleviating poverty.

Strategies and policy reforms to achieve these major human capacity development priorities need to be initiated and implemented at the national, subregional and regional levels. At the national level, these need to focus on providing quality education, increasing the relevance of education and training to national needs, broaden access to education, in particular to improve the access of girls to education; strengthening existing science, technology and research institutions; applying explicit population policies compatible with national socio-economic goals; provide training and extension services and production technology to increase agricultural productivity and improve socio-economic infrastructure for rural development; support primary health care; and promote decentralization of development by supporting the decentralization of development process and devolution of power to lower administrators closer to the grass-roots communities.

At the subregional and regional levels, member States should formulate common strategies and approaches to common problems in the areas of building and strengthening human and institutional capacities. These include supporting and strengthening centres of excellence for specialized technical and professional skill training; harmonizing existing national, subregional and regional networks for research and development; establishing regional cooperation in the production of teaching and research materials and equipment; and creating information networks and strengthening common facilities for labour market, health, and NGOs.

Appropriate strategies and policy reforms need to provide adequate and assured resources for all areas of human capacity building. Public expenditure on all areas of human capacity building should increase from its current low average of 14 to about 30 per cent of government budgets and should thereafter be maintained at a rate above the population growth rate. Therefore, appropriate measures need to be taken at the national level to increase resources, redirect and appropriately target them towards human capacity building. However, national efforts for building and strengthening human capacities must be supported by complementary actions by international development agencies, bilateral partners and international NGOs. Official development assistance (ODA) should increase from its present level of 7 per cent to at least 20 per cent towards building and strengthening human capacity in Africa.

The growing consensus that building and strengthening human, infrastructural and institutional capacities must be at the centre of the development process and transformation must be put to practice. Therefore, African governments, indigenous NGOs and people's organizations, subregional and regional organizations must commit themselves to implement this objective. Thus, highest priority must be accorded to investing in people, building and maintaining infrastructures and improving institutional capacities. National, subregional and regional policies need to be re-oriented and resources redirected and increased in support of building and strengthening human capacities. These efforts will not succeed without the increased and assured commitment and support of Africa's partners in development, who have the responsibility of creating an external environment supportive of Africa's development efforts.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The primacy of human development has been stressed in a number of regional and international programmes and strategies on Africa, such as the *Lagos Plan of Action*, *Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery*, the *United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development*, the *Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Human-focused Approach to Socio-economic Recovery and Development in Africa*, and the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation*. This imperative has been further reinforced and articulated in concrete strategies and policies in a number of more recent ECA documents such as the *Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa*<sup>1</sup>; *Human Development Agenda for Africa in the 1990s*<sup>2</sup> and the *African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa*.<sup>3</sup> While the human being is at the centre, without adequate capacities and endowments, he/she cannot effectively benefit from or meaningfully contribute to this process.

2. While there may be a need for capacity to be created to ensure the successful implementation of economic reforms and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), there is no doubt that there is a serious lack of capacity to forge ahead with Africa's socio-economic transformation and sustained and sustainable long-term development. A number of strategic development objectives have also been set by African Governments, particularly in the Lagos Plan of Action whose attainment has yet to be realized primarily because of the inability, to date, to use effectively the existing development capacities, however limited they may be. For capacity building for development must start somewhere, and the fullest utilization of existing endowments is a necessary condition.

3. "Development capacity", i.e. the capacity to initiate and sustain the socio-economic development process, is the existence in society of a mix of attributes and endowments that catalyse an interplay of forces to bring about steady material, economic, social and political improvements in society, and continually raise the quality of life of the people.

4. What are the constituents of "development capacity"? They are the existence within society of:

(a) Skills, attitudes and knowledge that can be utilized to create capital and technology; transform the physical environment into a haven for survival and development; transform and add value to natural resources to serve the material needs of the people; build, develop and effectively manage social, economic, political and cultural institutions for the greater good of the people; create and maintain an enabling environment to promote individual and collective productivity, self-expression, self-fulfilment and a healthy discourse on the common good; and create and maintain mechanisms for promoting the growth of knowledge and regenerating social norms and values;

(b) Physical infrastructure to facilitate the smooth functioning of the State, society and the economy;

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Human Resources Development: "A Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa", ECA, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> ECA: "Human Development Agenda for Africa in the 1990s", E/ECA/CM.19/9, Addis Ababa, April 1993.

<sup>3</sup> ECA: "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa", E/ECA/PHSD/MC/94/5, January 1994.

(c) Institutions that in turn create, maintain and continuously strengthen capacity; ensure that the fabric of society and the body politic remain intact and grow from strength to strength; and provide guarantees of social, political, economic, cultural and religious protection to all, especially minority groups, the weak, the vulnerable and the needy;

(d) A political, cultural, economic and social environment as well as a public policy environment that enables people to thrive materially and morally;

(e) An enlightened, benign and dedicated leadership that is committed to justice, fair play, good governance, the maintenance of social and political equilibrium, socio-economic development and the common good.

5. In all cases, this development capacity is created and nurtured by human beings, who must, in turn be invested with their own special capacities to be able to do so. This paper examines the situation in respect of human capacity building in Africa with a view to proposing an actionable agenda and a pro-programme of action at the regional, subregional and national levels.

## II. STATUS OF HUMAN CAPACITY IN AFRICA\*

6. There is now a widespread acknowledgement of the fact that human capacity constitutes the core of development capacity. Human capacity is built within, and derives from, the population itself. It is therefore fitting to begin this analysis with an examination of the demographic characteristics of the continent with a view to ascertaining the extent to which the population is endowed with the constituents of capacity required to catalyze and sustain the socio-economic development process.

7. Africa's total population in mid-1992 was approximately 644 million people. Country populations ranged from less than a million people to more than 50 million people.<sup>4</sup> It is expected that the population will grow at a rate of 2.9 per cent between 1990 and the year 2000. With this rate of growth, the total population of Africa will reach 1.3 billion people in 2018.

8. Data on the geographic distribution of the population shows that Africa is urbanising rapidly: in 1970 some 23 per cent of the population lived in urban areas, this increased to 34 per cent in 1990 and is projected to reach 41 per cent by the year 2000. An urban population growth rate of 4.9 per cent is approximately 70 per cent greater than the average total population growth rate. With the present structure of the African economy, and assuming no significant change therein, these trends have dire implications for the region's food security as well as for the overall health of the African economy.

9. While Africa is predominantly an agricultural and pastoral region, the total land area suitable for agriculture is only 5.0 per cent. Agricultural land per capita has declined from 2.82 hectares in 1970 to 1.53

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\*This section draws heavily on ECA "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa", E/ECA/PHSD/MC/94/5, Addis Ababa, 20-21 January 1994. Adopted by the first meeting of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Human Development.

<sup>4</sup>ECA, "African Socio-Economic Indicators 1992", Addis Ababa, 1993, p.2.

ha in 1992.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the population pressure, the availability of agricultural land is further being constrained by poor land use, the prevalence of backward technology and poor infrastructure.

10. If there is strength in numbers, then the African population and its current and projected rates of growth augur well for the continent's development. Unfortunately, the mere size of a population does not necessarily determine the strength of that population. There are certain endowments and attributes which invest a people with the "strength", the capacity, to initiate and sustain the development process. In the absence of these endowments and attributes, a large population could be a liability unto itself. People must have themselves transformed from development liabilities to development assets. And here, the distinction is being made between people or human beings and human resources, and between population and the stock of human resources. Thus, a country may have a very large population yet register shortages of human resources, as is the case throughout Africa. For as Frederick Harbison put it,

*"Human resources - not capital, nor income, nor material resources - constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organisation and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop any-thing else."*<sup>6</sup>

11. It is evident therefore, that human capacity is enhanced to the extent that education and training systems are able to produce and improve on the skills, knowledge and attitudes available to society. Human capacity also finds strength in an enabling policy and productive environment. It is worth assessing the current status of human capacities in Africa, through an analysis of the performance of the human development indicators such as education, employment, health and nutrition. Equally, an analysis will be made of the strength of the institutional and infrastructural support for human capacity building in Africa.

#### A. Education and human resources

12. There are three pre-conditions of socio-economic development. The first is the spread of literacy, which begins the process of transforming people from development liabilities to development assets. The second is the capacity to expand and continuously upgrade and improve knowledge and skills. And the third is the existence of opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills available in society towards socially productive ends, by allowing them to freely interact with physical and natural resources in ways that transform and add much value to these resources to serve society's needs. These three pre-conditions are created or influenced in large measure by a nation's education system. They are nurtured by a fourth: the existence in society of the right mix of attitudes that pre-dispose people to resourcefulness, dedication, innovation, inventiveness and commitment to the common good. These attitudes are also, to a certain extent, a product of the education system. When these three pre-conditions, crowned by the fourth exist and inter-act sufficiently in society, then that society is said to possess a strong human capacity for development.

13. As has already been mentioned, it is the existing human capacity that determines how effectively socio-economic transformation can be achieved. That capacity is embodied in the quality of human resources available

<sup>5</sup> ECA, "African Socio-economic Indicators 1992", op.cit., p.34.

<sup>6</sup> Harbison, Frederick H., "Human Resources as the Wealth of Nations", New York, OUP, 1973, p.3.

in society. The lower that quality, the more unattainable would be that society's development goals. The existing human resources, in terms of skill levels and stocks, is therefore, the principal determinant of sustained socio-economic development. And in all cases, it is the education system that produces these resources. The role of education in the process of economic growth and socio-economic development of any society is therefore paramount.

14. In Africa, one primary development constraint and capacity depressant is lack of education. Access to education at all levels continues to be limited in spite of the bold and dedicated efforts, which African countries have made in this regard, particularly during the first two decades after independence. This is evident from the declining growth rates in gross enrolments at all levels since the early 1980s. Between 1965 and 1970, total enrolments in Africa grew at an average annual rate of 5.6 per cent.<sup>7</sup> Between 1970 and 1980, this rate rose to an impressive 8 per cent.<sup>8</sup> However, between 1980 and 1991, the rate of increase plummeted to 2.8 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Although the rate of increase in enrolment declined at all levels of education, the drop was most pronounced at the primary education level where it fell from 7.2 per cent between 1970 and 1980 to 2.2 per cent between 1980 and 1991.<sup>10</sup> During the same periods, secondary school enrolment increased at an average annual rate of 11.7 and 5.1 per cent respectively, while the tertiary level increased at 10.7 and 5.7 per cent respectively.<sup>11</sup>

15. Given that the primary school-age population is increasing at an average annual rate of 3.3 per cent, a 2.2 per cent increase in enrolment will definitely not help African countries meet their objective of universal primary education by the year 2000 or even by 2010. Only 72 per cent of the children of the relevant age group were enrolled in primary school in 1990 compared with 79 per cent in 1980.<sup>12</sup> In some countries the situation is worse, since this is a regional average. Furthermore, the shares of secondary and tertiary levels in the total gross enrolments are lower in Africa compared to other regions of the world. For example in 1991, these shares for Africa were about 23 and 2.5 per cent compared to 45.3 and 12.4 per cent for Europe; 35 and 13.3 per cent for America; 21.5 and 7.2 per cent for Latin America and the Caribbean; and 31.7 and 4 per cent for Asia respectively. It can thus be seen that there is a serious problem of access to education, which is at the root of Africa's problem of human capacity building and social equity.

16. A related problem is one of spread among the three levels: Africa's education system resembles a pyramid, with a broad base at the primary level moving sharply through the secondary level to a narrow apex at the tertiary level. Only about 23 per cent of primary school graduates move on to secondary education and

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<sup>7</sup> UNESCO, "Statistical Yearbook, 1985", Paris: UNESCO, 1986, Table 2.2. See also World Bank "Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion", Washington, D.C.: Oxford University Press, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO, "Statistical Yearbook, 1993", Paris: UNESCO, 1994, P. table 2.2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Donors to African Education "Newsletter", Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning 5 (2), 1993, p.1.

less than 3 per cent of those who leave the secondary school go on to tertiary education. This presents special problems of capacity as the economy is flooded from the primary schools, with people possessing low levels of skill and knowledge and, from the inadequate tertiary institutions, with a poor mix of technical and vocational skills which cannot sustain modern production systems, with their stress on specialization of tasks.

17. To compound matters further, recent education policy under structural adjustment insists on an expansion of access to primary and basic education largely at the expense of secondary and tertiary education. The justification for this is that the most productive level of education in Africa is the primary level, and that the higher up the educational ladder one goes, the less productive that education becomes.<sup>13</sup> What the implementation of this policy means is that, over time, the African economy will be saturated with primary school graduates with few skills required by the integrated and technology-driven global economy. Without an adequate mix of technical and production skills, as well as abundant stocks of skilled labour, bottle-necks in the development of the industrial and service sectors are inevitable, resulting in stunted economic growth. It is largely for this reason that the phenomenon of educated unemployment has already been manifesting itself in our countries. It is a well-known fact that illiterates and semi-literates cannot constitute the human resources base for putting African agriculture on a sustainable basis through technological transformation in the region to increase yields. The engine of sustained growth, structural transformation and development in modern society resides in the middle and high-level manpower in science, technology, management, medicine, agriculture, etc. Producing this manpower is the job of the tertiary education system in any country. Therefore, while it is essential to democratize education by increasing access to it at all levels, it is equally vital to ensure that the skills and knowledge base for development is built and made solid, by expanding and strengthening higher education.

18. Although enrolments at the third level increased tremendously in relative and in absolute terms - from 21,000 in 1960 to 437,000 in 1983 and over half a million by 1993 - this is still very small for Africa's population of 644 million people as well as for the continent's development needs. In fact Africa's under-development is to a large extent re-enforced by the serious shortages of developmental skills within the regional economy. To further compound matters, there is the problem of quality and relevance of education received. Course offerings are biased in favour of the liberal arts and away from the critical disciplines of science, engineering, technology, management etc. It is therefore not surprising that the number of scientists and engineers per million inhabitants as well as the number of people engaged in scientific and technological research and development in Africa are the lowest in the world. In 1985, Africa's stock of scientists and engineers was only 3,451/million inhabitants compared with 8,263/million for developing countries as a group; 11,686/million for Asia; and 9,745 and 11,759/million inhabitants respectively for Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>14</sup> With such a low endowment of scientists and engineers, Africa's capacity to develop and apply science and technology for socio-economic development is seriously circumscribed.

19. No scientist, engineer or technician can function without the back-up of technicians in his field. In the world of work, the normal ratio of technicians to professionals is 4-5:1. This means that for every professional scientist or engineer produced by Africa's higher educational institutions, four to five technicians would have to be trained to guarantee the effectiveness of that one professional. It also means that capacity to train

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<sup>13</sup> The World Bank raised this proposal in the context of the need to maintain progress towards universal enrolment and the need to improve the quality of education in the face of limited fiscal resources. World Bank, World Development Report 1988, Washington, D.C., OUP, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> UNESCO, "Statistical Yearbook 1991", op.cit.

technicians should be four to five times larger than that to produce professionals. In Africa, the technician-to-professional ratio is reversed. In Nigeria for example, the pattern of enrolment in universities and polytechnics in 1988 would give almost nine professionals to one technician in agriculture, 1.3 engineers to one technician and three medical scientists to one medical technician and other support personnel, an illustration of the poor mix of skills output of African education systems.<sup>15</sup>

20. The research output in African universities has suffered serious declines in the last 15 years. This has been caused by the diversion of resources away from higher education where the bulk of developmental research - R&D - should ideally take place. In addition, inadequate funding of research in African countries has rendered Africa's researchers over-dependent on outside sources for funding. Without doubt, those out-siders would fund research in only those areas that are of interest to them. Another way of stating the problem would be to say that the lion's share of Africa's research agenda responds to the interests of others. Research has therefore contributed virtually nothing to socio-economic transformation and development.

21. The quality of education has also continued to decline since the early 1980s. Reduced budgetary allocations to the education sector due to the implementation of SAPs and the tremendous drops, in real terms, of these allocations have caused massive reductions in the supply of essential teaching and learning material, such as books, laboratory equipment, simple chemicals and reagents. Deteriorating and unsatisfactory conditions of service as well as low salaries paid at irregular intervals are forcing qualified and experienced teaching and research staff to quit the profession.<sup>16</sup> As a result, Africa's stock of teachers declined by almost 50 per cent between 1980 and 1988. In Europe and America, the stock increased by 66.67 and 11.11 per cent respectively.<sup>17</sup>

22. This situation has taken a heavy toll on the quality of education in Africa. Increasingly, therefore, the education system itself is making fewer - not more - contributions to capacity building in Africa.

#### B. Employment, manpower and incomes

23. Efficiency in the utilization of human capacity is manifested in high employment levels. In Africa, imbalances in the utilization of human resources provide the strongest evidence to show extreme weaknesses in human capacity. Underemployment, which signifies relatively low worker productivity, affects the majority of rural producers and the urban workforce in the informal sector as well as government workers in some countries.<sup>18</sup> Open unemployment of the order of 50 per cent in some countries, is growing rapidly and becoming a serious social issue. The causes of growing unemployment are the weak development capacities existing on the African continent today.

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<sup>15</sup> See Adebayo Adedeji, "A review of education policy in Nigeria: 1980-1990", Addis Ababa, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> ECA, "Strengthening the viability of the African university in the 1990s and beyond", Ezulwini Valley: ECA, PHSD, Report of Senior Policy Workshop, Swaziland, 25-29 May 1992.

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO, "Statistical Yearbook, 1990", Paris: UNESCO, 1992, Table 2.2.

<sup>18</sup> ECA, "Measures for the stimulation, development and promotion of indigenous entrepreneurial capability in Africa", Addis Ababa: ECA/PHSD, Development Management Series No. 1, 1992.

24. While the labour force is growing at an annual rate of 3 per cent, employment growth is estimated at no more than 2.4 per cent per annum. Open unemployment has therefore increased from a low of 7.7 per cent in 1978 to 22.8 per cent in 1990 and is projected to reach 30 per cent by the year 2000 if present trends continue.<sup>19</sup> Unemployment is especially high in urban areas and among the youth, though its incidence is also on the increase in rural areas where it is partially disguised by underemployment. The high rate of migration of the rural population to urban areas, fuelled by the collapse of agricultural sector and rural services, exacerbated by recurring poor weather conditions, have worsened the unemployment problem in urban areas.

25. The educational system has also been making more and more important contributions to the problem. Graduates of the African primary school enter the labour market with hardly any skills to offer. Employers are finding it increasingly difficult to use the products of the African educational system; consequently, unemployment is creeping higher up the educational ladder and is now affecting large numbers of university graduates in many an African country.<sup>20</sup> This is the clearest manifestation of the failure of the region's capacity building systems.

26. Additionally, retrenchment and a freeze on employment in the civil service and State-owned enterprises as part of public expenditure cuts associated with the implementation of SAPs have also contributed to the rapid growth of unemployment. More importantly, the weak fiscal situation and the faltering economies of most countries made it difficult for them to support the continuous large absorption of graduates into the civil service. Public sector employment, accounting for 50 per cent of formal sector employment during the 1980s, is expected to decline to between 30 and 35 per cent in the 1990s.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, very few redeployment programmes have been initiated or facilitated, thereby adversely affecting the human resource situation in the region. Public sector employment cuts are justified on the argument that the present arrangement is economically inefficient. However, given the realities of the extended family and the heavy dependency burden on the employed,<sup>22</sup> policies that deliberately cause more unemployment are, socially, extremely inefficient, and contribute to increasing poverty, malnutrition, morbidity and a further weakening of capacity.

27. Underemployment in the rural areas and in Africa's large informal sector is itself a result of capacity weaknesses. People work long hours only to produce relatively little in volume and in value terms. This is because, most of all, they lack the skills and knowledge to be more productive; they have little or no access to modern production technology, tools and equipment; and they lack access to inputs that enhance productivity such as high-yielding seeds, fertilizer, insecticide, etc. Lack of access, therefore (to education and training, tools, equipment and production inputs), acts as a major capacity depressant in the African economy.

28. In the formal sector of the economy - the organized private sector, government and the civil service, and in the State-owned enterprise sector - wage and salaried workers have to be given adequate inducement to be productive through attractive wages, salaries and other fringe benefits. Remuneration policies should also be cognizant of the need to remain competitive and to attract and retain the brightest and the best. In Africa,

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<sup>19</sup> ILO/JASPA, "African Employment Report 1992", *op.cit.*, p.22.

<sup>20</sup> ECA, "Measures for solving educated and graduate unemployment in African countries", Addis Ababa: ECA/PHSD/HRD/92/2[(b)(viii)], Studies in Human Resources Development No. 1, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> ILO/JASPA, "African Employment Report 1992" *op.cit.*, p.xii.

<sup>22</sup> In Africa's towns and cities, one working person supports between 8 and 10 other people.

the concern for attracting high-calibre manpower, given the realities of an attractive international skills market and for promoting efficiency and high productivity, has all but fizzled away with the economic crisis and the application of SAPs. Real income levels have been so dramatically reduced that it is a rare African country where a civil servant can live decently on his or her salary alone. Some countries have actually reduced the nominal and real wages and salaries of their public servants while in other countries, civil servants are paid several months late due to tight fiscal and monetary policies. All told, real wages in the region fell by 10 per cent between 1980 and 1990 due largely to repeated devaluations of national currencies and high inflation rates. In many African countries, real wages fell below nationally defined poverty lines.<sup>23</sup> With this situation, it has become difficult to retain high quality manpower in the formal sector, or to maintain high levels of productivity especially in government.<sup>24</sup> The end-result has been the continuous migration of skilled workers and managers from Africa to Western Europe and North America - the so-called brain-drain. Paradoxically, the World Bank estimates that foreign technical advisors working in sub-Saharan Africa, cost US\$4 billion annually in official development assistance (ODA). Primarily for these reasons, but also because of a stressful political and social environment, the brain-drain from African economies, which involves the loss to other regions of the world of badly needed middle- and high-level manpower, has surged unabated.

29. The phenomenon of brain-drain has led to an erosion of capacity which African countries can ill-afford. Already many governments are lamenting the loss of capacity in their public services. Quality has suffered tremendously - the World Bank declares that *"the demand for professionalism must be created"*,<sup>25</sup> whereas output, dedication and commitment have also dropped on account of the need for many public servants to engage in secondary activities - "moonlighting" - to supplement their meagre salaries, to the detriment of the job for which they were hired and are being paid. With these disabling working conditions prevailing in Africa, capacity for formulating and prosecuting development policy has become severely circumscribed, to the extent that a huge void has been created which outside interests have quickly moved in to fill in the form of policy interventions from the Bretton Woods institutions as well as an army of technical assistance personnel. Measures should urgently be put in place to create an environment that is socially, economically, politically and professionally enabling to slow down and, possibly, reverse this heavy outflow of skills.<sup>26</sup>

#### C. Literacy and basic education

30. It must be acknowledged that the problem of illiteracy has engaged the special attention of every African Government since independence. In fact, the 1961 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Conference of African Ministers of Education set a target - the year 2000 - for the total eradication of illiteracy from the continent. Only a few years to reaching that target, the objective is far from having been met. In fact, what has been achieved is a significant reversal of the gains attained in the first 20 years of independence: in 1970, gross enrolment ratios at the primary level of education stood at only 46 per

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<sup>23</sup> ILO/JASPA, "African Employment Report 1990", Addis Ababa; ILO/JASPA, 1991, p.39.

<sup>24</sup> See Crispin Grey-Johnson, "An enabling environment to retain Africa's high-level manpower", in Adedeji, Rasheed, Morrison, The Human Dimension of Africa's Persistent Economic Crisis, Hans Zell, London, 1990.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>26</sup> ECA, "Enhancing the interface between government policy-making entities, universities and research institutions in support of economic reform and development in Africa", Rabat: ECA, 21-25 September 1992.

cent. By 1980, they had jumped to an impressive 77 per cent from where they started the downward slide, such that by 1987 they had dropped by 5 percentage points.<sup>27</sup> Although illiteracy rates were brought down from 59.1 per cent in 1985 to 52.7 per cent in 1990, in absolute terms, illiteracy in fact increased from 133.6 million to 138.8 million adults during the same period.<sup>28</sup> The fact that resources were diverted away from literacy, adult and non-formal education programmes, certainly contributed to this situation. Today, the adult literacy rate of less than 50 per cent in Africa is the lowest in the world. By UNESCO's projections, sub-Saharan Africa will be the only region in the world where the number of illiterates will increase by the turn of the century. In the year 2000, an estimated 147 million illiterates will inhabit the African continent. These statistics on illiteracy coincide with those on poverty which show that sub-Saharan Africa will be the only region where poverty would have increased by several tens of million people by the year 2000.<sup>29</sup>

31. It is a known fact that most of Africa's illiterates are in the rural areas and engaged in agricultural production activities. Their lack of literacy and their low skill levels obviously limit their capacity to apply science and technology to production in ways that would increase their own productivity and total agricultural output on the continent while protecting ecological resources. This in turn imposes a serious constraint on attempts to obtain food self-sufficiency within the region.

32. Illiteracy retards the pace of agricultural development. Studies in South and South-east Asia have amply demonstrated that illiterate agricultural producers are less effective in seeking and applying new and more complex but more productive ideas and techniques. In one study,<sup>30</sup> while per acre production per capita in India increased by 305 lbs between 1940 and 1970, in Japan, the increase during the same period was 1,665 lbs, in spite of the fact that there was less land available for cultivation per capita in Japan than in India. The difference in productivity between Japanese and Indian farmers was traced to the difference in educational and skill levels, which allowed Japanese farmers to more effectively apply science and technology to production. Many other studies have indicated that productivity increases in agriculture correlate positively with increased literacy and education levels.

33. It therefore, stands to reason that literacy and basic education must first reach the majority of Africa's rural producers before Africa's priority of priorities in socio-economic development - the modernization of agriculture to attain food self-sufficiency - can be achieved. But added to its direct impact on agricultural productivity, literacy is important for its other socio-cultural benefits (improved health and nutrition levels, greater openness to new development ideas, a greater tendency to put aside anti-developmental beliefs and practices, more responsible parenthood, etc.)

34. Development cannot occur without democracy which may be defined as the existence of opportunities for people to participate freely in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation. The extent to which people are able to so participate determines the pace at which they are able to bring about positive changes in their conditions of living. Popular participation can be instigated through the active institution of government policies and programmes of mass mobilization, as has been the case in China, or through more

<sup>27</sup> UNESCO, "Basic Education and Literacy: World Statistical Indicators", table 7, p.9, Paris, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, table 24, p.41.

<sup>29</sup> World Bank, World Development Report 1990, OUP, Washington, D.C., 1990, p.139.

<sup>30</sup> Owen and Shaw, Development Reconsidered, Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., USA, 1974.

passive means, such as simply creating an environment that is enabling enough to allow the people the leverage to participate in economic production and in social and political discourse within their communities. In either case, the ability of people to benefit from opportunities presented to them to be fully involved in socio-economic and political decision making is circumscribed by their education and skill levels.<sup>31</sup>

35. It has already been argued that education is a major determinant of worker productivity levels. But, over and above the impact of education on production is the pervasive effects of education and literacy on the lives of people as individuals and collectively, as a community. The effectiveness of popular participation in promoting socio-economic development is predicated on the level of awareness, the ability to be analytical and critical and the level of group consciousness among a people. True democracy, which is a precondition of development, cannot occur in situations of mass illiteracy. And even when structures and institutions are created for the exercise of democracy, the people's ability to take advantage of these democratic provisions of government will be extremely limited by their level of education and literacy. Literacy thus becomes a precondition of democracy which is, in turn, a *conditio sine qua non* of socio-economic development.

36. Women, refugees, the handicapped, youth and rural dwellers are particularly vulnerable to adverse social and economic conditions in African countries. The gross enrolment declines in the education sector during the difficult decade of the 1980s affected girls and children in rural areas and the urban peripheries. The austerity measures which caused a withdrawal of resources from important programmes such as basic, adult and non-formal education programmes had their severest impact among rural dwellers. Refugees and displaced persons suffer a fair amount of neglect as far as their educational needs are concerned. Yet when taken together, the vulnerable groups constitute the majority of the African population. Propagating literacy among them and raising their skill levels will render them more productive, more confident of their capabilities and thus less vulnerable to exploitation and neglect.

37. The urban-based informal sector is dominated by women and youth. This is a low-productivity sector of the modern African economy. Productivity levels in this sector are low, thanks in part to the high incidence of illiteracy and the low levels of education prevalent within it. Yet it has been shown to be an important contributor to GDP, to the provision of incomes, goods and services to the rural areas and to the formal sector of the African economy. The informal sector, which is dominated by the vulnerable groups, could be rendered significantly more productive and be instrumental in forging a stronger integration of the African economy if illiteracy were removed among its operators and if skill levels were raised higher.<sup>32</sup> For example, women abound in informal sector, cross-border, intra-African trade. The incidence of illiteracy among them is very high. If this were reduced by 50 per cent, productivity among them could double. Productivity increases of this magnitude have salutary multiplier effects on employment creation, income increases and distribution and overall efficiency within the African economy.

38. It is thus an imperative that literacy levels be raised in society if human capacities are to be built in any meaningful way. The history of human development shows that only when the spread of education has reached

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<sup>31</sup> See "African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha 1990)", E/ECA/CM.16/11, February 1990. To promote popular participation in development, ECA organized, in cooperation with NGOs, African Governments and the United Nations an international conference in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in February 1990 which adopted the African Charter.

<sup>32</sup> See ECA, "Policies and programmes for creating employment and raising incomes in the informal sector", ECA/PHSD/HRP/90/12[6.2(i)(OA)(a)], October 1990.

a threshold level in society can there be any guarantees of social and economic development for that people on a sustained basis. The minimum requirement for the educational foundations to be laid to support development is that literacy should reach at least three-fourths of the population. As a Nigerian Federal Minister of Education once put it, *"it is not a mere co-incidence that all the countries that have 80-90 per cent literacy are advanced and developed, while all the countries that have 60-100 per cent illiterates are underdeveloped - the less literate, the less developed"*.<sup>33</sup>

39. Literacy empowers people to make more meaningful and positive contributions to the creation and full utilization of political, economic and social structures and infrastructures, to be more receptive to external and internal development stimuli and more amenable to being transformed from development liabilities into development assets.

40. The adult literacy rate of less than 50 per cent in Africa is the lowest in the world. In 1990, the adult literacy rate of males was 61 per cent and that of females 41 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 86 and 67 per cent respectively in East Asia and the Pacific and 87 and 83 per cent respectively for Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>34</sup> The problem of limited access to education will further accentuate these already high rates. Thus, despite the continued strong commitment by most African Governments to the goal of universal literacy by the year 2000, prevailing trends in this regard are far from encouraging.

#### D. Food and nutrition

41. Access to adequate food and nutrition in Africa, a fundamental condition for human capacity building, is progressively being reduced. Once a net exporter of food, the region since the 1980s has become a net importer of food. This trend has persisted into the 1990s. Today, about one quarter of Africa's food requirements are met through imports from abroad particularly food aid. While drought, desertification and other natural calamities have contributed to the decline in food production, unfavourable policy environment for agricultural and rural development as well as political instability are also important causes of the food crisis in Africa.

42. As a consequence of the declining food production per capita, the daily calorie intake since the 1980s has been approximately 93 per cent of normal requirements of 1600-1700 calories. The number of people in the continent who were unable to obtain the minimum daily requirements of 1600-1700 calories increased by 70 per cent, from 99 million in 1980 to over 168 million in 1990-1991.<sup>35</sup> This situation has led to an increase in the incidence of severe malnutrition, particularly protein energy malnutrition (PEM) and iron and vitamin deficiency disorders. PEM which retards both the growth and development of the child, and can cause serious impairment of mental and intellectual functions in children and adults<sup>36</sup>, affected about 30 per cent of Africa's under-5 years old children in 1990. This depresses the learning capacity of school children due to hunger-

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<sup>33</sup> Babatunde Fafunwa, Aliu, Welcome Address at the Launching of the 1990 International Literacy Year and the Blueprint for Mass Literacy, Lagos, 1990.

<sup>34</sup> UNICEF, "The State of the World's Children 1994", New York: UNICEF, 1994, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> FAO, "The State of Food and Agriculture", Rome: FAO, 1992.

<sup>36</sup> OAU/UNICEF, "Africa's Children, Africa's Future: Background Sectoral Papers", New York: UNICEF, 1992, p. 37-38.

induced absent-mindedness in class and due to repeated absence from school activities due to recurring illness. This speaks for the cumulative damage being done on African human capacities by the chronic lack of food self-sufficiency. In the adult population, malnutrition results in low worker productivity due to high morbidity rates. As food is perhaps the most important basic need for human survival and welfare, chronic food insecurity and malnutrition have contributed to the relentless deterioration in overall human security and the quality of life in Africa.

#### E. Health

43. The health sector has been adversely affected as a result of the unprecedented economic crisis that has affected the continent since the 1980s. The ratio of health personnel to population in Africa has remained the worst in the world. In 1989, one doctor in sub-Saharan Africa served 24,380 persons in comparison with 380 persons in the industrialized countries and 5,080 in all developing countries.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the ratio of population to nurse for the same period in sub-Saharan Africa was 2,400 in comparison with 150 in industrialized countries.<sup>38</sup> Only 60 per cent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa had access to modern health facilities, 47 per cent to safe drinking water and 26 per cent to sanitation facilities in 1990. In other regions of the world, these percentages were 72, 68 and 55 per cent respectively during the same period.<sup>39</sup> Africa's under-5 mortality rate, at 181 in 1990, was the highest in comparison with East Asia and the Pacific at 56; Latin America and Caribbean at 50; and the industrialized countries at 11.<sup>40</sup>

44. A very high percentage of the population in the region continues to be affected by diseases which in other regions of the world have been overcome through improvements in public health and the living conditions. A number of diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, parasitic infections, measles, gastro-intestinal complaints, etc., are claiming the lives of millions of people in Africa. For example, malaria alone killed almost 1.5 million people in 1989.<sup>41</sup> On average, diarrhoea claims the lives of 1.5 million children annually. Some 42 per cent of all cases of diarrhoea in the world occurred in Africa.<sup>42</sup>

45. The spread of HIV/AIDS is yet another major threat looming over the health landscape of Africa. Some 50 per cent of the estimated 12-13 million people world-wide infected with HIV/AIDS in 1991 were reported to be in Africa. In 1993, some 7 million people in Africa, of which 1 million were new-born babies, were believed to be infected with the deadly disease.

46. It is quite obvious from the foregoing that virtually all indicators show that rates of morbidity and mortality are higher in Africa than the rest of the world. This is evident from the low average life expectancy of 51 years in sub-Saharan Africa, which is about 23 years lower than industrialized countries; and 13 years

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<sup>37</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report 1993", New York: UNDP, p. 159.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> UNICEF, "State of the World's Children 1994", op.cit.

<sup>41</sup> UNECA, "Report of the African Social Situation in 1993", Addis Ababa E/ECA/CM:19/CRP.1, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> WHO, "World Health Statistics, 1991", Geneva: WHO, 1992.

lower than the world average.<sup>43</sup> Needless to say, disease and sickness lower the productivity of the people, depress the GDP and increase poverty. They definitely lower the human capacity to sustain socio-economic development.

**F. Factors contributing to the current status of human capacity in Africa**

47. The foregoing analysis indicates that while the potential human capacity exists in Africa, in reality it is extremely weak in terms of its level of resource endowment. Moreover, proper incentives are lacking for the accumulation of this critical capacity. Weakness is also demonstrated in the low levels of literacy, the quality and spread of education; the poor health and nutritional status of the population; high levels of unemployment and under-employment; and the surging brain-drain.

48. The causes of the decline in human capacity in Africa can be attributed to the combined interplay of socio-economic, political and institutional factors. The severe economic crisis that engulfed the region during the 1980s and which has continued in the 1990s is the main cause of the deterioration in human, institutional and infrastructural capacities in Africa. The crisis is the result of both internal and external factors. Internally, the structural deficiencies of African economies have contributed to the economic crisis. These are the predominance of subsistence agriculture and petty service activities, the narrow production base, weak inter-sectoral linkages, domestic policy failures, the excessive openness and external dependence of the economies. The wide-spread political instability, civil strife and military conflicts in a number of African countries have also contributed significantly to the poor economic performance in the region. Between 1960 and 1993, there were more than 24 full-fledged wars in Africa, causing massive disruptions to production and capital development.<sup>44</sup>

49. The region's external debt and collapsed prices for its commodities are important factors in the loss of capacity in Africa. The external debt reached \$282.8 billion in 1993, while the debt service alone drained over \$26.1 billion from the domestic economy in 1993.<sup>45</sup> The collapse of commodity prices in world markets has over the years caused a significant loss of revenue to African countries, which has severely limited their ability to prosecute development and capacity-building endeavours.

50. The many huge and battle-active armies in Africa tie up millions of the region's most able-bodied men in destructive and economically and socially unproductive activities. Their actions have led to the creation of an even larger army of refugees and displaced persons who today number over 20 million helpless, mostly unproductive and dependent souls. The resources that are consumed by these armies are diverted away from capacity-building programmes mostly in the critical sectors of education and health.

51. Public expenditure cuts in the social sector and the introduction of cost recovery and containment measures within the context of SAPS in a number of African countries have had deleterious effect on the social sector. The sorry state of Africa's schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and health centres has been caused partly by the diversion of resources from the region's social sectors to achieve external balance and honour external debt obligations, by unproductive investments through distorted national priorities and official corruption.

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<sup>43</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report 1993", op.cit., p. 143.

<sup>44</sup> ECA, "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa", op.cit.

<sup>45</sup> ECA, "Economic Report on Africa 1993", Addis Ababa, op.cit.

52. A weak human capacity is a guarantee for a weak development capacity. In Africa, human capacity has not only been weak, but it has also been further weakened in recent times by the application of mis-guided policies and the choice of wrong development priorities. The situation has placed Africa's development in jeopardy and has produced the following effect: a growing dependence on outsiders for skills, expertise, technology, goods and services, ideas and security; either non-utilization or virtually give-away of Africa's natural resources to be exploited by others; and total loss of capacity to compete globally.

53. The security, integrity and development of the African continent, without a doubt, depends on the extent to which Africans are able to develop human capacities.

### III. THE STATUS OF INSTITUTIONAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT

54. Through the assessment of the performance of some human development indicators such as education, health and nutrition, and employment, etc., in section II, it has clearly been established that human capacities are not only weak, but the pillars for building and sustaining them are clearly inadequate. Institutional and infrastructural support in Africa needs to be redirected towards economic recovery and sustained development, food security and self-sufficiency, clean water, safe sanitation, decent housing, improved health care and basic education and adequate family incomes. To achieve these welfare objectives, African countries need to rethink and set new priorities in the major areas of health, education and employment. And to implement these priorities, there is need to strengthen existing facilities and devise new institutions and infrastructural support structures. In health, the priority is to improve government spending by shifting the focus to the reduction of infectious diseases, preventing the spread of AIDS, and changing individual and household health behaviour towards greater individual responsibility for individual family well-being. In education, the issue is to improve the quality and restore sustained growth of educational enrolments that was arrested by the economic crisis in the 1980s. In employment, the emphasis should be on the institutional and infrastructural supports to improve the formation of skills through suitable reforms of educational and training systems, an efficient labour market structure that facilitates labour mobility and a supportive legal system that balances the rights of workers and employers.<sup>46</sup>

55. In the health sector and related areas like nutrition, clean water, safe sanitation and housing, the institutional and infrastructural support expenditures have been characterized by poor priorities, misallocation, inequitable coverage, and inefficiency in the use of available scarce resources, resulting in escalating costs in the provision of a basic health package. Consequently, the majority of the population are currently not reached by the health services. However, according to a recent World Bank Report, governments have a vital role to play in changing the institutional and infrastructural support structures. This objective can be attained by reforming public health structures and providing essential clinical services more cost effectively.<sup>47</sup> Governments need to shift fiscal resources from the urban-based hospital focused-system now common in most member States and increase expenditure in support of primary health care system covering the entire population which would support:

<sup>46</sup> UNECA, "Human Development Agenda for Africa in the 1990s", Addis Ababa: E/ECA/CM.19/9, 21 April 1993. Also see UNECA, "A Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa", Addis Ababa, 1992.

<sup>47</sup> World Bank, World Development Report 1993: "Investing in Health", Washington, D. C., OUP, 1993, pp. 6-13.

- (a) Increased immunization against the six major killer diseases;
- (b) Provision of school-based health services (treatment of diseases and provision of food supplements) that would improve the health, school attendance and increase learning achievement; and
- (c) The need to encourage greater individual and household responsibility for their health through education and information on nutrition, family planning and prevention of diseases.

This should be complemented by a package of basic clinical services especially against debilitating and killer diseases which are easily cured by early and effective interventions.

56. The rationale for an institutional and infrastructural structure that supports a package of public health care plus essential clinical services is that they are cost-effective and are particularly beneficial to the poor but, more importantly, they are targeted at reducing the high disease burden of poor countries, especially Africa. These services should provide information on family planning, pregnancy care, major diseases such as tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and diseases common to young children.

57. The building and strengthening of institutional and infrastructural support will require a combination of increased expenditure by government, donor agencies, as well as by individuals and households for their health. It is evident that people already pay heavily for their health, directly or indirectly. Governments should assist in the development of moral and socially equitable new structures for the mobilization of resources from individuals and households for improved health coverage.

58. Regarding education, the current challenges facing Africa in the 1990s include an increasing primary - and secondary - school-age population and stagnation, even reduction, in enrolment rates brought about by the difficult economic conditions since the early 1980s which have necessitated reduced public spending and reduced educational inputs. The result has been low scholastic achievements and the erosion of educational quality.<sup>48</sup> The main priorities in the area of education are to restore progress towards the goal of universal primary school enrolment by the year 2000, and to achieve a similar target at the secondary level, say by year 2010. This will require expanded investments in schooling, particularly for girls, given its multiplier effect on health, family planning, nutrition, and employment. This calls for member States to adjust themselves to the current demographic and fiscal realities by diversifying the sources of finance for education by strengthening old and forging new partnerships between local government institutions, NGOs, religious organizations and peoples organizations;<sup>49</sup> by containing educational costs through involvement of the private sector in the provision of some educational services, especially at the tertiary level;<sup>50</sup> and by a better targeting of donor and NGOs resources towards the building and strengthening of institutional and infrastructural structures for the sustenance of human capacities.

<sup>48</sup> World Bank, "Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustments, Revitalization and Expansion", *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> ECA, "African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation", *op. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> ECA, "Mobilization and management of financial resources in African universities", Accra: ECA/PHSD organized a workshop within the framework of the Special Action Programme for Administration and Management in Africa Regional Project (SAPAM) in collaboration with the Association of African Universities, 2-6 December 1991, Accra, Ghana.

59. The institutional and infrastructural changes required to support the new emphasis of restoring quality and enhancing human capacity building demand that member States commit themselves to return to "basics" in education - to reform the curriculum so as to reflect Africa's development needs; to put renewed emphasis on academic standards, including improvement of the quality and integrity of exams, etc.; improve the quality of educational inputs, for example, through refresher courses and better supervision of teachers; and the provision of a minimum package of textbooks and other learning materials.<sup>51</sup>

60. Given the high rate of adult illiteracy and especially female illiteracy in Africa, increased enrolment rates for the school-age population are not enough to give a boost to African capacities. African countries must resume their drive towards the attainment of the UNESCO goal of full adult literacy by the year 2000. In this endeavour, African NGOs and their counterparts from the North can be of tremendous help, as the goal of literacy also happens to be one of the fundamental conditions for the attainment of other objectives on behalf of the African people - be they to increase family incomes and welfare, protect the environment and so forth. Governments should assist and work hand in glove with NGOs and people's organization in achieving the objective of literacy.

61. Improved development management in African countries requires a re-orientation of the education and training policies and strategies and a strengthening of the continent's institutions of higher learning.<sup>52</sup> The products of these institutions are important determinants and components of institutional capacity in the region. Tertiary educational and training institutions have to provide the conceptual framework relevant to each member State's development objectives. They have to generate analysis and policies based on concrete realities within the society which should, in time, filter through to planning offices and reach all levels of the administration as well as private sectors. This calls for a redefinition of the role of institutions of higher education in Africa, which should emphasize development-oriented objectives in teaching and research. It also calls for the re-organization and re-orientation of educational institutions to build skills essential for sustained growth and development as well as instilling positive attitudes towards work and an entrepreneurial spirit.<sup>53</sup>

62. In the area of employment, the priority is to expand the range of skills of the work force. As has been indicated, this requires fundamental reform in the curriculum at all levels, especially tertiary institutions, where emphasis should be directed towards productive skills. Furthermore, training and retraining opportunities for those who have entered the labour force need to be increased.<sup>54</sup> Labour market information needs to be made more easily available to both employers and job seekers. There is also a need for job skills related training for unemployed school leavers. This is a major problem in literally all African countries.

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<sup>51</sup> ECA, Joint UNECA/UNESCO "Plan of Action for Effective Curricula Reform for Development Economic Transformation and Self-Confidence Building in Africa", Addis Ababa: ECA/PHSD/93/13/1, October 1993.

<sup>52</sup> By implication, this also means strengthening the public and private sectors. See ECA, "Strategic Agenda for Development Management in Africa for the 1990s", Addis Ababa: ECA/PHSD, March 1993.

<sup>53</sup> ECA, "Measures for the stimulation, development and promotion of indigenous entrepreneurial capability in Africa", *op.cit.*

<sup>54</sup> ECA, "Mobilizing the informal sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for African Economic recovery and development: Policy and management issues", Abuja: ECA/SAPAM, Report of the twelfth AAPAM Roundtable Conference, Abuja, Nigeria, 1990.

63. Finally, given the current resource constraints experienced by all countries in the region, there is need to maximize subregional and regional cooperation wherever possible in various areas of human capacity building.<sup>55</sup> Specifically, research, training and the exchange of related information are amenable to regional cooperation. The existing subregional and regional institutions should be strengthened. Centres of excellence for use by groups of countries on a subregional or regional basis could play a catalytic role in critical areas of development.

64. The magnitude of financial resources required to meet human capacity-building objectives are enormous. Fiscal resources should be increased through more efficient collection and by redirecting from lesser priority areas with dubious social return to institutional and infrastructural development in support of human capacity. But, even then, fiscal resources are not likely to be sufficient. Therefore, there is need to give much harder thought as to how adequate resources can be mobilized from African families - the beneficiary of stepped-up efforts in human capacity building.

65. Cost-sharing methods, in contrast to existing approaches, should be implemented but must be based on the principles of social equity and certain moral imperatives, for example, that it is clearly immoral to deny health coverage to an indigent family simply because they cannot afford to pay. A minimum package of health services needs to cover as many poor people as possible. Those who prefer health services in excess to this minimum package can be taxed progressively.

66. Finally, a case needs to be made in support for increased ODA for institutional and infrastructural development. Other areas include debt reduction and cancellation. At the nineteenth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) proposed "debt-for-human capacity building swaps", a modality also advocated by the Donors to African Education.<sup>56</sup>

#### IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR THE BUILDING OF HUMAN CAPACITIES

67. Sections II and III of this paper have clearly demonstrated the declining human, infrastructural and institutional capacities. Education, training and literacy form a basic constituent in the development of human capacity. Unfortunately, the education system is characterized by low and declining coverage, quality and relevance. Similarly, health, food and nutrition, water and sanitation as well as good governance and popular participation which enhance human capacity have been deteriorating in the past decade.

68. The proposed framework for building human, infrastructural and institutional capacities aims to:

- (a) Build human capacities through education and training in skills and appropriate attitude formation relevant to and consistent with Africa's development needs and aspirations;
- (b) Create structures for an efficient labour market where skills are put to work and remunerated adequately;

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<sup>55</sup> ECA, "Africa's Human Resources Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond", Addis Ababa: E/ECA/PHSD/MC/91/6[6.3(ii)(a)], Report of the fourth meeting of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization, 18-23 November 1992.

<sup>56</sup> UNICEF, "Debt relief and aid restructuring in Africa", draft UNICEF position paper, Addis Ababa: nineteenth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers, 3 May 1993. Also see Donor to African Education, "Newsletter", vol. 6, No. 1, January-March 1994, pp. 12-15.

(c) Reduce hunger, increase the delivery of and access to health services and improve access to safe drinking water, sanitation and housing; and

(d) Ensure genuine participation of people and their organizations in the development process and promote good governance and a strengthened civil society.

69. The long-term objectives of the proposed framework are to create self-sufficiency in food production; develop a dynamic national and regional socio-economic system which is self-sustaining and competitive globally; and improve and sustain the quality of life of the African population. Thus, the major human capacity development priorities in Africa are:

(a) Eradicating illiteracy;

(b) Increasing access to education at all levels;

(c) Improving the health and nutritional status of the population;

(d) Providing adequate housing and sanitation facilities;

(e) Upgrading and maintaining basic infrastructural facilities for building and strengthening human capacities;

(f) Building the appropriate institutional framework for strengthening policy-making, implementation, coordination and monitoring functions for human development; and

(g) Creating and sustaining productive employment and income generation;  
all of which are components of the strategy for the overall objective of alleviating poverty.<sup>57</sup>

A. Policy reforms for building and strengthening human capacities

70. In order to achieve these objectives, certain policy reforms relating to building and strengthening human capacities need to be initiated and implemented at the national and subregional/regional levels.<sup>58</sup>

1. At the national level

(a) Education and human resources development:

(i) make education and training relevant to national needs through appropriate curriculum reforms;

(ii) provide quality education at all levels;

(iii) strengthen existing science, technology and research institutions; and

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<sup>57</sup> ECA, "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa", op.cit. pp. 3-16.

<sup>58</sup> ECA, "A Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa", op.cit.

- (iv) adopt explicit population policies to ensure that population growth rates would be compatible with the place and goals of national economic and social development.
- (b) Employment, manpower and incomes:
- (i) develop skills and create a conducive environment for entrepreneurship development;
  - (ii) create a conducive environment for motivating and retaining skilled and trained manpower to strengthen and effectively utilize indigenous capacities, especially the motivation of personnel in the institutions involved in formulating and implementing policies that strengthen institutional capacities and oversee the development process;
  - (iii) synchronize retrenchment in the public sector with the retraining of those affected to enhance their prospects of redeployment; and
  - (iv) improve access, especially of women, to land, credit and related production inputs.
- (c) Literacy and basic education:
- (i) broaden access to education and training through formal and non-formal programmes with the aim of attaining universal primary and secondary school enrolment in the next 10 to 15 years; and
  - (ii) improve access of girls to education and training with the aim of attaining parity with boys over the same period.
- (d) Food and nutrition:
- (i) provide training and extension services and production technology to increase agricultural productivity; and
  - (ii) improve rural socio-economic infrastructure, by strengthening communication capacities for rural development.
- (e) Health:
- (i) support primary health care and community-based programmes;
  - (ii) strengthen linkages with the traditional informal sector health services and professionals;
  - (iii) increase the immunization coverage of children against the six major killer diseases;
  - (iv) improve the provision of and access to safe drinking water, sanitation, safe and sustainable environment;
  - (v) increase the potential for the creation of affordable and adequate housing at a rate matching population growth; and

- (vi) identify socially and morally equitable cost-sharing arrangements to generate domestic resources that are required to sustain essential health services, education, water supply and sanitation development.
- (f) Democratization and popular participation:
  - (i) create an enabling political and institutional environment which will foster exchange and cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations which have the potential to play a leading role in improving public health and reducing illiteracy;
  - (ii) promote the democratization of development by supporting decentralization of development processes and devolution of power to lower level administrations closer to the grassroots levels and communities;
  - (iii) support planning strategies and techniques that include the effective participation of the people and their representatives in development; and
  - (iv) strengthen the legislative organs of the State.

## 2. At the subregional and regional levels

- (a) Member States should formulate common strategies and approaches to common problems in the area of building and strengthening human and institutional capacities at the subregional and regional levels;
- (b) Within the framework of subregional and regional groupings, centres of excellence for specialized technical and professional skill training should be supported and strengthened and used jointly by the member States;
- (c) Efforts should be made to harmonize and strengthen existing national, subregional and regional networks for research and development (R&D) for skills transfer, modification and adoption of appropriate technology for development;
- (d) Regional cooperation in the establishment of teaching and research materials and equipment centres (textbooks, laboratory materials and equipment, etc.);
- (e) Labour market information networks at the subregional levels should be established for regulating and managing employment;
- (f) Initiate and assist the creation of health information networks and common facilities; and
- (g) Establishing and strengthening networks among NGOs at the subregional and regional levels to share experiences and set common goals in the areas of public health, the struggle against illiteracy, the organization of workers in the informal sector, their training and technology transfer.

## B. Resource requirements for building and strengthening human capacities

71. In addition to action in policy reforms, there is urgent need to provide adequate and assured resources for all areas of human capacity building. Currently, for Africa public spending for human development, mainly on education and health as a proportion of total expenditure is not only low but has been declining since the mid-1980s, from 17.2 per cent in 1987 to 13.9 per cent in 1990.<sup>59</sup> This amounts to approximately 6.5 per cent of GNP. In contrast, industrialized countries spend considerable amounts on education and health: 14.6 per cent of GDP in OECD; 17.7 per cent in North America; and 14.1 in the Nordic countries.<sup>60</sup> The above figures show clearly that there is massive under investment in human development in Africa. Fiscal resources must be boosted through more efficient taxation systems as well as efficient/honest collection. Secondly additional avenues must be tapped for domestic resource mobilization. In addition, there is also neglect of certain priority areas such as poverty alleviation and employment generation. Furthermore, public spending on human development areas is poorly targeted, with out-reach biased in favour of urban centres.

72. There is consensus that resources for human capacity building should both be increased to ensure that all areas of human development are adequately covered and more equitably distributed. Nevertheless, this objective of building and strengthening human capacity runs the risk of not being attained as long as African economies remain fiscally weak and structurally maladjusted. Therefore, changes will have to be made to revamp the economies, to change the conditions and modalities under which current SAPs are implemented, and to generate the necessary self-confidence and political will to implement programmes in support of human capacity building in the region.

## C. Resource mobilization strategies and policies

73. An integral part of this broad consensus framework is the recommendation that public spending on all areas of human capacity building and utilization should increase from its current average level of 14 per cent to 30 per cent of government budgets and, thereafter, to maintain a growth rate in public spending in all the areas of human capacity building at above the population growth rate as proposed in the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAF-SAP) and collectively expressed recently during the first meeting of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Human Development which adopted an African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa. A variety of approaches based on the particular circumstances of each African country will be needed to mobilize and re-direct resources towards human capacity building. Some of the ways through which this could be accomplished are as follows:

### 1. At the national level

(a) Public spending in many African countries is high in defence and non-productive public sector activities.<sup>61</sup> Currently, about 15 per cent of total public expenditure is devoted to military spending.<sup>62</sup> This

<sup>59</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report 1993". New York: UNDP, table 18.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, table 40.

<sup>61</sup> ECA, "African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes", *op.cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>62</sup> OAU/UNICEF, "Africa's Children, Africa's Future: Human Investment Priorities for the 1990s", New York: OAU/UNICEF, 1992, Table F.

is slightly more than the combined spending on education and health. There is an urgent need to reduce military spending by at least two thirds of its current level and re-direct these resources to human capacity building. ECA has advocated the reduction of government expenditure on defence as much as possible and on non-productive public sector activities. Furthermore, it has proposed "expenditure switch-ing" (without necessarily increasing total government spending) to raise government outlays on human capacity building;

(b) As regards the need to generate additional revenue, rationalization of fiscal policy is called for. In this context, nominal user-charges are yet another means, though perhaps not significant way, of increasing the resources for building and strengthening human capacity. In resorting to such measures, equity considerations must be given priority. Experiences in countries such as Kenya and Cameroon have indicated that parents can be mobilized to build their own schools in return for teachers being paid by government. Such schemes should not be neglected. The people will simply have to pay more for social services - either directly or indirectly;

(c) Additional resources for human capacity building could be made available if existing resources are well-managed and utilized efficiently;

(d) Greater efficiency in the allocation, use and management of resources by adopting cost-effective strategies and practices;

(e) There is also a role for indigenous NGOs and people's organizations to channel resources for human capacity by shifting their emphasis from short-term relief and welfare activities to support long-term human capacity building and utilization programmes.

74. The aim of all these measures must be to raise the 14-30 per cent of the resources of government budgets which must be directed to human capacity building activities.<sup>63</sup>

## 2. At the international level:

(a) National efforts for building and strengthening human capacities must be supported by complementary actions by international development agencies, bilateral partners and international NGOs. The available evidence suggest that resource flows and aid levels to Africa are not only inadequate relative to the region's needs, but they have also dropped. Less than 7 per cent of total ODA is spent on human development programmes in Africa. Additionally, poverty alleviation has not been a leading objective of the international development agencies and financial institutions. And until recently, the development of institutional capacity in Africa has been virtually neglected. Moreover, tied aid has been a prominent feature of bilateral ODA, thereby reducing its impact and effectiveness. In order to further the development and utilization of human capacities, Africa's development partners should:

- (i) put new emphasis on policies aimed at long-term development and transformation in Africa. In this regard, early action on such issues as resource flows, debt reduction, trade promotion, and more generally an external economic environment conducive to human capacity building on sustained and sustainable basis is vital;

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<sup>63</sup> ECA, "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa", *op.cit.* Also see ECA "Strategic Agenda for Development Management in Africa in the 1990s", *op.cit.*

- (ii) provide a substantial increase in resource flows to Africa, reassess current aid policies and practices and provide unambiguous commitment to support human capacity building endeavours in Africa;
- (iii) commit at least 20 per cent of ODA to human capacity building as compared with the present of 7 per cent.<sup>64</sup> Africa's development partners should commit themselves to meeting this target while, at the same time, African Governments must also provide matching funds;
- (iv) part of the peace dividend - an outcome of the end of the cold war and progressive reductions in global military spending - should be the encouragement given to African countries to end their conflicts and civil strife and to re-direct military investments towards the building and strengthening of human capacities; and
- (v) take urgent measures to reduce and/or write-off ODA debts and swap these to building human capacities and institutions.

## V. CONCLUSION

75. The growing consensus that building and strengthening of human, infrastructural and institutional capacities must be at the centre of the process of development and transformation must be put to practice. In this regard, African Governments, indigenous NGOs and people's organizations, subregional and regional organizations must commit themselves to implementing this objective. Therefore highest priority must be accorded to investing in people, building and maintaining infrastructures and improving the institutional capacities.

76. National, subregional and regional policies need to be re-oriented and resource redirected and increased in support of human capacity building. These efforts will not succeed without the increased and assured support of Africa's partners in development, who have the responsibility of creating an enabling external environment for this new development paradigm to be operationalized.

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<sup>64</sup> UNDP, "Human Development 1992", New York, UNDP, p. 89.