



THE CRITICAL ROLE OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Abstract: Today, more so than ever before, the African Continent is confronted with many challenges on its path to sustained growth and development. There is no denying the fact that Africa needs to substantially improve growth performance if it is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These various challenges facing Africa's sustainable development were the main focus of the 20th Anniversary Summit of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) held in the picturesque city of Kigali, Rwanda³ - under the theme '*The Future of Africa is Now! The Critical Role of Capacity Development.*' The aim of this introductory paper of the special issue is to provide a summary of the key presentations from the Summit with special focus on leadership, innovation and the role of the private sector and science and technology, networks of skills and knowledge, rebuilding after conflict, and sustainable support to capacity development. Moreover the paper will also provide a summary of the steps outlined by the summit to build capacities for emerging challenges beyond the MDG. The paper will also include an overview of the ACBF's flagship publication-*Africa Capacity Indicators Report (ACIR)* launched during the Summit and finally conclude by highlighting a key outcome of the Summit - 'Kigali Resolution'.

Keywords: Africa; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); Sustainable Development; ACBF; Capacity Building; Leadership; Innovation; S&T; Networks: Skills; Knowledge.

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³The Summit would not have been possible had it not been for the generosity of H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, who without hesitation, offered to host this Anniversary.

INTRODUCTION

The development challenges confronting Africa in the 21st century are without doubt substantial. Central to the myriad challenges facing Africa are the inadequacy of human and institutional capacity and the absence of a systematic and institutionalized mechanism for peer learning and experience-sharing amongst countries. As a result, there is an urgent need for a public sector that is knowledgeable, efficient, empowered and committed; a private sector that is not only innovative and growth oriented, but also driven and competitive; civil society that is constructively responsive and capable of collaborating with both the public and private sectors with a view to achieving the MDGs; a political system that is responsive to its citizens and premised on good governance; and a socio-economic and geo-political environment that is enabling and inclusive of all.

This double special issue of WJSTSD is devoted to Africa, covering a wide range of dimensions, focus and country-specific cases. The objectives are to provide an overview of the important role of the ACBF in fostering capacity development and sustainable

development across Africa. The special issue includes selection of full papers presented during the summit by distinguished politicians, policymakers, practitioners and scholars from Africa and across the world.

ACBF 20TH ANNIVERSARY SUMMIT

The 20th Anniversary Summit represented a landmark in the strategic vision of the Foundation, as it sought to further enhance and entrench ACBF's position as the premier capacity development institution on the Continent. The Summit rejuvenated and reinvigorated commitment to capacity development on the African continent at the highest levels of policymaking; shared lessons and best practices in capacity building; and, raised further awareness about the ACBF. It shed light on the implications of the emerging world order for capacity development in Africa, with special emphasis on new finance regulation issues, new international competition, global financial crisis, exit strategies and future technologies. In so doing, the Summit identified and interrogated potential roles that can be played by capacity development institutions such as ACBF.

The Summit of ACBF, amongst others, sought to renew stakeholders' individual and collective commitment to capacity development on the Continent. The strategic objectives of the Summit were to:

- a. Mobilize the attention of the African leadership and development partners on the importance of adopting innovative solutions to the challenges of capacity facing the Continent;
- b. Foster peer-learning and experience-sharing on capacity development on the Continent;
- c. Interrogate the short, medium and long term capacity development strategies and supporting processes; and
- d. Examine how capacity development efforts and interventions can be better devised to meet unique needs.

The Summit brought together a wide range of the Foundation's stakeholders, country teams led by Heads of States/Government, senior cabinet ministers, senior representatives of multilateral, bilateral, continental and regional organizations, members of the diplomatic corp, ACBF Executive

Board Members, ACBF Board of Governors and many others, who in our opinion, represent the family of ACBF. Also in attendance were both the local and international media.

The structure of the Summit's myriad knowledge and learning events were designed to foster maximum peer-learning and experience sharing. The format allowed for panellists to present their views on specific topical issues followed by a question and answer session. This provided opportunities for delegates to effectively engage in dialogue and share their individual experiences and perspectives on the given issue or topic. The learning events were specifically designed for development practitioners, policy makers, academics and decision makers to participate in a forum that allowed them to share experiences, develop innovative approaches, and create partnerships to enhance capacity development.

BUILDING CAPACITY BEYOND MDGS

During the Summit, a high level panel discussed various issues regarding the MDGs and capacity development in Africa. The panel

moderated by Rahel Kassahun, Founder & Executive Director, Africa Unbound Inc, included President Paul Kagame, Kenya's Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, Togo's Prime Minister, Gilbert Houngbo, World Bank's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, African Development Bank President, Donald Kaberuka and Frannie Léautier, Executive Secretary, ACBF. Also in attendance were some of the continent's top leaders and academics, including former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, Burundi's Vice President, Gervaise Rufyikiri and the Prime Minister of Gabon, Paul Biyoghé Mba.

The adoption of the MDGs in 2000 added impetus to the efforts for capacity building. To achieve the MDGs, developing countries needed to put in place the right policies and institutions. It is undeniable that there has been progress made on some MDGs in many countries. While the share of poor people is declining, the absolute number of the poor across the African sub region is increasing. The need for capacity development today is even greater due to challenges that keep arising. There is need for capacity to deliver for development and poverty reduction.

In enhancing capacity beyond 2015, there are a number of issues that need to be looked into critically. For example, there is need to rethink the models for measuring change. While development in Africa has been attributable to governance measured through GDP, this measure has not paid attention to growth mix, such as effects on society; need to focus capacity building interventions on different levels of society and embed universal values; need to consider the demographic impact on development; need to think of capacity beyond qualifications and technical know-how, and more importantly, the need for countries to be drivers of their development strategies.

This High Level Panel session noted Africa should put more efforts in building capacity that goes beyond achieving the MDGs target of 2015. Indeed capacity development is more than focusing on the MDGs. President Kagame, who co-chairs, the United Nations MDG Advocacy Group, observed that while MDGs could be achieved in a few years, capacity building on the continent will continue for much longer. President Kagame also noted that the need for capacity today, is even greater because of the new challenges that keeping coming up as

the continent moves into the future. It was highlighted that the required capacity is organizational, institutional and human, to be able to deliver human development. "Capacity is very central for us to be where we want to be and that entails many challenges, the ones we are here to discuss and see how we can confront them and find solutions," President Kagame added.

President Kagame further observed that what Africa needs is the transformation of mindsets. "We are thinking beyond certain limits, as we were thinking beyond 2015, when it came to MDGs. We are also thinking beyond capacity being that investment in an individual, beyond qualifications and skills,... "beyond having economists, engineers". "[Africa] needs people with a certain mindset, a certain attitude, a certain culture so that these useful qualities take us beyond the individual," President Kagame said, adding that the qualities should help in the transformation of communities.

The President cited Rwanda as an example of a country which started from rock bottom after the 1994 Genocide, by investing in the capacity of its people and in turn expecting them

to use the capacity to the benefit of the country as a whole, something that has paid off. President Kagame emphasized that Africans know what they want and no other party should seek to prescribe what is supposedly ideal for them because they (Africans) know what is good for them.

Kenyan Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, challenged Africa to believe in itself to make things possible by looking back at what has been achieved in the last 15-20 years and using it as a springboard to further progress. "Africa has now witnessed very appreciable rates of economic growth in the last 15 to 20 years. This of course is attributable to improved governance," Prime Minister Odinga said. "One issue that has not been paid attention to is the kind of growth rates, because we tend to measure the growth in terms of the GDP. When the figure increases we are all very grateful." The Kenyan Prime Minister, further noted that, people don't attach more value on how this growth spreads into the society, hence failing to recognise the impact, such as infrastructure development and improved standards of living.

The Togolese Prime Minister, Gilbert Houngbo, concurred

with President Kagame, noting that Africa needs to look beyond 2015 and MDGs by identifying the role capacity building will play in the future. He also wondered what can be done to sustain the achieved MDGs. "Capacity at individual, institutional and national levels should be utilized towards the attainment of MDGs and beyond" he cautioned.

The African Development Bank's Donald Kaberuka, and the World Bank's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala both supported African countries seeking solutions to their own challenges rather than taking "blueprints" from donors and other partners, emphasising that Africans know the solutions to their own challenges. Accordingly, they noted that Africa should critically look at building capacity to negotiate favourable contracts with foreign investors interested in exploiting Africa's natural resources. Africa has come a long way and has demonstrated capacity to cope with food and, financial crisis.. Africa has shown resilience when faced with crisis. Regarding views on the focus beyond MDGs, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala strongly felt that Africa should look at urbanization capacity, demography capacity and climate change capacity.

Frannie Léautier, the Executive Secretary of ACBF agreed with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala that beyond the MDGs more focus should be placed on examining demography of States. "One can immediately note that there will be more people under the age of twenty five years who will need jobs. There is a need to come up with strategies to develop individuals who can create their own jobs. Further, capacity to manage risks will be valuable beyond the MDGs" Mme Léautier added.

During the debate, the issue of Africans attaching value and dignity to themselves was emphasised as a vital element to the continent's development. And in response to the questions about transformation of the mindset, emphasis was put on thinking beyond acquiring skills that benefit individuals but develop skills that benefit the community, and capacity that delivers results. To achieve complete transformation people have to be passionate about what they do.

With much being said about the capacity gaps in Africa, the plenary nevertheless acknowledged that Africa has strengths that can be harnessed for economic growth. Resilience, similarities

across African Diaspora and natural resources were African attributes identified as strengths.

AFRICA CAPACITY INDICATORS (ACI) REPORT

The 20th Anniversary Summit also witnessed the official launching of the ACBF's flagship publication-Africa Capacity Indicators Report (ACIR) with the theme: - '*Capacity Development in Fragile States*', leading former South Africa President Thabo Mbeki to comment that the flagship is as timely source knowledge product, and a testimony of ACBF's contribution to capacity development. As President Mbeki put it "ACIR provides an authoritative characterization of the state and evolution of African capacity across space and time. ACIR also provides an invaluable tool for country benchmarking and monitoring-and-evaluation of capacity development interventions."

ACBF Executive Secretary, Frannie A. Léautier, noted that ACIR is an important guideline and milestone for all Government officials, policy makers, development practitioners, researchers, scholars and all who have a keen interest in Africa's development agenda. The inaugural edition of

ACIR provides important baseline and insights on capacity development landscape in Africa with respect to the specific capacity clusters that have guided the underlying inquiry.

'KIGALI RESOLUTION' – 09 FEBRUARY 2011

Following two days (8-9th February 2011) in Kigali, Rwanda of constructive deliberations, there was a general consensus on the guiding principles to inform future capacity building programmes across Africa - the *Kigali Resolution*. The Resolution calls for the following:

1. Focus on delivering tangible results for economic prosperity, social inclusiveness and political stability for the benefit of all Africans;
2. Build long term economic, social and governmental institutions that transcend individual leaders, and operate independently and accountably for generations;
3. Align with and promote government's own development priorities- with capacity building an integral part of all implementation plans;

4. Drive change at all levels of society and embed the values of integrity, ambition and focusing on results – involving citizens in decision making and empowering local communities to forge their own future with dignity;
5. Innovate and share lessons of what works across the continent to support regional co-operation especially through trade, job creation and investment.

To ensure these principles become a reality there was a commitment, ahead of the African Union Summit in June 2011, for:

- African governments to set out their development priorities and identify the capacity gaps they have in achieving these – and clearly set out the type of support they require. Governments are encouraged to prepare such plans by June 2011, with the ACBF offering support to those who need it;
- Development partners and capacity building institutions to align all their financial and technical support towards the priorities of African countries

in advance of Busan in November 2011;

- Both African governments and development partners to harmonize capacity building initiatives under Government owned coordination mechanisms by the end of 2012;
- ACBF coordinate and integrate capacity building institutions across African countries– beginning with the implementation of the Africa Capacity Indicators by June 2011.

The *Kigali Resolution* was adopted at the closing ceremony of the ACBF conference – with a goal of it being presented to African Heads of State at the African Union Summit in June 2011 at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

THE WAY FOREWORD

It is obvious that socio-economic and technical analysis alone will not provide a satisfactory solution to the type of problem presented in this special issue as these issues and problems also have political, cultural, ethical and industrial relations dimensions.

We hope that the outcome of this special issue will help to

outline the major issues that frame the current state of capacity development in Africa and contribute to better understanding of such an important role that capacity building can play in African sustainable development. Also raising the necessary global commitment to help and support Africa.

Finally, we would like to congratulate the authors for their valuable contribution and it is hoped that the ensemble of papers presented in this special issue will help to stimulate debate amongst scholars, researchers, policymakers and practitioners that will ultimately lead to a more integrated and multidisciplinary approach to policy design. We are also grateful to all reviewers for graciously offering their invaluable comments, which have enriched the quality of the papers in this special issue, and also for making available to us their valuable time and efforts. The suggestions and criticisms of these leading world experts greatly enhanced the quality of this special issue, and much credit goes to them for the quality of this issue.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Allam Ahmed completed his Ph.D. in Technology and

Knowledge Transfer for Development from Edinburgh Napier University, UK. Allam is currently based at SPRU, University of Sussex, UK (*world leader in research, consultancy and teaching in the field of Science Technology and Innovation Policy*) and leading the Government of Abu Dhabi first of its kind in the Middle East Knowledge Management Framework (Musharaka). Allam has published widely on how knowledge and technology transfer (TT) contribute to sustainable development (SD) and competitiveness in the developing countries (DCs). He produced more than 120 publications and recipient of several international Awards and Medals for contribution to International scientific Research. Allam is the Founding President of World Association for Sustainable Development; Founding Editor-in-Chief of six international journals; Expert Advisor to the EC on International Scientific Cooperation; International Coordinator UNESCO Chair on TT and has worked extensively for the WB, UN and EU.

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