



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE



LESSONS NOTES on
**CAPACITY
DEVELOPMENT
IN AFRICA**

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FOREWORD

It's been 27 years since African and non-African countries, and their partners, including the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank founded the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) in order to strengthen indigenous human and institutional capacities with particular focus on policy formulation, analysis and management. Has this been achieved? Evidence from independent evaluations carried out so far overwhelmingly points in the positive direction with most African countries attaining medium level capacity. However, despite this well-recognized progress, Africa is still struggling to achieve its development potential. The central impediment to Africa's development, according to various studies, including those by the ACBF is primarily deficiencies in implementation capacity. Therefore, capacity deficiencies remain a binding constraint to sustainable development and economic transformation in Africa.

At their 28th Summit in January 2017, the African Heads of State and Government granted ACBF the status of the specialized Agency of the African Union for capacity development. This is not just a recognition of the central role it has played in facilitating capacity building on the continent over the years, but it is also an appreciation of the huge challenge that remains in building the requisite capacities for implementing Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the trust African leaders have in ACBF moving forward. With this renewed responsibility bestowed on ACBF, the Foundation needed to reflect on its capacity development interventions in order to understand what works and what does not so as to innovate and meet the new capacity challenges facing the continent.

It is against this background that ACBF, in collaboration with the World Bank, commissioned a series of policy-oriented studies aimed at documenting the lessons learnt in capacity development interventions. The hope is that the Notes will provide additional motivation and support for the continued learning and progress on capacity development across Africa and beyond.

One important lesson emerging from these studies is that capacity development is a long-term process that requires continuous follow-through. For example, while capacity has been built mostly in policy formulation and analysis as was initially intended, capacity for implementation of the policies and development frameworks such as Africa Union's Agenda 2063 and SDGs remain a challenge yet to be addressed. While Africa has mostly relied on its international development partners for the financing of its capacity development, attainment of sustainable capacity on the continent will require the political and financial support of African Governments and the continued investment of their international development partners.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge, on behalf of the 40 African member countries of ACBF, the support of all the development partners including the Governments of Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) towards ACBF over the years. In particular, I wish to single out the World Bank which has been the largest contributor. The successes achieved so far would never have been possible without this support. But more importantly, moving forward, we all need to remain engaged in supporting coordinated capacity development that will lead to ACBF's vision of an Africa capable of achieving its own development.

Prof. Emmanuel Nnadozie

Executive Secretary

African Capacity Building Foundation



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ABBREVIATIONS



ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
AfDB	African Development Bank
ARRF	African Research and Resource Forum
ATTN	Africa Think Tank Network
AU	African Union
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
BIDPA	Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis
CAC	Conflict-affected countries
CAPEC	Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIREs
CAPOD	Projet de Renforcement des Capacités en Conception et Analyse des Politiques de Développement du Benin
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
CEPA	Centre for Policy Analysis
CERCAP	Centre d'Etudes et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Analyse et de Plaidoyer
CMAp	Collaborative Master Program
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPP	Collaborative Ph.D. degree Program
CREAM	Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes et d'Appui à l'Analyse Economique à Madagascar
CSOs	Civil society organizations
EAC	East African Community
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDRI	Ethiopian Development Research Institute
EEA	Ethiopian Economic Association
EPM	Economic policy management
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre
ESRF	Economic and Social Research Foundation
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
HESPI	Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute

ICT	Information and communication technology
IDEG	Institute of Democratic Governance
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
LIMPAC	Liberia Macroeconomic Policy Analysis Center
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEFMI	Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute
NGO	Non Governmental organisations
NTPCI	Nouveau programme de troisième cycle interuniversitaire en économie
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PSMTP	Public Sector Management Training Program
PTCI	Programme de Troisième Cycle Interuniversitaire en Économie
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC-PF	Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIPA	Schools and Institutes of Public Administration
STPC	Strategy Transformation Policy Center
TTI	Think Tank Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States of America
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WAIFEM	West Africa Institute of Financial and Economic Management
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZIPAR	Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.





GENERAL OVERVIEW

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BACKGROUND

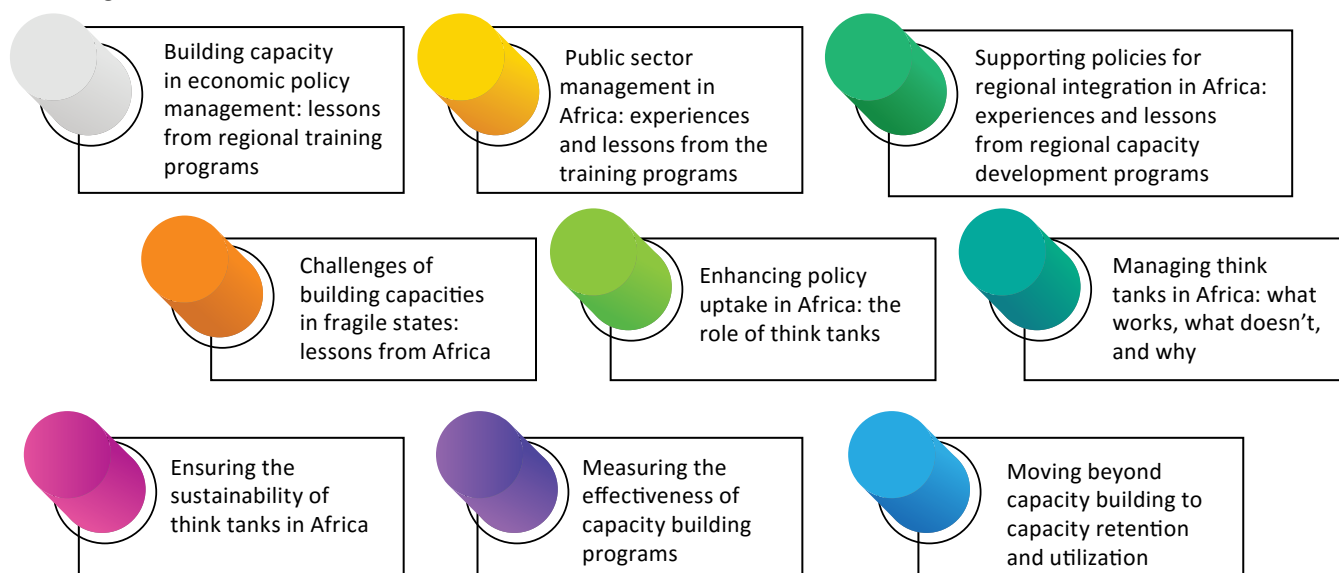
The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) was established in 1991 by African and non-African countries, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, with the mandate to tackle Africa's capacity issues and invest in strengthening indigenous human and institutional capacities. While implementation of policies and development plans remains an issue in Africa, significant strides have been made on capacity building over the years. This is clearly evidenced in the Africa Capacity Report, ACBF's annual flagship publication, which shows that most African countries have attained medium level capacity especially with regard to policy formulation and analysis.

Through its interventions in the past 27 years, ACBF has been able to contribute to the development of Africa's public-sector capabilities by investing in countries' intellectual infrastructure through policy institutes, training organizations, and other types of capacity development initiatives. ACBF has also invested in supporting non-state actors such as civil society and private sector organizations for their effective engagement in the formulation of policy and development plans. Moreover, ACBF complemented this investment by developing an explicit knowledge management function, which includes the production and dissemination of fit-for-purpose knowledge products, services and best practices with focus on capacity development. ACBF has hence become the premier institution facilitating capacity building on the continent leading to it being conferred the status of the specialized Agency of the African Union on capacity development by African Heads of State and Government at their 28th Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2017.

With close to three decades of capacity building on the continent, it is high time to reflect on and share in a single document the lessons learnt in these efforts. This volume, therefore, tackles important questions including: what works, what doesn't work in capacity development interventions and why? What are the implementation bottlenecks facing countries? What critical factors need to be reconsidered and what initiatives should be undertaken to effectively and sustainably support the capacity development efforts on the continent? What results have these capacity building efforts produced for African citizens? Are there adaptable generic capacity building tools that have emerged from over a quarter century of ACBF engagement with African institutions and societies?

It is against this background that ACBF, in collaboration with the World Bank, has conducted a series of policy-oriented studies aimed at documenting the lessons learnt in capacity development interventions in selected strategic areas. The series entitled '**Lesson Notes on Capacity Development in Africa**' aims to clarify and understand more downstream effects of capacity building interventions and how the support has created impact on the continent, while also understanding what may not have worked and why so as to inform more fit-for-purpose and innovative capacity building interventions that can sustainably support Africa's socio-economic transformation.

This Compendium brings together the lessons and experiences of selected capacity building interventions in the following areas:



OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Compendium of Lessons Notes is to produce and share knowledge on the lessons learned during the past three decades of capacity building efforts in Africa, in order to provide a framework for understanding how to better design and implement more effective capacity development programs that would enable the continent to achieve its development goals and aspirations.

The specific objectives included the following:



- Highlight the capacity development challenges that were being addressed;
- Analyze the strategies and interventions modalities put in place;
- Demonstrate the results and impacts achieved;
- Identify the lessons learnt including the good practices in the design and implementation of the capacity development interventions; and
- Formulate clear and evidence-based recommendations for the countries (and Africa at large) to benefit more from capacity building initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted to meet the objectives mostly consisted of desk reviews of Evaluation Reports of the work of ACBF and ACBF funded projects and programs as well as relevant in-house and key external publications available. Wherever possible, the desk reviews were complemented by key informant interviews.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE KEY RESULTS

Some of the key cross-cutting results emanating from the Lessons Notes include the following:

- Given the diversity of African countries and the variety of the challenges they face, it is unlikely that a single blueprint for capacity development interventions will meet the diversity of needs and contexts. To be effective, capacity building interventions must be flexible and context-specific. For instance, looking at the specific areas of think tanks, the Notes show that capacity development interventions covered issues such as financial capital (money); physical capital (land and buildings); human capital; informational capital and social capital (as links to institutional networks and organizations), depending on the country.
- Developing capacity is particularly more challenging for post-conflict governments and their development partners. For instance, most conflict-affected countries' governments seem to view capacity development as intangible, not worth paying for, and risky since newly developed human resource capacity may leave for greener pastures if service conditions are unattractive. This challenge notwithstanding, the presence of Africa-based capacity development institutions such as ACBF gave other partners a basis for interventions as well as timely response and efforts towards resolving implementation issues.
- Core funding has been critical in developing the internal capacity of institutions, particularly in the early stages of institutional development, as it allows the institutions to put in place human resources and systems that provide the basis for a strong foundation. Relatedly, the sustainability of capacity development interventions – which is the main challenge and fear of the majority of African think tanks, for instance – represents a challenge across Africa. It is however intrinsically associated with the relevance of the institutions undertaking the initiatives; the quality of their interventions; the diversification of the sources of funds; and the value addition generated by the interventions.

- ACBF has ensured that its capacity development interventions include a combination of human capital development and institution building of the host organizations as well as training providers. For instance, the Public Sector Management Training Program hosted by the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, besides supporting the training of students, included assistance for computer facilities refurbishment, the construction of classrooms and auditoriums, and a series of training of trainers' workshops thereby ensuring their sustainability.

KEY CAPACITY MESSAGES

Some of the key capacity messages from the Lessons Notes include the following:

- Effective leadership and management which were given high priority in the program design and implementation of ACBF supported-programmes represent a key factor for the success and sustainability of capacity development initiatives. They are related to program coordination, budget and financial management, procurement, staffing and remuneration, physical maintenance, stakeholders' management, program evaluation, etc. ACBF has tended to rely on the training provider to organize these areas, and most inevitably, draw on available local resources. Obviously, this helps to promote local ownership.
- Customized institutional and technical support provided by ACBF helped its supported-partners to deliver quality products and services to their clients despite the challenges they encountered. The proximity of ACBF gave partners timely response and support in resolving implementation issues, facilitating local ownership and enthusiasm.
- Capacity development is slow process and with its impacts generally long term in nature. Therefore, the impacts of ACBF's interventions on improving skills, competencies and institutional effectiveness cannot be adequately observed within a short period. The pace of capacity development, retention and utilization is even slower in fragile states, where the infrastructure and human resources have been destroyed during long years of conflict and atrophy. Moreover, in the context of conflict-affected countries, the inadequacy of resources available to address the challenges, some of which are very large, led to resources and interventions being thinly spread across several sectors of the countries making their impact hardly visible, especially where sustainability was a success criterion. But even where the impact of capacity development is not perceptible, changed behavior has revealed it.
- Recording failed capacity development interventions is critical for systematic documentation of what does not work – as what seems not to work is the opposite of what worked. For example, most of the mid-term reviews and end of project evaluation reports did not record capacity retention and utilization issues which have largely been seen as challenges for countries and organizations.
- Regional integration which is critical to the success of Agenda 2063 and the socio-economic transformation of Africa, has been slowed by weak institutional capacity, inadequate research and knowledge management mechanisms, and insufficient competent staff at African regional Economic Communities (RECs) secretariats, at other regional institutions, and at the integration units of national ministries responsible for regional integration. One of the main challenges that still remains for RECs and their member states is the lack of adequate capacity to go beyond formulating appropriate policies and effectively implement the regional integration projects and programs. This is an area where ACBF needs to continue playing a key role in.
- Minimizing duplication and overlaps of capacity building initiatives to increase efficiency and maximize institutional and human capabilities. Following ACBF's new mandate as the African Union's specialized agency for capacity development, the Foundation should engage with the African Union Commission (AUC), RECs and countries, and work to harmonize the capacity development interventions on the continent. An inventory of who is doing what and where at any given time, should be kept. ACBF and other players on the continent such as the AU's Human Resource, Science and Technology (HRST) Department as well as that of Economic Affairs, NEPAD, the African Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa who all engage in capacity building across the continent should be involved and their interventions harmonized and well-coordinated.

Lesson Note #1



BUILDING CAPACITY IN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS



Victor O. Ayeni

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For nearly thirty years, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has played a pivotal role in facilitating the education and development of leaders and officials in public sector management (PSM) through training and learning programs. These interventions have aimed at enhancing the human resource competencies required to deliver an effective and well-functioning public administration system as part of an overarching commitment to building African states for effective development. Indeed, any history of African public administration since independence would be incomplete without mentioning the catalytic role of ACBF in assisting African governments since the 1990s. This study examined ACBF's PSM training activities through program documents, reports on independently conducted evaluations as well as published literature.

ACBF has contributed considerably to building individuals' capacity. Integrated with its broader capacity building role, ACBF's specific activities have included Master's degree programs delivered by four higher education institutions and various short courses for PSM professionals or specialized groups, such as civil society organizations and national parliaments. The number of participants in its programs runs in the thousands. At its peak, its Master's degree program trained an estimated 110 participants a year, 25 percent of them women, who took influential top management positions in their civil services. Its interventions have included a substantial focus on developing the capacity of the training providers as part of a commitment to ensuring indigenous ownership and institutional sustainability.

The lessons of ACBF's experience in PSM training programme include:

- Capacity development through structured and targeted training and learning interventions is critically important to building the capability of state institutions for effective development.
- While the benefits of developing individuals' capacity are hard to measure because it takes time to build the capacity and change the mindset of public service and government institutions, the focus on individuals' capacities eventually results in improved development in Africa.
- To ensure sustainability, the capacity development of public entities must be accompanied by increasing the institutional capacity of the training providers.
- Capacity development of training providers must include good data management systems to enable effective post-training evaluation and impact assessment.
- Effective PSM training must be rooted in good local knowledge and owned by participants and beneficiaries alike. Similarly, it is essential that structures are established to ensure good coordination and networking among role-players to maximize opportunities for continuous sharing of lessons.
- Adequate funding remains a major challenge to realizing effective capacity development in African public administration, and the situation would be much better if governments and organizations such as the private sector entities became more involved.

The study's key recommendation is for ACBF to restore its commitment to PSM training, which dwindled in its current medium-term plan. Other recommendations call for gender representation efforts to be boosted, and a more competitive scholarship scheme for funding participation in its programs is needed. Further, PSM training should be offered to all the major language groups in Africa, not just to Anglophone and Francophone regions, as is currently the case.

INTRODUCTION

For nearly thirty years, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has played a pivotal role in facilitating the education and development of leaders and officials in public sector management (PSM) through training and learning programs (World Bank 2017). As part of its broader role, these interventions have aimed at enhancing the human resource competencies required to deliver an effective and well-functioning public administration system as part of an overarching commitment to building African states for effective development.

ACBF's use of the term "capacity building" refers to not just the initial stages of building or creating capacities, which alludes to an assumption that there are no existing capacities to start from, but also in the much broader sense of capacity development entailing 'the process through which individuals, organizations, and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain capacities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time' (Eade 1997; UNDP 2008a; ACBF 2011a).

African governments have long recognized that education, training, and learning are essential in developing state capacity (Adedeji and Baker 1974; Rweyemamu and Hyden 1982; AAPAM 1984). Various policy and institutional measures have been implemented throughout the continent in response to this need, but success has been mixed. In fact, by the end of the 1980s, it was evident that Africa was witnessing a deep crisis in governance and institutional performance, occasioned by several economic and political factors. As Barber Conable, then President of the World Bank, aptly put it, Africa's economic crisis "has continued to deepen (and) the moment has come to step back from the immediate problems and take a longer view" (World Bank 1989; AAPAM 1984). One significant outcome of this re-assessment was the ACBF. Thus, its emergence in 1991 marked a renewed effort to redress Africa's record of performance and boost governments' ability to better secure competent officials and professionals to run their organizations and institutions. How well has that expectation been met?

This Lesson Note assesses the public sector management training programs delivered through support of ACBF over the past three decades. The paper reviews stories of success and failure, emerging innovations and the factors that have shaped them, and the contributions of various interventions to African development. The aim is to gain a better understanding of what worked and what didn't to inform future public sector capacity development programs. The importance of undertaking such a review can hardly be overemphasized, especially in the light of new developments associated with Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the ever-expanding challenges facing the African state. The study drew on a review of existing literature especially of ACBF evaluation reports and project documents, and the personal experience of the author in this field over the past four decades.

CONTEXT OF ACBF'S ROLE IN PSM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ACBF was established with the mandate to develop new capacity interventions while also strengthening existing and ongoing ones toward the development of African governments and societies. Its actual creation was a direct response to a combination of factors, namely: then-current developments, the contextual realities of African states over time, and the dominant intellectual ideas in the field of operations. In turn, these have shaped ACBF's priorities, approach and mode of contribution to PSM training over the years.

The impetus for ACBF

As one perceptive observer has rightly concluded: “there is now a broad consensus that what has most distinguished Africa from the rest of the world over the last three-and-a-half decades is the weak capacity of its states to respond to environmental, external, and other supply shocks and to design appropriate policies and institutions for growth” (Englebert 2000). Indeed, by 1990, it was evident that Africa was witnessing a deep crisis in governance and institutional performance, occasioned by several combination and due to several combination of economic and political factors that have their roots in the fact that “human and institutional capacity is lacking in virtually all sectors and countries” (World Bank 1991; Dia 1996).

Box 1 provides a snapshot of the nature of the crisis in Africa’s PSM by the 1990s.

Box 1 State of capacity in African public sector management

The situation in Africa’s public sector agencies and ministries is little better than in its universities. A disproportionate part of national recurrent budgets (up to 85–90 percent) now goes to cover wages and personnel costs, leaving insufficient funds to meet routine operating expenses. Cuts have been made in all areas: maintenance, equipment, supplies, training, and staff development. In-house facilities and training for staff are practically nonexistent. Exacerbating an already difficult situation, new entrants to the civil service, recently graduated from university, and hired by government as the “employer of last resort,” are frequently assigned jobs without substance and given negligible supervision. Power and decision-making authority are concentrated at the very top management rank with the result that senior management levels in government are severely overextended.

Fiscal austerity has led not only to a decline in public sector real wages but also to a narrowing of the already small differentials between management levels and lower-skill groups. Under these circumstances, many of the best public sector personnel have chosen either to devote less time to their official capacities, or to leave service altogether to become part of the brain drain. Estimates place the number of Africans who were trained in Europe and who remain there at some 70,000. Over 10,000 trained Nigerians are reportedly now working in the United States.

Reform of African public sector management in general, and civil service structures and incentive systems in particular, must go hand in hand with efforts to increase the supply of trained analysts and managers. Most governments in Africa now recognize this need, and virtually every structural adjustment program now under way in Africa includes public sector management reforms.

Source: World Bank 1991.

The World Bank’s study of long-term development prospects for Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 1989) had exposed the overwhelming realization that sound policies and efficient infrastructures, though essential to productive use of resources, were insufficient to transform the structure of African economies. The study emphasized that “at the same time major efforts are needed to build African capacities—to produce a better trained, more healthy population and to greatly strengthen the institutional framework within which development can take place” (World Bank 1989). However, the challenge of developing Africa’s capacity was not just about the lack of adequate attention to it hitherto but also about institutionalizing a response that is well-organized and effectively targeted. Thus, the underlying premises on which the ACBF was established underscored the need to create a framework that allows for flexibility, focuses on improving donor coordination, ensures strong African participation, and emphasizes sustainability and a long-term horizon. This way, “its impact on the African development process will be deep, widespread, and catalytic” (World Bank 1991).

The foundation was set up as an arms-length organization to enable and facilitate, but not directly implement, across the African region. This arms-length character is important in understanding how ACBF has sought to deliver its PSM training and development interventions. First, it understands that its role includes to help assess and identify gaps, work with experts and relevant institutions to design appropriate responses and facilitate the delivery of the ensuing interventions through financial and technical assistance. Second, ACBF functions outside the human resource development policy of the public organizations. This reinforces its independence. Equally important is that its efficacy was maintained as its offerings were aligned with the actual needs of those organizations and governments or the beneficiaries of its interventions. Third, ACBF relies on the quality of provider-organizations it contracts to deliver interventions and account directly to ACBF – with ACBF ensuring the provider has quality systems, structures and tools.

Fourth, as an Africa-wide program, ACBF is required to think and operate not just with its broad scope in mind but also in response to prevailing political and economic realities and challenges, balancing those special needs against the advantage, given constrained resources, of defining interventions more generally to fit as many African states as possible. Both regional and country programs have been designed and implemented to respond to the various needs and contexts. Last, and partly in response to the foregoing issues based on knowledge of good practices, ACBF has consistently adopted an approach that recognizes the critical need to foster partnership built on indigenous inputs and ownership (UNDP 2008b).

Influence of prevailing intellectual ideas

ACBF's orientation and work plans are inevitably a reflection of the dominant ideas in public and development management at the time of its establishment. From about the mid-1980s, the field of public administration witnessed a change from old-style bureaucracy-centered management practices to market-oriented ones (McLaughlin, Osborne, and Ferlie 2002; Politt and Bouckaert 2011; Christensen and Lædri 2013). Commonly known as the New Public Management (NPM), this approach was characterized by the transfer of private sector management practices, adoption of market principles in the delivery of public services, and establishment of liberal democratic values in governance institutions and processes. With the decline of the Soviet communist regime and the associated political upheavals, the consensus was that the old-style public administration system had failed to achieve its goals and no longer fit Africa's development requirements. It had to be dismantled and replaced with the new approach.

One after another, African governments were required by development partners and internal domestic political realities to identify with programs to reform and modernize their public sector institutions and processes. The goals were, among other things, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public agencies, enhance the responsiveness of public agencies to their clients and customers as well as reduce public expenditure. Moreover, the aim was to shift the focus to the use of markets and market-type mechanisms in place of centralized command-and-control-style regulation, encourage competition and choice as well as create a better match of authority, responsibility and accountability (Adamolekun 1989; Adamolekun 2005; World Bank 1997; Ayeni 2001; Hughes 2018).

The implications of NPM were not limited to top-level management and leadership roles. It spawned new specialties in public sector management in finance, auditing, risk management, performance management, customer service, complaints handling, project management, procurement management, data and information management, social services management, ethics and integrity in government, and more. Additionally, NPM demanded a new approach to delivering frontline and street-level services and the competencies that officials at those levels must exhibit (Balogun and Mutahaba 1989; United Nations 2005; Adamolekun 2011).

It was inevitable that ACBF's approach and programs would be influenced by these prevailing realities of African governments. Even more significant, African countries have in the main struggled with these reforms with mixed success (UNECA 2005; AfDB 2005; Ayee 2005; Chanie and Mihyo 2013). Not only have the reform programs proved expensive to implement, they also placed a huge demand on the need to develop new public managers with the competencies to midwife modernization and deliver government affairs and services in line with the new management ideas. In the circumstance, ACBF has been a welcome effort not just to enable the shift in public management thinking and

practice but as an effective vehicle for enabling African governments to reap the potential benefits that came with that (Olowu and Sako 2002; ACBF 2011b). The fact that one of ACBF's initial core competencies was themed "Public Sector Management (PSM)" is a clear reflection of this reality and the strategic role ACBF saw itself playing in assisting African governments to implement liberal democratic values and business principles in running state affairs. This probably also explains why ACBF's documents have tended to define PSM as coterminous with public sector reform and modernization (Universalia Management Group 2011; Arthur 2011).

Crisis of education and training

Africa's challenge in the 1990s was not just about the need to modernize but also about the ability of the public administration system to acquire and retain the human resource capacity to enable it to do so (Adamolekun 1989; Ayeni 1990; United Nations 2005). Old staff needed to be retrained and retooled, while fresh ones with more relevant competencies were to be attracted and retained. Yet by this time, the continent's human and institutional capacity in nearly all areas had been severely depleted by a combination of poor leadership, ineffective policies, and progressive disregard of critical institutions. And this decline was significantly manifest in the training and human resource development system of the public sector.

In the early years of post-independence, African had managed to build a number of training and development institutions of repute, including in places such as Legon in Ghana, Ife and Zaria in Nigeria, Dar Es Salam in Tanzania, and Makerere in Uganda. Less than two decades later, most public institutions had seen their better days and were withering away from brain drain, poor funding, infrastructural neglect, and a widespread lack of commitment to what they were established to do (AAPAM 1984; Agere 1999; ECA 2003; AfDB 2005). By the time ACBF was created, it can be safely said that training and development in African public administration systems were in a state of severe crisis (World Bank 1991). Yet, it was this same sector that the African state had to rely on as it faced the challenge of modernizing its public administration. The situation could hardly be more perplexing. And this was the reality that ACBF was confronted with when it commenced operations in 1991.

CAPACITY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The focus on PSM was a key highlight in the early years of ACBF under an overarching mandate to "build professional policy analysis and development management and institutions in Africa." (World Bank 1991; Arthur 2011). While this role has remained, PSM has been subsumed in more recent years into broader areas. Training, education and learning are one of the key tools of capacity development, and in the context of PSM, capture only a part of the broader work that the ACBF has implemented towards creating capacity, defined as 'the ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully' (ACBF 2011a; p. 30). ACBF accepts that this takes place at three main levels, namely: individual, organization and institutional. In more recent years, especially in regard to the pan-African policy agenda of the African Union Commission, it has widened its understanding of the institutional level to include the transnational environment (ACBF 2008 (a); 2016).

ACBF's concept of training and education programs presupposes a focus that is essentially about teaching and learning interventions and courses targeting individuals. Buckley and Caple (2004:5-6) have accurately defined what this entails:

"Training is a planned and systematic effort to modify or develop knowledge, skill and attitude through learning experience, to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose in the work situation is to enable an individual to acquire abilities in order that he or she can perform adequately. Education, on the other hand, refers to a process or series of activities which aim at enabling an individual to assimilate and develop knowledge, skills, values and understanding not simply related to a narrow field of activity but allow a broad range of problems to be defined, analyzed and solved. Learning refers to an idea that is broader than the two. It is the process whereby individuals acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes through experience, reflection, study or instruction"

The logical extension of this reasoning is that the benefits of targeting training and learning on individuals will extend over time to the organizational level and eventually the wider state sector. By the same token, ACBF's implicit assumption is that African governments and institutions will function and deliver their mandates better when their employees and officials are competent and well equipped to perform their roles. Recognizing the importance of education and training is, however, the easy part of human resource development in public sector management. The much harder part is to make them happen and ensure that they lead to desired continuous improvement (Clawson and Haskins 2006; Gilmore 2009; Gravells 2017).

ACBF has been relentlessly in drawing on the rich body of knowledge and good practices in the area (Biech 2005; Clawson and Haskins 2006; UNDP 2008b; Wart, Hondeghe, and Schwella 2015; Jolles 2017). Thus, PSM training interventions have robustly involved at least five related capacity challenges. First is defining the needs and performance gaps that officials and professionals face in their jobs in PSM, which translates into coherent programs of learning interventions with explicit learning objectives and fit for purpose. The second challenge is about securing the required quality trainers and facilitators to deliver the interventions and ensure that the target trainees and participants acquire the required competencies. Third, even after interventions have been successfully delivered, is the question whether those trained will be able to transfer the knowledge and competencies acquired into the work place and thus realize the desired performance standards. This is about ensuring adequate incentives and for stakeholders and those trained to implement required institutional conditions for change and improvement.

Fourth is systematically assessing the outcome and impact of the interventions and determining whether or not the training effort actually makes a difference and provides the desired return on investment (ROI). Such an assessment raises a whole range of issues about data collection, cost-benefit analysis, impact measurement, and separating the role of training from other factors that shape the operations and performance of a public sector organization. The fifth challenge is funding all aspects of the training, including producing an optimal number of trainees to get the job done. But African governments have faced a recurring problem of sustainably funding all aspects of training and development of officials. This is in part because state allocations, given the competing demands for them, are usually limited for training or diverted elsewhere, while external assistance is not always assured or able to respond to all the needs in the area.

ACBF'S STRATEGIES AND TRAINING INTERVENTIONS

ACBF's work in the PSM area is much broader than the documentation (evaluation and mid-term review reports) shows. Although PSM is difficult to define, there is general agreement that it is associated with four key elements (Bovaird and Loeffler 2016):

- It covers all public sector organizations and institutions that draw the most of their funding from the state.
- It covers public service organizations, whether in the public, volunteer, or private sector.
- It includes managerial techniques (often originating in the private sector) to increase the value for money achieved by public sector and public service organizations.
- It concerns how public organizations work with their partners, stakeholders, and their network to shape the outcome of public policy.

This conceptualization of PSM broadens the notion of the work ACBF does in this area, providing a much richer appreciation of what the foundation has sought to achieve in the context of the ever-changing realities of the African continent. Itad consultants' evaluation of ACBF programs reported that Public Administration and Management (PAM) "has received significant financial support next to EPAM (Economic Policy and Management) and PVP (Professionalising the Voices of the Private Sector and Civil Society)." (ACBF 2012). ACBF's commitment to the area was estimated at 11

percent of its total disbursement but could well be higher under the broader definition of PSM as suggested above. On average, 33 percent of this commitment would be defined as training, while the remainder is made up of wider institutional development support. However, the focus on PSM training seems to have largely fizzled out in the medium-term review of SMTP III published in 2015.

For almost thirty years, ACBF has implemented four broad groups of training interventions in the PSM field:

- The Public Sector Management Training Programme (PSMTP), launched in 2006, offering a post-graduate degree in PSM delivered by selected higher educational institutions.
- Short professional courses—usually one to four weeks, delivered either at one time or over a period. They have targeted public administration systems in a specific nation or a group of countries or the entire region. An example is the leadership development training for top-level Gambian officials run by the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) through ACBF's support.
- Short-term PSM training interventions delivered as part of a broader organization and institution building and funded through direct grants or technical assistance support. Examples are the Public Administration Capacity Building Project for Angola and the gender development program delivered by the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network.
- Short-term specialized programs with a strong PSM component, such as training programs for civil society organizations, national parliaments, and public policy analysts.

Although not developed together, these interventions follow an overarching strategy with two main elements: enhancing state effectiveness and bringing leaders and officials abreast of dominant ideas and practical tools for running effective public sector organizations. From these elements flows a portfolio of long- and short-term professional programs, broadly characterized by the following:

- A preference for calling programs "training" rather than "education" or "development," presumably to underscore the ACBF's priority focus on professional enhancement.
- Training project objectives and goals oriented to specified needs of a government, a group of governments, or the entire region.
- A collaborative approach entailing partnership with national organizations and other international organizations.
- A largely traditional approach to the design and delivery of training interventions, facilitated by an established higher educational institution that is classroom based and pedagogical.
- Inclusion of a capacity development component for the host organization or training provider to enable it to facilitate the intervention and guarantee its future sustainability.
- Offering interventions in at least two language groups and over a broad geographic spread.
- Provision in the post-training plan for sharing success stories and lessons for program improvement and sustainability.
- Provision for building a network of institutional providers to support individual program delivery and future sustainability.
- Targeting of middle- and high-level officials, mostly in generic management roles but in selected specialist areas, as well.
- Inclusion of a quality assurance framework.

One of ACBF's flagship interventions has been the PSMTTP, which was launched in 2006. Note that ACBF characterizes this as a "training" intervention, not an education program, even though it is a university postgraduate program, presumably to underscore its focus on professional development for a new-style public administration system. PSMTTP was designed, following a preliminary study, to enable African governments to shift from the erstwhile state-centered administrative institution to a more people-focused and entrepreneurial culture. It illustrates how ACBF has organized and delivered training in PSM over the years. Drawing on the Project Completion Reports of GIMPA and the Africa University (ACBF 2008b, ACBF 2011b), the PSMTTP's key goals can be paraphrased as follows:

- To establish a sustainable Public Sector Management Training Program (PSMTTP) to be hosted in a partner higher education institution.
- To build or strengthen the institutional human capacity of the partner institution to organize a Master's degree in Public Sector Management (MPSM) and to manage a network of institutes of public administration and management in the Africa region.
- To provide graduate training leading to a Master's degree in Public Sector Management for middle- and high-level public sector managers from Anglophone and Francophone African countries.
- To establish a network of PSMTTPs in Africa using successful models implemented by ACBF.

In 2003, before PSMTTP was introduced, ACBF requested a group of independent consultants to visit selected African training and educational institutions to assess their capacity to offer an internationally accepted management development program. The assessment criteria included the quality of existing programs, competency and expertise in the area, and the quality of educational facilities and existing infrastructure of the institution. This assessment led to ACBF's decision to sign contracts with four African institutions: Ecole Nationale d'Administration and Université Omar Bongo, Gabon; Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration; Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Senegal; and Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe. Geographically, two centers were in West Africa, one in Central Africa, and one in Southern Africa. Francophone and Anglophone speaking countries had two centers each.

In September 2005, GIMPA and the ACBF signed an agreement involving a grant of \$3 million to support GIMPA in hosting the PSMTTP. Under the agreement, GIMPA established a graduate training program leading to a Master's degree in public sector management for middle- and high-level public sector managers from Anglophone West African countries—the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Identical agreements were signed with the other three centers.

An independent evaluation of the GIMPA center documented the key features of PSMTTP, which were essentially reproduced in the Gabon, Senegal, and Zimbabwe centers. Eligible candidates were expected to have at least five years of relevant work experience in the public sector and to be fully employed at the time of applying for admission. A total of 30 participants were selected every year from the five Anglophone West African countries and enjoyed scholarships, charged to the grant, to facilitate their participation.

The program was an intensive 12-month full-time training leading to the Master's degree in public sector management. The course content was like that in comparable programs in other higher educational institutions in the continent (Ayeni 1990; Ayeni 1996). To give it an interdisciplinary structure, it comprised four modules, each conducted over one semester:

1. Background and perspectives.
2. Strategic planning.
3. Public sector resources management.
4. Global and regional perspectives and experiences in public sector management.

Each module consists of five courses, bringing the total number of courses in the program to 20. A mini– research project ran concurrently with the courses, though subfield specialization was somewhat limited. On completion, student received the MPSM degree.

Participatory learning was used extensively throughout a combination of methods that included regular lectures, participatory class discussions and exercises, seminars, individual assignments, and group work. Participants were regularly exposed to professional development series sessions during which eminent practitioners shared experiences and highlighted practical situations in public sector management. The series focused on topical and controversial issues likely to affect the conditions for national development, democracy, and good governance as well as efficient and effective public services. Further, participants participated in study or field trips to public and private sector organizations to be exposed firsthand to the experience of managing people and operations in public sector organizations.

The independent evaluation of these methods based on feedback from participants and employers was highly positive. Some 91 percent of students rated the content as a “blend of theory and practice,” and 66 percent rated the methods as “a good blend of academic and adult learning teaching techniques.” Similarly, 88 percent rated the program overall as “structured as a fully integrated and coherent package.” (ACBF 2008b). The training organization links this affirmative feedback in part to the caliber of teaching and facilitation, reporting that experienced lecturers and practitioners were used to deliver lectures, give talks, and share experiences. Further, senior diplomats and other dignitaries visiting institution for other engagements were routinely offered an opportunity to interact with PSMTP participants. A system of quality assurance was also established, including written assessment and oral evaluations of the performance of lecturers and their methods of teaching, as well as the performance of project staff.

The management and coordination of the PSMTP was the responsibility of the host institution and training provider. To draw again on the experience of GIMPA, its academic board, which was responsible for academic issues, awarded certificates to deserving participants at the end of each year. The daily management of the program was the responsibility of the program coordinator, under the leadership of the dean of the Graduate School of Governance, Leadership, and Public Management. The coordinator was assisted with the administrative responsibilities of the PSMTP secretariat by a team of professional and support staff comprising an accountant, a driver, and two administrative officers. The heads and country coordinators of the participating institutions constituted a governing council that met once a year to review the program’s activities and to plan strategies for improvement.

Short professional interventions are, naturally, more diversified than the graduate degree program. They are essentially determined by the counterpart organization and training provider. To illustrate, between 2006 and 2009, the Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network implemented a Gender Budgeting and Women’s Empowerment project, which incorporated a human capacity development component for government ministries and agencies. ACBF contributed \$1 million—54 percent of the total funding of \$1,867,638. Other partners were UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (ACBF 2011c).

The human capacity development component of the project comprised training in gender mainstreaming and gender focused budgeting skills for gender focal points and key representatives of sector ministries in Zimbabwe. According to the project completion report, it had three levels of training: sensitization and advocacy, basic trainings, and intensive training of trainers. The sensitization meetings covered the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Parliamentary Caucus for Women, Gender and Community Development, Ministry of Finance officials (Treasury Department), local authorities, and line ministries (mines, water, transport, agriculture, education, small and medium enterprises, and infrastructure development). The basic training level covered gender responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming for members of Parliament, permanent secretaries, directors of finance, gender focal persons of ministries and parastatals, heads of department, local authorities, and civil society organizations. The third level comprised training of trainers to develop trainers to propagate the program throughout the target organizations.

For another illustration, human capacity building support for national parliaments followed two paths: direct capacity building of legislators or parliamentarians and capacity building of civil servants (parliamentary staff). The programs generally took the form of short-term training through seminars and workshops targeting specific skills, including basic knowledge in budgeting, budget analysis, project cycle analysis, and others (ACBF 2012). Such programs were delivered in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and other countries.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of key training interventions ACBF has facilitated since its inception.

ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNED

PSM is a vast and encompassing field, particularly given the long history of serious and debilitating problems in the African environment. The PSM challenges identified earlier provide the benchmark against which training should be assessed. How well has ACBF responded to these challenges and benefited the African state? Given the foundation's overall strategy and key training activities, what lessons do the success stories and evident areas of setback tell?

Achievements

Evidence of ACBF's success in PSM training over the years can be grouped in three broad areas: the number of trained participants; the effectiveness of program design and delivery; and transfer of knowledge, impact, and return on investment (Phillips 1997; Clawson and Haskins 2006; Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick 2006).

Number of trained participants

The most obvious measure of any training intervention is number of trainees who fulfilled the requirements for completion. In this regard, ACBF has contributed considerably to capacity building at the individual level. The Public Sector Management Training Program (PSMTP) hosted by the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (PSMTP-GIMPA) and funded by ACBF from 2006 to 2017, leads to a Master's Degree in Public Sector Management for middle - and senior-level public sector officers from Anglophone West African countries. It has graduated 448 persons so far - 351 on ACBF scholarship and 97 fee-paying. There were no dropouts. Over the past three decades, ACBF has populated African PSM with many leaders, officials, and professionals. First, ACBF has a high completion rate in all its interventions. For the PSMTP, it is more than 95 percent.

The Public Sector Management Training Program (PSMTP)



Table 1 Selected training interventions facilitated by ACBF

Title of intervention	Date(s)	Target group	Main location of training
Post-graduate in Economic Policy Management	2008–12	Africa region	Cameroon, Uganda
Training in Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting Skills	2006–09	Zimbabwe national	Zimbabwe
Post-graduate Degree in Public Sector Management Training Program	2006–12	Africa region	Gabon, Ghana, Senegal, Zimbabwe
Training of Trainers for Lecturers and Facilitators	May 2006	Ghana national	Nigeria
Training of Trainers Workshop on Leadership Development	November 2008	Gambia national	Gambia
Accelerated Training Program for the Leadership of the Ghana Civil Service	2006–08	Ghana national	Ghana
Orientation for Staff of the Parliamentary Service	2008	Ghana national	Ghana
Workshop for Newly Elected Ministers of the Fifth Government	2009	Ghana national	Ghana
Senior Policy Seminar and National Workshops in Policy Analysis	2008–14	Kenya national	Kenya
Training of Trainers Workshop	2008	West Africa region	Sierra Leone
Training of National Parliamentarians	2009–12	Africa region	Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia
Training of Parliamentary Staff	2009–12		
Training in Public Procurement	2007–10	Africa region	Cameroon, Rwanda, Uganda,
Training on Role of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Public Policy Process	2009	Lesotho national	Lesotho
Workshops on Performance Management System (PMS)	2008–11	Namibia national	Namibia
Public Financial Management Training	2008–11	Africa region	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, South Africa

Source: ACBF annual reports, evaluation studies, project completion reports, and policy briefs.

Second, through the GIMPA center, a total of 147 participants sponsored by ACBF graduated between 2006 and 2011, and an additional 47 participated on a fee-paying basis. Taken together, therefore, the PSMTTP trained a total of 194 senior public servants in Anglophone West Africa in that period—an average of 28 a year. GIMPA was clearly the most successful of all ACBF's training centers. Extrapolation to the rest of the region gives an average of about 110 graduates a year, 25 percent of them female. That figure suggests that the program produced an average of 7 graduates per country per year. By 2015, for example, 83 Zimbabweans had graduated from the PSMTTP.

Third, ACBF's PSM training interventions are far more diversified than is often recognized, so their influence has been broader than previously recorded. The actual number of participants inevitably varies by program type and target group. The capacity development program delivered by the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network between 2007 and 2009 included 300 stakeholders and 30 trainers in a series of five training workshops a year. In total, the program is believed to have exceeded its target, with more than 813 participants over the period. Similarly, between December 2006 and December 2008, 600 top management staff of the Ghana civil service, ranging from departmental directors

to human resource managers, management analysts, and chief directors, underwent a custom-made course in 16 parts entitled “Accelerated Training Program for the Leadership of the Ghana Civil Service.” And in 2008, 230 participants graduated from a program for newly elected parliamentarians in Ghana. Finally, ACBF interventions included a substantial focus on developing the capacity of the training providers. About 30 percent of graduates of PSMTTP either came from or went into teaching in African training institutions.

Taken together, documented PSM training outcomes for participants include:

- Opportunities to acquire a postgraduate degree or training that might not have been possible otherwise.
- Opportunities to gain and apply new skill sets (knowledge, tools, and skills) to their places of employment. About 90 percent of participants confirmed to evaluators that they were able to do things in their job that they would not have done without the training. About the same percentage felt that the training program’s content responded to the needs of their work environment.
- Realization of positive outcomes and impact on the graduates and beneficiaries’ capacities.
- Enhanced opportunity in the marketplace and in career prospects within organizations. When surveyed by evaluators, 50–60 percent of PSMTTP graduates felt the training had helped them gain employment, and get a salary increase or some other increase in income.
- Improved prospects for female participants to get managerial positions.
- Becoming greater assets to their employers through the acquisition of advanced skills that their colleagues did not have.

Background documentation on the PSMTTP describes it as “designed to equip African countries with a critical mass of public sector managers to make efficient and effective contributions for meeting the developmental challenges in their various countries.” (ACBF 2011d). Clearly, this is an overly ambitious statement. For example, the total of 39 Nigerians trained between 2006 and 2011 would amount to a miniscule 1 graduate per federal and state government in the country. Because ACBF and GIMPA do not have a specific admissions target, it is difficult to assess the performance of PSMTTP against a predetermined change of theory.

Effectiveness of program design and delivery

The quality of program design and delivery determines the competencies that participants gain from an intervention. The evidence indicates that ACBF programs such as the PSMTTP gained an appreciable reputation in Africa. This has proved a confidence booster for African countries in containing the PSM crisis they were facing when ACBF emerged in the 1990s. ACBF’s focused on a number of critical features has played out positively in its interventions.

First, ACBF has focused its training interventions on needs identified by prior studies commissioned by itself or its partner organization, as is well illustrated by the flagship PSMTTP. The reliance on prior research has ensured that program design responds adequately to the African situation. Not surprisingly, representatives from governments, central banks, universities, and donor agencies surveyed by independent evaluators reported that “they view graduates from ACBF academic programs as being more valuable and better qualified than those from other programs in African universities.” (ACBF 2011e).

Second, training interventions almost always benefit from tested best practices and from the knowledge and experience of leading authorities. With the advantage of its reputation as Africa’s lead capacity development institution, ACBF attracts the best minds in the field and deploys their knowledge in design and delivery.

Third, adopting a mix of training tools and methodology in programs enhances the quality of learning and outcomes. Fourth, as already noted, ACBF has ensured that its training interventions include a parallel attention to building the human and institutional capacity of the host organization and training providers. For example, the PSMTP in Ghana included assistance for computer facilities refurbishment, the construction of classrooms and auditoriums, and a series of training of trainers' workshops. Similarly, the Gender Mainstreaming program in Zimbabwe developed a gender budgeting training manual and users' guide, considered by the independent evaluation as a major outcome that "greatly supported the implementation." Five hundred copies of the training package, including the guide and tools, were produced for the stakeholders.

Fifth, effective leadership and management are naturally given high priority in the program design and implementation. The items covered by this include: program coordination, budget and financial management, procurement, staffing and remuneration, physical maintenance, stakeholders' management, program evaluation, etc. ACBF has tended to rely on the training provider to organize these areas, and most, inevitably, draw on available local resources. Obviously, this helps to promote local ownership. But national economic and political conditions could be debilitating, such as when Zimbabwe faced severe economic crisis, which caused serious cashflow problems. There is also evidence that some providers struggle to secure the caliber of staff that are required from their local environment, more so when promised capacity enhancement programs were not readily forthcoming (ACBF 2011b).

Sixth, ACBF programs have built-in quality assurance systems that help ensure their relevance and effectiveness at delivering the intended content and competencies.

Last, ACBF PSM training almost always includes fostering the professional and institutional PSM network in Africa. Although opinions are divided on its cost implications and impact, institutional networks have contributed to program sustainability and capacity of trainers and institutions through sharing of experiences and best practices.

The Women's University in Africa project enhanced lecturers' skills in developing curriculum, including distance learning modules. The project also improved lecturers' teaching and research environment through access to academic support services such as computers, generators, student bursaries, library resources and systems, and upgraded internet connectivity. Moreover, the Centre International de Formation des Acteurs Locaux (CIFAL) has contributed to establishing an African platform of learning through experience and training exchanges among decentralized local government representatives. In South Africa, CIFAL has established regional centers of excellence specialized in training for decentralized institutions and local leaders.

Institution development in the Francophone context has not been as successful as in the Anglophone one. Still, key outcomes for training institutions involved in ACBF interventions in the Francophone centers as reported by independent evaluators can be summarized as follows:

- Improved quality and level of staffing.
- More standardized curriculum and more state-of-the-art programming of the institution's education and training mandate.
- Strengthened infrastructure, including books, teaching, and documentation infrastructure.
- Access to more contemporary curriculum not available elsewhere.
- Enhanced access to international experts.
- Opportunities for joint programming through institutional networks.
- Increased academic rigor and research capability.

- Overall increased capacity of host organizations and training providers.
- Development of internationally recognized programs accessible to other African officials besides those sponsored by ACBF.

Transfer of knowledge, impact, and return on investment

It is much harder to establish the direct contributions of PSM training interventions to organization and system improvements and to determine whether they have provided a good return on investment (ROI). For ACBF, this compounds the challenge of determining how much its interventions have affected African development. As past studies have noted, it takes a long time to build capacity and to change the mindset of government and public service institutions. The report of the evaluation conducted by Universal Management Group puts the point eloquently as follows:

While there is ample anecdotal evidence that ACBF-supported graduates are playing key roles in the public sector as a whole, in universities and in research institutions, it is extremely difficult to make a causal linkage between ACBF-supported training and changes in the quality of overall governance. For example, improvements in budgetary management are not exclusively dependent on whether an individual participated in a particular training program. Rather, the factors which could influence changes in budgetary management include overall economic conditions, political will, global pressures from donors, civil society pressures, and many others.... In that light, it is apparent that the role played by a training program in general is a potential contributing factor among others to long-term changes (ACBF 2011e).

The secondary data available from evaluation studies, project completion reports, and published literature unfortunately do not offer a credible basis to draw definitive conclusions. However, there is some anecdotal evidence from which to draw useful conclusions. High profile programs such as the PSMTTP have produced a substantial number of quality graduates, many whom went to high-level and responsible positions where they influenced developments in their countries. At one point, the core faculty of the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA), the director of training for Customs, Excise, and Preventive Services (CEPS), the chief director of CEPS in Liberia, the senior customs officer in Liberia, and the core team of the Government Budgeting Staff in Liberia were all products of PSMTTP. In the Gambian civil service, many past and present permanent secretaries and deputy permanent secretaries graduated from that program. Six faculty members of two of Nigeria's leading training organizations, namely: the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the Centre for Management Development (CMD) are PSMTTP alumni.

In Sierra Leone, graduates are employed at the Permanent Secretariat (Chief Executive Office) in Freetown, in key positions at the Ministry of Agriculture, the headquarters of the National Power Authority, and other ministries. In Ghana, PSMTTP graduates have occupied strategic positions at the Armed Forces, District Assemblies, Immigration Service, Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Health Directorates, and the Office of the Head of the Civil Service, as well as the Ghana News Agency. Likewise, the substantial number of graduates of the PSMTTP in top-level positions in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone speaks to the remarkable role ACBF has played through its various PSM training interventions towards the revitalization of post-conflict and fragile states (ACBF 2011a).

Gender representation is a critical requirement in all ACBF training, though compliance is not always adequate. Even so, the promotion of gender representation is positive. The PSMTP enhanced opportunities for women in managerial positions, given that an average of 25 percent of participants were female. The capacity development program of the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) (ACBF 2011c) has recorded a number of contributions. Its training series in gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting significantly contributed to raising awareness of top-level ministries. Annual budget call circulars issued by the Ministry of Finance now require all budget submissions to be engendered as a matter of course. Similarly, there is good evidence that the program enhanced the political will of women parliamentarians, senators, and councilors, leading to regendered economic policies. Indeed, the government of Zimbabwe has adopted gender budgeting as a mainstream planning and budgeting tool and endorsed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between ZWRCN and the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development to ensure that the gender budgeting remains a pivot of the activities of its Department of Women Affairs. The National Statistical Agency (formerly Central Statistical Office) of Zimbabwe now produces gender disaggregated data, as well.

The Itad evaluation (ACBF 2012) reported good outcomes, including improvements in legislators' problem solving, decision making, motion drafting; policy analysis; bill drafting, analysis, and scrutiny; analysis and control of the state budget; and prioritization and allocation of resources. Similarly, a 2015 assessment of work and achievements (ACBF 2015) confirmed that CIFAL in Durban, South Africa, and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, have made useful contributions to improving the skills of public officers in budgeting, policy analysis, policy formulation, programming and implementation, negotiating with multilateral financing institutions, and other areas. Similarly, there was evidence that the Women's University in Africa had empowered women alumni politically, economically, and socially, and some of the sampled alumnae were actively participating in national and subnational politics.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

ACBF's PSM training programs represent a remarkable part of the effort to develop African public administration over the past thirty years. Probably no other single contribution to capacity development since the 1960s–70s wave of Africanization programs matches the role ACBF has played. Any history of African public administration since independence would be incomplete without mentioning the role ACBF has played in assisting African governments to adjust to the new realities from the 1990s onward.

Eight key factors stand out as explanations for the success of ACBF's success:

1. *Matching work and activities to African realities, so that ACBF could articulate relevant and desired solutions.* ACBF has ensured a good appreciation of the situation on ground, focused on identified niche areas, and hired experts and organizations that understand the issues.
2. *Using a mix of training tools and methodology to implement training interventions.* ACBF ensured that training organizations utilized pedagogical tools as well as a wide range of hands-on and participative methods to facilitate learning in line with established good practice.
3. *Recognition that effective training delivery is both about design of training schedules as well as building structures and processes to manage, provide effective leadership, and engage stakeholders.* In the case of the PSMTP, for instance, ACBF made sure from the outset that elaborate management structures and controls were established and reviewed for continuous improvement.
4. *Using partnership and collaborative arrangements to deliver interventions, so that ACBF could draw on institutional capabilities elsewhere but appropriate to the training and development needs.* Collaboration and partnership underpin every ABCF intervention. It occupies its own niche while leveraging what others have to offer to enable it to deliver its strategic priorities.

5. *Diversifying operations and confronting the capacity requirements of the continent from different perspectives at once.* Defining its overarching role as that of developing the capacity of Africa to develop, ACBF's robust approach enables it to address the wide-ranging aspects of the problem. This is even more so in the face of several crises that confront Africa at the same time. ACBF's broad orientation has been equally useful in the PSM area, allowing it to deliver a menu of multifaceted programs.
6. *Using the resources at its disposal to fund and underwrite capacity development projects.* ACBF's influence stems from its ability to provide funding in a continent with severe resource challenges. Without ACBF funding, most PSM programs would hardly have materialized. But that raises a separate concern about programs' long-term sustainability in the absence of the resources ACBF provides.
7. *Developing the institutional capacity of host institutions and training providers that deliver and implement ACBF's interventions.* ACBF has through most of its intervention devoted appreciable attention to enabling the human and organizational capacity of developers themselves. This has paid off hugely in the effectiveness of programme design and quality of the implementation processes.
8. *Keeping abreast of the intellectual debate and issues, especially in PSM, that affect the continent.* ACBF's work benefits from cutting edge ideas about PSM, primarily because it draws resources from the leading experts in the field. It understands the importance of this activity to reinforcing its niche position as the African Union's specialized agency for capacity development. So, ACBF programs benefit from the knowledge of best practices and matches them to the contemporaneous situation of the continent.

Challenges and problems areas

Interestingly, some of the success factors also contribute to the more serious challenges that ACBF has faced. Nine key points are:

1. *The inclination to diversify and fight from several fronts at the same time reduces the capacity to fund individual projects, since resources have to be stretched hard.* Thus, in spite of PSMTF's success and the need for more graduates, funding to it has had to be cut to make way for other priorities. Similarly, the plan to establish PSM training institutions was dampened by funding issues.
2. *ACBF depends on other training providers to implement interventions.* This largely works well for a foundation that is essentially an enabler. But it also means that the outcome of ACBF's interventions is subject to the performance of those providers. In the case of the PSMTF, successive evaluation studies indicate varying performance across the host institutions and show that some were less effective than others in achieving the program objectives.
3. *ACBF often has to view problems from a continent-wide perspective.* Programs designs may not be directed toward participating institution training policy and plans unless the partner can fill the gap. When that does not happen, the appropriateness of training could be diminished.
4. *While the overall import of ACBF's role cannot be undervalued, the foundation has not addressed the design and delivery of training programs in PSM in any remarkably new or different way.* Its orientation and approach have been consistent with mainstream thinking and similar to what has been done elsewhere. In other words, its commitment to dominant intellectual ideas also appears to inhibit it from thinking outside the box.
5. *Some of ACBF's interventions have ended up heavily dependent on its funding.* Some employers have not been willing to assume direct sponsorship costs for their employees in ACBF programs even though they generally support ACBF's training programs and create high demand for them.
6. *High-profile programs such as the PSMTF lack specific admission targets, so it is difficult to assess program performance against a predetermined change theory.* That in turn impedes the evaluation of their overall impact and the measure of their return on investment.

LESSONS LEARNED

What have we learned from the ACBF's approach and interventions in PSM training? The key lessons of ACBF's work over the last thirty years in Africa include:

1. *Continuous development of public sector management capacity is critical.* African must continuously develop the capacity of its public sector institutions to realize its development goals as enunciated in the SDGs and meet the ambitious targets of Agenda 2063.
2. *Training, education and learning hold an indispensable place in PSM capacity development, hence deserve to be well implemented.* While often the most prominent feature of capacity development, realizing impactful training and education outcomes remain challenging but not insurmountable if the right lessons are learned.
3. While the consequences of developing individuals' capacity are hard to measure because it takes time to build the capacity and change the mindset of public service and government institutions, the focus on the individual level results eventually in success. Regardless of the difficulties of measuring impact, training and capacity development yield palpable benefits for public sector development and management. Good design and effective delivery are paramount, and the gains are inescapable.
4. *To ensure sustainability, the capacity development of national organizations must be accompanied by increasing the institutional capacity of the training provider.* The developers of capacity must themselves be well-equipped to do the job. Adequate attention must be paid to developing those institutions in parallel with any program to build the main PSM organizations.
5. *Capacity development of training providers must include good data management systems to enable effective post-training evaluation and impact assessment.* The problem of demonstrating the impact of training results from inadequate data to populate the analysis. Because organizations too often think they can go without systematic training and development of their staff, having measures in place to demonstrate the benefits and impact of any intervention is paramount.
6. **Collaborative approaches grounded in effective networking and stakeholders' engagement are critical to training outcomes.** In addition to ensuring that training design and delivery benefit from good local knowledge, employers and governments must have confidence in the programs offered for them to be consistently committed and thus provide adequate incentives to participants returning to their job to transfer the knowledge acquired.
7. *Adequate funding remains a major challenge to the realization of effective capacity development of African public administration, and the situation would be much better if governments and organizations became more involved.* External funding from organizations such as the ACBF cannot always be guaranteed, yet many governments and organizations in Africa are unwilling to fund training from their internal resources. This situation must be reversed. Attractive market-base incentives, including objective proof of the benefits and impact of training and development programs, are required to attract more funding of capacity development interventions from national governments and organizations.
8. *Direct funding of institutions may not always be the most cost-effective way to deliver training interventions.* Direct funding of particular institutions to the exclusion of others risks making them over-dependent on external funding. That appears to have happened in the case of the PSMTF and the four host institutions. A more sustainable arrangement is required going forward. Well- managed merit-based scholarship schemes would possibly offer better opportunities for a wider target group and create incentives for training organizations to attract suitable participants.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACBF has been remarkably successful in facilitating high-grade short- and long-term programs on general management and selected specialized areas in the public sector. Though it is not the only institution available to African governments and organizations, it has managed to stand out. This study analyzed ACBF's Public Sector Management (PSM) training work over the past thirty years, revealing how it has been designed and delivered, responded to the African realities, and realized considerable achievements and outcomes. The study also highlighted some key problems and challenges ACBF has faced. And the study distilled a number of key lessons of ACBF's experience for better understanding human capacity development in PSM. Nevertheless, ACBF work in this area mostly fizzled out in the organization's Strategic Medium-Term Plan III.

So, making a strong case for ACBF to restore its erstwhile commitment to PSM training is a key recommendation. There is evidently continuous high demand for this throughout the continent. However, the renewal must not repeat the mistakes of the past. Accordingly, ten other recommendations are:

1. In line with an evaluation study carried out by Universal Management Group (2011), ACBF need to clarify the theory of change and targets of its training interventions.
2. ACBF should clarify what it covers in the PSM area to enable better management and tracking of the program.
3. ACBF must continue to support long and short courses, because they serve different but mutually reinforcing needs.
4. A more openly competitive scholarship scheme funding participants in reputable programs in the continent should also eliminate the controversy around short and long programs.
5. Gender representation must be taken seriously. A clear policy is required to promote it, backed by penalties to programme implementing institutions in future funding opportunities.
6. Better data management must be incorporated into all training processes, including to reinforce gender representation.
7. Focused attention may be required on the capacity weaknesses of many of the training providers in the Francophone context to bring them up to the standards in the Anglophone countries.
8. All the main language groups in Africa should be covered. Currently only the Anglophone and Francophone groups have enjoyed programs in PSM.
9. More work should be done to further link the focus on public sector administration and state development to the highly commendable initiative of the ACBF on the capacity challenge of Agenda 2063.
10. Africa is a vast continent with enormous capacity needs that are impossible for the ACBF to meet alone, regardless of how much it tries. Investing in effort to get other national and international players involved is paramount.

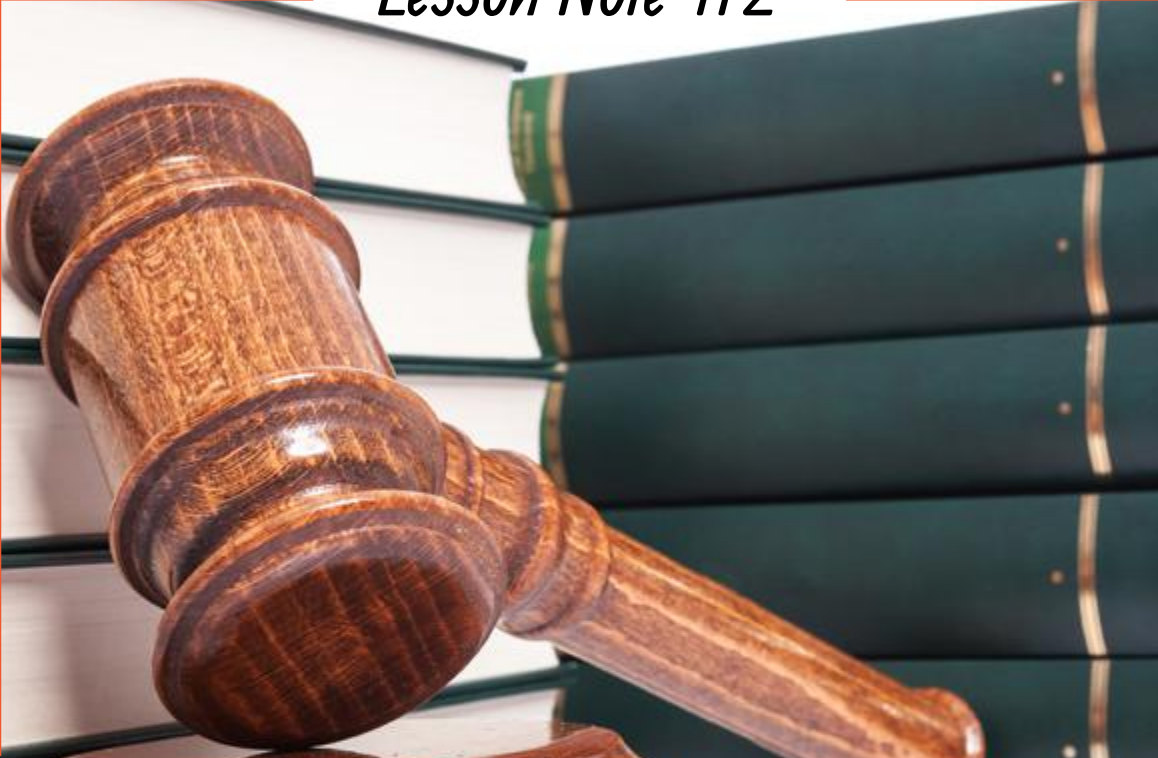
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Lesson Note #2



ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS



Wanyama Masinde

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional integration has been slowed by weak institutional capacity, poor research and knowledge management mechanisms, and lack of competent staff at African regional economic community (REC) secretariats, other regional institutions, and the integration units of the ministries responsible for regional integration at the national level.¹ One of the main challenges faced by RECs and their member states is the lack of adequate capacity to formulate relevant policies as well as to effectively implement regional integration projects and programs. This is manifest in poor, slow, or failed implementation of agreed actions at the top levels of both regional and national organizations. It must therefore be understood that regional integration is not a do-it-yourself project; it requires certain competencies. Capacity building for regional integration is therefore essential.

This Lesson Note looks at the capacity challenges to regional integration on the continent, how the ACBF intervened, what the impacts were, and most important, what lessons emerged in the years of supporting regional integration. The Note makes recommendations based on the lessons on how to approach capacity building on regional integration, including identifying possible innovations. The Note draws on internal ACBF reports, occasional papers, and other publications.

Capacity challenges for regional integration

Africa faces numerous capacity challenges. Some of those identified are:

- Limited human capacity: lack of adequate or qualified personnel at the national and regional levels.
- Weak institutional capacity at REC secretariats and within the coordinating ministries at the national level.
- Poor linkages between RECs, across RECs, and between RECs and the coordinating ministries at the national level.
- Inadequate investment in research (knowledge generation), resulting in lack of adequate or relevant research, as well as a lack of awareness of its availability, leading to the inability to make evidenced-based policy decisions.
- Incompetent² and deficient regional and national institutions and inappropriate models and approaches.
- Insufficient institutional capacities to maintain and coordinate the RECs, including resource constraints.
- Limited institutional and financial capacity to help member states formulate and implement regional programs.
- Difficulty translating regional political commitment into action by ratifying protocols and linking regional integration to national development.
- Slow pace in aligning development partners' priorities and systems with the African or REC integration agenda.
- Diversity across economies and divergent country attitudes toward regional integration.
- Overlapping membership of RECs.
- Inadequate participation by non-state actors.
- Reconstruction and political transformation challenges facing fragile states, and lack of innovation among middle-income countries to build regional capabilities.
- Failure of national governments and RECs to prioritize capacity building and to fund it.

1 Mangeni 2006.

2 In regional integration, competence means institutional authority, and incompetence therefore means a lack of or inadequate authority.

Capacity building support by the African Capacity Building Foundation

To respond to these challenges, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has invested in capacity building using grant support and technical assistance through these channels:

- Financial support at the continental level to the African Union (AU) and at the regional level to RECs, such as the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).
- The establishment of regional training programs in Francophone and Anglophone Africa, such as the African Institutions of Science and Technology (AIST), the Programme de troisième cycle interuniversitaire en Economie (PTCI), and Economic and Policy Management (EPM).
- Support to other intergovernmental organizations such as the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI).
- Support to regional think tanks and policy institutes with a regional mandate, such as the Nairobi-based African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and the Addis Ababa-based Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI).
- Development of knowledge products—research reports and other publications—which have become a useful tool for policy-makers, researchers, academics, and development partners in the field of regional integration at all levels.

Relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact

Anecdotes and feedback from institutions and individuals provide some insights on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of ACBF-supported capacity building projects in support of regional integration. All stakeholders consider ACBF support as being “very successful”. Moreover, ACBF-supported institutions are viewed by all beneficiaries, donors, and partners as above average compared with other similar institutions. In addition, the effectiveness of the support given by ACBF can also be assessed by looking at capacity needs assessment reports. These reports indicate that, in most cases, the support given responds to the needs identified.

Recommendations

Several recommendations should be considered by the ACBF and its working partners (the AU, RECs, governments, development partners, and others) for ongoing or future capacity development initiatives in support of regional integration:

- Minimizing duplication of capacity building activities to increase efficiency and maximize institutional and human capabilities as well as carrying out continuous monitoring and evaluating of capacity building efforts: Following ACBF's recognition by the AU as its specialized agency on capacity development, the foundation should engage with the AUC and RECs and harmonize training for regional integration on the continent. An inventory should be kept of who is doing what and where at any given time.
- Making sure that capacity building is driven by demand: Designs of interventions to nurture capacity must be result-oriented and focus on *capacity for what and whom*. The underlying principle should be clear on who will benefit, and the activities must reflect the needs of the beneficiaries. For instance, donor practices can, at best, facilitate and, at worst, hamper the emergence of the much-needed capacity. The RECs differ in mandate and levels of integration— and any support should consider this.
- Taking a long-term perspective: Capacity development is a long-term process that can be promoted through a combination of short-term results driven interventions from the outside and more sustainable, longer term ones driven from the inside which require sticking with the process even under difficult circumstances. While policy institutes and national institutions may have their own long-term staff, most RECs do not and hence the need for continuous training—as officers on secondment go back to national governments taking the capacity gained with them.
- To harmonize the work of the various players in capacity building for regional integration on the continent and to address overlaps and facilitate better utilization of the scarce resources available, an annual **Africa Capacity Building Summit** is proposed. At this event, the various players will review performance and plan for the year ahead. Questions such as *what needs to be done, who will do what, who can do it best, and how, where, and when* will be addressed.

These recommendations should be attempted with an appreciation for—and good understanding of—the political economy dynamics in each region and institution. Africa is not one country; the RECs are not the same. Each site requiring capacity building should be treated as unique, with its own special requirements, and attendant interventions should be formulated accordingly.

INTRODUCTION

Regional integration remains an integral part of Africa's development strategy and has underpinned most pan-African development policies for the past 50 years. Regional integration is an irrefutable reality of our age that is especially important for Africa, as highlighted in the continent's Agenda 2063.³ Regional integration is considered a key driver and the way forward for the structural transformation of African economies. There is increasing commitment to regional integration and a heightened recognition that collaborative action and regional approaches are critical to achieving Africa's development goals. However, for regional integration to yield the expected benefits in trade, investment, peace, security, and above all, economic transformation and sustainable development, continental institutions, RECs, and the responsible ministries, departments, and agencies at the national level need to understand the key issues and constraints. This understanding needs to guide their formulation and coordination of appropriate strategies and policies and their successful implementation of various regional development projects and plans. Related support institutions and other players also need to do their jobs effectively. This requires appropriate and adequate capacity: sufficient human and institutional capacity and knowledge management.

Since its establishment in 1991, the ACBF has supported sustainable development and transformation of the continent through investment in national and regional capacity building interventions. ACBF's support has focused mainly on strengthening capacity for policy formulation and analysis, financial management and accountability, public administration and management, and national statistics and statistical systems of national parliaments and regional parliamentary assemblies, and on the professionalization of the voices of the private sector and civil society.⁴ In these efforts, ACBF has spearheaded and coordinated capacity development programs in every corner of the continent in up to 45 countries (and beyond if sharing of relevant knowledge is considered).

This Lesson Note looks at the capacity challenges to regional integration on the continent, how the ACBF intervened and what the impacts were, and most important, what lessons emerged in the years of supporting regional integration. The Note makes recommendations based on the lessons on how to approach capacity building on regional integration, including identifying possible innovations. The Note draws on internal ACBF reports, occasional papers, and other publications.

For this Lesson Note, a desk review was conducted of evaluation reports of ACBF work and ACBF-funded projects, as well as relevant in-house and external publications. The Note reviews ACBF's support in enhancing the capacity of regional organization and institutions for policy formulation to advance regional integration in Africa.

CAPACITY CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

Regional integration has been slowed by weak institutional capacity, inadequate research and knowledge management mechanisms, and lack of competent staff at African REC secretariats, at other regional institutions, and at the integration units of national ministries responsible for regional integration.⁵ One of the main challenges faced by RECs and their member states is the lack of adequate capacity to formulate appropriate policies and to effectively implement regional integration projects and programs. This is manifest in poor, slow, or failed implementation of agreed actions at the top levels of both the regional and national organization. It must therefore be appreciated that regional integration is not a do-it-yourself project; it requires certain competencies. Capacity building for regional integration is therefore essential. Regional integration has been a priority focus for ACBF, and some of its regional interventions over the last 27 years have included studies leading to the publication of flagship reports such as *Challenges Facing Africa's Regional Economic Communities in Capacity Building* (2006), *A Survey of the Capacity Needs of Africa's Regional Economic Communities* (2008), and *A Survey of the Capacity Needs of Africa's Regional Economic Communities and Strategies for Addressing Them* (2016), as well as the ACBF's flagship *Africa Capacity Report for 2014: Capacity Imperatives for Regional Integration in Africa*. These studies identify capacity challenges that impede the continent from achieving its regional integration agenda.

3 <http://agenda2063.au.int/en/vision>.

4 ACBF 2016a.

5 Mangeni 2006.

The studies reveal capacity deficiencies in all RECs. They also reveal that most capacity interventions over the years have been fragmented and reactive, rather than well-planned and strategic. In most RECs, capacity assessments have been funded by development partners such as UK Aid through the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the European Union (EU), German Development Cooperation (GIZ), the Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA),⁶ with implications for ownership and commitment.

Some of the capacity challenges identified are:

- Limited human capacity: lack of adequate or qualified personnel at the national and regional levels.
- Weak institutional capacity at REC secretariats and within the coordinating ministries at the national level.
- Poor linkages between RECs, across RECs, and between RECs and the coordinating ministries at the national level.
- Inadequate investment in research (knowledge generation), resulting in lack of adequate or relevant research, as well as a lack of awareness of its availability, leading to the inability to make evidenced-based policy decisions.
- Incompetent⁷ and deficient regional and national institutions and inappropriate models and approaches.
- Insufficient institutional capacities to maintain and coordinate the RECs, including resource constraints.
- Limited institutional and financial capacity to help member states formulate and implement regional programs.
- Difficulty translating regional political commitment into action by ratifying protocols and linking regional integration to national development.
- Slow pace in aligning development partners' priorities and systems with the African or REC integration agenda.
- Diversity across economies and divergent country attitudes toward regional integration.
- Overlapping membership of RECs.
- Inadequate participation by non-state actors.
- Reconstruction and political transformation challenges facing fragile states, and lack of innovation among middle-income countries to build regional capabilities.
- Failure of national governments and RECs to prioritize capacity building and to fund it.

Weak capacity for national coordinating units in member states generally leads to lack of effectiveness in fulfilling their mandate of facilitating and implementing regional integration programs. There seems to be inadequate appreciation for and understanding of regional integration policy and implementation issues by some government officials involved in policy making and implementation. This is usually attributable to inadequate human resources specialized in regional integration matters. At the regional level, attitudes during negotiations reflect a lack of appreciation of regional interests. Negotiators tend to take a national rather than a regional perspective on regional integration. Arguably, this has the potential to produce programs that reflect largely the interests of a few member states rather than of the entire region, as predominantly national programs end up being regionalized. Skills for negotiating regional integration need to be developed.

6 CIDA is now Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

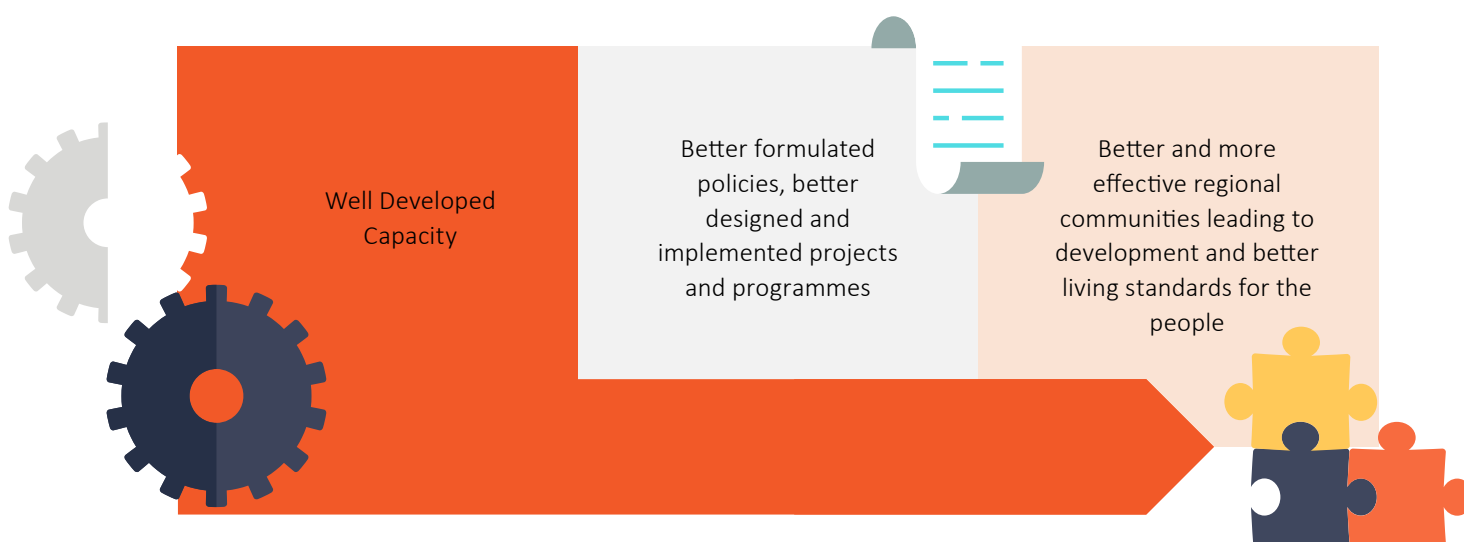
7 In regional integration, competence means institutional authority, and incompetence therefore means lack of or inadequate authority.

Regional community secretariats and national agencies play an important role in spearheading and managing regional integration programs, and yet they face serious capacity challenges in supporting implementation of key regional integration programs. This has led to unsustainable over-reliance on short-term consultants paid for by foreign donors and who often lack the requisite skills. Moreover, despite the critical role of statistics and research data in general to support decision-making, the lack of capacity in this area ultimately undermines decision-making. Effective negotiations and other decisions require research evidence.

ACBF SUPPORT TO CAPACITY BUILDING FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Africa needs a bold approach to capacity building in order to foster regional integration (figure 1). Clearly, capacity is needed to drive the integration process forward and to support the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the eventual creation of the African Economic Community, and the delivery of Agenda 2063.

Figure 1 Better capacity leads to better policies and more effective regional economic communities



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS BY THE ACBF

ACBF has approached capacity building on the continent through grant support to RECs and other regional organizations as well as to think tanks and policy institutes. This support has gone toward capacity building through training, research, and institutional strengthening to address the limited human capacity, particularly within government institutions, and the inability to make evidenced-based policy decisions.

ACBF has invested in capacity building using grant support and technical assistance through these channels:

- Financial support at the continental level to the African Union (AU) and at the regional level to RECs, such as the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).
- The establishment of regional training programs in Francophone and Anglophone Africa, such as the African Institutions of Science and Technology (AIST), the Programme de troisième cycle interuniversitaire en Economie (PTCI), and Economic and Policy Management (EPM).
- Support to other intergovernmental organizations such as the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI).
- Support to regional think tanks and policy institutes with a regional mandate such as the Nairobi-based Africa Research and Resource Forum (ARRF) and the Addis Ababa-based Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI).
- Development of knowledge products—research reports and other publications—which have become a useful tool for policy-makers, researchers, academics, and development partners in the field of regional integration at all levels.

Although much remains to be done, strategic evaluations and project assessments of ACBF support over the years show that ACBF has made significant contributions to the relevance and influence of policy institutes and think tanks; created space for inclusive policy engagement; and produced a cadre of skilled macroeconomic, financial management, and public sector managers who are driving and contributing to national and regional policy initiatives, projects, and programs across the continent. The following case studies illustrate the support given by ACBF.

ACBF support to RECs and their related institutions—the case of COMESA

AACBF's initial support to COMESA came under the project Strengthening Capacity for Trade Policy Development within COMESA (2002–2009). This project aimed to enhance the capacity of the COMESA Secretariat and member states in such critical areas as trade negotiation, trade policy formulation, and customs union issues and to improve the participation of the private sector and civil society in trade policy and regional integration. Overall, the project was expected to enable member states to deepen regional integration as well as enhance their integration into the global economy.

This project recorded several milestones:

- A total of 39 workshops were held benefiting 916 officials in the 17 project member states. This figure surpassed the initial target of 340 trainees.
- The interface between the private sector and other non-state actors and public institutions was strengthened in trade-related negotiations such as economic partnership agreement (EPA) negotiations with the European Union and negotiations on accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In Zambia, for example, this support led to non-state actors being invited to join government officials in EPA negotiations.
- A number of member states (including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Seychelles, and Sudan) went through WTO accession negotiations closely supported by the COMESA Secretariat, which enhanced capacity.

In 2010, ACBF approved further support to COMESA for a new capacity building project: *Enhancing Capacity of the COMESA Secretariat to Support Economic and Trade Policy Analysis and Research*. The project, launched in 2014, focused on strengthening institutional capacity at the COMESA Secretariat, including the capacity for economic policy research and analysis and for trade policy analysis and trade negotiations.

This grant has resulted in multiple benefits to the region. It enabled COMESA to train negotiators from member states to take part in the COMESA–EAC–SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area negotiations. ACBF support to COMESA also included building the capacity of officers at the national level, where REC policy formulation begins. Policy formulation and implementation are a national function; the RECs exist only for coordination purposes.

The COMESA Research Forum, a gathering of representatives from government, academia, think tanks, and the private sector to engage on regional integration policy research and to share knowledge on regional integration, has helped COMESA shape policy-making in the region. In recognition of the value of this initiative, the COMESA Council of Ministers made the forum an annual event.

COMESA has also used funding from ACBF to initiate the COMESA Virtual University of Regional Integration. Its master's program in regional integration will start in 2018 at Kenyatta University in Kenya before expanding to other universities. The COMESA Summit in Addis Ababa approved the Virtual University project in 2015, and the master's program was launched by the Summit in Madagascar in 2016.

Capacity building project for the Pan-African Parliament

In addition to support to the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the ACBF has given support to the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) to build the capacity of PAP committees, parliamentarians, and parliamentary staff to discharge their functions and advance implementation of AU protocols; increase PAP's visibility and stature through effective communication and interaction with national parliaments, regional parliaments, and a wide spectrum of Africa's citizens to enable them to actively participate in PAP affairs; advance knowledge of PAP members, staff, and committees through research and networking using information and communication technology; develop internal administrative and financial management systems and procedures; and equip the PAP Secretariat with modern organizational techniques.

Through internal capacity development support, including payment of PAP staff, the PAP Assembly was able to hold two regional consultative seminars on harmonization of RECS and regional parliamentary fora. These seminars facilitated PAP's execution of one of its core mandates of "promoting the coordination and harmonization of policies, measures, programs, and activities of the RECs and the Parliamentary Fora of Africa."⁸

While it may be desirable to highlight the value of regional parliamentary assemblies in Africa, and in the world, only two regional parliaments are true parliaments: the EU Parliament and the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA). Other assemblies are more a symbolic gathering of representatives from national parliaments. How much support should the ACBF give to symbolic bodies? Could these resources be better spent elsewhere?

ACBF support to other intergovernmental organizations: The Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa

The Harare-based Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI) is a regional capacity building institute with 13 members (Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). The ACBF has been supporting MEFMI through the *Improving Macroeconomic and Financial Management in MEFMI Member Countries* project, which has enabled MEFMI to enhance the knowledge and analytical capacity of policy-makers, academics, and researchers through research and training in regional integration and the financial sector. ACBF has also addressed emerging regional integration challenges such as those related to implementation of the integration agenda in light of issues such as over-lapping

8 ACBF 2011.

membership and capacity and financing constraints of regional integration.

Through this project, MEFMI has trained policy-makers and other government officials and commissioned studies to support policy-making on regional integration. Some of these efforts include:

- A seminar on Regional Integration and Trade in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2013.
- A course on Economic Issues in Regional Integration in Pretoria, South Africa, in 2014.
- A course on Deeper Regional Integration Agenda in Africa in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2014.
- A forum on Regional Integration in Africa for Deputy Governors of Central Banks and Deputy Permanent Secretaries for Finance and Planning in Maputo, in 2017.
- A regional workshop on Cross-border Payment Systems for the East African Community in 2017.
- An ongoing study on 'Mapping the EAC Regional Ports with Complementary Transport Infrastructure to Facilitate Trade.'

In 2017, MEFMI designed and offered a successful and over-subscribed online course on regional integration and trade that attracted participants from 12 countries, many of whom were public officials whose input feeds into policy-making. MEFMI also runs a fellowship scheme that attracts mid-level and senior public officials. Beneficiaries of the capacity building programs have highlighted the quality and contribution of MEFMI to their work as implementers of and policy-makers in regional integration. MEFMI's impact reflects internal institutional support from ACBF. ACBF has also helped MEFMI strengthen its human resources, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation systems, thereby improving its institutional effectiveness and efficiency. ACBF funded the acquisition of highly skilled and capable staff and supported the development of systems and procedures that have enabled MEFMI to evolve into the capable, trusted institution of choice in the region.

While ACBF support to MEFMI is important to its work, MEFMI has a high-level convening capacity and its sustainability is guaranteed by the fact that it is owned by the central banks and ministries of finance of its member states, who contribute to its resources. This also guarantees that MEFMI events are attended by top policy-makers, thereby ensuring high-level impact. The fact that MEFMI is headed by a former central bank governor further ensures high-level support from colleagues who are still in service. MEFMI is an outstanding example of the benefits of ACBF support to policy-making in support of regional integration.

ACBF support to think tanks and policy institutes with a regional mandate: Africa Research and Resource Forum and the Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute

The Africa Research and Resource Forum (RRF) works with EAC, whereas HESPI's activities feed into the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). ACBF has supported them to strengthen their internal processes, to hire and retain staff, to carry out research, and to hold conferences and meetings with RECs. The work of the two institutions has also resulted in the publication of several papers. However, their reach is still minimal, and while they touch on regional integration issues, this is not their core business. Convening one or two meetings does not equal impact, and further support may be required.

Africa needs more think tanks and policy institutes focused on regional integration. Few of the think tanks and policy institutes supported by the ACBF focus solely on regional integration. A particular REC region may constitute the geographical reach of these think tanks and policy institutes, but regional integration issues may not be their core field of specialization. Where competencies in regional integration may be wanting, the internal capacity of such think tanks and policy institutes requires strengthening before they build the capacity externally.

ACBF support through knowledge products

ACBF research output in the form of reports and other publications contributes to public policy discourse, particularly with the public sector. This research is useful to policy-makers, researchers, academics, and development partners in the field of regional integration at all levels. ACBF research has resulted in the publication of reports such as *Challenges Facing Africa's Regional Economic Communities in Capacity Building* (2006), *A Survey of the Capacity Needs of Africa's Regional Economic Communities* (2008), and *A Survey of the Capacity Needs of Africa's Regional Economic Communities and Strategies for Addressing Them* (2016). In addition, the 2014 ACBF flagship *Africa Capacity Report examined Capacity Imperatives for Regional Integration in Africa*. These studies identify capacity challenges that impede the continent in achieving its regional integration agenda and offer recommendations on how to address the challenges. The ACBF publications remain the only comprehensive database and source of information on capacity needs for regional integration across the RECs on the continent.

IMPACT, EFFECTIVENESS, RELEVANCE, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ACBF SUPPORT

ACBF support has enabled RECs, other regional organizations, think tanks, and policy institutes working on regional and African integration to:

- Address critical policy issues.
- Actively participate in policy discourse through policy papers, workshops, and conferences; high quality research; and publication production that, in most cases, adequately meet the needs of external stakeholders.
- Strengthen their internal systems and procedures, making them more effective in delivering on their mandate.

Impact and effectiveness of ACBF support for regional integration

The concept of capacity building is a high-level abstraction, and therefore measuring the impact and effectiveness of capacity building initiatives is a challenge.⁹ Nevertheless, it can be said that capacity building in regional integration should lead to better performance by the beneficiary institutions that goes beyond their delivery of activities and outputs. However, this better performance is also difficult to measure. For example, even though COMESA acknowledges ACBF support in training negotiators for the COMESA–EAC–SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area negotiations, the conclusion of negotiations cannot necessarily be attributed to the training received by the negotiators.¹⁰

Anecdotes from institutions and individuals can provide insight into the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of capacity building projects. Stakeholders consider ACBF support as being “very successful” (ACBF 2013). In addition, ACBF-supported institutions are viewed by beneficiaries, donors, and partners as above average compared with other similar institutions. A participant at a MEFMI course on Regional Integration and Trade (2017) said that the training equipped her with new skills that would enable her to perform better at her place of work.¹¹ Support for courses such as this addresses one of the challenges for regional integration on the continent—officials who lack the requisite skills for the job they are meant to perform.

The effectiveness of the support given by the ACBF can also be assessed by looking at capacity needs assessment reports. These reports indicate that, in most cases, the support given responds to the needs identified.

Despite the support from the ACBF, huge capacity challenges for regional integration persist on the continent, and more concerted efforts will be required of all stakeholders in the long term.

9 Ogiogio 2004.

10 ACBF 2016b.

11 MEFMI 2017.

Relevance of ACBF support

In supporting regional integration, the role of each institution needs to be taken into account. One impediment to regional integration in Africa is the failure of RECs to focus on their core mandate, instead initiating projects in other areas that are easier to deliver on but that take them away from the work that they should be doing. For instance, while COMESA counts the setting up of a university as an achievement, is this something that is within the competence of RECs or should this be left to national governments?¹² The experience with the Pan-African Parliament, which is wholly donor funded, raises questions of competence and sustainability. RECs should be encouraged to focus on their core mandate of regional integration. In the cases of PAP and COMESA, for example, it is important to support them in delivering on their core functions rather than going beyond their mandate by giving them competencies that they do not need.

As to think tanks and policy institutes, the ACBF should give more support to those that focus on regional integration as their core mandate. This is particularly important considering ACBF's new mandate as a specialized agency of the African Union. Most think tanks address regional integration only in their work on economic issues, yet regional integration is multi-disciplinary. That means that many other aspects are left unaddressed.

Sustainability of ACBF-supported capacity building programs in regional integration

African states should strengthen institutions for regional integration by ensuring that adequate administrative and financial resources are available and by supporting the funding of capacity building interventions, especially in designing, operating, and monitoring regional programs and projects. African states should also pay attention to human capacity in trade-related issues and organizational capacity in fiscal policy and financial market development. They should also attend to the development of capacity building programs and emphasize the retention and use of skills, not just their acquisition. Priority should go to strengthening research, sharing knowledge and experience, harmonizing legal frameworks, and ensuring that continental objectives and those of the RECs are aligned with the continent's Agenda 2063.

If some countries fail to recognize the importance of capacity building and neglect to provide budgetary allocations for it, the key institutions for regional integration risk losing the long-term positive benefits of ACBF support as a result of over-dependence on donor funding. But this is not always the case. A good successful example worth mentioning is the COMESA Secretariat Project Research Unit supported by ACBF managed to absorb all staff once the project ended.

While policy institutes can raise resources by commercializing their products, RECs and national units cannot do that. Governments therefore need to take responsibility and not leave technical support for policy-makers in the hands of development partners, some of which may have their own agenda to advance that may not be in the best interests of beneficiaries. Nevertheless, ACBF support has allowed institutions to attract other donors.

LESSONS FROM ACBF EXPERIENCE SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Relative success over the years notwithstanding, efforts by REC member states and pan-African institutions to foster regional integration have been hindered by their lack of enforcement capacity and inadequacies in their human resource capacity, which compromise policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of projects or programs. For instance, many protocols have been signed but remain unimplemented due to ineffective and inadequate implementation capacity. In some RECs where capacity exists, it is neither optimally used nor sufficiently nurtured. The institutional competence of RECs is within the purview of member states, and they should be encouraged to respond to the requests of REC secretariats for more authority to drive the regional integration agenda. National governments, for

12 Subsidiarity: RECs should only do what governments cannot do as well.

their part, have competing priorities and will not drive the agenda fully. Thus, it is necessary to strengthen the mandates of the executive secretaries and heads of Africa's RECs to manage internal mechanisms and governance structures and to advise member states on key regional integration issues.

Policy impact through research and the training of high-level officials is key to the success of regional integration policy-making. ACBF should support institutions that have a high convening capacity. MEFMI, for example, can convene seminars and workshops for senior government officials up to the ministerial level. This is better than most RECs can do, which is to gather ministers only for meetings and not for training or seminars. MEFMI can do this since it is "owned" by ministries of finance and central banks and its executive director is always a former central bank governor, which means that MEFMI meetings are meetings among colleagues. This shows good appreciation of Africa's political economy dynamics. Institutions with prominent individuals at the helm will also more readily attract buy-in, support, and attention to their policy advice. Equally, RECs are able to draw senior officials to their meetings. Consequently, MEFMI and REC projects have been of higher impact at the policy level. Intergovernmental institutes are able to draw higher profile audiences, and therefore policy-makers readily consume their products.

When it comes to funding, think tanks that are owned by governments, such as the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) and Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU), as well as those nested within universities and research centers, such as the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), have better funding, better support mechanisms, and a better platform for engaging with those at a high level in government. On the other hand, independent think tanks such as ARRF must struggle for funding and to market their products; these institutions therefore require greater nurturing by ACBF. This support is vital since an independent voice is essential in policy research and analysis. Nevertheless, some independent think tanks have high-profile board members—retired senior officials from government or RECs—with sufficient clout to garner support and attention that raises their impact. Think tanks and policy institutes, especially smaller, independent ones, should be nurtured and supported to ensure that they engage more with policy-makers to increase the impact of their work. As coordinating and facilitating institutions, RECs require capacities strong enough to drive the regional integration agenda.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Adequate capacity is central to any institution or project. No matter how much financial support is mobilized for Africa's development, such funds will yield only limited or modest results if the African Union Commission, RECs, and coordinating units at the national level do not have sufficient human, organizational, and institutional capacity to use the resources effectively. Capacity development is therefore the foundation for Africa's much needed transformation. But to produce better results, this capacity development must adopt innovative approaches and be uniquely targeted to each REC as opposed to taking a one size fits all approach. Africa is one, but capacity differs across the continent among its individual and institutions. All capacity building efforts should be attempted with an appreciation for the political economy dynamics in each region and institution. Each site requiring capacity building should be treated as unique, with its own special requirements and interventions should be formulated accordingly.

Despite the efforts of the ACBF over the past 27 years, much work remains to be done in light of the persisting challenges for regional integration identified over the years. All stakeholders should continue working together to ensure continuous capacity building.

Recommendations

Several recommendations should be considered by the ACBF and its working partners (the AU, RECs, governments, development partners, and others) for ongoing or future capacity development initiatives in support of regional integration:

- Minimizing duplication and overlaps of capacity building activities to increase efficiency and maximize institutional and human capabilities: Following the ACBF's new mandate with the AU, the foundation should engage with the AUC and RECs and work to harmonize training for regional integration on the continent. An inventory of who is doing what and where at any given time, should be kept—may be the ACBF should coordinate this and encourage the RECs to report on the capacity building efforts within them, say, on a quarterly basis. Other players on the continent such as the AU's Human Resource, Science and Technology (HRST) Department as well as that of Economic Affairs, NEPAD—the AU's New Economic Development Agency, the African Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and its Dakar-based African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (UN-IDEP) who all engage in capacity building across the continent should be involved and their interventions harmonized and well-coordinated.
- Making sure that capacity building is driven by demand as opposed to supply: Designs of interventions to nurture capacity must be result-oriented and focus on capacity for what and whom. The underlying principle should be clear on who will benefit, and the activities must be designed to reflect the needs of the beneficiaries. Donor practices can, at best, facilitate and, at worst, hamper the emergence of national capacity. The RECs differ in mandate and level of integration—any support should put this into consideration.
- Taking a long-term perspective and carrying out continuous monitoring and evaluation of capacity building efforts: Capacity building is a long-term process that can be promoted through a combination of short-term results-driven interventions from the outside and more sustainable, longer-term ones driven from the inside which require sticking with the process even under difficult circumstances. Emphasizing skills' retention and utilization and accommodating the dynamic nature of capacity building. African countries face serious impediments due to the continued emigration of skilled professionals and non-standardization/harmonization of skills development processes across borders. It should also be noted that while policy institutes and national institutions may have their own long-term staff, most RECs do not and hence the need for continuous training—as officers on secondment go back to national governments taking the capacity gained with them. Capacity building is a dynamic process with many facets, and interventions should evolve in line with emerging needs.
- The situation highlighted in the three preceding recommendations calls for an Africa Capacity Building Summit. To facilitate proper planning, it is high time that the various players gathered for an African Capacity Building Summit every year review performance and to plan for the year ahead. This event will allow for the harmonization of the work of the various players in capacity building for regional integration on the continent and address overlaps and facilitate better utilization of the scarce resources available. Questions such as what needs to be done, who will do what, who can do it best, and how, where and when will be addressed.

The following issues also require consideration:

- Adopting a learning-by-doing approach to capacity building: Use a range of tools from traditional methods (such as workshops and in-service technical training) to those that offer greater scope both methodologically and institutionally (such as networking, horizontal exchanges and cooperation, creation of multi-stakeholder project steering committees, sharing of project management responsibilities, internships, south-south cooperation and issue-based scientific networks).
- Establishing communities of practice—otherwise called epistemic¹³ communities in regional integration—to share knowledge and experience in pursuing well-researched and sustainable solutions. The epistemic community—knowledge/thinking community—is a key plank in any regional integration process.
- Encouraging all RECs to formulate gender policies, anchored on international conventions, specifically the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Supporting skills development in ways that bridge individual learning and institutional change by adopting an integrated and holistic approach to capacity building.
- Ensuring coordination: Successful capacity building depends on good coordination with sufficient flexibility to fine-tune plans and priorities as conditions change and new problems are encountered.
- Despite the largely fruitful efforts of the ACBF over the past 27 years, a lot still remains to be done since the challenges for regional integration identified over the years persist. All stakeholders should continue working together to ensure continuous capacity building so that the continent delivers on its regional integration aspirations beginning with the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area and the realization of Agenda 2063.

13 Epistemic means knowledge.

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Lesson Note #3



BUILDING CAPACITY IN AFRICA'S CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES



Joseph R. A. Ayee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Africa has 20 conflict-affected countries (CACs), 75 percent of all those in the world at the end of 2016. Conflict creates serious capacity deficits on several fronts and building and retaining human resource capacity is one of the most difficult challenges facing post-conflict governments and their development partners. Notwithstanding extensive domestic and external efforts spanning several decades, many CACs continue to fall short on that challenge, breeding fatalism, complexity, and conundrum.

This paper examines the African Capacity Building Foundation's (ACBF) progress in developing the capacity of Africa's CACs. The key question is: How did customized projects designed by the ACBF to develop the capacity of CACs fare? The paper finds that ACBF interventions through institutional and technical support have contributed to effective policy making and public sector delivery. The interventions nurtured and transformed CAC partner institutions into effective entities. They also helped under-resourced ministries, departments, and agencies develop human resource skills in both the public and private sectors. And the interventions enhanced inclusiveness so that non-state actors, especially women, participated in national and regional development.

ACBF's key innovation was designing customized capacity development interventions to suit the different contexts of the CACs. Through the collaboration of state and non-state actors and non-conflict-affected countries, a holistic approach to capacity development facilitated learning and adoption of best practices and promoted local ownership and regional partnership.

ACBF's limited financial resources confronted the size, number, and huge capacity deficits of CACs, their inability to absorb knowledge, and the lack of commitment from their governments to support most capacity development programs and projects, leading to their scaling down or discontinuance.

Three key messages emerge. First, the customized or demand-driven approach to capacity development in the diverse and complex CACs largely succeeded in spite of the hiccups. Customized institutional and technical support helped ACBF's partners to provide quality products and services to their clients despite the challenges they encountered. ACBF's proximity to its partners resulted in timely response and support in resolving implementation issues, facilitating local ownership and enthusiasm. A one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable because it does not take into consideration the country-specific context and complexity.

Second, developing capacity is one of the most difficult challenges facing post-conflict governments and their development partners. But they face challenges—for instance, most CAC governments are not interested because they see capacity development as intangible, not worth paying for, and risky since newly developed human resource capacity may leave for greener pastures if service conditions are unattractive (Liberia is usually a case reported in the literature; Brinkerhoff 2007).

Third, developing capacity in CACs is more expensive than in non-CACs because of destroyed physical and human infrastructure. It also takes time, requiring systematic, carefully targeted, sustained effort over a reasonable period of time. Thus, although ACBF maintained regular oversight over its interventions to ensure timely and effective impact, in the short-term results may not be readily visible.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines progress in developing the capacities of conflict-affected countries (CACs) in Africa and the lessons learned from that experience. Specifically, it examines the African Capacity Building Foundation's (ACBF) capacity development framework and experience in this area and assesses its impact, challenges, and lessons. The paper is based on a desk study review, mostly of evaluation reports of ACBF capacity development in some of the Africa's 20 CACs (Table 1) and how they affected capacities in planning, implementing capacity development activities, implementing development programs, and producing tangible results for the population.

Table 1 Conflict-affected countries in Africa and African Capacity Building Foundation capacity development projects

Country	Project
Angola	None
Burundi	(1) Institut de Développement Economique; (2) Burundi Country Capacity Building Program; (3) Capacity Building Initiative for Poverty Reduction Programming, Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation
Central African Republic	(1) Projet de Renforcement des Capacités en Statistiques de la République Centrafricaine; (2) Capacity Building Project to Improve the Participation of Central African Economic and Monetary Community Member States in the Multilateral Trade System
Chad	(1) Training Support Project for Public Administration Civil Servants in Chad; (2) Project for the Professionalization of Public Administration in the Republic of Chad; (3) National Secretariat for Capacity Building in the Republic of Chad
Comoros	Center for Analysis and Research on Public Policies (start of an ongoing project)
Congo	(1) Capacity Building Project in Statistics, Forecasting, and Planning in the Fight against Poverty in the Republic of Congo; (2) Capacity Building Project for Civil Society and Private Sector Dialogue in the Republic of Congo; (3) Financial Accountability and Transparency Support Program for the Fight against Poverty in the Congo
Congo, Dem. Rep.	(1) Support Unit for the Formulation and Management of Macroeconomic Policies; (2) Capacity Building Project for Support Structures, Promotion of the Private Sector and Women's Organizations within the Civil Society in the Democratic Republic of Congo; (3) Capacity Building Project for the Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Prevention and Management in Central Africa; (4) Economic Management Training Program of the University of Kinshasa
Côte d'Ivoire	(1) Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIRES; Country Program for Capacity Building for the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire; (3) Economic Policy Management Program
Eritrea	None
Guinea	(1) National Secretariat for Capacity Building in the Republic of Guinea; (2) Cellule d'Etudes de Politique Economique
Guinea-Bissau	Project National de Renforcement des Capacités—Cellule d'Appui à la Formation
Liberia	Liberia Macroeconomic Policy Analysis Center
Madagascar	Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes et d'Appui à l'Analyse Economique à Madagascar
Malawi	(1) Malawi Statistical System Project; (2) Malawi Public Policy Research and Analysis Project; (3) National Economic Council; (4) Malawi Directorate of Macroeconomic Policy Research and Analysis; (5) Malawi Knowledge Network for Research and Development

Country	Project
Mali	(1) Centre d'Etudes et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Analyse et de Plaidoyer; (2) Capacity Building Initiative for Poverty Reduction Programming, Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation; (3) Capacity Building for the West African Journalists Association; (4) Center for the Analysis and Formulation of Development Policy; (5) Project de Renforcement de l'Interface entre l'Etat et le Secteur Privé; (6) Women's Capacity Building Project in Mali
São Tomé and Príncipe	(1) Renforcement des Capacités de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté en République Démocratique de São Tomé et Príncipe; (2) Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute for the Portuguese-Speaking Countries in Africa; (3) Capacity Building Project for Economic Policy Analysis and Management in São Tomé and Príncipe
Sierra Leone	(1) Capacity Building Initiative for Poverty Reduction Programming, Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation; (2) Capacity Building for the Parliament of Sierra Leone; (3) Mano River Training Project
South Sudan	South Sudan Capacity Building Project
Togo	(1) Centre Autonome d'Etudes et de Renforcement des Capacités pour le Développement au Togo; (2) National Secretariat for Capacity Development
Zimbabwe	(1) Zimbabwe Policy and Analysis Research Unit; (2) Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa; (3) Ministry of Regional Integration and International Cooperation Capacity Development Program; (4) Consumers International Regional Office for Africa; (5) Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network; (6) Zimbabwe Capacity Development Program; (7) Public Sector Management Training Program at Africa University; (8) Professional Development and Training Program in Economics; (9) Eastern and Southern African Initiative in Debt and Reserves Management; (10) Women's University in Africa; (11) Strengthening the National Secretariat of the Zimbabwe Economic Consultative Forum; and (12) Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies

Source: ACBF, various completion reports, medium-term reviews, and project grants.

CONTEXT OF ACBF'S INTERVENTIONS

Africa has 23 conflict-affected countries, 60 percent of all those in the world at the end of 2016 (table 2). Conflict creates serious capacity deficits on several fronts and building and retaining human resource capacity is one of the most difficult challenges facing post-conflict governments and their development partners. Notwithstanding extensive domestic and external efforts spanning several decades, many CACs continue to fall short on that challenge, breeding fatalism, complexity, and conundrum.

Table 2 Conflict-affected countries in the world

Africa region (23)	Asia–Pacific region (8)	Europe (2)	Middle East/Central Asia region (4)	Western hemisphere (1)
Angola	Kiribati	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Afghanistan	Haiti
Burundi	Marshall Islands	Kosovo	Iraq	
Central African Republic	Micronesia		Syria	
Chad	Myanmar		Yemen, Republic of	
Comoros	Nepal			
Congo	Solomon Islands			
Congo, Dem. Rep.	Timor-Leste			
Côte d’Ivoire	Tuvalu			
Eritrea				
Guinea				
Guinea-Bissau				
Liberia				
Libya				
Madagascar				
Malawi				
Mali				
São Tomé and Príncipe				
Sierra Leone				
Somalia				
South Sudan				
Sudan				
Togo				
Zimbabwe				

Source: IMF 2017, 11–12.

Conflict is attributed to many interrelated factors, including the inequitable distribution of resources, especially natural resources; outright corruption and bad economic governance in the mismanagement of financial resources (both national budgets and donated funds); African leaders’ lengthy rule (extended by constitutional revisions to prolong terms in office); and political and social exclusion and isolation, largely based on religion, geography, political affiliation, and ethnicity and race (UNECA 2012).

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a CAC has weak institutional capacity as measured by its World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) score of 3.2 or lower) or has experienced conflict as signaled by presence of a peacekeeping or peace building operation in the most recent three-year period (IMF 2017).¹⁴

¹⁴ The IMF uses a three-year average, rather than the World Bank’s annual CPIA score, to reduce the risk of countries being excluded or

CACs find it very difficult to build resilience,¹⁵ and many seem to be caught in a “fragility trap”—a closely interlinked circle of underdevelopment, political instability or conflict, and ineffective state capacity (IMF 2015). Transition from conflict seems to involve intermediate phases ranging from state failure and conflict to less extreme symptoms of weak governance and institutions, with each phase entailing different challenges.¹⁶

An ACBF report (2011) notes that despite recent economic growth, the African continent has the world’s most extensive history of civil wars and instabilities. Over 1990–2000, there were 19 armed conflicts and cross-border civil wars in Africa, and in 1999 alone, 16 African countries were in armed conflict. Conflict is widespread, sources are varied, and correctly diagnosing the sources is important to developing appropriate remedial strategies. Conflict results in high levels of poverty and inequality, which become sources of further instability. The challenges of post-conflict recovery are numerous, and to extricate a country from conflict requires addressing the often-dynamic causes sustainably. Another ACBF report (2004), while synthesizing experiences of post-conflict reconstruction in Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Uganda, examines why key local agents and international development actors adopted different reconstruction plans and strategies to respond to more or less similar situations. The report notes that although strategies inform planning, in practice, planning refines strategies by framing and assessing alternative approaches, identifying actors’ differing interests and tradeoffs, and highlighting policy disconnects for decision makers.

Furthermore, some countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone have overcome challenges of post-conflict development and thereby demonstrated the importance of state legitimacy and accountability. The experience of Niger shows how searching for democratic space can create ongoing instability, but winning democracy can bring stability (UNECA 2012). So, sharing experiences among member CACs can highlight challenges and opportunities in post-conflict reconstruction.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

According to Brinkerhoff (2010), conflict is directly related to capacity deficits. CAC governments cannot assure basic security for their citizens, fail to provide basic services and economic opportunities, and are unable to garner sufficient legitimacy to maintain citizen confidence and trust. CAC citizens are polarized in ethnic, religious, or class-based groups with histories of distrust, grievance, or violent conflict. They lack the capacity to cooperate, compromise, and trust. When these deficits are large, states move towards failure, collapse, crisis, and conflict.¹⁷

CACs need capacities developed on several fronts. They do not yet have the kinds of capacities even to effectively use external assistance and tend to have what might be termed “disabling” environments. And yet, the success of capacity development matters greatly for the pace and sustainability of efforts to reduce fragility (Brinkerhoff 2010). Consequently, CAC development after conflict encompasses reconstruction, nation building, capacity building, and institutional reform.

The issues revolve around the capacity challenges to be addressed, which themselves can be traced directly to the features of conflict.¹⁷ Conflict is associated with various combinations of systemic dysfunctions leading to government inefficiency and the breakdown of the social contract.

A number of capacity challenges must be addressed. First, the capacity to reform is generally weak, since core state institutions lack the basic human resources required to develop strategies and oversee operations. Second, human and technical capacity challenges pervade the state, society, and private sector level, and the institutional framework

included in the list of fragile states due to temporary shifts.

15 Resilience can be defined as a condition where institutional strength, capacity, and social cohesion are sufficiently strong for the state to promote security and development and to respond effectively to shocks. See IMF (2015, p. 7).

16 According to the g7+ (2013), these phases could be crisis, rebuilding, transition, transformation, and resilience.

17 Conflict defies a clear-cut definition. UK Department for International Development and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development definitions focus on the inability of the state to supply basic services, whereas the European Commission, Canadian International Development Agency, UN Development Programme, and USAID definitions go beyond performing basic functions for poverty reduction and development to encompass other broader dimensions such as state authority and political legitimacy. The World Bank definition encompasses weak governance, weak policies and weak institutions and a low ranking on the banks’ Country Policies and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) index.

defining the state and its capacities is nonexistent or so severely challenged that it cannot provide the security and systems for society to function in peace. Third, large numbers of people, many of them youth, are trapped in a cycle of violence, often because they lack skills and employment opportunities, prolonging instability and possibly degenerating into renewed warfare (UN 2007; Ayee 2011).

Understanding the underlying reasons behind conflict is critical to building capacity in a fragile environment and defines the context of any assistance. This also entails an appreciation of the dynamic link between development, fragility, and conflict and requires an analysis of the character and determinants of the conflict, its duration, and its intensity (Rondinelli 2006).

According to Brinkerhoff (2007), capacity targets in CACs imply the need to perform three core functions that states must discharge to be legitimate. They are:

- Political legitimacy, which involves the presence of governance and democratic principles, separation of powers, responsive and accountable government, representation and inclusiveness, and protection of basic rights for all citizens.
- Delivery of basic public goods and services, including infrastructure, health and education, and economic opportunity through rules-driven and transparent policy making, regulation, fiscal arrangements, partnerships, and civil service systems.
- Security, which entails upholding the social contract between state and citizen, protecting people and property, and dealing with crime and illegal activity while exercising oversight of security forces to ensure legitimate application of coercive force, curbing of abuses, and maintenance of the rule of law (table 3).

Table 3 Three basic functions and expected interventions in fragile states

Functions	Expected interventions
Political legitimacy	<p>(1) Create and reinforce democratic structures and processes through strengthening legislative structures and procedures, establishing or strengthening an electoral system, developing or strengthening processes for political competition, developing or strengthening accountability organizations, ensuring transparency and reducing corruption, reforming or strengthening the civil service, and developing or strengthening decentralized local government</p> <p>(2) Strengthen citizen participation and civil society through ensuring media freedom, strengthening public information and communication systems, and supporting civil society organization formation and functioning</p>
Delivery of basic public goods and services	<p>(1) Provide basic humanitarian and social services through addressing needs of refugees and internally displaced populations; providing emergency shelter, food, and so on; reestablishing and strengthening the provision of basic public services (health and education); and rebuilding or expanding public infrastructure (such as roads, water, and sanitation)</p> <p>(2) Establish effective economic management through formulating or reforming growth-inducing economic and trade policies; reforming fiscal, tax, and monetary policies and institutions; establishing or strengthening financial institutions; reforming public budgeting and expenditure systems; reforming regulatory policy and regulatory systems for key sectors; supporting private sector development and investment; and identifying and prioritizing critical public investments</p>

Functions	Expected interventions
Core security	<p>(1) Establish safety and security through demobilizing, disarming, and reintegrating ex-combatants; ensuring public safety and order and reducing crime; protecting infrastructure and public facilities; and securing national borders</p> <p>(2) Rebuild or strengthen security services and judicial system through protecting basic human rights and property rights, reorganizing or strengthening the national armed forces, strengthening and rebuilding police forces and related infrastructure, establishing or strengthening oversight of police forces, strengthening or rebuilding the criminal justice system, strengthening or rebuilding judicial personnel systems and related infrastructure, and strengthening or rebuilding the corrections system and facilities</p>

Source: United Nations 2007; Brinkerhoff 2007.

CACs need capacity development to address three important underlying conditions: their immediate needs, the core economic and political causes of their conflict (including building agencies of restraint), and finance and financial sector reconstruction. The priority is to build capacity focused on the immediate needs of post-conflict societies. This may begin by building the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance, which is very complex, encompassing conflict-related emergency relief and related social services (ACBF 2011a).

To rebuild the state and its key functions requires capacity to manage skills and knowledge, utilize resources effectively, support effective organizations, restructure politics and power arrangements, and create incentives for development. Resources include food aid; finances from trust funds and social funds; and material, equipment, and budget support (Brinkerhoff 2011).

CACs also need capacity to re-skill the population and manage training, knowledge, and learning activities, including study tours, technical assistance, and technology transfer. Organizational capacity includes management systems development, effective organizational twinning to learn from peers, restructuring organizations from before the conflict, and civil service reform and decentralization (Brinkerhoff 2011). Politics and power capacities include empowering communities, strengthening legislative capacity, and developing alternate politics to handle ethnic conflicts and the causes of previous conflict. Appropriate incentives are needed for accountability, rule of law, steps to support sectoral reforms, and dialogue and consensus building (AfDB 2015).

ACBF analysis (2011) distinguishes the capacities of CACs and non-CACs. The most critical difference is the CAC need for organizational capacity to manage myriad post-conflict activities. Another is the need for effective resource use and sped-up skills building and knowledge transfer. There is less difference in the capacity to use politics and power and to define incentives—what seems to matter is the purpose of using politics, power, and incentives (OECD 2015).

ANALYSIS OF ACBF STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTION MODALITIES

How can capacity be developed in an environment of post-conflict reconstruction? The experience of the ACBF in African CACs, focused on supporting reconstruction, may provide some answers. The ACBF intervened in one way or another in all CACs even though not all were in conflict when their ACBF capacity building projects began (see Table 2). Interventions were varied and reflected the countries' critical capacity needs. The initiatives covered national public and private sector institutions and civil society, including think tanks and regional bodies. They include the following:

- National capacity development programs for Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe to strengthen the machinery of government and the public sector, which have seen decay and malaise over the years.
- Programs for capacity to implement poverty reduction and improvement in financial governance in Burundi, Guinea, Mali, and Sierra Leone.
- Programs to strengthen the capacity of mid-level economic public policy makers and implementers in a one-year Master's degree in Economic Policy Management Program (EPMP) in the Côte d'Ivoire run by the University of Abidjan and in the Democratic Republic of Congo run by the University of Kinshasa.
- Capacity development for state institutions, such as parliament and the public service in Chad, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.
- Capacity development for regional policy development in Sierra Leone (the Mano River Training Project), Central African Republic (Improved Participation of Central African Economic and Monetary Community—CEMAC—Member States in the Multilateral Trade System), and Zimbabwe (Eastern and Southern African Initiative in Debt and Reserves Management). In addition, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Civil Society Capacity Building Project in Conflict Prevention and Management in Central Africa (PREGESCO) aimed at improving economic and social governance and the conflict prevention and management through the active and effective participation of civil society. And the Financial Management Institute for the Portuguese Speaking Countries in Africa was held in São Tomé & Príncipe.
- Capacity development for civil society organizations, the private sector, and the media in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Republic of Congo. This included the West African Journalists Association project to strengthen human and institutional capacities to promote democracy and ensure participatory governance, accountability, and transparency in Economic Community of West African State member countries. Its components are training, publications and dissemination, and freedom of the press and networking.
- Capacity development for women in Mali and Zimbabwe. The Capacity Building Project for Women's Organizations of Mali supported civil society work with the government for the empowerment of women through the improvement of their sociopolitical and living standards.
- Capacity development for specific knowledge creation. For instance, the Capacity Building Project in Statistics in the Central African Republic aimed to address the loss of trained managers in statistics, the lack of reliable data for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, and the lack of coordination of statistical activities in a decentralized context.
- Capacity development through knowledge generation and dissemination. ACBF support on capacity development knowledge has been instrumental in evidence-based development policies and plans. In CACs, such knowledge boosted reconstruction and recovery programs. ACBF activities included its annual flagship publication, the Africa Capacity Report, which, through comprehensive surveys, tracks capacity development efforts in African countries, including fragile states, which were targeted in the 2011 report.

The ACBF projects aim to strengthen the capacity of institutions and their staff to deliver their mandates more effectively and efficiently. Human initiatives include training activities such as academic studies (postgraduate and diploma programs), skills improvement, learning best practices in both in-country and out-of-country residency programs, study trips, exchange programs, seminars, and workshops. The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), previously the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS), has emerged as one of the most successful parliamentary initiatives supporting countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone (though located in and originally intended for Nigeria). In recognition of its active role in providing capacity building for democratic institutions including political parties, NILDS—originally established as a Policy Analysis and Research Project—has become institutionalized within Nigeria's legislative structure serving the ECOWAS region.

Institutional support for capacity development involves the provision of logistics, equipment, and financing expenditures for research, surveys, and publications. For instance, the Guinean Cellule d'Etudes de Politique Economique, designed to strengthen national capacities for the diagnosing, analyzing, forecasting, and evaluating economic policies, included institutional strengthening, research activities, training, and documentation and dissemination.

All the ACBF projects were rolled out after they had already been in their completion stage (examples are the South Sudan Capacity Building Project; Burundi's Institut de Développement Economique; Madagascar's Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes et d'Appui à l'Analyse Economique; and Zimbabwe's Ministry of Regional Integration and International Cooperation Capacity Development Program and Women's Resource Centre and Network).

RESULTS AND IMPACT

A first achievement in human capacity was developed through training programs and activities in the various CACs. For instance, the Economic Policy Management Program in Côte d'Ivoire and Democratic Republic of Congo trained mid-level staff for ministries, departments, and agencies and also a few staff from the private sector.

In Zimbabwe, ACBF's skills enhancement programs implemented by the Professional Development and Training Program in Economics (PDTPE), Public Sector Management Training Program (PSMTP)–Africa University (AU), Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI), Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS) (short term), and Women's University of Africa (WUA) targeted senior managers and officials of the public sector and academia.

The (PSMTP-AU) in Mutare, Zimbabwe, contributed to improved public sector performance through balanced academic and professional training in public sector management. Within Zimbabwe, 83 students benefited from the Master's degree program. A review by the university showed that the program helped a number of individuals but had not produced enough graduates across all the participating countries. Feedback from the alumni shows that, "they considered the program as very valuable as it enhanced their job performances" (ACBF 2011b). The PSMTP was market oriented and satisfying to public sector managers (McCala et al. 2014). In short, the PSMTP was highly relevant and highly sought after within the public sector and contributed to effective public sector management. In total, the PSMTP-AU training program benefitted 148—70 men and 78 women from 10 countries in the southern and eastern Africa region (ACBF 2016).

Similarly, with funding from ACBF, the Women's University of Africa provided both short- and long-term training programs, mainly for exceptional but needy women across the continent. The programs provided 17 PhD scholarships, of which 5 were awarded to staff to strengthen university teaching capabilities; 22 scholarships at regional level to economically disadvantaged women from Malawi and Zambia; and bursaries for 38 students covering tuition fees. Testimonials from WUA graduates show that in addition to transforming the institution into a regionally recognized center of excellence, the ACBF grant directly affected the individual beneficiaries and their families. Other scholarship recipients expressed the same sentiment. The testimony shows how ACBF's capacity building support enabled individuals, even during a crisis in Zimbabwe (ACBF 2016).

In the Central African Republic, 15 of 16 staff who trained abroad in a Master's degree program returned home to contribute to the improvement of their organizations. Some moved to better-paid jobs with other public institutions or development projects funded by donors.

In Burundi, the Poverty Reduction Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation (PRIME) program was the only project whose primary objective was finalizing and implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Its advantage lay in: (1) promoting the participation of non-state actors in its implementation while promoting an effective institutional monitoring and evaluation system; (2) strengthening the human and institutional capacities, particularly of actors in the labor market, private sector, civil society, and local development institutions; (3) deepening research in the causes

of poverty and ways to reduce it; and (4) promoting partnership with other technical and financial partners in Burundi in the context of ownership, harmonization, and alignment as advocated by the Paris and Accra Declaration. Similarly, PRIME programs in Guinea, Mali, and Sierra Leone contributed in no mean small way to the realization of the countries' poverty reduction programs.

The CEMAC project to build capacity to improve the participation of CEMAC member states in the multilateral trade system, hosted by Central African Republic, had several regional, sub-regional, and national seminars and workshops attended by 1,084 participants, of whom almost 24 percent were women. The seminars and workshops improved understanding of the CEMAC zone multilateral trade system, contributing to better negotiations and refined terms and conditions. Some seminars and workshops were either attended or hosted by Cameroon and Gabon, which are non-fragile states.

A second ACBF achievement is institutional capacity development through equipment and other logistics. For instance, the Women's Capacity Building Project in Mali purchased the computer equipment for women's organizations, facilitating internet access. Several other projects such as the EPMP also benefited from the setting up of computer laboratories and the purchase of publications. Technical reports such as policy briefs and issue papers were produced by civil society organizations (CSOs) and think tanks that either directly or indirectly influenced policy making in the countries.

The WUA project attests to the value of ACBF's institutional support. At the peak of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, ACBF's grant enabled the institution to grow. WUA was able to improve the program delivery and establish the first e-Granary digital library in Zimbabwe. In addition, WUA rolled out an Open Distance Learning Facility that has increased the scope and coverage of its programs. ACBF support also enabled WUA to strengthen its Faculty of Agriculture, which led to the university winning 17 awards at the 2011 Agricultural Show in Zimbabwe. In 2012, the ACBF made WUA a second phase grant aimed at enabling the institution to increase the access more women to the university by establishing a regional gender center in Marondera. The new grant enabled WUA to double enrolment and achieve a 95 percent graduation rate (ACBF 2016).

A third ACBF emphasis empowered women through targeted programs, such as the capacity building projects for Malian women, Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, and the WUA. The programs contributed to promoting women and professionalizing women's organizations and associations, though there is still room for improvement.

Fourth is the capacity development project for the private sector, CSOs, and think tanks in some of the fragile states such as Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe, which promoted interface capacity building between, on one hand, civil society and the private sector and, on the other, the public sector for policy dialogue, policy development, synergy, and partnership. For example, the ACBF's capacity building support for the Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis Unit (ZEPARU) promoted evidence-based policy making. The first phase of the ACBF grant enabled ZEPARU to study contract farming, savings, investments, and the productive sector and to hold pre- and post-budget consultations with the Ministry of Finance. Some of the recommendations from these studies influenced the development of the Monetary Policy Statements and Mid-term Fiscal Policy Reviews. More recent ZEPARU studies influenced the government Mining Sector Policy Study, which led to the development of a Draft Mining Policy. ZEPARU's study "A Review of Zimbabwe's Optimum Future Currency Regime" influenced the adoption of a multicurrency system. Through the support of ACBF and other partners, ZEPARU has emerged as a capable and trusted policy unit with the power to convene stakeholders from the government, private sector, and civil society to discuss economic issues (ACBF 2016).

Fifth, the ACBF has supported regional and sub-regional bodies such as the CEMAC zone, the Portuguese Speaking Financial Management Institute for the Portuguese Speaking Countries in Africa, and the West African Journalists Association. This initiative has built interface capacity between state and non-state actors to begin addressing the challenges faced by regional economic communities (RECs) in implementing development strategies, such as financial constraints, inadequate staffing structures and mandates, overlapping memberships (of Africa's 54 countries, only five belong to just one REC, while three countries belong to four RECs); and the not-so-free movement of people, goods, services, and capital (ACBF 2017).

Sixth, ACBF interventions generated and disseminated knowledge. Although much was destroyed in the CACs, new information and knowledge have boosted reconstruction and recovery programs. In addition to the 2011 Africa Capacity Indicators report focused on building capacity in the fragile states, country-specific information has been generated on the budgetary process, poverty reduction strategy, and public sector reforms. ACBF work has also improved the quality of public documents that enhance public policy making.

Impact

Capacity development is slow and long term, so the impacts due to ACBF of improving skills and competencies and relaying innovative ideas to subordinate staff cannot be adequately addressed within the short period of the interventions. The slowness of capacity development is even more pronounced in fragile states, where the infrastructure and human resources have been destroyed during long years of conflict and atrophy. Moreover, the inadequate resources available to address Africa's 20 failed states, some of which are very large, led to projects and interventions being thinly spread across several sectors of the countries and made them hard to see, especially where there were problems with sustainability.

Even where the impact of capacity development is not perceptible, changed behavior may reveal it. For instance, in the women's projects in Mali and Zimbabwe, exchanges with the beneficiaries showed the changes in behavior in political life, public speaking, self-confidence, and exchanges around the world through internet access. In the CEMAC project in Central Africa effects appear at the level of (1) control over the mechanisms of international trade and the world economy, (2) CEMAC, (3) regional integration, and (4) the World Trade Organization Reference Centers. The project allowed private sector economic operators and agents from CEMAC member states to gain understanding of economic partnership agreements. Training seminars and workshops also enabled public and private sector agents and civil society members to better understand regional and sub-regional barriers to trade. The project's forum allowed the exchange of experiences by regional and sub-regional economic operators.

ACBF interventions have improved debt, financial, and macroeconomic management in member countries. For instance, ACBF support to the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute (MEFMI) of Southern and Eastern Africa has resulted in effective policy coordination and macroeconomic consistency, sound and adequate legal and policy frameworks for domestic markets, and the development and updating of medium-term debt strategy across the member countries. The MEFMI supported its member countries in developing and deploying tools and instruments such as models, procedures, and manuals that enabled monitoring and managing macroeconomic fundamentals and financial indicators. MEFMI supported Zimbabwe and other countries such as Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland's development of Macroeconomic Models and Economic Activity Indicators currently being used for macroeconomic forecasting and serving as proxies of short- to medium-term economic performance (ACBF 2016).

In Zimbabwe, MEFMI has been instrumental in the daily work of the Central Bank of Zimbabwe and the Debt Management Unit. MEFMI training and support services, though they have not been quantified, have been very effective in helping under-resourced government departments. Sixteen men and five women were trained in macroeconomic management, financial sector management, or debt management. Some trained fellows reported that the MEFMI training enhanced their skills and also let them enhance the functioning of their departments. The linkages with other ACBF-funded organizations such as ZEPARU also appeared when key ZEPARU products, in addition to direct support from MEFMI, were used by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (ACBF 2016).

Similarly, the EPMP in Côte d'Ivoire and Democratic Republic of Congo and the PSMTTP in Zimbabwe improved the quality of most mid-level staff in both the public and private sectors and became the flagship training programs for most of the mid-career public sector and the banking and financial sectors. The programs gave participants new skills and competencies for workplace performance. Comments from participants and their supervisors show that the participants became better trainers and took on added responsibilities after graduation. The participants became trainers, imparting knowledge and skills to their subordinates. As already pointed out, in Zimbabwe PSMTTP became highly sought after within the public sector and contributed to effective public sector management. It benefited 70 men and 78 women from 10 countries in the southern and eastern Africa region (ACBF 2016). However, asserting that the skills and competencies learned had national impact would be overstretching.

LESSONS LEARNED

What worked?

The ACBF's customized capacity development interventions fared relatively well despite different country-specific contexts. First, the interventions contributed to effective policy making and public sector delivery including strengthening of partner institutions. They have nurtured and transformed the CAC partner institutions into relevant and effective entities. They also supported under-resourced ministries, departments, and agencies while human resource skills were developed in both the public and the private sector. Second, ACBF activities and interventions enhanced inclusiveness and the participation of non-state actors, especially women, in national and regional development in a number of countries. For instance, the ACBF grant to the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) was instrumental in reducing gender inequalities and promoting gender-sensitive policies. The ZWRCN grant supported human capacity, research and publications, networks and coalition building, and institutional capacity strengthening. It improved the quality of debates on gender and public finance in Zimbabwe's parliament and moderately increased women's participation budget preparation, decision making, and economic policy formulation (ACBF 2016).

Innovations.

The key innovation is designing customized interventions by ACBF to suit different CAC contexts. This reinforces the view that there is no one-size-fits-all capacity development strategy, particularly for CACs at different stages of capacity deficits and demands. Customization made ACBF institutional and technical support extremely helpful to partners, who could provide quality products and services to their clients despite the challenges they encountered. In addition, the proximity of ACBF offices and personnel enabled the partners to secure timely responses and support in resolving implementation issues. The participation of state actors, non-state actors, and as non-conflict-affected countries supports the adoption of a holistic approach to capacity development that facilitated learning and best practices among the various actors and countries and promoted local ownership and regional partnership.

What did not work?

Despite progress, the ACBF interventions faced several challenges. First was the disparity between the limited financial resources available to ACBF and the number, size, and huge capacity deficits of the CACs. This is reflected in ACBF not undertaking interventions in two countries, Angola and Eritrea, while in the Comoros, the project with the Center for Analysis and Research on Public Policies is yet to be completed.

Second was the low level of commitment from governments to support capacity development programs, except the countries implementing poverty reduction strategies—Burundi, Mali, and Sierra Leone. The lack of commitment led to projects being scaled down or their duration and sustainability threatened so that some were discontinued. For instance, Central African Republic's inability to honor its counterpart commitments limited the funds for statistical activities in the *Projet de Renforcement des Capacités en Statistiques de la République Centrafricaine*.

Third was the risk of loss due to the mobility of newly developed capacity. For instance, in the Central African Republic, qualified staff were lost by the Central African Institute of Statistics, Economic and Social Studies (ICASEES). In some countries, the staff of some institutions lost motivation after they returned from training programs. In Guinea-Bissau, a staff member who benefited from a residency program abroad was put "on the shelf" at the *Projet National de Renforcement des Capacités—Cellule d'Appui à la Formation* when he came back, because another person had taken his position. Such examples illustrate the weakness of public institutions in that country, with no career, salary, or title advancement plan.

Fourth was the low absorptive capacity of CACs for knowledge for economic growth and development, meaning the "ability to absorb knowledge," that is, "middle income countries have to build up the stock of trained manpower (including entrepreneurs) to a position where they can accelerate the rate of absorption of the existing stock of knowledge" (Rostow 1980, 267–77).¹⁸ Low absorptive capacity is caused by poor institutional and administrative capacity, including

18 The term has much in common with the notion of social capability in the developing countries context, to improve capabilities (such as technical competences, financial institutions and markets, stability of government, honesty and trust) that allow them to catch-up with more developed economies (Abramovitz 1986; Lewandowski 2015). Absorptive capacity was also widely understood as the ability of the developing

nonfunctional physical infrastructure, nonfunctional social services systems, and prolonged crises that undermine the knowledge base of international institutions so that reengaging in the country becomes uncertain. This contextual variable delayed and sometimes truncated ACBF.

Fifth were the risks to capacity development interventions in fragile states from economic instability, lack of capacity, unsettled local politics, and disputed legitimacy of various institutions. For instance, the Project National de Renforcement des Capacités—Cellule d’Appui à la Formation was launched at a very difficult political transition point in Guinea-Bissau marked by military conflict and the departure of major donors, foreign investors, and local technical staff. However, persistence of the initial staff contributed the project’s stability and performance. Engaging on an effective, long-term basis requires a high degree of risk tolerance.

Critical factors of success and failure

Critical factors appear at both the non-project and project levels. At the non-project level, success depends on the CAC offering an enabling environment despite its predicaments. Welcoming and accommodating governments and institutions were prepared to help ACBF succeed. Where there were differences, the ACBF, the government, and institutions tried to resolve them amicably. In addition, the human resources were ready to participate in the capacity development interventions as a means of improving their status and organizations.

Project-level factors in success depended on rigorous ACBF measures for budget and finance, governance and management, and implementation and monitoring. ACBF provided resources to the project by through the requisition method. The project had a separate bank account, managed by a project accountant. Guidelines on procurement, ACBF guidelines, and the International Standards on Auditing were followed, and the organizations prepared financial statements (including receipts and expenditure) for each financial year. In doing so, the project secretariats in charge of day-to-day administration selected suitable accounting policies, applied them consistently, and made reasonable and prudent judgments and estimates. The secretariats also kept accounting records with reasonable accuracy, safeguarded the project assets, and prevented fraud and other irregularities. Earmarked ACBF funds for activities were disbursed under approved guidelines after the receipt of a “no objection” response from ACBF.

The project governance and management structure consisted of the governing council of the organization, ACBF, a project steering committee, and the project secretariat. The ACBF participated in regular supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of the project and helped the project secretariat on project reporting. Before funds were used for project activities, ACBF had to give a “no objection” clearance.

The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the projects were conducted in accordance with a results measurement framework and the monitoring and evaluation plan agreed during project appraisal. Instruments for monitoring and implementing capacity development projects included:

- A retrofitted results measurement framework.
- An annual work plan and budget approved by the project steering committee.
- An indicators’ tracking table.
- A project quarterly report.
- Regional International Development Association (RIDA) Indicators on Satisfaction Survey.
- RIDA Data Collection Form.
- A success stories template.

country to absorb new investments (Adler 1965).

- A procurement plan based on ACBF guidelines.
- A monitoring and evaluation plan detailing expected results, outcomes and outputs, indicators, indicator definition, baseline, target, source of data, data collection, frequency, and responsibility and key information users.
- Participant or beneficiary evaluation of projects.

The instruments contain appropriate means of verification or tracking progress, performance, and achievement of indicators, which are user friendly.

In addition, the grant agreements were signed through negotiations between ACBF and the fragile state institutions or governments. Those negotiations themselves required creating capacity on the part of the institutions and governments by ACBF in the form of meetings for knowledge creation and sharing.

Other factors sought to undermine the interventions. One was the project conceptualization problem. For example, even though the governance bodies of the Capacity Building Project for the Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Prevention and Management in Central Africa (PREGESCO) of the Democratic Republic of Congo were functional, they were unequipped to lead the monitoring and evaluation of the project, which had no formal monitoring framework, plan, or allocated resources. This is not to belittle the contribution of the PREGESCO regional management team and national coordinators, whose dynamism helped build the capacity of the beneficiary structures, contributing to peace and stability in the sub-region and to ACBF's visibility and consolidation of its own visibility there.

Another factor is the seeming tension between ACBF and some project steering committees perceiving ACBF delays in request approvals and attributing them to micromanagement. ACBF responded that it was not micromanaging the projects but promoting due diligence and effective use of resources.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This paper has shown that developing capacity in conflict-affected countries is daunting because of huge capacity gaps as a result of years of conflict, decay, and atrophy. CACs are constrained by weak human, institutional and implementation capacities. Destroyed physical, human, and financial infrastructure take a long time to restore. But in the CACs, ACBF implemented capacity development interventions that yielded results, in spite of inadequate resources and questionable sustainability, lack of commitment from most of the governments, and variable country-specific context. ACBF interventions contributed to effective policy making, public sector delivery, and strengthening of partner institutions, which ACBF support nurtured and transformed into effective entities.

ACBF has demonstrated many years of experience in design, delivery, management and monitoring of capacity development interventions, including in CACs. Evaluation of ACBF's track record of project management procedures has revealed strengths that include a demand-driven approach to project selection, which encourages local ownership, and a long-term view of capacity development. ACBF's ability to "go where others are not," support research, and transfer lessons learned in experimenting with new intervention modalities should be sustained and strengthened.

Recommendations

First, capacity development activities take time to manifest results. While ACBF maintained regular oversight over its interventions to ensure timely and effective impact, the development itself has a long gestation period. Thus, in the short term, results and impact of an intervention may not be visible. Effort must be systematic, carefully targeted, and sustained over a reasonable period of time to generate the desired results.

Second, the evaluation of capacity development activity in CACs is inherently risky, particularly in politically unstable environments and post-conflict situations. Even without clear results, ACBF will have to continue to build on its growing experience and strive to apply best practices to minimize risks and ensure adequate control mechanisms for its interventions. Sustainable long-run achievements are possible if broader public sector and educational reforms in the legal, institutional, financial, and human resources areas are carried out and if ACBF and other donors continue to support the economic and social development efforts of CACs. Education in particular can be one of the most critical and strategic instruments for peace and reconciliation, and genuine reform of the education sector is imperative because of the history of the misuse of schools to channel intolerance and ethnic violence—in Rwanda, for instance.

Third, continued building and strengthening should be pursued of the capacities of critical public sector, private sector, and civil society institutions. Building and retaining human resource capacity across the board is one of the most difficult challenges facing post-conflict governments and their development partners. Institutional and human resource management capacity must be built within the government, the private sector, and civil society if development is to be effective. Developing capacity must be comprehensive and sustainable to meet the special needs of CACs.

Fourth, ACBF should help CACs to develop an explicit national capacity building framework or blueprint. This will harmonize donor capacity development interventions, elicit the commitment of political and bureaucratic leaders, provide a platform for workable interface with non-state actors, and encourage citizens' voices to demand transparency and accountability.

Fifth, CACs face huge human and implementation capacity gaps as a result of years of conflict, decay, and atrophy. For them to succeed, the following practices are imperative:

- Gain an understanding of the specific context or political economy of the country. The engagement strategy should be based on the local situation, the key political actors, and a proper assessment of risks. Countries have major differences in government accountability, institutional capacity and performance, the political and public security environment, and the commitment to progress along a credible reform path, with implications for the scope and nature of capacity development interventions.
- Adopt a customized or demand-driven approach. This will ensure local ownership, since efforts will align with local priorities and national actors can take the lead in recovery. Uniform approaches to widely differing circumstances on the ground have often failed to produce the desired results, and in many circumstances have precluded possible appropriate and effective interventions.
- Calibrate the pace of interventions. Local capacity constraints should drive the pace of activities, allowing time for results. Overly ambitious capacity development projects can backfire by engendering unrealistic expectations that harm the legitimacy of the coordinating institution and the state. Interventions require political will, which can take time to materialize.
- Review the capacity building interventions to date of such institutions as ACBF. A holistic analysis would cover the time required to increase capacity, the difficulty and complexity of developing capacity, and the magnitude of the change. This stocktaking exercise will enable institutions to adjust outcomes to fit their programming and intervention calendars, and to anticipate the need to provide medium- to long-term support for interventions that require an extended period. It will also enable the institutions to develop the local capacity needed to provide a sense of ownership and commitment to deal with the occasional tensions between external and local capacity development actors.
- Promote capacity development interest and activity among private sector and civil society actors. They have a track record of demanding and advocating for transparency, accountability, and probity, especially in local communities. However, their advocacy is undermined if they remain weakened by conflict or coopted by ruling governments because of inadequate resources from independent sources.
- Seek adequate budgetary support from the central government. Capacity development is expensive. Unfortunately, most African governments hesitate to invest in it because it is by nature intangible and competing demands for resources may take priority.

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Lesson Note #4



ENHANCING POLICY UPTAKE IN AFRICA: ROLE OF THINK TANKS



Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACBF has created and supported many think tanks that have become key drivers of policy discourse and debates as well as reliable conduits of technical and advisory support to stakeholders along the policy value chain. To date, however, little published material exists on the experience and valuable work done by think tanks to support and contribute towards enhancement of policy uptake. It is therefore crucial to document this role, paying special attention to the lessons learned.

The findings show that capacity building in Africa is a long-term process that requires sustained support and extended resource commitment. Several lessons can be drawn from ACBF's implementation of capacity building interventions towards policy formulation and analysis on the continent. These range from project design, governance, coordination, monitoring and learning, partnership and networking, risk management, to impact sustainability.

Clear from the findings is that achieving increased relevance and policy uptake requires sustained engagement between public and non-state actors. If built around well researched evidence, the engagement develops into a solid relationship that drives policy that is mutually beneficial to the actors and citizens. ACBF-supported think tanks have often been requested to participate, or lead, in policy discourse by key government officials through the development of policy research and dissemination.

The key recommendation in this Lesson Note is that think tanks will require continued support especially with core funding for their continued provision of independently generated evidence for policy. This will require, on the part of the think tanks, the sustained production of high quality outputs based on evidence; the provision of timely and policy-relevant outputs in a form that is easily understood by policy makers; and the assurance of proximity (or maintaining strong links) to those that will uptake their research findings. On the other hand, stakeholders need to build on the evidence generated by think tanks for advocacy and policy formulation while providing continuous feedback on areas for improvement.

INTRODUCTION

The African Union's Agenda 2063 for the Africa we want envisages a modern, prosperous continent that is poverty-free; is food secure; having well educated citizens; thriving with economic activity supported by modern transport, ICT and energy infrastructure; structurally transformed economies creating decent jobs and economic opportunities for all; climate-resilient and peaceful economies enjoying good governance, intra-African trade, investments, and an expanded democratic space. While Africa has the capability to realize her full potential in development, capacity is a key success factor for the successful implementation of Agenda 2063. This is against a background of limited human capacity particularly within the public sector.

Recognizing the importance of addressing Africa's capacity challenges, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) was founded in 1991 to invest in local human and institutional capacity. Specifically, ACBF has largely focused on enhancing the quality and relevance of policy through enhancing policy-oriented research, evidence-based policy engagement among government and non-state actors; and enhancing institutional and human competencies of policy centers and think tanks to effectively support policy processes.

There has been a growing focus on developing the capacities of think tanks, networks, policy-makers and donors to generate research-based evidence. It has further been recognized as critical for development (Nuyens, 2005).

ACBF has created or supported over 41 think tanks that have become key drivers of policy discourse and debates as well as reliable conduits of technical and advisory support to stakeholders along the policy value chain. To date, however, little published material exists on the experience and work done by think tanks to support and contribute in enhancing policy uptake. It is therefore crucial to document this role, paying special attention to the lessons learned.

Indeed, evaluation and documentation of lessons learned in building capacity of think tanks in Africa and their role in supporting uptake of policy over the years is crucial in understanding what worked and how to inform the design of future, purpose-oriented, innovative capacity building interventions that can sustainably support Africa's socioeconomic transformation agenda.

Scope of the Lessons Note: Preparation of the Lessons Note entailed review and analysis of the various reports provided by the ACBF such as mid-term and end-term reports for supported programs and institutions over the last 26 years, and other available literature; and drafting the lessons note based on the review and analysis of information provided. The ACBF and the World Bank provided pertinent review and guidance in drafting of the Lesson Note.

A total of 68 reports were reviewed (see references) comprising of 16 ACBF consultancy reports, 25 ACBF-supported think tanks and policy centers (out of total of 41 supported, or 61 percent); 9 training programs/institutions; 5 civil society organizations (CSOs), 11 public sector capacity building programs; 2 multilateral/grant making organizations. Due to time limitation, very limited key informant interviews were conducted.

CONTEXT: THINK TANKS IN AFRICA AND ENHANCING POLICY UPTAKE

African think tanks and operating environment

Africa is today at a critical stage of its development. Over the past two decades the continent has experienced a major transformation in economic growth, sound policies, and reforms that are improving institutions and governance. The continent has also experienced a boom in innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT) for financial services and mobile phone-based money transfer and its related products. Despite this progress, African countries still face many macroeconomic, sociocultural, political, security, and environmental challenges. Addressing persistent policy challenge such as the burgeoning youth unemployment, developing leadership and critical skills, changing mindsets, creating an enabling environment for private sector development, and building or strengthening key institutions remains a priority (ACBF 2016).

As such African think tanks have a critical role in supporting African countries address development challenges through their support to evidence-based policy design, implementation, and monitoring, capacity development activities for state and non-state actors, and provision of platforms for stakeholder engagement, dialogue, and advocacy. For them to deliver on their mandate, a conducive policy environment and transformative leadership in both state and non-state sectors is required.

Limited human capacity, particularly within government institutions, coupled with limited use of evidenced-based policy advice by decision makers, continues to constrain implementation of appropriate and timely interventions and adopting approaches that support sustainable growth. Policy centers and think tanks on the continent have stepped in to support governments in developing evidence-based policies, but they are also facing their own challenges including inadequate funding, underdeveloped institutional capacity, and inadequate enabling environments. Policy centers and think tanks supported by the ACBF are at varied levels of maturity and different country contexts. Therefore, addressing the challenges faced by them is a key strategy to catalyzing the development of sound economic policy and economic development across Africa (Dalberg 2013).

Defining “enhancing policy uptake”

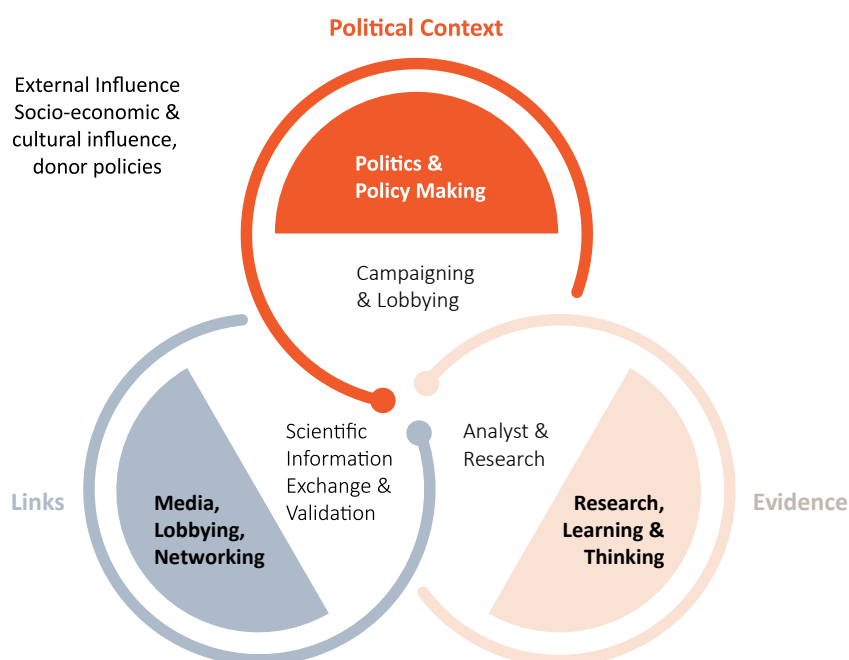
Through its interventions over close to three decades, ACBF has supported development of Africa’s public- sector capabilities by investing in think tanks and policy research institutes, training institutions, policy centers, and other capacity development initiatives. Think tanks in turn are enhancing policy uptake by supporting policy makers to formulate evidence-based policies that are building blocks for transforming economies in Africa. They also support non-state actors with the aim of enhancing their participation in the policy process through:

- Convening actors with policy mandate to debate on emerging policy and development issues.
- Increasing awareness among key players in the policy arena, through forums such as round tables, dissemination workshops, seminars, and conferences.
- Equipping those working on policy issues through tailor-made training targeting specific stakeholders in the policy making process.

Various factors though influence the policy uptake as illustrated in the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) framework (figure 1). It is important to note that the policy making process has various players and processes which are highly interlinked and a block at any stage would influence the buy-in and the speed with which the policies are formulated. For example, the four broad interlinked areas include:

- Context (including politics and institutions involved in policy making).
- Evidence (research quality, researcher credibility, and the framing of messages emanating from policy centers and think tanks).
- Links (between researcher/policy centers and think tanks and formal or informal policy maker communities, the role of intermediaries, networks, and campaigning strategies).
- External influences (including the role of donors, funding organizations, international discourses, global political or economic shocks, and socioeconomic and cultural influences).

Figure 1 Stakeholders in the Public Policy Making Process (the RAPID framework)



Source: Start and Hovland 2004; Court et al. 2004.

Supporting the legislative process

Legislatures, at the political context, debate on a wide range of policy issues. They are expected to scrutinize the policy documents, but in some cases, lack the specialized expertise. In some countries civil society organizations (CSOs) play an important role in providing individual legislators and legislative committees with much-needed expert inputs to inform parliamentary debates (Mandaville 2004). For example, CSOs in Tanzania have organized targeted training workshops and retreats for parliamentary select committees, as well as exhibitions in the National Assembly to raise awareness of key social policy issues.

Box 1 Building capacity of National Assembly of Benin

ACBF supported the government of Benin to establish a Development Policy Analysis Support Unit (Cellule d'Analyse des Politique de Development de L'Assemblée Nationale—CAPAN), a think tank that builds the capacity of members of parliament, government officials, parliamentary staff, civil society, and committee assistants on budget cycles, analysis, and legislative functions—for example, drafting bills and monetary and fiscal policies—and transformed it into a well-informed legislature on public policy process that improved policy debates, decisions, and outcomes. Following success at home, CAPAN also promoted public engagement and helped to share experiences and learning with other parliaments in the sub-region, including Parliament of Mali.

Through support from ACBF, the Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations in Swaziland (CANGO) strengthened its institutional and human capacity, to enable civil society to contribute to the development of policies and programs to eradicate poverty and improve the quality and quantity of resources allocated to the poor through the national budget. As a major achievement, in 2006, CANGO teamed up with the government to draft the country's NGO policy. CSOs also play a key role in lobbying for change and legislations that aim to create equity and benefit the less privileged members of the society. Further, CSOs are playing a critical role in supporting the public participation forums at county level. Private sector umbrella bodies also play a critical role in policy formulation and implementation as evidenced by Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA). KEPSA was created following an enabling business environment program KIPPRA was implementing (Seck 2011).

ACBF-supported institutions have also played a significant role in influencing policy through their contributions to development blue prints, advisory and technical services, and research activities. Among them are the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI; see Box 2) in its creation of the Ethiopia Commodities Exchange; Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIRES in Côte d'Ivoire, which has been particularly influential on restructuring the cocoa sector; and the Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) in Rwanda and its work in helping to reform the investment tax code. Through support from the ACBF, Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU) enhanced policy uptake in Zimbabwe through conducting a policy paper on special economic zones; policy positions on agricultural value chains; and macroeconomic research engaging Ministry of Finance during budget preparation. The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) is in a position to garner support on a key policy issues due to their visibility and credibility (Dalberg 2013).

Box 2: Transforming Agriculture in Ethiopia through EDRI's Credible Research

ACBF-supported research centre, The Ethiopian Development Research Institute's (EDRI) research and recommendations were instrumental in enabling the Ethiopian government to establish the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX), the first initiative of its kind in Africa. The ECX is an organized marketplace, where buyers and sellers come together to trade, assured of quality, quantity, payment and delivery. It opened in April 2008 with the vision of revolutionizing Ethiopia's traditional agricultural sector into a vibrant sector. ECX was established as a new marketplace 'ecosystem' to serve the entire value chain in the agricultural sector, while simultaneously providing support to linked industries such as transport and logistics, banking and financial service sectors. As a national multi-commodity exchange, ECX guarantees low-cost, secure marketplace services to benefit all agricultural market stakeholders and its members to participate in fair trading. EDRI was established in 1999 by the Ethiopian Government with support from the ACBF aimed at institutional and human capacity building, research programs, information dissemination and networking activities.

Credible research and researchers in policy centers and think tanks among legislators can help improve research-to-legislation channels (Basil 2011). Credibility of policy research is enhanced by the independence of a policy center or think tank as perceived by the policy maker. Achieving increased relevance and uptake also requires sustained engagement with public and private sector players to develop relationships based on trust and reliability to deliver quality output that can inform direction in an emerging policy debate. ACBF-supported think tanks were often been requested to participate, or lead, in policy discourse by key government officials through the development of policy research and dissemination. For example, the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) was authorized by the Communications Commission of Kenya to conduct a study on the impact of competition in the mobile voice market on the telecommunication sector and macro economy in Kenya (Box 3). BIDPA also undertook several reviews, at the request of government, on a range of topics including a study on the Financial Assistance Policy, a review of Botswana's Rural Development Policy and an assessment of the agricultural sector, all leading to policy changes to further enhance economic development.

Box 3: Enhancing Policy Uptake in Kenya Through Credible Research

Following a national study on Kenya public-private sector wage differentials conducted by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) in February 2013, one of the government-affiliated think tanks supported by ACBF, the government acted on the recommendations by restructuring salaries and allowances employees in the public service. In another study, in 2015, KIPPRA was requested by the National Government to evaluate progress made in realization of the Sessional Paper No.8 of 2013 on National Values and Principles of Governance that provides broad guidelines to government, non-state actors and citizens to develop action plans to mainstream national values and principles of governance as provided in Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010).

Evidence-based Research for Strategic Choices in Kenya

The Government of Kenya needed to make an informed decision on whether to sign on not the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union (EU). The Government in January 2014 requested KIPPRA, one of the projects supported by the ACBF, to conduct an analysis of the economic implications of the EPAs to enable the government to make an informed decision. The government was able to arrive at a decision and eventually, initialed the EPAs based on the findings of the KIPPRA study. The signing of the agreement has enabled Kenyan exports to enter the EU markets without any tax which has been a huge relief for the Kenyan exporters (see: <http://www.trademarka.com/relief-for-exporters-as-kenya-signs-new-trade-deal-with-eu/>).

ANALYSIS OF ACBF KEY SUPPORT AREAS

Over the last 27 years, the ACBF provided support to policy centers and think tanks aimed at: enhancing institutional and human competencies of policy centers and think tanks and of policy makers and other non- state actors to effectively support policy processes; enhancing the quality and relevance of policy research; and enhancing policy engagement among government and non-state actors, along with the use of policy products and services.

Enhancing institutional and human competencies to policy centers and think tanks

Scope, objectives, and strategies

To enhance institutional and human competences, institutions sought support from the ACBF mainly for staff development through recruitment, staff training, providing scholarships, developing learning programs, and institutional sustainability. Strategies employed by the ACBF-supported institutions varied by type of institution and included: classroom approaches which include PhD and master's degree programs and short courses; experiential learning through study tours; skills transfer through recruitment, fellowships, mentorships, workshops, roundtables, conferences, and working groups; institutional development through the establishment of membership associations, committees, forums, platforms, and networks that promote knowledge generation and dissemination; and advanced knowledge and teaching tools and infrastructure (see **Annex 3** for more details).

Results, outcomes, and impacts

The support provided by ACBF enabled policy centers and think tanks to recruit and train staff, forge partnerships with other institutions, address critical policy issues, actively participate in policy discourse, and produce quality products and services, in most cases adequately meeting the needs of external stakeholders.

The results of institutional and human capacity development initiatives to think tanks and policy centers were at three levels: those that addressed the think tanks and policy centers as institutions, those that addressed the staff, and those that addressed the training institute/university. Institutions reported improved institutional capabilities including institutional growth through recruitment of required technical and administration staff. The growth was sometimes through the establishment and strengthening of compendiums, networks, depositories, platforms, and forums aimed at promoting knowledge generation and dissemination.¹⁹

Additional institutional outcomes included increased demand for services by the government and strengthened capacity for own resources generation which has consequently improved the performance and visibility of several institutions. Think tanks, with strengthened institutional and human capacity, are often requested to participate, or lead, in policy discourse by key government officials through the development of policy research and its dissemination. For example, KIPPRA was authorized by the Communications Commission of Kenya to conduct a study on the impact of competition in the mobile voice market on the telecommunication sector and macro economy in Kenya. The Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA) also undertook several reviews, at the request of government, on a range of topics including a study on the Financial Assistance Policy, a review of Botswana's Rural Development Policy and an assessment of the agricultural sector, all leading to policy changes to further enhance economic development (Dalberg 2013).

The institutions providing the capacity building particularly universities also experienced some gains with evidence of improvement in the quality teaching, techniques, methodologies and learning. The Kenya School of Monetary Studies (KSMS), Women's University in Africa, and Gambia Integrated Capacity Building Project (GICAP) enhanced their library capacity; the Public Sector Management Training program at Africa University (PSMTP-AU) and Ghana Institute of

¹⁹ This includes the Economy of Ghana Network; Economic Policy Research Network; Food Agriculture, Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network; Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network; network of Public Sector Management Training programs in Africa; Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum; Gambia Social Forum; Government Issue Forums; Pan African Parliament Committees and Community AIDS Action Committees.

Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) acquired training equipment. This as reported in the “Independent Evaluation of ACBF Supported Training Programs Report (2011),” had contributed to increased demand for ACBF supported training. In some instances, was accompanied by an increase in the number of beneficiaries of the capacity development initiatives. This high and increasing demand for capacity development particularly degree training was a result of the scholarship opportunities; high quality of degrees; the value of the skills and knowledge from a professional and employment point of view.

At the individual level, the capacity development to think tank staff, contributed to enhanced knowledge and skills development; improved research and analysis skills, analytical knowledge, report writing, innovation, and networking skills amongst beneficiaries. This further contributed to better understanding of government policies and public policy processes, increased research outputs, informed development of policies, career progression, and ability to take on additional assignments with the improved capacity.

Challenges faced

Human resource capacity: several beneficiary institutions were faced with inability to attract, recruit and retain high quality professional personnel required, partly attributed to constraints in securing reliable sources of funding, which affected compensation package. High staff turnover accompanied by delayed recruitment contributed to delays in implementing planned project activities. This challenge was highlighted in a number of ACBF supported institutions including KIPRA, Women’s University in Africa, Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC), and Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN). The high staff turnover of staff who, following capacity development, received more lucrative opportunities in other institutions, did not offer opportunities for knowledge transfer, thus limiting further transmission of the knowledge acquired.

In some cases, projects recruited lower caliber of research staff instead of experts (as in the Pan African Parliament) hence research outputs were not sufficiently analytical. In other cases, think tanks depend on external consultants which contributed to delays research outputs as they spend a significant amount of time to get familiar with the nature of the work and country context.

Other human resource constraints were experienced with delays in setting up the project implementing office as was the case CAPAN, staff recruitment (as experienced by Capacity Building and Institutional Support Program of the Commission of the African Union (AU-CAP) and PAP) and validation and appointment of other members of the management organs such as CAPAN’s technical and liaison committees.

Design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation: Several ACBF supported programs encountered weak design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting which curtailed the speed of implementation and the level of achievement of results. Some beneficiary institutions viewed the ACBF’s reporting and procurement processes as inflexible hence difficult to meet. Further in some cases, the ACBF supported institution was unable to act on some issues without recourse to ACBF leading to unnecessary and avoidable delays in implementation.

Although it was a requirement in the ACBF grant agreement to set up an M&E framework and unit with the institutions, most beneficiary institutions experienced difficulties in complying. The spillover effects were weak project design and poor work planning manifested by inadequate synchronization between the activities and budget of the grant agreement.

Due to weak donor coordination, the concept of basket funding did not actually materialize since each donor administered its own budget independently. In other cases, the role to be played by each funding partner in the project was not clear from the beginning. In some instances, including The Association of Non- Governmental Organizations (TANGO) and Uganda Country Capacity Building Program (UCCBP), the design of the project was too ambitious that it became increasingly difficult to recruit qualified personnel to execute the activities, leading implementation delays.

Governance structure: leadership conflict that engulfed some beneficiary institutions dissipated the productive energies of building the internal capacities necessary for delivering the project's outputs efficiently and effectively. This deprived the project managers of the ability to identify, monitor, and manage risks.

Funding and funds disbursement: Inadequate core funding is a challenge that can affect an institution's ability to recruit and retain core senior staff. For instance, with failure of co-financing arrangements to materialize, Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA) and Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) were consequently unable to recruit and retain high level of staff, attributed to low remuneration packages. In other instances, AU-CAP program implementation was dampened by intermittent flow of funds to support program activities. The program suffered from a suspension of financial disbursement by ACBF due to noncompliance. In the case of Pan African Parliament (PAP), funding partners temporarily stopped disbursement of funds over allegations of non-adherence to rules. PAP experienced challenge of need to comply with several competing donor administrative and financial management systems with regard to preparing annual work plans and budgets.

Conclusion

Policy centers and think tanks that received support from ACBF considered the support in developing internal capacity of institutions as being "very successful," attributed to ACBF spearheading the development of relatively viable policy centers and think tanks in a range of environments. ACBF support helped institutions attract other donors, establish basket funds, and develop human capacity across the portfolio. Given the geographical scope of ACBF, its work in various contexts, the need to utilize support services in a strategic way and variability in the types of institutions, projects, and programs within the portfolio required a larger management staff portfolio than was utilized to monitor implementation.

Capacity development and technical support by policy centers and think tanks

Scope, objectives, and strategies employed

A number of think tanks reviewed, having recognized the capacity gaps amongst different stakeholders, adopted strategies aimed at equipping stakeholders who come into contact with different policy issues with the requisite capacity for different purposes as elaborated below.

Training

The key objective of training conducted was to enhance critical and technical capacity among stakeholders, including policy makers, the public sector, the private sector, and civil society. The agenda of the training varied based on the targeted group. Those directed to the public sector were aimed at strengthening policy planning and implementation, economic analysis, and public-sector management. Private sector training is aimed at improving business performance and corporate governance. Trainings directed to CSOs and other non-state actors were aimed at building capacity to engage with stakeholders particularly the public sector and strengthening policy advocacy capacity. Training conducted was either short-term or long-term.

The short term training offered were for a range of topics including: policy and law formation; economic management and governance; gender; trade, diplomacy, and foreign affairs, particularly negotiations skills, private sector, research analysis largely focused on economic analysis; and monitoring and evolution and project management. Some of the short courses were training of trainers. These courses were largely offered to community leaders. These course modules were often tailor made and were often administered either in part or in whole by a third party an individual or institution.

ACBF supported such institutions as the Swaziland Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre (SEPARC), West Africa Institute for Financial and Economic Management (WAIFEM), and Zambia Institute for Public Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) which had the objective to train members of public sector, specifying the cadre to be targeted. This was offered by policy centers such as ZWRCN and GICAP were supported with a training for CSOs with a focus on advocacy and participation in policy process including public dialogue as well as topical issues such as HIV. The overall and recurring

objective of training strategies employed is to build or strengthen research and economic policy analysis capacities in relevant public sector workers. The Center for Corporate Governance and KCA University in Kenya developed a six-month executive diploma on corporate governance.

The long term courses were in the form of PhD and master's degree programs; some offered sponsorship opportunities. The main focus was economics, including economic policy, public sector management, banking, and finance. The overall objective was to increase the pool of skilled professionals. This was offered by ACBF supported Institutions such as Africa Research and Resource Forum (ARRF), Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Kenya School of Monetary Studies (KSMS), Public Sector Management Training program at Africa University (PSMTP-AU) and African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). The key beneficiaries were public sector officials, universities or students mostly from the same jurisdiction however in some instances (Ethiopian Economics Association—EEA) students were from France, Italy, and the United States. Most think tanks who adopted this capacity development strategy did not target CSOs and few supported the private sector.

Providing technical support to government and other stakeholders through taskforces and working groups.

Task forces and working groups are membership-based thematic interagency multistakeholder forums that are spearheaded by their respective government ministries for a specific time with clear terms of reference. Institutes such as the Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA), The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) and KIPPRA participate in task forces and working groups that are mandated to undertake different initiatives including policy reviews and policy advisory services. The key role played by think tanks in task forces and working groups is aimed at building skills and knowledge in effectively reviewing or implementing policies. This offers a great opportunity for think tanks to develop capacity amongst relevant stakeholders on a variety of subject areas (Box 4).

Box 4: Enhancing Policy Uptake Through Participation in Taskforces in Kenya

In March 2016, the President of Kenya appointed the National Taskforce on Coffee sub-sector reform through the Gazette notice dated 3rd March 2016, with a mandate of consulting with coffee stakeholders and recommending comprehensive reform. A Principal Analyst at KIPPRA was appointed chair of the taskforce. The coffee sector in Kenya is of paramount importance and a source of foreign exchange. Despite the Kenyan coffee being highly regarded to be of premium quality in international markets, its farming has however over the years been experiencing several challenges which contributed to declining productivity and export earnings. The challenges needed to be addressed comprehensively by an informed position which was successfully achieved by the National taskforce on Coffee sub-sector as reported in several media outlets.

On successful completion of the assigned tasks, the report was presented to the President of Kenya on 9th June 2016. Some of the recommendations provided in the report that was acknowledged by the Government were that coffee farmers would soon be paid on the spot for coffee cherries delivered to factories. The report also recommended for the introduction of subsidy programme for the sector that will cost KSh.2.47 billion in the next two financial years (see: <http://www.president.go.ke/2016/06/09/prompt-payment-for-coffee-farmers-begins-in-july>). In the 2016 Budget Statement read the day prior, the Cabinet Secretary for the National Treasury indicated that KSh.2.4 Billion had been set aside for Coffee debt waiver and STABEX. The intervention was an indication that evidence-based policy is imperative for policy persuasion and winning political will towards up-taking such policy recommendations.

Mentorships and fellowships. Institutions such as KIPPRA, EEA, CEPOD, KSMS, GIMPA, and Non- Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC) provide internship opportunities, particularly to the youth and to women (especially in the latter institution) to expose the graduates to research, analytical processes, and work experience. The KIPPRA Young Professionals Program is an annual mentorship program (Box 5) that competitively selects 12 applicants from both the public and private sectors to undergo rigorous training in public policy research and analysis and publish research outputs. The Young Professional graduates are expected to return to their former places of work to continue supporting development with evidence-based policies. NGOCC of Zambia institutionalized a three-month internship for twelve young women. The program is structured to provide young women with opportunity to contribute to social economic development while engaging with gender and women's rights issues. This is a strategy toward building future leaders and activists for the women's movement.

Box 5: Advancing Young Professionals for Enhanced Policy Uptake

The ACBF supported the Young Professionals (YP) Program in Kenya as part of its support to KIPPRA. It is an annual capacity building programme that aims to enhance technical policy research competences for 12 or more applicants, competitively selected from both the public and private sectors. The YPS undergo rigorous training in public policy research and analysis and publish research outputs. A tracer study of 85 YP graduates that benefited from the programme indicated that all of the respondents reported improved research and analysis skills, analytical knowledge and innovative skills, with 60 percent reporting job progression after graduation; 76 percent of the graduates were employed by the public sector, with roles in policy making, implementation and review. 95 percent of employers reported that the graduates had greatly enhanced skills with better productivity.

Results, outcomes, and impact achieved

Training. Most of the long-term training programs supported by ACBF achieved the intended outcomes. Majority of the graduates from the collaborative training programs (master's and PhD) managed by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) who had come from the public sector returned to their place of work and utilized the knowledge acquired. Some of the key outcomes of this was, informed policy formulation, planning and budgeting; improvement governance, accountability and financial integrity, and improved capacity to undertake economic research and analysis. Students who received degree awards went on to get jobs in universities, other training institutions, and think tanks. Students gained efficiency in undertaking research and economic analysis. The skills were also beneficial in assisting them in getting employed. The AERC Collaborative Masters in Agricultural and Applied Economics (CMAAE), according to the report on the Achievements and Impact of ACBF's Capacity Building Interventions (1991–2015), increased the pool of well-trained agricultural economists. These beneficiaries work in the universities, government institutions and other relevant organizations and said to be contributing to the economy's development. The ACBF supported capacity development strategies have enhanced the number of trained economists within the public and private sector (ACBF 2016).

Beneficiaries of the short-term courses generally felt that the courses were relevant and contributed to skills upgrading while enhancing the individual's networks through interactions with training recipients from other institutions. Beneficiaries in the private sector further benefited from different business skills that improved their business management practices, enhanced public private engagement forums and other networks. A need for increased investment in capacity building efforts for the private sector was also reported. The outcome of capacity development offered to CSOs included increased awareness on various uses, enhanced stakeholder dialogues, forums, and networks; increased participation in local government structures and enhanced capacity to undertake advocacy.

Institutions providing the capacity building, particularly universities experienced improvements in the quality, teaching techniques and methodologies and learning. They also experienced heightened demand of their services which in most cases exceeded the supply (Dalberg 2013). This high and increasing demand particularly for degree programs is a result of the scholarship opportunities; high quality of degrees and the value of skills and knowledge from a professional point view.

In administering the training, a number of institutions have established collaborative training programs spanning across countries and universities, aimed at developing a critical mass of African-trained professionals in development. Under the PSMTF in Africa University– Zimbabwe, the University networked with four Institutes of Public Administration (IPAs) that provided short-term professional training in Eastern and southern Africa. Further, to ensure sustainability of the program beyond ACBF funding period, the African University established a parallel fee-paying master's degree program in Public- Sector Management.

Certain training sessions implemented by the Centre d'Etudes de Politiques pour le Développement (CEPOD) were linked up with studies or analysis activities and aimed most often at consolidating the assimilation of the developed methodological tools, releasing the results of studies, and updating the knowledge acquired during previous activities. Capacity building programs were need-based given they were designed following request from stakeholders. Ministerial conference on the implication of results- centered management was attended by high-level delegations led by ministers of Senegal and four other countries of the sub-region (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde and Mali) thereby giving the program the much needed credibility.

Several think tanks and other beneficiary institutions (such as AERC and EEA/EEPRI) received support from the ACBF to implement internship programs within their wider mandate. For instance, KIPPRA implemented the Young Professionals Program while NGOCC institutionalized within its structures, a three-month internship involving twelve young women, for placement both within its own structures and those of members.

Taskforces and working groups. Participation in taskforces has seen think tanks contribute directly to formulation of policies and further elevated their advisory role. The Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) and Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) for instance provide advisory services to their respective governments. In addition, think tanks have seen their staff appointed to various positions in government including for example Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA) that has had its staff appointed as Deputy Ministers as well as other senior government positions while BIDPA) trained economists serve as resident advisor of the Government of Botswana (ACBF 2006). The CEPA in Ghana, ESRF in Tanzania, EPRC, Kenya's KIPPRA and The Cellule d'Etudes de Politique Economique (CEPEC) of Guinea also saw staff appointed to Committees and Working Groups where they provide Advisory services. Further, think tanks have used the task forces and working groups as platforms to disseminate relevant research findings aimed at influencing policy.

Mentorships and fellowships. The key outcome with mentorship and fellowship programs was skills upgrading particularly in economic analysis and reporting and undertaking research on critical issues. These have helped to enhance analytical skills and knowledge amongst beneficiaries which is utilized that the workplace thus contributing to strengthened technical capacity and competency. A secondary outcome of such programs is enhanced networks of think tanks with beneficiaries enhancing institutional ties. The fact that mentees/interns, particularly those engaged in under the KIPPRA program, are professional already engaged in work environment, relevance of policy research is enhanced as mentee/ interns can easily identify policy challenges drawn from their experience which they then can apply.

Critical factors for success

For training to be effective, needs assessments should be carried out. Tailor made courses can thereby be designed with this in mind. It further ensures continuous refinement of the training modules to be more relevant based on the needs of the stakeholders. For instance, the Programme for Capacity Building for the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (PPRC-CI) and the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) have been effective in identifying skills, capacity, and competency gaps. Demand driven training courses stand a higher chance of success. CEPOD for instance designs training programs based on requests from stakeholders. Certain training sessions implemented by CEPOD were linked with studies or analysis activities undertaken by the institute. There are opportunities to enhance knowledge transmission through training of trainers, mentorships, and completed degree holders who went on to get jobs in Universities, other training institutions and think tanks.

The collaborative implementation approach of the Collaborative PhD Programme (CPP) training program by the AERC continues to rationalize the use of scarce resources, achievement of economies of scale, reduction of isolation of Departments of economics and fostering of intellectual exchange, thereby improving quality of PhD education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the collaborative feature of the model continues to provide basis for standardization and quality control. CPP continued to be extremely of high quality both in terms of content and resources (both human and physical) for its delivery. The course materials were reported to be both of high quality and useful in applied contexts. Taskforces, working groups, mentorships, and fellowships offer an opportunity to promote the transmission of capacity developed. Hands-on training is an important capacity development tool. Beneficiaries trained should thereby be positioned to contribute to building pool of skilled professionals. Additional mechanism such as study tours; engaging short-term visiting scholars and skilled volunteers have been adopted by some ACBF supported institutions however at a small scale. The key benefit of these strategy is that it is targeted aimed at obtaining specific knowledge, skill or technical capacity.

Challenges faced

Limited financial resources have limited the impact of the capacity development and technical support strategies. This is evidenced in a number of institutions including Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum where the SADC-PF/ACBF internship program was discontinued due to low resources allocated to it. Human capacity constraints were also experienced by some institutions.

Low female participation was reported by a number of ACBF supported capacity development initiatives; majority of the beneficiaries of the different capacity development initiatives were male. There is also a country bias which has left some countries, particularly those post conflict countries underserved.

Some institutions experienced challenges in undertaking impact assessments or evaluations of the capacity development programs. Impact was difficult to measure or to observe; especially in programs with ad hoc activities; with limited scope or with no baseline data. This is attributable to capacity challenges in undertaking effective monitoring and evaluation. There were further limited reports of knowledge sharing across supported institutions especially those that offer similar capacity development programs.

Conclusion

Capacity development and technical assistance programs by think tanks and policy centers need to be well designed, properly targeted to the audience, relevant and gender sensitive. This calls for a mechanism to systematically obtain the capacity needs of stakeholders. Training institutions and universities also need to ensure they are responsive and able to meet emerging challenges which calls for continuous focus on skills building and development. Training, overall, if well designed, relevant and properly targeted is critical in enhancing quality of research as the beneficiaries are well equipped with the relevant analytical tools and research methodology to undertake rigorous studies. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are critical in generating lessons aimed at continuous improvement. Resource mobilization strategies should also be designed and implemented that ensure capacity development and technical support initiatives have the necessary human and financial resources.

Enhancing policy engagement among government and non-state actors

Scope, objectives, and strategies employed

Think tanks and policy centers have instituted and convened platforms aimed at promoting interactions between government and non-state actors. Two key approaches have been adopted policy dialogues and workshops or institutional policy forums platforms and networks that promote knowledge generation and dissemination.

A number of ACBF supported institutions adopted dialogues as a means to engage and interact with stakeholders on a variety of topics that included education, food security, tax, and governance and elections matters. Participants involved in such forums have included policy makers, other public-sector representatives, private sector, civil society, development partners, and the media. The objective for Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) Rwanda, Food Agriculture, Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) and Gambia Integrated Capacity Building Project (GICAP) was to enhance capacity for public policy dialogue. These dialogues were either organized in ad hoc manner based on the policy issues at the time or systematic as is the case with Strategic Transformation and Policy Centre (STPC) of Cabo Verde, which set up a platform of dialogue between private sector, on a semiannual basis, to discuss and get consensus on salary, labor, and tax incentive policies.²⁰ Other engagement approaches adopted by think tanks include media briefings, parliamentary briefings, thematic roundtable discussions and social media interactions. ZWRCN through ACBF's support was in a position to do advocacy work through mobilization of peers and awareness raising engagement.²¹

A number of think tanks adopted institutionalized the engagement platforms, for instance, the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) established Government Issue Forums (GIFs) to mobilize and empower the community to engage with policy makers through sustained dialogues. GICAP's Gambia Social Forum brings together various civil society actors who have focused on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other local issues. Private Sector Capacity Building Project (PSF) has convened investors' forum and presidential investor roundtable. Institutions with existing networks, such as ZWRCN, EEA, and FANRPAN, enhance stakeholder engagements and participation.

A third approach is a target specific engagement platform for instance for legislators /parliament (for example Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), Pan African Parliament (PAP) and West African Institute for Financial and Economic Management (WAIFEM).

Results / outcomes / impacts achieved

Effective engagements are about packaging the relevant message to the right audience at the right time and right mode and by the right institution. A number of consultative policy dialogues were successfully convened by a number of think tanks and policy centers. Majority of respondents engaged during the Evaluation of *ACBF Supported Policy Centers and Think Tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa* felt that independent policy centers and think tanks are best positioned to offer a truly objective view of key policy issues (Dalberg 2013). Measuring and attribution impact of policy dialogues and conferences is however difficult to measure due to the presence of multiple donor and development organizations, working on issues of capacity development for policy research and reform. Increased awareness on various issues was however reported with evidenced increase in public private dialogues. FEMNET for example, through ACBF capacity building support, implemented women rights advocacy and awareness initiatives which worked greatly to ensure that gender equality is incorporated in all planning and budgeting processes at different levels and to ensure that sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators are generated and used in planning and implementation. Some of the countries in which this has been a success include: Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and Ethiopia. As a result, more governments in Africa are more receptive to gender issues and have shown commitment to mainstreaming gender in the national development plans and budgets.²²

20 ACBF n.d.b.

21 ACBF n.d.b.

22 ACBF n.d.b.

There has been an increase in the establishment of structures for engaging with the policy makers (such as forums and networks) while others have been strengthened. The engagement platforms have further improved access to materials whereby the communities have a platform to articulate their views and make their contributions. A good example is the Consultative Dialogue Framework for the Private Sector, Civil Society, and other Interested Groups to engage in the EAC Integration which was set up by East Africa Business Council (EABC) with support from ACBF (Asibey 2016).

ACBF-supported institutions are now considered to be proficient at providing relevant research on critical and emerging policy issues and are often considered experts by stakeholders that often rely on their input and advice. For example, IDEG has been a key player in democratic governance and reform as Ghana seeks a more democratic form of governance. Specifically, IDEG has been critical in advocating for peace during the recent, highly competitive elections, in addition to a more transparent government, particularly as Ghana seeks to boost oil production. The National Institute of Legislative Studies (NILS) has also been a key player within the parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), teaching capacity building and training to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, aimed at increasing human capacity for effective policy decision making, particularly on policy issues such as the budget.

A number of capacity development programs by think tanks and policy centers had the effect of improving the capacity of CSOs as well as not-for-profit organizations in the policy making processes thus empowering them to contribute more effectively; to perform lobbying and advocacy roles more effectively whilst enhancing public policy dialogue.

Critical factors for success

Stakeholder forums need to be well organized for them to be effective. The Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum reported that weak coordination, and disagreements among stakeholders contributed to conflict in scheduling of meetings resulting in low participation rates. A critical factor of success of policy engagement is the credibility of the institution which brings out the aspect of autonomy. The ability, and degree to which, policy centers and think tanks can impact the external environment is largely governed by the nature of the policy center/think tanks' relationship with the government.

High level policy engagements were preferred by some institutions for instance the PSF's presidential roundtable or the IPAR-Kenya policy engagements with the office of the Prime Minister. Getting high level audience is often beneficial for uptake of evidence based policy interventions by the policy maker.

ACBF capacity building projects targeting the public sector are likely to create wider impact in a country if aligned to/developed around existing/ongoing government capacity building programs / development agenda. The success of a capacity building institution depends on a number of factors, including good governance and management, clear definition of vision and mission, ownership on the part of beneficiaries, sustained support from donors and other stakeholders, enabling environment in terms of the political environment, development and implementation of a sustainability strategy that explores options for leveraging additional funds from sources other than the conventional donors.

For capacity building projects targeting parliamentarians, proper orientation of Members of Parliament at the inception phase of the project is necessary to avoid misunderstanding and mistrust by members of parliament on what the project is all about. In addition, there is need for existence of a clear process of soliciting co-financing assistance or managing such assistance, streamlined within the National Assembly.

Indirect and direct engagement along the policy impact value chain substantially augments policy impact. For example, funding mechanisms can be used to support policy centers and think tanks, but can also be a tool to incentivize key decision makers around a particular policy issue. Management of resources (such as human capital and processes) is also critical; how and when key stakeholders are engaged within the ecosystem, can strengthen the policy impact value chain, increasing the likelihood for policy reform.

Challenges faced

Weak coordination or ineffective secretariat within institutionalized the engagement platforms often contributed to failures of stakeholder engagement initiatives. Funding challenges, coupled with overdependence on donor support, further contributed to planning and sustainability challenges. Stakeholder engagements were thereby irregular and inconsistent. Additionally, activity plans and budgets were not comprehensive since most beneficiary institutions lacked a robust M&E framework.

Conclusion

Monitoring and evaluation indicators for tracking impact of policy engagements need to be innovative and robust to inform the policy center/think tank on the result of their support. Modalities for engagement with policy makers should be expanded and diversified aimed at ensuring the policy maker is always informed or policy research and policy priorities. They should be participatory and inclusive for enhanced policy relevance.

LESSONS LEARNED

Capacity building in Africa is a long-term process that requires sustained support and extended resource commitment. Several lessons can be drawn from the capacity building implementers, ranging from project design, governance, coordination, monitoring and learning, partnership and networking, risk management to project sustainability have been learned through implementation of ACBF capacity building programs.

Enhancing the quality and relevant of research: ACBF supported policy centers and think tanks contributed in enhancing quality of policy-oriented research. The strategies adopted included enhancing institutional and human capacity to undertake research and to disseminate the research. Policy centers and think tanks need capacity in conducting policy surveillance in order to identify policy and capacity development needs of consumers of policy research.

Project design, organization, and governance: Capacity development interventions need to be well designed, informed by capacity needs, potential impact to stakeholders/beneficiaries, and based on the political, socioeconomic circumstances of the country. They need to be informed by the human and infrastructural resources available. Leadership and governance structures within think tanks and policy centers should be stable and well institutionalized to ensure implementation, continuity, and sustainability of the capacity development initiatives whilst ensuring accountability and adherence to grant requirements and timelines.

Project coordination and management: The capacity of grant beneficiaries to plan, initiate, and undertake activities should be clearly ascertained during project appraisal. Effective project coordination is critical to ensuring a high level of success and effective implementation. A capacity gap in effective project management in some think tanks and policy centres was evident. In other programs, for instance the Rwanda MSCBP, special coordinating agencies were established (box 6).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): Performance evaluation is weakened by the lack of clear indicators to measure progress in achieving objectives. In some capacity building initiatives lacked baseline data. Though M&E frameworks and operational units formed a critical institutional requirement for ACBF beneficiaries, most implemented this and/or engaged staff with limited M&E skills. These among other factors resulted in challenge in measuring impact generated from the capacity building programs. ACBF has acknowledged the need for a rigorous M&E framework (Dalberg 2013). This presented another common capacity gap.

Funding and sustainability: Funding constraints was reported as a challenge for a number of ACBF- supported think tanks and policy centers. To address this, a number of think tanks employed co-financing as a strategy to fundraise for specific initiatives, programs, or projects. A basket funding mechanism would be beneficial in such circumstances. Where basket funding is involved, coordination of donor funding is imperative for reporting and accountability purposes. This again brings out the importance of coordination and project management capacity in the think tank or policy center.

Box 6 The Rwanda Multi Sector Capacity Building Program

To successfully implement the MSCBP, establishment and strengthening of Human Resources and Institutional Capacity Development Agency (HIDA) and PSCBS Public Sector Capacity Building Secretariat (PSCBS) contributed significantly to successful implementation of the grant from ACBF, despite the transitional challenges experienced during the transformation of HIDA to PSCBS and the subsequent decoupling of the Private Sector and Civil Society components from HIDA. The PSCBS facilitated smooth implementation of the project as well as closer collaboration among the beneficiary institutions except for the fact it did not have the freedom or mandate to take decisions relating to the implementation and management of subgrantees.

Source: Rwanda MSCBP MTR Report

Project risk management: Greater attention to anticipation of risks and new developments is imperative. While some of the major risks may be correctly identified in the project document, the occurrence of those risks requires that timely innovative alternatives be proposed to move the project's implementation ahead. In this regard, it is important to have frequent consultations on the project's implementation to address ongoing or anticipated challenges, especially for projects whose activities tend to be very process-intensive. This again brings out the importance of a robust, rigorous, and effective M&E framework.

Partnerships and networking: Structures for managing partnerships need to be formal, both among development partners and between capacity building beneficiaries and partners. Meetings need to be regular, with well-structured and informed exchange of ideas and experiences. Effective partnerships would further engender the harmonization of the reporting formats and timing, common performance indicators, joint evaluation missions, as well as common procedures and norms of procurement. Given majority of the ACBF capacity building program targeted public sector entities, future partnerships need to consider public–private partnerships and the role of private and civic institutions. Training programs: Several training programs were supported by the ACBF, either in the form of university-affiliated programs (such as EPM-Makerere, EPM-Makerere, and WUA) located in one university or in the form of collaborative programs involving partnering institutions of higher learning across Africa (such as AERC CMAP and CMAAE). For collaborative degree programs, a conducive environment in terms of infrastructure and facilities was found to contribute to the high quality of learning and teaching at the joint facility for electives (JFE)—whereby students from participating universities covered a semester in another country. Applicants from fragile and post-conflict states tend to have weak capacity to compete for places in the collaborative, multi-country programs.

Engagement with policy makers: The ACBF capacity building programs supported four parliamentary programs namely; PAP, CAPAN, AU-CAP and the SADC parliamentary Forum. The programs highlighted the need for broad-based, regular, and intense consultations with policy makers and key stakeholders. Parliamentarians require capacity building in issues related to public finance management, good governance, leadership, and public policy process among others. Balanced participation of all parties present in the National Assembly is necessary. There is renewed donor interest in supporting / funding capacity Building activities in the National Assemblies in Africa, hence the need for better donor coordination for increased impact.

A high level of credibility of research and researchers in policy centers and think tanks among legislators is beneficial in the research-to-legislation channels. Credibility of policy research is also enhanced by independence of a policy center of think tank as perceived by the policy maker. Achieving increased relevance and uptake also requires sustained engagement with public and private sector players to develop relationships based on trust and reliability to deliver quality output that can inform direction in an emerging policy debate (Basil 2011).

Knowledge exchange and learning: Measures to strengthen mutual learning among ACBF-funded activities are important to reduce the learning curve and facilitate smooth implementation. Such measures can include, bringing together institutions that benefit from ACBF funded activities in the country to exchange notes; greater exposure to capacity building concepts and approaches for stakeholders; and exposure of key policy makers through exchange and study tours as a way on nurturing strategic partnership ‘champions’. The establishment of Governance issue forums in Ghana where different stakeholders participated, was found to provide a good platform for knowledge transfer particularly to the local community who were further better informed and empowered to engage with the government and local authorities. This contributed to strengthening interface between state institutions at local and national levels and other stakeholders. In several capacity building programs, training of officers from the beneficiary institutions was found to create more impact when combined with experiential approaches.

Gender mainstreaming: Most capacity building projects did not have activities deliberately focusing on gender mainstreaming. Capacity development initiatives that address attitude and behavior in society, such as gender budgeting, require a long period of time for full results to be realized. Meaningful capacity needs to be structured in a long term sustainable manner given the deconstruction of sociocultural practices that have oppressed women and girls may not be achieved in the short term. Gender awareness should be coupled with addressing the practical gender needs of women including empowerment at an individual. There is therefore need for the supported projects to strike an appropriate balance between strategic interests and practical gender needs.

The low female participation in the training, partly attributed to socioeconomic factors, lack of gender mainstreaming in learning programs, historical and cultural factors; country-specific information asymmetries and spatial constraints. There is need to consider gender dimension in future capacity development initiatives. Improved M&E frameworks would be beneficial in providing output and outcomes for different beneficiaries.

Adherence to ACBF grant guidelines: In most cases, delay implementation of planed activities was due to beneficiary institution’s failure to adhere to ACBF guidelines / conditions set in the grant agreement. At times, grants were suspended for some time. The requirement to seek “no-objection” from ACBF headquarters for certain procurement procedures was viewed by majority of institutions as being too stringent, compared to other donors whose decision making was not centralized. The quality and relevance of donor funding can be compromised by delays in disbursement and inflexibility in the disbursement procedures of the ACBF. It is important for the ACBF to sensitize the Management and Board of the supported institution on ACBF’s rules and procedures. In addition, flexibility in localizing decision making process can strengthen the sense of ownership and commitment in program implementation.

Absorption capacity: At times, the grant given to a beneficiary institution by the ACBF was relatively large considering the beneficiary’s own internal capacity to utilize it fully. ACBF need to undertake institutional capacity assessment prior to disbursement of funds to ensure efficiency.

Political and economic stability: In some cases, the effects of unprecedented political and macroeconomic instability in a country were felt by the capacity-building programs. Stable political and macroeconomic conditions are prerequisite context factors for effective project implementation. Unfortunately, for some beneficiary institutions, their projects happened at a time when the countries were going through unprecedented economic upheaval. For instance, in Zimbabwe, hyperinflation underscored by seemingly intractable political crisis and widespread postelection violence affected implementation of planned activities by the ZWRCN. Hence most of the major activities including training workshops took place at the latter parts of the program which may have affected the ability of trainees to have used knowledge to influence policy and budgeting as intended. In the case of WAIFEM, political conflict affected ability of some member countries such as Liberia to participate fully and benefit from the regional capacity building program.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Future ACBF support programs with long duration could utilize the process of rolling budgets to make program budgeting more responsive to unexpected changes. To help fast-track project implementation, in-country coordinating agencies could be given some level of authority to approve payments for certain activity amounts without the need for ACBF granting “no objection” clearance.

It is crucial for budgeting for a program/grant to be done at different levels, providing the coordinating agency (in-country) authority to approve budgets for small activities in a program. Management of country programs or other larger projects need to be decentralized either by appointing country representatives or allowing implementing agencies to exercise more powers. Clarification of roles, responsibilities, and mandate of the coordinating agency should be clearly established and incorporated into the design of the program. The processes, tools, and forms of communicating with program implementing partners needs to be reviewed to ensure that all levels of participation in the program are kept informed.

ACBF need to invest more time and analysis to understand the nature and character of each partner organization. Such a holistic organizational picture would allow ACBF to identify at the project design stage, potential success factors, potential risks likely to be faced, and to propose realistic strategies for mitigating them. ACBF, needs to appreciate the organizational culture of political organizations. In addition, ACBF and other capacity building organizations to seek to build on and strengthen existing structures, processes and procedures of its partner organization rather than working around it. ACBF will need to conduct capacity needs assessment prior to disbursement of funds, to determine the capacities (or lack of capacities) of all participating institutions to implement proposed projects. Some of the capacity gaps for instance that are present in some ACBF supported think tanks and policy centers as established earlier include project management, gender mainstreaming, gender evaluation, risk analysis and M&E. Needs assessments is a critical activity for think tanks and policy centers introducing capacity development programs.

To address the financial constraints; delivery of short courses through in-house training facilities should be considered to avoid hiring external venues which take up a good proportion of training budget. This calls for the development of training facilities which can further be hired out to third parties and offer a source of revenue. Alternatively, partnerships should be forged between think tanks, policy centers and training institutions for infrastructure sharing. Think tanks and policy centers should prioritize continuous building of internal capacity and competency to avoid hiring external trainers. Individual and institutional partnerships will also be beneficial in complimenting human capacity; this can be achieved through approaches such as visiting scholars, fellows, or engaging mentors which include skilled diaspora volunteers. Leverage on developing and intensifying cooperation with similar centers operating in Africa with a view to promoting exchange of information and experiences and strengthening the capacities of supported institutions. This would further build institutional and human capacities with other development partners.

Public sector capacity building programs supported by the ACBF and other donors could benefit more from stronger cooperation among donors, who could make greater effort to collaborate and utilize common frameworks when their assistance targets the same beneficiary institution. The focus of capacity building support by ACBF and other development partners will not only be on creation of capacity, but also on utilization and retention which entail wider government involvement and restructuring in the short, medium, and long term.

Apart from mid-term and end-term reviews, periodic program assessment informed by the robust M&E framework is necessary. The aim is to identify what is not working as per the program design, therefore instituting changes in the design and delivery of the targeted activities/themes. In case a lead beneficiary is supporting other agencies/

sub-beneficiaries within the program, as in the case of umbrella or membership organizations, emphasis within each component need to be given to cross-cutting initiatives instead of independently developed work plans by each sub-beneficiary institution. To overcome cases of fragmented look in a country program, poor connection, and lack of synergy among beneficiary institutions, cluster leaders for various components need to be appointed to push for greater linkages and harmonization— through all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In the event where top priority of the capacity building program is the public sector, program design needs to have a component for building capacity of private sector and civil society institutions which contribute significantly to growth. The ACBF and AU need to continue supporting think tanks in Africa to play an increasing role in the push for realization of Africa Agenda 2063. Think tanks will require funding and technical support to develop methodologies to guide member states in integrating Agenda 2063 in their national planning frameworks. This will include guidelines, toolkits, and standardized methods of integration of the global and regional agendas and enhancing cross country comparisons of performance. In addition, think tanks need support to conduct research and monitor achievement of country-specific SDG targets and organize regular (such as annual) policy dialogues, round tables, workshops, seminars, media interviews and other fora with public, private and CSO stakeholders in their home countries, to address any identified bottlenecks.

There is need to strengthen the institutional, governance, transformative leadership, soft and technical capacities of the pan-African institutions and regional economic communities to overcome key obstacles preventing effective implementation and monitoring of development priorities towards achievement of Africa Agenda 2063. Other support will include building their human capacity to reduce dependence on external donors, building capacity in coordination, harmonization, and strengthening skills and competencies.

Between 30 and 60 percent of African think tanks are highly vulnerable with a serious risk of disappearing, given unstable funding, staff turnover and brain drain. The nature and the scope of the think tank crisis constitute a big risk to sustained African transformation (McGann 2014; McGann, Signé, and Muyangwa 2017). Providing long term support to most policy institutions and think tanks in Africa is an important strategic priority to ensure that institutions can thrive beyond ACBF program support period. Hence ACBF need to keep on providing tailor-made capacity support, striking a balance between institutional and project level support. The ACBF could also provide advisory support to think tanks on ways to achieve financial sustainability, through development and implementation of resource mobilization strategies. Apart from insufficiency of funding, think tanks in Africa also face a myriad of other challenges including independence, quality, and capacity, achieving impact and effectiveness in engagement with policymakers and the public. As catalysts for Africa's economic, political, and social transformation, African think tanks need to be supported to ensure their independence, capacity, and future sustainability is intact. Even think tanks that are heavily reliant on their government for financial support make independent recommendations on public policy. Although some governments are members of ACBF and understand the workings of ACBF, there is need for ACBF to support incorporation of think tanks and encourage think tanks in government mainstreams in getting the right legislations to support independence in their outputs and impact.

Some think tanks will require support to implement specific projects—for instance, a five-year program to build capacities of private sector players countrywide or a three-year capital-intensive project to develop office block or other infrastructure which could have long-term benefits and impact in supporting uptake of policy. In addition, certain think tanks in Africa require support to develop M&E framework or macroeconomic models and tools for support economic forecasting and simulation of sectoral performance (such as computable general equilibrium modeling), hence will require customized support from the ACBF. Going forward, as ACBF continues to implement its Strategy for 2017–2021, there is need to rationalize its support to respond to demand for institutional and project level support in a highly flexible way.

To enhance think tanks role in uptake of policy in Africa, this review recommends the following:

1. Think tanks and policy centers need to form networks, engage and partner more actively with CSOs and other non-state actors as a way of increasing their reach and dissemination of research outputs. Both stakeholders form a key constituent in enhancing policy uptake and can utilize credible evidence generated think tanks to advocate for policy formulation and uptake by the public sector and policy makers.
2. Think tanks and policy centres must develop internal capacity and tools for M&E, so as to support policy makers, through evidence generated by research and surveys, to monitor and evaluate impact of policies for achievement of desired development outcomes.
3. Capacity building programmes with a training component need to ensure that from onset, they are designed to support the research-to-policy link. Communities of practice, drawing membership from individuals that have benefitted from capacity development programs, based on their expertise, need to rally and champion policy uptake through sharing knowledge, collaborative research, dissemination at forums involving think tanks, policy centers, policy makers and non- state actors.

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Lesson Note #5



MANAGING THINK TANKS IN AFRICA: WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T, AND WHY



Kwabena Asomanin Anaman

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Think tanks in Africa have grown quickly over the past quarter-century, buoyed by spreading democratization, widening space for dialogue between politicians and citizenry, and increased external financial support. However, think tanks face several capacity challenges that directly affect their management.

This paper discusses such challenges and describes the strategies and intervention modalities that think tanks are using to deal with them. It also discusses the results of the interventions and their lessons.

The key messages identified managing think tanks include the need to:

- Diversify sources of funding for think tank projects and other services.
- Emphasize producing relevant, easy-to-understand, and cost-effective products and services for policy makers and the public.
- Create clearly articulated and implementable leadership succession plans to reduce the current workload of executive directors and founders and to generally ensure sustainability of the think tanks.

INTRODUCTION

Policy research institutes, often called “think tanks,” can be categorized into five main groups:

- Those affiliated with a political party or candidate.
- Those created by corporations or businesses.
- Those that are state-sponsored or directly created by governments, such as the ones situated at a Ministry of Finance.
- Those located at universities and colleges or affiliated with universities.
- Independent civil society organizations established as not-for-profit institutes that do policy research and advocacy.

There are an estimated 6,600 think tanks in the world (University of Pennsylvania 2018).

Think tanks often serve as quick and practical bridges between researchers and policy makers, serving to influence public opinion and action and to shape public policies. Many are nonprofit and have no direct political, governmental, or institutional affiliations (McGann and Sabatini 2011). Think tanks in Africa are mostly funded by multilateral and bilateral organizations and receive relatively little funding from endowment income or government grants and contracts (Struyk 2006). Over the years, their funding has come to be mainly directed at specific projects for short periods of time. African think tank dependence on Western donors and international agencies poses a risk to their sustainability (McGann et al. 2017).

The growth of think tanks in Africa over the past three decades was accelerated with the creation by African governments of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), with financial assistance from the World Bank and several Western governments. ACBF was established in 1991 to engender sustainable economic and social development in Africa by addressing the capacity challenges facing the continent (ACBF 2016). ACBF has directly helped create several think tanks in Africa and supported capacity building projects of think tanks in universities and government institutions and in independent civil society policy research organizations.

Despite the efforts of ACBF and other organizations to build their capacity, African think tanks are bedeviled by weak management and institutional arrangements that reduce their ability to influence policy decisions. Improved management can help think tanks address their challenges and allow them to deliver enhanced products and services. So, uncovering good management practices in African think tanks is important for generating lessons that can support their sustainable growth.

This Lesson Note identifies strategies that African think tanks have used to resolve capacity challenges so they can deliver more efficient and effective products and services. The study aims to describe (1) specific management capacity challenges faced by think tanks, (2) strategies and intervention modalities used to deal with the challenges, (3) results and impacts achieved, and (4) lessons learned.

The study’s main method was a desk review of published and unpublished papers as well as documents concerning think tanks that ACBF has supported. Reports were available from ACBF on 50 projects it has supported across more than 30 countries in Africa. The author read 39 of these project review reports and conducted detailed review analysis on 13 of them (see Table 1).

Table 1 Thirteen ACBF-supported projects were reviewed extensively for this study

Period of support	Name of organization	Country	Type of organization	Major capacity challenge(s)	Name of project
1998–2003	Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)	Tanzania	Independent	Weak staff capacity (human resources)	The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) Phase 2
2006–2009	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN)	Zimbabwe	Autonomous not-for-profit organization	Insufficient building of human resource capacity; ineffective building of networks and institutional capacity	Gender Budgeting & Women's Empowerment Project
2007–2013	Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIRES (CAPEC-CIRES)	Côte d'Ivoire	Semi-autonomous, government-owned	High level of unsatisfied demand for the products and services of the organization from policy makers and development agencies	Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIRES (CAPEC-CIRES) Phase III
2008–2012	Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI)	Ethiopia	Semi-autonomous government-owned	Inability to generate relevant policy advice to the government of Ethiopia and the public due to limited resources such as manpower and financial capital	EDRI Phase 2
2008–2012	Ministry of Development, Republic of Benin	Benin	State-owned	Inadequate funding for projects; weak staff capacity	Projet de Renforcement des Capacités en Conception et Analyse des Politiques de Développement du Benin (CAPOD)
2009–2012, 2013–2017	African Research and Resource Forum Project	Kenya	Non-governmental, non-partisan, regional organization	Lack of multidisciplinary approach to solving inter-African problems; limited dialogue on regional development issues (networks)	The African Research and Resource Forum Project (ARRF)
2009–2013	Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG)	Ghana	Independent	Inadequate highly skilled manpower to execute projects (human resources)	IDEG Capacity Development Project Phase 2

Period of support	Name of organization	Country	Type of organization	Major capacity challenge(s)	Name of project
2010–2014	Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC)	Uganda	Autonomous not-for-profit organization	Weak capacity to deliver policy analysis products and services due to manpower constraints and inadequate financial resources	EPRC Phase 4
2010–2014	Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI)	Ethiopia	Autonomous not-for-profit organization	Limited qualified staff to contribute to the national policy formulation and development process	EPRI Phase 2
2011–2014	The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)	Kenya	Independent	Weak research capacity and communication capacity	KIPPRA Phase 3 Project
2011–2014	Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR)	Zambia	Semi-autonomous	Lack of qualified staff to carry out key project activities (human resources)	ZIPAR Project
2012–2014	Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI)	Ethiopia	Independent, regional	Weak staff capacity and staff turnover due to overdependence on limited and inflexible external funding	HESPI Project
2012–2016	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR)	Rwanda	Government-supported	Weak staff capacity and low level of quality human resources required to produce outputs	IPAR Capacity Building Project

Capacity challenges addressed by African think tanks

To produce products and services demanded by clients such as state institutions, community organizations, and the public, the management of a think tank combines its own resources with acquired capital such as:

- Financial capital (money).
- Physical capital (such as land and buildings).
- Human capital.
- Informational capital.
- Social capital (such as links to institutional networks and organizations).

Capacity challenges decrease the amount or availability of these five forms of capital to the organization and reduce its performance.

The challenges to African think tanks include (1) inadequate, uncertain, and irregular funding to support their work; (2) deficient work due to the limited quality and quantity of well-trained and skilled professionals; and (3) difficulty in engaging with policy makers and the public (McGann et al. 2017).

(1) Inadequate, uncertain, and irregular funding to support their work

Funding is a major area where African think tanks lack capacity. All the ACBF-supported projects reviewed for this study indicated inadequate and inconsistent funding as a major challenge to introducing the projects. Funds are critical for any think tank manager to ensure the optimal performance of the organization.

The funding problem of African think tanks was exacerbated by the withdrawal of core project funding by several external agencies from about 2008 onward (Nzo-Nguty 2013). With the advent of the global economic crisis, Western donors and international development agencies increasingly shifted to project-based funding. For the EPRC project in Uganda, limited funding meant insufficient office space and physical infrastructure, which generated weak capacity to deliver policy analysis products and services for policy makers, non-state actors, and the public (Admassie 2013). In general, inadequate funding affects the effectiveness and overall impact of think tank initiatives because money and other material resources are required to acquire the minimum inputs for efficient and effective operations, as Abagi (2014) reported for the KIPPRA Phase 3 project in Kenya and the HESPI project based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Also due to inadequate and uncertain funding, most organizations reviewed lacked the full complement of skilled staff and ancillary human resources for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Inadequate staff was a key factor cited in the reduced efficiency and lack of implementation of the IPAR project in Rwanda (Karake 2013), the ZIPAR project in Zambia (Ayako 2012), the ESRF Phase 2 project in Tanzania (Oucho 2001), and the KIPPRA Phase 3 project in Kenya (Abagi 2014). Core funding from external donors and agencies had often been used to maintain core or permanent staff. But with the shift to project-based funding, staff appointments had to be increasingly justified by projects whose funding was uncertain beyond initial stages. Project renewal became crucial to keeping staff working in the organization, but its uncertainty led many to look for other jobs and quietly apply for them while working on current projects. High turnover of staff in independent think tanks resulted. High turnover of core staff threatened the sustainability of the ARRF project (Ayako 2015). Worker turnover was a challenge specifically noted for the EDRI project in Ethiopia (Ajakaiye 2013), and the CAPOD project in Benin (Ouedrago 2013).

Nonrenewal of staff contracts was more often due to the unavailability of new funding than the incompetence of staff. To get the right types of staff, especially under flexible short-term contracts, money is required.

Inadequate staff meant that a think tank's executive director was often overloaded with day-to-day management. But such overload was also linked to the executive director's inadequate delegation of duties to lower staff—a persistent problem in the projects and think tanks reviewed, such as the EDRI project in Ethiopia (Ajakaiye 2013) and the IPAR project in Rwanda (Karake 2015).

And inadequate staff meant that project outputs were not produced even when funding was available. For example, no activity was implemented in relation to training 100 members of parliament in the IDEG project in Ghana due to the high turnover of staff, including forced retrenchment and nonrenewal of contracts (Nzo-Nguty 2013). For several ACBF-supported projects, staff skilled in research administration were insufficient, and think tank staff often focused on more than one operational area of their institution (ACBF 2015).

Another staffing problem was that in order to reduce costs, some think tanks outsourced work to external consultants or employed specialists already working in academic and research institutes and local universities. Because academic staff members were heavily engaged in teaching, their think tank work would be curtailed, especially during the teaching semester. For example, although the Economic and Social Research Foundation had highly trained staff, they tended to divide their work time between the think tank and other engagements in academic and research institutes (Oucho 2001). Weak monitoring of the work of these external consultants delayed work and caused the organization to miss deadlines set with sponsors.

The lack of succession planning for long-term leadership is a consistent weakness in African think tanks, especially independent ones, which are generally tied to a founder or founders, often the executive directors or the close associates of the executive directors. The lack of leadership succession planning pushes the founder or executive director to do many things that could be delegated to others. Succession processes may be evolving but are not even identified in several ACBF review reports. For example, the ARRF project lacked a clear succession strategy, while the founding members dominating the board of directors impeded the generation of new management ideas (Ayako 2015). The problem is less important in state-owned or university-based think tanks, where administrative processes are available to choose new leadership.

2) Deficient work due to the limited quality and quantity of well-trained and skilled professionals

The scarcity of well-trained staff who can communicate ideas and advice to policy makers weakens think tank impact on public policies and programs. Policy analysis expertise may also be limited (Ajakaiye 2013). Some ACBF-supported think tanks had few staff with a communications background until the ACBF intervened, as with the ZIPAR project in Zambia. Communicating with policy makers requires specialists, though key research staff could be given specific and continuing training in this function. Changes in government frequently follow national elections in Africa, so think tanks deal with changes of policy makers every few years and must adapt, or else risk being seen as politically controlled by the government in power as they attempt to inform it.

3) Difficulty in engaging with policy makers and the public

Publishing and disseminating research findings for policy makers and the public and raising public awareness to confront societal problems in a non-partisan manner is a major capacity challenge of African think tanks (Ayako 2015). Think tank ability to publish declines with rising costs. Further, the common use of European languages in published materials and the limited use of mass media reduce the usefulness to the public of some of the think tank's findings. Few publications from ACBF-supported projects use officially recognized African languages – some of the exceptions are the ESRF (in Tanzania) which publishes in Swahili. Most of the think tanks often lack a critical mass of employees with reading and writing skills in African languages to disseminate products and services to people who do not use European languages. Most of think tank products and services largely serve small elites unable to galvanize the population for required social change. Their advocacy rarely addresses the common people even though much of their research concerns the welfare of the common people. For example, work on mass transportation is rarely communicated to common commuters and private transport operators, particularly in French-speaking countries such as Benin (CAPOD) and Côte d'Ivoire (CAPEC-CIRES).

Finally, African policy research organizations participate in only limited networking with regional and international policy research institutes and other institutions. One cause is a lack of multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving, which makes results difficult to comprehend across boundaries. (Admassie 2013; Ayako 2015).

STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTION MODALITIES

What strategies and intervention modalities do African think tanks use to meet their capacity challenges? Successful strategies and modalities would win capital funding inputs from internal and external sources— such as ACBF, national governments, and international development agencies—needed to produce products and services for policy makers and the public.

ACBF has provided grants to policy research organizations, increasing their financial capital and enabling them to pursue physical, human, informational, and social capital. ACBF also provides nonfinancial support in procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and audit. Its approach to project development and management includes training for think tanks in the project cycle – including networking and knowledge sharing related activities (ACBF 2016). It was instrumental in the establishment of the African Think Tank Network, which has allowed think tanks to improve their social capital by sharing knowledge and lessons in order to improve their survival and sustainability.

Financial capital

To increase their overall financial capital base, ACBF-supported policy research organizations solicit project funding from other organizations in addition to the special support grant received from ACBF. IDEG raised more than \$500,000 in counterpart funding—enough to support acquiring a new office complex (Nzo-Nguty 2013). State-owned policy research organizations supported by ACBF sought funding through the national government. For example, the EDRI project received considerable direct funding from the government of Ethiopia.

Physical capital

ACBF-supported policy research organizations improved the quality and quantity of physical capital such as offices, modern office equipment, and vehicles (Ouchou 2001). Examples of organizations receiving physical infrastructure face-lifts included IDEG (Nzo-Nguty 2013) and CEPA (ACBF 2012). Common top priorities of think tanks that received ACBF funding were improved office space and modern electronic instruments and equipment that allowed publications of their products as well as easier communication with ACBF and other agencies. Another example worth noting is that IPAR-Rwanda used the ACBF grant agreement to secure a loan from a local Commercial Bank to build offices. Thereafter, the reimbursement of the loan was done using the funds earmarked for rentals. Such a case is indeed a good example that can be replicated by other think Tanks.

Human capital

Given success in acquiring external funding, ACBF-supported organizations employed skilled professionals and supporting workers. The increased external funding thus led to increased human capital, which allowed increasingly relevant policy research and analysis (Abagi 2014; Admassie 2013; Ajakaiye 2013; Ayako 2015; Karake 2015).

To remedy weak human capital capacity and upgrade staff output and productivity, ACBF-affiliated policy research organizations released funds to sponsor attendance at seminars, workshops, and conferences, as occurred at the Abagi 2014; Admassie 2013; Ajakaiye 2013;). Other think tanks directed ACBF financial support at training young people employed to take up positions there. Yet other think tanks were empowered by their ACBF affiliation to employ people in vacant positions (Ayako 2015; Karake 2015).

Think tanks have used various intervention modalities to improve the status and expertise of skilled staff. Going beyond monetary remuneration, these interventions include enhanced work autonomy and recognition, among others, as incentives to attract or retain valuable staff. Enhanced work autonomy includes freedom to staff to make decisions and flexible work arrangements friendly to married staff, especially women.

Other incentives include allowing extended leave to committed workers to study for Master's and PhD degrees. These incentives were particularly visible for the ACBF-supported EDRI project in Ethiopia, where the long-term training program, especially for Master's and PhD students, was deemed highly successful in the return of trainees to work in the country after completing their studies (Ajakaiye 2013). EDRI was unique in retaining highly-skilled intellectual workers in a country where civil service remunerations were quite low. External funding improved EDRI's capacity to retain staff for collaborative research through training and extra or top-up pay.

The Centre for Democratic Development, a non-ACBF-supported project and think tank in Accra, Ghana, has a similar program for their staff to acquire advanced degrees, and several of them have completed degree programs and returned to the organization. This type of extended leave is also common in university-based and state-owned think tanks. Another leave incentive used by think tanks for full-time and permanent staff is travel outside the country for conferences and workshops to broaden their professional horizons. This review study noted the common use of overseas travel incentives by both ACBF-supported organizations and other types of organizations.

Informational capital

To build informational capital, policy research organizations increased publication, dissemination, and knowledge sharing, translating research findings to drive public advocacy. This increased the institutional visibility to the general public, thereby increasing the credibility of their publications to government officials, international institutions, and other institutions working in their subject areas (Abagi 2014).

Social capital

Policy research organizations, including those supported by ACBF grants, increased their social capital through enhanced networking with national, regional, and international institutions such as universities, think tanks, and international development organizations. Network participation allowed easier access to such resources as information and data from highly skilled workers. A major strategic intervention of the African Research Forum Project from 2009 to 2017 was networking East African Community national policy research institutes into a common research platform for quicker and more effective research sharing and idea exchange (Ayako 2015). More recently (since 2014), ACBF has established the Africa Think Tank Network to provide a platform for information sharing, exchange of ideas, knowledge creation and dissemination, and creating partnerships among think tanks in order to individually and collectively develop evidence-based solutions to the pressing development challenges facing Africa.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Often the evidence of efficient resource use by managers of ACBF-supported think tanks, even those starting with weak capacity, is increased influence with policy makers and increased authority in the policy environment of their country. The improved productivity and increased production of information relevant to policy makers and the public has resulted from the efficient use of funds to purchase such critical inputs such as highly skilled staffing. Several of these think tanks are now ranked among the best in their country. This is primarily attributed to ACBF support, which has strengthened institutions and improved the dissemination of outputs (ACBF 2016). For example, IDEG became a key player in democratic governance in Ghana by hosting several think tank platforms and networks, and it jointly won the 2008 award as the best think tank in the country. Of the 50 best think tanks in Africa in 2017, 17 received major support from ACBF, and of the top 10, 3 were ACBF-supported (University of Pennsylvania 2018).

Increased budget allocations from ACBF and other sources to African think tanks have increased the policy influence of non-state actors such as women, traditional chieftaincy authorities, and civil society organizations. The increased hiring of women has been promoted by flexible work arrangements, prompted by growing awareness of the need to allocate workers sufficient time for family life. The public agenda is pushed by think tank research, monitoring, and evaluation of government service delivery, national resource deployment, and success in institutional reforms such as decentralization. Non-state actors have played an enhanced role in producing new legislation across Africa. For example, in Ghana, transitional bills and laws passed by the parliament were directly related to work by independent think tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in Accra and the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD).

Increased funding also led to the hiring of highly skilled specialist staff who improved communication with policy makers at different levels. The hiring of specialist communication officers helped independent think tanks to get research findings more quickly to lay person outlets such as daily newspapers. Skilled academics hired by the IEA Ghana edited and produced *Ghana Policy Journal*, the first internationally recognized policy journal in the country. Similarly, the innovative *Journal of East African Political Economy* was developed by the ACBF-supported ARRF project (Ayako 2015).

The addition of nonmonetary incentives to attract and retain staff has helped some think tanks. For example, the CDD Ghana retained several key staff who were given leave to study overseas and returned to the organization to work, thus strengthening its capacity and maintaining its key corporate memory bank. Flexible work arrangements have clearly led to African think tanks retaining women staff, reflected in their visible presence, at both the junior and senior levels. The availability of travel grants to national and international conferences directly increased the amount of material published by think tanks in Africa.

Such nonmonetary incentives as flexible work arrangements have also attracted very senior staff with excellent reputations from established national and international institutions to work for a time at African think tanks, enhancing their status. Further, innovative work arrangements have helped think tanks recruit energetic junior staff members who are willing to learn and generate new ideas.

Since ACBF support to African think tanks began, some have had a recognized impact on the policy-making environment in their countries. Increased budgetary allocations from ACBF and other sources have strengthened their contribution as stakeholders in formulating and shaping policy.

Some ACBF-supported think tanks have gained financial autonomy and therefore can conduct independent studies with their own resources. They actively participate in the policy discourse and play a notable role in influencing policy. An example is the Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIRES midterm review report under the CAPEC 2 project in Côte d'Ivoire (ACBF 2006). CIRES was instrumental in the country's restructuring its cocoa sector. The Institute for Policy and Research in Rwanda made considerable contributions toward reforming that country's tax investment code (Karaoke 2015).

Think tank affiliation with ACBF has also improved the quality and quantity of materials disseminated to the public. For example, the credibility of CEPA and ZIPAR publications has increased due to their presentation and clarity (Admassie 2013; Ayako 2012). ACBF-supported think tanks in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria were trained to strategically align their programs with government budget planning and formulation to enhance efficient and effective use of resources (ACBF 2015).

IMANI Africa, a think tank based in Accra, has produced an annual list over the past decade that commends government institutions and quasi-government agencies on their performance, and also lists those it perceives as the worst performers. The approach has been both praised and criticized by government institutions, agencies, and officials, depending on whether they are being commended or criticized.

LESSONS

Lessons can be drawn on the governance of think tanks, their information dissemination, their budgeting and dependence on external sources of funding, and the importance of fostering mid-level and junior staff. In corporate governance, clearly distinguishing the duties of the executive director from the duties of the board of directors promotes project implementation. This lesson is clearly illustrated by the multinational East Africa project ARRF. Even with considerable insecurity in the region, good corporate practices helped deliver high achievement of project targets and objectives (Ayako 2015).

In information dissemination, the production of working and discussion papers, annual reports and other communications is crucial to improving the relevance of the research findings and its impact. The CEPA in Accra, Ghana, an independent think tank supported by ACBF, quickly disseminated research findings to various stakeholders including the mass media, which can help to galvanize public interest and so force policy makers to act (Struyk 2015). Both local and international mass media widely report on numerous conferences and workshops organized by independent think tanks, attesting to their growing influence in disseminating policy research results. African think tanks have been shown to have influenced policy to produce legislation to tackle a number of societal problems.

Although papers and reports are often scheduled for regular release (monthly, quarterly, and annually), the schedule is sometimes missed and there are long breaks between two issues of the same publication. The break is often caused by unavailability of skilled staff and may reflect an overambitious target set to attract external funding. Schedules often fail to accommodate externally induced constraints such as severe national electricity rationing, as happened in Ghana in 2007 and 2014/2015, or other factors beyond the control of management, including macroeconomic changes due to world economic conditions. The impact of external constraints on think tank output was also observed in the case of CAPEC-CIRES in Côte d'Ivoire. Research publication and dissemination was a major project objective, but political instability in the early 2000s slowed the rate of release.

Most think tank outputs are directed at policy. Admassie (2013) advocated that lay versions of technical papers, products, and services be required to ensure think tank results a wider reach and to bring new perspectives to policy debates. And think tanks should create websites to disseminate their activities (Oucho 2001). Most think tank outputs are directed at policy. Admassie (2013) advocated that lay versions of technical papers, products, and services be required to ensure think tank results a wider reach and to bring new perspectives to policy debates. And think tanks should create websites to disseminate their activities (Oucho 2001).

The global financial crisis starting in 2008 reduced funding for civil society organizations and think tanks as donors and funding agencies themselves received reduced funding from governments and individual donors in wealthy countries (Nzo-Nguty 2013). The donors and funding agencies shifted toward financing projects rather than core think tank activities. Projects could often be justified by societal benefit–cost analysis, which could convince governments of the attractiveness of funding, while core funding of non- project activities required complex evaluations that were often unavailable. Karake (2015) suggested that as think tanks grow, they must reduce their excessive dependence on external support by introducing demand-driven services that will generate funds – while ensuring that they do not end up only doing consultancy work as core research is primordial for addressing the local developmental needs.

Think tanks normally have projects backed by budgetary allocations principally aimed at output in other areas. Not receiving any form of financial support at ESRF were budget lines for staff development, research staff salaries, and publication (Oucho 2001). ESRF is reported to have addressed this problem to ensure smooth running of projects by requesting reallocations of funds from other budget areas.

External funds, such as ACBF funding to think tanks, are generally supposed to be complemented by internally generated funds or funds externally generated from other sources. Certain activities cannot be undertaken without a budget allocation from the think tank itself even though external donors have provided substantial funding. This point was made by Oucho (2001) and other ACBF project consultants such as Abagi (2014) in his review of the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research (KIPPRA) Phase 3 project.

A major challenge to think tanks that received ACBF support for staff training and capacity building was high turnover as staff who had received skill enhancement training left for other places where they expected much higher remuneration. Turnover was often linked to a high gap between the executive director’s salary and subordinate staff salaries, as was reported for the ACBF-supported Gender Budgeting and Women’s Empowerment Project of the Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Center and Network (Jommo 2009).

So, while the executive director is very important, the long-term retention of key mid-level and junior staff is critical to think tank success. High turnover reduces long-term think tank capacity through the loss of institutional memory. Think tanks must budget salary top-ups and increments based on productivity to retain critical staff (Ajakaiye 2013; Karake 2015).

Some aspects of ACBF-supported project schedules, determined by an external calendar, were impossible to meet (Oucho 2001). Some activities requiring relatively few resources had to show flexibility in fitting within organizational lean periods. Flexibility in timing activities requires harmonizing the think tank calendar with external sponsor requirements in order to achieve goals.

Some independent think tanks acquired and developed office buildings to house their secretariat. This could be seen as a strategic move toward their long-term sustainability but at the cost of reducing staff through nonrenewal of contracts, thus reducing work output.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful management of African think tanks requires adapting to shrinking external funding from international development agencies and employing optimal staffing levels to carry out the organization's mission and plans. Hence, management requires balancing in the use of resources such as money and people to produce goods and services required by policy makers and the public.

Conclusion

What are some of the things that work in managing of African think tanks? Increased funding closely monitored by donors is one. Hence, an organization can improve its chances of funding by familiarizing itself with the norms and practices of the donor organizational system. Through ACBF support, think tanks have attracted support from other donors, and most projects reviewed in this study also received funds from other agencies. However, acquiring extra funding requires the presence of a technical person in the think tank specifically tasked with fundraising, who constantly follows up on the activities and announcements of actual and potential donors.

Having staff specialized in communications who are able to interact effectively with policy makers has been shown to work. Quick release of research results using the mass media as an ally works in communicating findings to policy makers. The presence of media that understand think tanks also works to encourage public debate, which inevitably affects government decision making. Hence, the mass media need to be coopted to work with think tanks for the common good through regular communication and feedback.

Incentives to staff members for short or extended study leave have been shown to work by broadening the professional scope of staff members who complete higher degree programs and return to work in their organizations. Additional or incremental top-up salary schemes have been shown to work to retain key staff, especially those with corporate memory vital for short-term and long-term organizational growth.

Flexible work arrangements work in African think tanks. Flexible work arrangements have allowed the retention of junior and senior women staff members as can be seen in the visible presence of many women in think tanks in Africa. The arrangements lead to a better balance between office work and family responsibilities and directly help the organization by producing more contented staff. Such arrangements have also led to the employment of external consultants and other professionals to strengthen think tanks without long-term financial commitments on either side.

Certain features of African think tanks apparently do not work. Being perceived as politically biased fails over the long term because the think tank's suggestions and advice are not taken seriously by people in the government structures who do not agree with its political views. Think tank managers should ensure that the organization is objective and neutral, even though its leading members and management may have their own political beliefs. Think tank managers must continuously engage the political class. Otherwise, policy makers who must be embraced as partners in development based on positive policy criticisms will turn away.

Some successful think tanks reviewed, such as EDRI in Ethiopia, were in key government ministries and departments and had direct access to policy makers. But mere location in a ministry is not enough; think tank managers must get along with officials and policy makers and politely push their ideas through to them. Simply sending the research results to the mass media does not communicate findings to policy makers and the public. To establish the media as an ally, cordial links should be forged by the think tank.

Other features of African think tanks that do not work include over centralization of work by some executive directors or founders who are overstretched with too many duties. The organization becomes so dependent on a single individual that when he or she is sick, indisposed, or on extended leave, work slows excessively. Executive directors and founders of African think tanks also tend to be relatively old, with common chronic illnesses that need monitoring and attention. Delegation of executive duties needs to be broadened for current and long-term optimal organizational performance.

Similarly, leadership succession planning in independent civil society think tanks needs to be more clearly articulated, since many institutions are already in their second or third decade of activity. Such think tanks will work more effectively if clear planning is in place. ACBF and other external donors should insist on it as a key ingredient in an organization's short-term and long-term success. Leadership succession planning is crucial, since it ultimately links to the executive director or founder's current workload and influences the institution's optimal performance. The planning should fully comply with the laws and rules of society recognized by the organization rather than rules dictated by the executive director or founder.

Recommendations

Think tanks should emphasize the production of relevant, easy-to-understand, cost-effective products and services for policy makers and the public. Information for policy makers should be easily understood and packaged in formats that quickly attract their attention. Reports required by policy makers must be produced on time to be relevant and useful. Think tanks need to maintain constant communication with policy makers to present their views and listen carefully to policy makers' ideas.

Think tanks should diversify their sources of funding. First, they need funding from a national research fund operated by the government such as the Australian Research Council funds. But in many African countries, such government-owned national research funds do not exist. Hence, independent think tanks should make it a primary objective to lobby legislators and government officials to set up such funds as are common in Western countries. In the same vein, ACBF can support think tanks by providing training in resource mobilization, diversification of sources of funding and tapping/promoting local philanthropists interest in think tanks work.

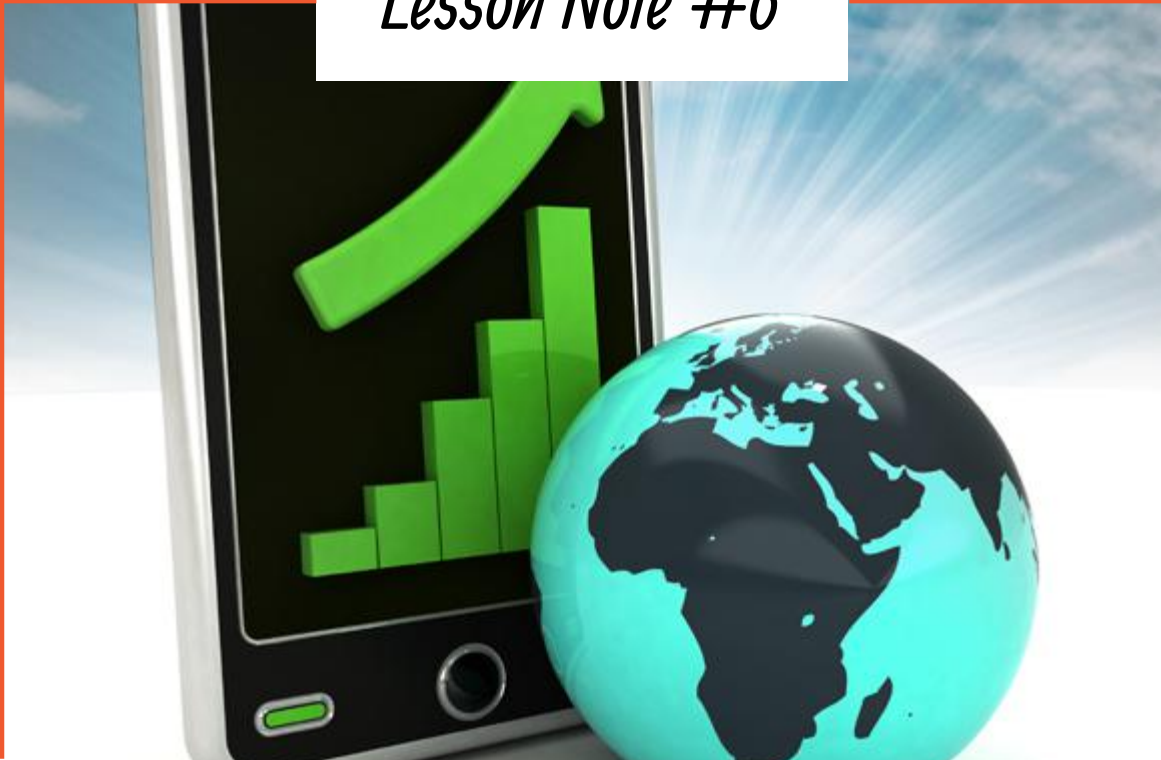
Further, independent think tanks should expand vigorously into the market for appraising and monitoring government and public investment projects as is partly the case with the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR-Rwanda) that is engaged by Rwandan government to appraise performance contracts of senior public servants. In the 1960s and 1970s, projects were often appraised and monitored by government departments in African countries; from the early 1980s, appraisal and monitoring were often outsourced to private consultancy companies, some based overseas, sometimes in countries where much of the project funding was coming from. Project appraisal and monitoring funds are 1–2 percent of the total costs of large projects. With government investment projects constituting 10–20 percent of total government budgets, appraisal and monitoring can be important sources for think tanks to tap into to maintain their organizations. This activity would require think tanks to employ a critical mass of both highly skilled and supporting staff.

Finally, many African think tanks face the problem of surviving the death of their founder—this question is related to the important one of leadership succession planning. Such planning is weak in African think tanks, and funding agencies should address it critically given the dramatic decline in the number of African think tanks over the past few years (ACBF 2016). Inadequate succession planning is a problem shared by many private organizations, especially businesses and religious organizations. However, as organizations that often claim the high moral ground criticizing the public and private sectors, think tanks need to set a good example by articulating leadership succession plans beyond their founders to shape themselves as proper community-based institutions.

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Lesson Note #6



HOW TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THINK TANKS IN AFRICA



Gibson Chigumira

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1991, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has supported the establishment of over 41 policy institutes and think tanks, predominantly set up in partnership with finance or planning ministries to provide economic analysis to the government. ACBF-supported think tanks have become key drivers of policy discourse and debate and reliable conduits of technical and advisory support for stakeholders throughout the policy value chain.

But ACBF supported think tanks, especially those that received multiple phases of funding, became over- dependent on ACBF funding. This lack of a diversified funding base and overdependence on a single funder presented serious challenges to a number of think tanks, which came to the fore when ACBF funding dwindled and grants closed without the possibility of renewal. In recent years, ACBF's clearly defined and scheduled strategy for closing grants has motivated think tanks to develop and implement resource mobilization and institutional sustainability strategies.

Even though think tanks in Africa have different sources of funding, organizational structures, modes of operation or business models, and levels of influence in shaping development policy and practice, all are concerned to some degree about their sustainability. The nature and scope of think tank sustainability challenges present a risk to Africa's sustained economic and structural transformation.

Think tanks should continue to receive support to conduct strategic and prospective studies on development challenges, human and institutional capacity gaps, and good practices for evidence-informed policy and decision making. Strengthening transformative leadership capacity within the African think tank community will further enhance the relevance of think tanks in solving societal problems, in turn unlocking resources that will increase their sustainability.

Some of the recommendations to some of the emerging lessons on sustainability of think tanks include:

- The weakening of think tank capacities is happening just as the demand for their services is growing at the continental level to implement Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The growing demand must hence be met by increasing resources from development partners to help think tanks work and guarantee sustainability of their core operations.
- Some ACBF-supported think tanks have been institutionally anchored within partner governments. Scaling up government funding for think tanks following the closure of ACBF grants can set solid foundations for their operational and financial sustainability.
- Consultancy services offered by think tanks include research, training, and advisory services based on their accumulated expertise and network of consultants. National and sub-regional consulting in these three areas can contribute to think tank financial and operational sustainability.
- Independent think tanks with no government support are challenged to close the funding gap through fee-for-service strategies. This is especially true in countries with limited programs run by development partners, having private sectors with limited capacity to fund research, and governments that do not commission think tanks to do paid work for them. Independent think tanks in countries with a developed private sector such as South Africa have grown without grant funding but depend on project funding under a fee-for-service model.

INTRODUCTION

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has over the past 27 years created and supported the establishment of over 41 policy institutes and think tanks aimed at providing economic analysis to governments in order to support evidence-based development planning.

Some of these think tanks are independent of the government or sponsored by the private sector or civil society.²³ ACBF provided unrestricted core funding to them in three or four tranches spanning a number of years, after which the think tank were hoped to be somehow self-sustaining. In practice, ACBF has found it difficult to end its support even after the fourth tranche and instead seems to have decided to provide gradually diminishing levels of support (Yeo 2013). The question of how long it is reasonable to fund a think tank remains difficult, also depending on dynamics of the think tank's operational environment.

Some think tanks received more than one phase of funding from ACBF but struggled to sustain themselves afterwards due to paying less attention to sustainability mechanisms.²⁴ Others, such as the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA), the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR), the Cellule d'Analyse de Politiques Economiques du CIRES (CAPEC-CIRES), Centre d'Etude des Politiques de Developpement (CEPOD), Centre d'Etudes et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Analyse et de Plaidoyer (CERCAP), Centre d'Analyse des Politiques Economiques et Sociales (CAPES) and Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), are performing well.

Even though think tanks in Africa have different sources of funding, organizational structures, modes of operation or business models, and levels of influence in shaping development policy and practice, all are concerned to some degree about their sustainability. A 2014 evaluation of ACBF-supported think tanks and policy units showed notable concern, with 66 percent of the surveyed stakeholders believing that their institutions are “not likely” or “somewhat likely” to conduct activities at the same or better level without ACBF support. Although this affirmed ACBF's value, it raises critical issues about the institutional sustainability of African think tanks and policy units that deserve attention.²⁵

The 2014 evaluation report further notes that, despite the overall low ratings for the sustainability of capacity building support, supported institutions are more optimistic. A majority (57 percent) of policy centers and think tanks staff rated their ability to sustain or increase activities “likely” to “extremely likely.” This perception does not contradict the observation cited above, but instead highlights the desire for survival and optimism in a number of ACBF-supported think tanks that have survived beyond ACBF funding.

Deliberations on the sustainability of African think tanks have featured prominently in summits organized by ACBF and its partners, beginning with an inaugural summit held in South Africa in 2014.²⁶ The theme of third African Think Tank Network (ATTN) summit was “Creating a Sustainable Future for African Think Tanks in Support of SDGs and Agenda 2063.” Success in the implementation of these agendas is dependent on broad dissemination of the strategies articulated in these frameworks to foster national ownership, knowledge generation and sharing, strengthened capacities to integrate such initiatives into national planning, and institutional architecture and skills to monitor and follow up on implementation outcomes.²⁷ One of the recommendations of the first and second ATTN summits was for think tanks to leverage the African Union Agenda 2063 to mobilize support.

23 These include the Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute sponsored by the Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA); Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR, Kenya) as well as regional think tanks such as the Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI), African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

24 Examples include the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU), Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) in Kenya, Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Ghana, Center for Research, Studies, and Support to Economic Analysis of Madagascar (CREAM), and Institut de Développement Economique du Burundi (IDEC).

25 Dalberg Global Development Advisors 2014.

26 See <http://africathinktanks.org/> for details. The ATTN secretariat is hosted at the ACBF headquarters in Harare.

27 Extract from Brookings Institution (2017) which focused on understanding the think tank sustainability crisis in Africa and its potential impact on think tanks, policymakers and the public.”

Furthermore, McGann, Signé, and Muyangwa (2017) observed that many credible think tanks in Africa have disappeared and that the survival of the remaining ones is threatened.²⁸ Over the past two decades, they argued, the shift from the world perception of an Africa facing permanent crisis to one of “Africa rising” can be partly attributed to the work of African think tanks, which have provided stronger and more nuanced understanding of policy options for improving policy and governance.

The nature and scope of think tank sustainability challenges present a risk to sustained African economic and structural transformation. The communique of the fourth ATTN summit held in April 2017 acknowledged the important role of think tanks in supporting the structural transformation of African economies from low- to high-productivity activities and industrial development.²⁹

Lack of funding is not the only problem think tanks face, and perhaps not even the most important one. Donors’ short funding cycles and their widespread shift from core funding to project funding have adversely affected the planning horizons and staff retentions of think tanks. Lack of a diversified funding base and overdependence on a single funder—ACBF—has been a serious challenge for a number of think tanks, which came to the fore when ACBF funding dwindled and grants closed without the possibility of renewal.

For example, the Strategy Transformation Policy Center (STPC) in Cabo Verde benefited tremendously from the technical and financial support of the ACBF from September 2005 until March 2014, when the grant closed. The STPC also received support from other development partners, including United Nations Development Programme (2009–17), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2014–15), and Luxembourg Cooperation (2014–15). The STPC became the main avenue of policy dialogue with academia, civil society, and the private sector, as when it organized the Second Forum on the Economic Transformation Agenda 2014 to set the economic transformation agenda for the next 30 years.³⁰ In an effort to sustain STPC operations beyond the ACBF funding, the Cabo Verde government continued to invest in it until December 2017 out of commitment to the organization and its important work. The government that came into power in March 2016 decided first to integrate STPC in the Ministry of Finance in 2016 and finally to close it in December 2017.

The challenges faced by STPC are not unique to Cabo Verde. While some ACBF-supported think tanks have not yet closed shop, quite a number are struggling due to funding constraints. The problem is compounded by inadequate African government funding to scale up support to think tanks when ACBF funding declines. Capacity building programs and projects, especially think tanks, compete for resources that can be used for achieving agreed development outcomes, such as the provision of basic services. The under-appreciation of think tanks by African governments, the private sector, and local philanthropy is manifested in their negligible financial support. Financial and operational sustainability of think tanks depends on scaling-up demand for their technical inputs/services by government, development partners, and non-governmental organizations including private sector organizations, among them the secretariats of business membership organizations.

Improving government capacity to increase domestic resource mobilization enhances the fiscal space and provision of adequate funding to think tanks for sharing of knowledge to inform government policy.³¹ Furthermore, governments and their development partners can consider leveraging technical assistance budgets to support building think tanks’ capacity and guarantee their operational sustainability. Ogiogio and Ongile (2002) highlighted the need for far-reaching reforms in traditional technical assistance programs so that well-established institutional frameworks can manage the declining flow of resources for capacity building in Sub-Saharan Africa.

28 McGann, Signé, and Muyangwa 2017.

29 ACBF 2017.

30 <http://www.caboverde2030.gov.cv>.

31 ACBF 2015a.

It is with this context in mind that this paper asks how to ensure the sustainability of think tanks in Africa, documents successes and failures, describes emerging best practices in gaining institutional support, and draws lessons about what works, what does not, and why. Thus, the overall objective of this Lesson Note is to distill lessons of the past three decades of ACBF support, especially on the sustainability of think tanks, in order to provide a framework for designing and implementing more effective capacity development programs to enable the continent achieve its development goals and aspirations.

CONTEXTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THINK TANKS

The different political, social, economic, intellectual, and operational contexts in which African think tanks operate present unique constraints and opportunities to their sustainability. The operational environment of think tanks in Africa is characterized by weak institutional structures to support think tank emergence and sustainability, including minimal foundations and philanthropic organizations and limited earmarks in fiscal budgets. Think tank research findings are sometimes interpreted through the prism of politics. Thus, different political cultures and systems of democratic governance precondition the influence of evidence and dialogue between researchers and policy makers. Furthermore, with a change of government and new policies, the think tank may not survive as budgets are cut and political support is withdrawn. Dalberg's (2014) evaluation of ACBF-supported think tanks established that country context affected how think tanks use and absorb funding once budget estimates are approved.

ACBF interventions have assisted in institutionally anchoring think tanks within partner governments—for example, in the ministry of economic planning or the office of the prime minister or president—to cultivate a culture of evidence-based policy making. Some prominent Sub-Saharan think tanks were established following joint agreement between African governments and the ACBF against a backdrop of limited government capacity for research and policy analysis. Their aim was to improve economic governance by using evidence in policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring in concert with the private sector and civil society.

Since its formation in 1991, ACBF has been a key supporter of think tanks in Africa. It provided the leadership and catalytic funding to set up policy think tanks, built their capacity to strengthen their internal systems and procedures, and empowered them to become key players in the policy space. More recently, the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) started supporting established think tanks to enhance their capacity and sustainability through unrestricted core funding.³² Over the years, there have also been other, briefer initiatives, some focused on specific think tanks.

The theory of change envisaged in ACBF interventions was that as established think tanks increase their visibility and relevance to African governments, the governments will in turn be motivated to scale-up support and ensure the continuity of think tank operations as ACBF scales back its funding. Government funding has been scaled up for think tanks following the decline or closure of ACBF grants by the governments of Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, Mali, Senegal, Burkina and Cote d'Ivoire among others.

In addition, the need to survive, especially where there was no increase in government funding, has forced think tanks to fill the financing gap through short term consultancy projects. For example, Institute of Policy Analysis and Research in Rwanda (IPAR-Rwanda) depends mainly on project funds and has not had any government funding since the closure of the ACBF grant. The government of Rwanda has commissioned big annual projects from IPAR-Rwanda on Imihigo performance. IPAR-Rwanda is currently implementing two other projects with the German foundation GIZ and the nonprofit Access to Finance Rwanda. IPAR-Rwanda has also partnered with outside universities including Aberdeen University in the UK for a four-year adult literacy project, and University Massachusetts for a three-year administrative justice and other smaller projects.

32 The Think Tank Initiative (TTI), launched in 2008 and managed by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is a multi-donor program dedicated to strengthening the capacity of think tanks in the developing world, including Africa. The support provided is mainly (1) core grants to already existing think tanks, (2) technical support, and (3) targeted capacity building. TTI, with its 10-year program support ending in 2019, is mainly concerned with the sustainability of think tanks.

Consultancy revenue depends on country context, in particular the extent of development partner and donor activity within the country, the capacity of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to fund research, the willingness of the government to solicit technical assistance from local think tanks, and the capacity of think tanks and the quality of their output.

Most think tanks have struggled with recruiting and retaining qualified staff following the closure of ACBF grants, especially where there is no significant co-funding from the government or other partners. The uncertainty associated with the closure of each phase of the ACBF grant coupled with unpredictable project funding has stimulated staff to seek more secure employment. In practice this seems more an issue of cost than of availability (though it varies across countries). Economics PhDs have tended to emigrate, often attracted by job opportunities in international financial and development institutions. Those who remain in their home country often work for consulting firms or as independent consultants, or they combine a university teaching career with consulting (Yeo 2013). Others were appointed in some prominent Governmental positions as Prime Ministers or Ministers.

Staff mobility, especially at senior management levels, erodes institutional memory, undermining think tank continuity and operational sustainability. When think tanks try to hire research staff (especially senior researchers), they often find themselves competing with the same organizations that provide them with financial support. Thus, ACBF-supported think tanks have faced challenges in sustaining the staff with the competitive remuneration packages established under ACBF funding.

The ACBF (2012) mid-term review of the performance of the Center for Economic Policy Analysis (CEPA) observed that:³³

- CEPA faces the challenge of recruiting and retaining highly skilled policy research competences mainly due to its limited income and relatively low remuneration. Going forward, the challenge is to recruit a deeper base of high-level research staff and initiate a succession plan in anticipation of the retirement of the executive director.
- CEPA has benefited from the dedicated leadership, tireless work, and commitment of its current director, whose focus on building autonomy to provide public policy research goods has sustained and institutionalized CEPA.
- CEPA has limited internal capacity since its corps of mid-level and senior researchers is thin, and its succession plan is not clearly articulated.

Those findings are not unique to CEPA but cut across a number of ACBF-supported think tanks, some of which have closed. Dalberg's (2014) assessment of ACBF-supported think tanks established that inadequate and unbalanced administrative and research staffs often resulted in researchers being inundated with administrative responsibilities rather than undertaking research activities. Dependency on external consultants where a think tank has low internal capacity delays research outputs and increases demand on internal staff to manage quality and follow up with consultants to meet deadlines. For some projects such as BIDPA and EDRI, ACBF provided funds for scholarships to build their internal capacity.

In the CEPA case, competence, strategic planning, succession planning, staff retention, strong commitment, adequate remuneration, and visionary think tank leadership were key factors in long-term sustainability. The small number of think tanks in African countries makes leading one difficult. Ensuring good performance is not easy when there are no obvious comparators. Think tank leaders are often isolated from peers with whom they might informally exchange experiences. The ACBF Policy Institute Committee (PIC) provides a platform for peer learning and formally sharing experiences.

³³ The ACBF funded the establishment of CEPA as an independent, nonprofit and nongovernmental think tank and has supported it since 1993 for in phases: Grant 4, \$3,500,000 (1993–98); Grant 71, \$1,700,000 (2001–05); and Grant 220, \$1,500,000 (2007–12).

Support for think tanks in Africa is increasingly challenging for a variety of reasons, including the diversity of the think tanks and the preferences of funders to invest in specific countries and issues.³⁴ Only a handful of think tanks have the credibility to enter collaborative research partnerships with other think tanks and multilateral financial institutions. Think tanks in many countries have not attracted support from major initiatives, such as the TTI, which supported well-established institutions. The challenge is compounded by the fact that most current core funding initiatives and support for think tanks in Africa will end in 2018, with no clear indication of follow-up support.³⁵

The termination of core funding to ACBF-supported think tanks without guaranteed alternatives threatens to reverse gains made by ACBF investments. If unaddressed, funding challenges could lead to fragmentation and weakened think tank capacities. Thus, the emerging environment is challenging think tanks leadership to explore survival options, clearly articulate the value of think tanks to stakeholders, and improve their own agility in responding to policy and developmental opportunities.

Think tank capacity is weakening just as the expectations are increasing for their contribution to continental development and the empowerment of women and youth. The 2018 Africa Think Tank Summit focused on strategies and actionable initiatives for think tanks to contribute to job creation by sharing knowledge, relating good practices, and developing solutions to youth unemployment within the context of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, exploring options to ensure the operational and financial sustainability of think tanks beyond ACBF grant funding is a topical and strategic issue for African think tank leaders, especially those not guaranteed government funding.

OPTIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPACITY CHALLENGES WITHIN THINK TANKS

African think tanks have pursued different variants and options for financial and operational sustainability, principally scaling up government funding and increasing their own resources.³⁶

Scaling up government funding. Scaling up government funding when ACBF grant funding dwindled or ended has sustained a number of think tanks. The increase in government funding has been premised on the public good nature of policy think tank work and the fact that governments are the primary beneficiaries of think tank research products and policy advice. For example:

- After the ACBF grant to the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) ended in December 2014, the government of Zambia increased its funding to fill most of the gap. In 2016, the government declared ZIPAR a grant-aided institution or statutory body under the Ministry of National Development Planning. ZIPAR also increased its own-generated resources by offering fee-based services. Its major clients are line ministries, other government institutions, and, to some extent, cooperating partners. The average annual government funding for 2015–18 has been around 63 percent of the total ZIPAR budget of about \$1.4 million. The government share of ZIPAR's budget has gone from 50 percent in 2015 to 67 percent in 2018, with a peak of 70 percent in 2016.³⁷

34 Think tanks are relatively small actors in the policy research ecosystem (and even smaller in the greater political space), but they can still play an influential role in promoting evidence-informed policy.

35 ACBF 2017.

36 Think tanks are classified under four categories: government, private or independent, political party, and academic.

37 Information received from the ZIPAR Executive Director Pamela M. Nakamba-Kabaso.

- The Centre d'Études et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Analyse et de Plaidoyer (CERCAP) in Mali is sustaining its operations through increased support from the Malian government. It was established in September of 2005, following a \$2 million grant as a first phase from ACBF. CERCAP was established by law as a permanent public agency, and the Malian government contributed up to \$1 million in phase 1. In 2010, CERCAP was awarded a phase 2 grant from ACBF of \$3 million, of which about \$1.2 million was not disbursed, while the government's phase 2 contribution was pegged at \$ 1 million. Because of CERCAP's outputs, the government decided to continue supporting it. Hence, it got enough financial resources in 2015 and 2016 to continue its activities, which included research, training, documentation, and public policy advocacy. For its 2017 work plan, CERCAP received additional funding from ACBF.
- The government of Mali is considering amending CERCAP's legal status to allow it to undertake consultancy work to complement its funding and guarantee its financial sustainability. Under the new legal status, CERCAP is expected to receive a specified amount each year from the Ministry of Finance to partly cover research activities and operational expenses.³⁸

Some think tanks have received free institutional accommodations from the government or donated land or budget support for purchasing property and constructing offices.³⁹ Stable accommodations have reduced rental costs and ensured continuity of operations even when funding dwindled.

Thus, for think tanks that received ACBF support, there is a plausible link between government financing and operational sustainability.⁴⁰ Furthermore, think tanks leverage their close connection with government to mobilize additional resources from development partners that work through government to implement their programs. The Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute (EEPRI) is an example.

Own resources. Think tanks that receive negligible or no government funding have scaled up consultancy work or broadened their funding base through cooperation with other development partners following the closure of the ACBF grants. This business model has been adopted by most think tanks either by default or as a strategic decision to sustain their operations in an environment where grant funding for think tanks is generally declining. Many think tanks have combined *Scaling up government funding and Own resources*.

From inception, ACBF's grant agreements for think tanks incorporated co-financing from other partners and generating income through other activities. Proof or commitment of co-financing was a key factor in declaring a project effective. For example, KIPPRA's phase 1 project in 1995 had a total budget of \$5,312,000 broken down as follows: ACBF grant, 30.7 percent; European Economic Union, 45.2 percent; government of Kenya, 24.1 percent. The project appraisal of Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI) had a total budget of \$5,170,000 broken down as follows: ACBF, 58 percent; HESPI, 7.8 percent; government of Ethiopia, 3.9 percent; government of Somalia, 5.8 percent; others, 24.6 percent.⁴¹

The structure of funding sources for ACBF projects is common to most projects, with slight variations where the project sponsors are not governmental. Percentages differ depending on the country context and diversity of funds. Progress in securing co-funding has been a key indicator tracked in supervision missions, and lack of committed co-funding resulted in delays in declaring grant effectiveness. So, the gestation periods between grant approval and grant effectiveness for some projects have been long⁴² ACBF's inclusion of co-funding in project design thus set the foundation for project sustainability once a think tank gained a reputation for quality work.

38 Information provided by CERCAP Director, Boubacar Macalou.

39 Examples of think tanks that received such assistance include the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA); Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF); Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA); and Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU).

40 This has been established by several independent evaluators of ACBF-supported policy think tanks, including the mid-term reviews.

41 ACBF 2015b.

42 See ACBF annual reports for details.

Consultancy services offered by think tanks include research, training, and advisory support based on their accumulated expertise and network of consultants. National and sub-regional consulting in these three areas can contribute to think tank financial and operational sustainability. The long-term sustainability of African think tanks is largely determined by their ability to provide consultancy services and policy research and capacity building for a broad spectrum of country, regional, and continentwide stakeholders within the context of the African Think Tanks Network.

A downside in policy think tank experience is the constraint caused by unreliable funding on the capacity to attract, recruit, and retain enough high-quality researchers to fulfill their mandates. This reduces their operational sustainability. Adequate staffing with experienced researchers determines the quality of research output and the capacity to respond to stakeholder demands, all of which are critical to operational and financial sustainability. Policy think tanks with few researchers tend to overstretch them and lack focus or specialization, undermining their capacity to undertake either core or commissioned research projects and reducing their research quality, credibility, and relevance.

Most think tanks face the challenge of transitioning from an ACBF funded project to an independent and sustainable institution. HESPI had elements of sustainability built into its design, which included undertaking commissioned studies to generate income and a lean staffing structure and modest logistics, which reduced overhead costs. Its operational sustainability was boosted by free office accommodation and tax waivers accruing from a protocol agreement with the government of Ethiopia.

In some think tanks resource mobilization is a pillar of their sustainability strategy driven by a dedicated business development unit (BDU), which will ensure effective marketing of their services and enhance their capacity to generate their own resources.⁴³ The activities of the BDU should be guided by a robust resource mobilization strategy and a long-term sustainability plan.

Other think tanks are mobilizing considerable resources through subscriptions to their premier publications. These think tanks have innovated in the various offerings subscribers pay for, which may include an advance copy of publications, notices of new products and services, and other ancillary services. One example is the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR), which produces *Survey South Africa* and the *Center for Risk Analysis Report*.⁴⁴ Leveraging their experience, think tanks can offer advisory and technical support for a fee. ACBF can also consider within its business model partnering with established think tanks to provide in-country services such as helping organizations (non-state actors) build internal capacities and offering courses and workshops on models and approaches for capacity development and program and project management.

Furthermore, such institutions as the African Development Bank, the African Export–Import Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the regional economic communities (RECs) can develop partnerships with local think tanks on development reports such as the African Economic Outlook and other research/knowledge products. This approach will support the sustainability of ACBF’s catalytic investment in nurturing the growth of think tanks. For example, the management of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intended to sustain the operations of the ECOWAS Economic Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) following the closure of ACBF grant. However, the decline in ECOWAS resources led to institutional reforms that left the survival of EPAU uncertain.

43 Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI) in Zambia is currently implementing its five-year strategic plan (2018–22), whose core funding is being provided by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), while the balance is met from its own resources. The Business Development Unit (BDU) was formed to spearhead the sourcing of funds, to enhance long term sustainability. See *Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Unit (n.d.)*.

44 <https://irr.org.za/>. Through the Centre of Risk Analysis, the IRR help government and business leaders plan for a future South Africa and identify policies that create a more prosperous society. Furthermore, South Africa has a developed private sector that is willing and able to pay for these services.

ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTION MODALITIES

Over the years, ACBF has intervened by providing grants to establish new think tanks or help existing ones scale up their activities. For both local and regional think tanks, ACBF worked mainly in partnership with governments and other development partners. Grant funding was complemented by specific technical assistance setting up finance and administrative systems and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Administrative systems covered procurement, training, bid evaluation support, sharing templates, and assistance in preparing requests for proposal and recruiting procurement experts. The support strengthened think tanks' internal systems, helped them pass the due diligence conducted by other donors, and thus increased their capacity to mobilize co-financing and improve organizational performance.

Stakeholders have commented that ACBF has been instrumental in developing think tank capacity and attracting investment from international donors (Dalberg 2014). For example, the Think Tank Initiative has funded the following think tanks supported earlier by ACBF:

- Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), Tanzania.
- Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR), Rwanda.
- Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA).
- Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI).
- Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA)/Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute (EEPRI).
- Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), Uganda.

ACBF has also strengthened the capacity of think tanks in knowledge management, communication, and information sharing. These are key elements in enhancing think tanks' financial and operational sustainability. The 2014 and 2015 Africa think tank summits, which had dedicated sessions and taskforces on think tank sustainability, concluded with the following recommendations: (1) establish an African Think Tank Network, (2) set up a task force to develop a framework for sustainability, (3) support think tanks developing innovative marketing strategies, and (4) support think tanks collaborating among themselves (for instance, through joint bidding and collaborative research).

The African Think Tank Network Taskforce on Sustainability is considering other initiatives centered on the following ideas:

- Engaging the African Union Commission to secure political will at the continental, regional, and national levels in support of think tanks.
- Exploring support for think tanks under the label of corporate social responsibility.
- Establishing national think tank innovation funds. Government, in-country funders, and nontraditional donors would support a basket fund accessible to think tanks on a competitive basis for high-quality proposals assessed by independent experts.

- Enhancing government support to national think tanks and institutionalizing the ad hoc arrangements in a number of African countries whereby government departments (usually the ministry of finance or the treasury department) provide a periodic unrestricted subvention to government and independent think tanks for policy-relevant research.
- Mobilizing more resources through joint efforts among think tanks to strengthen their role in facilitating Africa's transformation.
- Strengthening and funding core operations of think tank to ensure sustainability and independence.

The call for support to guarantee think tank sustainability from the African Union Commission, continental developmental finance institutions, African governments (major beneficiaries of think tank work), the regional economic communities (via special funding mechanisms), and the private sector through corporate social responsibility and philanthropy has been raised in numerous fora. But no concrete proposals are on the table yet (at least in the public domain).

RESULTS AND IMPACT

ACBF-supported think tanks have become key drivers of policy discourse and debate and reliable conduits of technical and advisory support for stakeholders throughout the policy value chain. The ACBF's designation as the African Union's specialized agency for capacity development in part recognizes ACBF's leadership and experience in creating and supporting think tanks across the continent. The 2014 Global Go to Think Tank Index Report has ranked 23 ACBF-supported think tanks among the 65 best in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁵

ACBF's strides in building Africa's human and institutional capacities are critical for sustained economic growth, structural transformation, and sustainable development on the continent.⁴⁶ The following examples illustrate ACBF-supported think tanks' instrumental role in preparing key policy documents and macroeconomic modelling:

- KIPPRA is one of the most successful ACBF-supported think tanks. Its success can largely be measured by its contribution to medium- and long-term economic blueprints, such as Kenya's Economic Recovery Strategy and Kenya Vision 2030. The KIPPRA–Treasury Macroeconomic Model, developed in 2000 as an economic forecasting tool, is used by the government in preparing the fiscal strategy paper and the budget outlook paper, thus improving Kenya's budget making. KIPPRA and other ACBF-supported think tanks in East Africa— EPRC in Uganda, ESRF in Tanzania, IDEC in Burundi, and IPAR in Rwanda—are undertaking research for deepening regional integration in the East African Community.
- The Centre d'Analyse des Politiques Economiques et Sociales (CAPES) in Burkina Faso had three major achievements in its three phases of ACBF funding: (1) the establishment of the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development, which plots the economic and social policy of Burkina Faso; (2) the development of an action plan for implementing the National Policy for Capacity Building; and (3) the formulation of a program to scale up implementation of the National Gender Policy.
- The Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) has been a key player in reform as Ghana seeks a more democratic form of governance.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.acbf-pact.org/media/news/23-acbf-supported-think-tanks-top-ranked> and <https://www.acbf-pact.org/acbf-investment-african-think-tanks-yields-dividends> for details of the rankings of ACBF supported think tanks.

⁴⁶ See <https://www.acbf-pact.org/what-we-do/success-stories/prof-emmanuel-nnadozie-acbfs-25-year-old-journey> for details of the success of ACBF interventions.

ACBF has generally supported policy think tanks whose core mandate is to generate and disseminate knowledge to inform economic policy making and implementation in diverse African countries. The willingness of governments to scale up support demonstrates think tank relevance and impact in these jurisdictions.

ACBF, to strengthen its knowledge management function, partners with policy think tanks within the context of the Africa Think Tank Network (ATTN) and the Policy Institutes Committee (PIC). For example, ACBF-supported think tanks have drafted U.S.–Africa position papers. A deepened partnership among them could increase capacity to implement the continent-wide Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals and to manage emerging partnerships (U.S.–Africa, China–Africa, India–Africa, and others).

The proposed Technical Support Department in ACBF could tap the pool of think tank expertise. Think tanks could be critical partners in generating fit-for-purpose knowledge services for African capacity development and economic and social development. Think tanks’ financial and operational sustainability will be strengthened by the blossoming of this partnership within the context of ACBF’s new business model.

Think tank growth has stimulated a culture of evidenced-based policy dialogue, policy making, and decision making in their countries. Policy think tanks contribute to policy formulation and implementation for growth, equity, and poverty reduction by generating and disseminating research and analysis on macroeconomic developments. Economic analyses include the KIPPRA *Economic Report*, the *Annual Report on Ethiopian Economy* produced by Ethiopian Economic Association (EEPRI/EEA), and ZEPARU’s *Economic Barometer*.⁴⁷ The basis of building sustainable policy think tanks in Africa rests on the knowledge products they generate, their institutional credibility, their policy research and analytic skills, and the competencies built through ACBF intervention supported by governments and other partners.

47 KIPPRA 2017; ZEPARU n.d.

LESSONS

Lessons from ACBF's experience supporting think tanks and their interactions with the broader think tank community within the context of the African Think Tank Network (ATTN) include:

- Catalytic core funding (patient capital) is critical to nurturing think tanks in Africa, where domestic resources to support their development is limited by constrained fiscal budgets, an underdeveloped private sector without resources to fund research, donors that do not prioritize public policy research, and an underdeveloped philanthropic culture and inadequate legislative frameworks promoting philanthropy.
- The overdependence of think tanks on ACBF funding, as demonstrated by receiving multiple phases of funding with no clear exit plan, forced them to decide whether to build and diversify funding sources when the ACBF grants closed with no possibility of renewal.
- ACBF's clearly defined and scheduled exit strategy for closing grants helps motivate think tanks to develop and implement resource mobilization and institutional sustainability strategies.
- Funding gaps due to the closure of ACBF grants have reduced the effectiveness of policy think tanks, particularly their ability to meet stakeholder expectations.
- Underdeveloped institutional capacity undermines the clout of policy think tanks and their ability to maximize their potential.
- Unfavorable political, economic, and regulatory environments often limit the number of policy think tanks and their ability to independently influence policy reform.
- Some ACBF-supported think tanks have been institutionally anchored within partner governments. Scaling up government funding for think tanks following the closure of ACBF grants has set solid foundations for their operational and financial sustainability.
- Independent think tanks with no government support are challenged to close the funding gap, especially in countries with limited programs run by other development partners, private sectors with limited capacity to fund research, and governments that do not commission think tanks to do paid work for them. Independent think tanks in countries with a developed private sector such as South Africa have grown without grant funding but depend on project funding under a fee-for-service model.
- The threat of weakening think tank capacities is happening when the demand for their services is growing at the continental level to implement Agenda 2063. The growing demand must be met by increasing resources to help think tanks work and guarantee their sustainability.
- Closure of struggling think tanks will increase Africa's institutional capacity deficits and reduce countries' ability to retain and fully employ the expertise built through ACBF interventions. African governments, development partners, the private sector, and African philanthropy need to leverage the expertise of ACBF in building and strengthening think tanks to collectively shape initiatives enhancing the think tank sustainability.
- Uncertain long-term funding of think tanks has resulted in high staff turnover and low staff morale. Thus, continuity of funding is key for think tanks' operational and institutional sustainability.
- Building capacities and sustaining institutional memory of think tank leadership is also key for their operational sustainability. Some ACBF-supported think tanks have had high staff turnover among executives and program directors, and among experienced mid-level and senior researchers. Some have long-serving visionary executive

directors who built the think tanks and grew their reputation with few senior researchers to anchor succession planning. So, strategic planning and succession planning are key pillars of think tank sustainability.

- The quality of research output; robust communication strategies using modern technologies; and the reputation and credibility that depend on the skills, experience, and expertise of professional staff also anchor think tank sustainability.
- The shift by donors from core funding to project funding presents operational challenges for think tanks. Aligning staff contracts with the duration of project funds increases uncertainty and thus staff turnover. McGann (2018) observes that 25–30 percent of think tanks in Africa are fragile or failing and that ongoing shifts in private and public sector support and major organizational challenges make it urgent to raise awareness of the sustainability crisis.
- Creating endowment funds is an innovative strategy for enhancing long-term think tank financial sustainability and avoiding operational disruptions. KIPPRA has had endowment funding from the European Union.
- Most African think tank researchers and research managers come from universities. The interaction between universities and think tanks could be leveraged through structured collaborations of key players in the knowledge landscape to connect research, teaching, and policy.⁴⁸
- Collaborative research between developed country universities and African think tanks has produced independent intellectual output, generating additional financial resources, capacity development, and knowledge sharing. Suggestions for donors include promoting university–think tank collaboration in calls for proposal and other funding streams, and facilitating university–think tank meetings (PASGR 2015).

48 PASGR 2015.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancing African countries' and governments' trust in think tanks and willingness to use their expertise is crucial to their sustainability. Think tanks can build trust by:

- Being constructive but critical in policy debates by offering practical and evidence-based recommendations that take into account the complex political environment.
- Being transparent about their mission, organization, and funders.
- Persuading policy makers and other partners to use their research output.
- Building a strong brand attractive to potential funders.
- Producing high-quality research output with reliable data.

Most ACBF-supported think tanks—especially those that started off with a trust deficit—had to increase their visibility, demonstrate their relevance, and earn acceptance and trust from stakeholders. Think tank expertise and experience are critical to evidence-based design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of home-grown policies for Africa's socioeconomic transformation within the context of Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals, and national development plans. Furthermore, African think tanks are well placed to help African countries tackle such country, regional, and continental challenges as youth unemployment. Evidence generated by think tanks also facilitates stakeholder engagement and dialogue between state and non-state actors.

The fifth Africa Think Tank Summit recognized the sustainability issues faced by African think tanks and welcomed expressed commitments from African governments, development partners, and key continental stakeholders to continue supporting the Africa Think Tank Summits and the work of think tanks, generally through the Africa Think Tank Network (ATTN). Building on this momentum and bringing in more partners will help strengthening the ATTN and highlight the need to focus on initiatives and strategies to ensure the sustainability of African Think Tanks because of their demonstrated relevance to African socioeconomic transformation. The move by some African governments to scale up support to think tanks and transform them from ACBF projects to permanent institutions bears testimony to the relevance of think tanks in the policy space.

Think tanks should continue to receive support to conduct strategic and prospective studies on development challenges, human and institutional capacity gaps, and good practices for evidence-informed policy and decision making. Strengthening transformative leadership capacity within the African think tank community will further enhance the relevance of think tanks in solving societal problems, in turn unlocking resources that will increase their sustainability. The communique of the fifth African Think Tanks Summit concluded by calling for continued ACBF support to emerging and struggling think tanks, while other supporters can directly support mature ones. For example, the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), which has been an ACBF sub-grantee, focuses on supporting individual researchers, mainly from universities, but has also developed a program to engage with think tanks. The Macroeconomic Economic and Financial Management Institute (MEFMI), also an ACBF sub-grantee, has launched an economics journal and economics conference series that tap into the expertise of think tanks. To provide for knowledge sharing and building the capacity of think tank leaders, such platforms as the Policy Institute Committee and the Africa Think Tank Summits, need to be sustained. ACBF and its partners should continue to support policy think tanks given their amplified present role of providing evidence and knowledge around what works in meeting Africa's transformative development agendas (Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals).

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Lesson Note #7



MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS



Lavagnon Ika

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Weak capacity is one of the major bottlenecks for Africa's development. Indeed, it challenges the implementation of development visions, strategies, policies, programs, and projects. Through its vision "Africa capable of achieving its own development," the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), established in 1991, has been tackling Africa's capacity building (development) shortages and investing in strengthening human and institutional capacity.

While over the past three decades, ACBF has enjoyed success in supporting sustainable development and transformation of the continent, the lessons learned in terms of how to measure the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives have not been systematically documented and shared. This is the focus of this Lesson Note. More specifically, the Lesson Note focuses on how to assess whether a capacity building intervention works or does not work. It then puts forward the lessons learned and provides a few recommendations for making capacity building effective.

From a methodological standpoint, the Lessons Note desk reviews evaluation reports to assess how their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability are measured. Thus, it analyzes how the overall capacity building effectiveness is assessed and provides a brief overview of the key insights gleaned from the evaluation reports.

The main finding has been that over the last three decades, ACBF's capacity building interventions have made significant achievements and impacts. However, measuring the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives remains a challenge. Evaluation reports cover systematically the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of capacity building projects but with little consideration for project settings, types, and complexities. By and large, the focus tends to be more on measuring outputs and less on measuring outcomes, making it difficult to demonstrate change beyond outputs, not to mention unexpected impacts. But capacity building projects differ in many ways—one size does not fit all. Only with such appreciation of context and focus on results can one learn from success and failure.



Notably, insights gleaned from the Lesson Note can lay the ground for better evaluation and help design and implement capacity building initiatives that contribute to Africa's regional and continental development goals. To that end, six key emerging lessons are worthy highlighting:

- The concept of capacity building is a high-level abstraction and has thus been difficult to measure in ACBF interventions.
- Capacity building initiatives can be measured by their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. However, this has not been consistently applied in evaluation of ACBF-supported projects over the years.
- It has been difficult to measure capacity building effectiveness in a one-size-fits-all manner because project types and settings matter.
- Evaluation teams have tended to measure outputs and not always outcomes in most ACBF interventions.
- Evaluation teams have usually not captured unintended impacts of projects.
- Effective assessment of capacity building projects has shown to work best when there was high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation.

Recommendations

The recommendations flowing from the findings and the lessons learned are six-fold:

- As one size does not fit all projects, capacity building effectiveness should be assessed in light of the setting, type, and complexity of the project.
- All evaluation reports should showcase the underlying evaluation criteria matrix, log-frame, theory of change, and monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Evaluation reports should go beyond measuring outputs and demonstrate change beyond outputs, especially for the more complex capacity building initiatives (such as policy influence).
- All evaluation reports should document unexpected impacts, whether positive or negative, for capacity building initiatives.
- All evaluation reports should document the levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation, and how capacity building project leaders attempt to obtain and maintain these four meta-conditions for success.
- The focus of the evaluation should be on learning from success and failure to inform future programming rather than mere accountability to donors.

INTRODUCTION

This Lessons Note seeks to document the practices in measuring the effectiveness of capacity building (development) programs and projects in Africa, mainly drawing from ACBF experience. The Note presents the key findings along with the lessons learned from measuring capacity building effectiveness in Africa. From a methodological standpoint, the Lesson Note reviews evaluation reports. More specifically, it analyzes how capacity building effectiveness has been assessed in ACBF interventions over the years and provides lessons gleaned from the evaluation reports.

OVERALL CONTEXT

Almost sixty years after their independence, African countries are still struggling to implement development visions, strategies, policies, programs, and projects. This “implementation gap” hampers Africa’s development in general and the implementation of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 in particular. Thus, Africa still hosts most of “the bottom billion” poor people of the world and falls short in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals. While Africa has made some notable progress over the years, it still faces a slew of development challenges that are, in essence, macroeconomic, sociocultural, political, and environmental.⁴⁹

Admittedly, weak capacity in all sectors (public, private, and civil society) and at all levels (individual, organization/institution, sector, society/country, region, and continent) is one of the major bottlenecks. Capacity is “the missing link” for the successful delivery of development programs and projects. By some estimates, only 18 percent of African countries have high capacity and this lack of absorptive and utilization capacity including critical technical skills is not only common but also problematic.⁵⁰ Indeed, Africa’s development is hobbled by severe capacity deficits in the form of shortage of critical individual skills, lack of leadership, inhibiting mindsets, and weak institutions, among others. This lack of capacity is experienced at all the above levels, and one should speak of capacities instead of capacity.⁵¹ Over the past 27 years, ACBF has been supporting sustainable development and transformation of the continent through investment in national and regional think tanks and policy research institutes, training institutions, and other capacity building programs and projects. ACBF has also been active in supporting non-state actors such as civil society and private sector organizations to foster the delivery of development policy and plans. This investment is accompanied by the development of an explicit knowledge management function, which includes the production and dissemination of fit-for-purpose knowledge products and service.⁵²

In this light, the overall objective of this Lessons Note is to produce and share knowledge on the lessons learned in terms of how to measure the effectiveness of ACBF-funded capacity building initiatives during the past three decades. The interest is to stimulate reflection on the understanding and assessment of the effectiveness of capacity building programs and projects in Africa and lay the ground for better design and implementation of such initiatives to help Africa achieve its regional and continental development goals.

The measurement challenge: There is no one-size-fits-all measure for capacity building effectiveness

As we have seen, a range of problems undermine development performance in Africa. One key impediment is lack of capacity. African countries and development partners acknowledge that capacity deficits pose a significant threat to the successful implementation of development policies, strategies, programs, and projects. To curb development failures, African countries and their development partners have invested billions of dollars in capacity building initiatives. The capacity building mantra has not lived up to expectations. Indeed, their results continue to disappoint stakeholders and beneficiaries who wonder what to expect from them in terms of benefits including human, institutional, and organizational capacities. However, we still do not know how to measure capacity building effectiveness, what makes capacity building programs and projects work, and whether the various evaluations have been able to measure the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives.

49 ACBF 2016a.

50 The African Union’s Agenda 2063.

51 ACBF 2016a.

52 ACBF 2017.

Part of the problem is that development economists often focus on what to do and not how to do it, leaving a knowledge void around what actually makes capacity building programs and projects work. The project management process becomes a kind of “black box” with no trace of how to deliver capacity building projects. Thus, we do not know how inputs are actually translated into outputs, and there is no explanation for what goes on in between.⁵³

Another part of the problem is that a theoretically and empirically well-established measurement of capacity building in Africa is lacking.⁵⁴ The concept of capacity is a high-level abstraction and covers an infinite range of project types, organizational circumstances, and situations.⁵⁵ There are differing capacities by organization, sector, and country. The polysemy and multidimensionality of the capacity concept and the sheer lack of harmonized performance indicators make it difficult to measure effectiveness in a one-size-fits-all manner.⁵⁶ Capacity building providers often measure the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of capacity building initiatives without much effort to attend to their specificity or the idiosyncratic context of Africa. This is not helpful because specifics matter when it comes to attribute any improvement to any given capacity building initiative. And it is not always clear whose goals or expectations are taken into consideration in the assessment of the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives. Are those donor or recipient goals?⁵⁷

Yet we know that many capacity building initiatives focus on ownership and the ability of people, institutions, and stakeholders to elicit developmental change. As such, they are more complex and differ from many development projects that focus only on the delivery of goods and such services as building or repairing new roads, schools, hospitals, or pipelines. In addition, they are often “change” projects and, as a result, rely on a theory of change at the individual, organizational, sector, country, region, and continent levels and a political process to bring about their outcomes.⁵⁸

The strategic alignment challenge: The underlying capacity building theory of change and the results chain

Capacity means different things for different stakeholders. ACBF defines capacity as the “ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully” and capacity development as “the process by which people, organizations, and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time.”⁵⁹ To achieve decent capacity development performance, ACBF needs to redefine a (new) theory of change, an articulation of how capacity development initiatives make a difference—a shared vision that explains what will change look like when it occurs, how and why change can be expected to take place, what stakeholders need to be involved, and what their expectations are.⁶⁰

Seeing itself not as a capacity builder, but promoter, broker, facilitator, and coordinator for capacity building in Africa, ACBF aims to enable its client organizations to obtain and maintain the capacity to efficiently and effectively design and implement development programs and projects. In so doing, ACBF expects them to produce positive change in the lives of people. Thus, ACBF, in partnership with other stakeholders, seeks to deliver capacity development services (technical advisory, policy advice, knowledge, investments) to these client organizations. From a strategic point of view and in line with its vision of an “Africa Capable of Achieving Its Own Development,” ACBF presently focuses on four mutually supportive strategic pillars for promoting Africa’s transformation and sustainable development and four corresponding programs:⁶¹

- Pillar 1: Enabling effective delivery of continental development priorities.
- Pillar 2: Supporting countries to achieve tangible development results.
- Pillar 3: Enhancing private sector and civil society contributions to sustainable development.
- Pillar 4: Leveraging knowledge and learning to increase development effectiveness.

53 Ika and Donnelly 2017; Ika and Donnelly (forthcoming).

54 ACBF 2017.

55 ACBF n.d.a.

56 ACBF 2015b.

57 ACBF n.d.a.

58 Ika and Donnelly 2017; Datta, Shaxson, and Pellini 2012.

59 ACBF 2014a.

60 ACBF 2015a.

61 ACBF 2016a.

Thus, the objectives promoted by the four programs are essentially shared, owned, and ultimately driven by ACBF client organizations. Hence, ACBF sketches the results chain including the strategic results underpinned with the associated intermediate results.⁶²

To achieve these target results, ACBF focuses its activities on a combination of five service lines or modes of intervention. So, ACBF maps programs and service lines and shows sample of relevant ACBF activities.⁶³ ACBF includes support to educational and training institutions, national ministries, public agencies, and non-state actors such as civil society, regional economic communities (RECs), and the private sector, among other things, in capacity development in policy research and analysis across Africa.⁶⁴ Broad areas of intervention include training (short or long term), policy formulation and analysis (such as policy research and think tanks, technical support), direct support to public sector management (such as financial management), regional integration, and civil society engagement.⁶⁵ The alignment among these activities, programs, and results is critical when it comes to measuring the effectiveness of ACBF initiatives.

Findings of the Lesson Note

As mentioned above, the Lessons Note desk reviews evaluation reports, takes stock of the results and impacts achieved by ACBF's capacity building programs and projects, and assesses how their overall effectiveness is measured. At first, it might be worthwhile to account for the extent to and the manner in which ACBF achieves the larger strategic outcomes underpinned by the above four strategic pillars (see the above section). However, such an assessment rests on a predetermined theory of change, which was not the case at least until 2011.⁶⁶ Thus, in the absence of such an established theory of change to track achievements and measure effectiveness, we turn to the more common methodological framework of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability that most assessors use in their evaluation reports.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS ACHIEVED

Over the last three decades, ACBF's capacity building interventions have made significant achievements and impacts. These achievements include the following:⁶⁷

- *Enhanced effectiveness and delivery of partner institutions:* This is the case of the Kenya School of Monetary Studies (KSMS) and the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) to name a few partner institutions. Through ACBF's institutional support, KSMS was able to enhance its capacity for training in building the financial sector in Anglophone Africa. ZWRCN benefited from institutional and human capacity support from ACBF and thus enhanced women's effective participation in social and political development processes. For example, with ACBF's institutional support, the Women's University in Africa was able to grow in Zimbabwe despite the crises and to improve the delivery of its programs. Of particular note, ZWRCN was able to double enrolment and achieve 95 percent graduation rate, of which 75 percent are female and mentoring women PhD graduates.
- *Enhanced impact of public policies and programs:* The value and impact of ACBF's capacity building support for promoting evidence-based policy making in Cabo Verde, Kenya, and Zimbabwe was greatly felt through the Foundation's support to the Cabo Verde Strategic Transformation and Policy Center (STPC), the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), and the Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis Unit (ZEPARU). The STPC, an advisory body to the Cabo Verde Prime Minister, a great interface and facilitator of dialogue and coordination among different public and private sector stakeholders, successfully supported crucial government decisions with the policy analysis and strategic advice necessary to implement the government's strategic transformation agenda. KIPPRA, a policy institute at the forefront of evidence-based research for strategic policy making in Kenya, was ranked number 1 in Sub-Saharan Africa by the "Go to Think Tanks" in 2014. KIPPRA played an instrumental role in the preparation of medium and long-term policy perspectives of the government

62 ACBF 2016a.

63 ACBF 2016a.

64 ACBF 2014b.

65 ACBF 2016b.

66 ACBF 2011a.

67 ACBF 2016b.

of Kenya and built the skills and competencies of state and non-state actors in policy research and analysis. KIPPRA's role was impactful in terms of policy consultative and advisory role in Kenya and thus took part in at least 25 Government Task Forces and 141 engagements with stakeholders to disseminate and discuss policy research findings. Through the support of ACBF and other partners, ZEPARU became a capable and trusted policy unit that engaged with different stakeholders from the government, private sector, and civil society and shaped several of the public policies in Zimbabwe.

- *Improved capability and performance of public sector managers/officials:* The high impact of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) based in Kenya and the Women's University of Africa based in Zimbabwe can be linked to the support and the patient capital from ACBF. AERC ranks highly among global think tanks and is impactful in collaborative research on policy making in Sub-Saharan Africa; hence, it contributes to the gradual build-up and retention of African scholars in Africa and eventually to the reduction of the brain drain on the continent. With funding from ACBF, the Women's University of Africa emerged as a key organization providing both short-term and long-term training programs.
- *Improved macroeconomic, financial and debt management in member countries:* ACBF support for the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Southern and Eastern Africa (MEFMI) has been instrumental in delivering effective policy coordination and macroeconomic consistency, sound and adequate legal and policy frameworks for domestic markets as well as development and update of medium-term debt strategies across the member countries. Significant impacts on member countries and organizations include increased use of the financial programming and policy through regional workshops and in-country trainings, better skills in macroeconomic management, financial sector management or debt management, improved modelling and forecasting capacities, international remittance statistics, regional integration and trade policy, and revenue policy and administration.
- *Enhanced inclusiveness and effective participation of non-state actors especially women in national development processes:* Such is the case of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) in Kenya and the ZWRN. With the great work of FEMNET, the only pan-African women's body that continues to increase the consciousness of the members about women's rights issues, strengthen their capacities to organize around these issues and remain connected through networking, coalition building and through sharing of information and other resources. FEMNET spearheaded the successful inclusion of gender equality, sex disaggregated data, and gender sensitive indicators in all planning and budgeting processes at different levels in different countries across the continent. In Zimbabwe, ZWRN was instrumental in reducing gender inequalities and promoting gender sensitive policies through work on human capacity, research and publications, networks and coalition building, and institutional capacity strengthening. Thus, ZWRN improved the quality of debates on gender and public finance in parliament and moderately increased participation of women in budget preparation process, decision making and economic policy formulation.

While the above performance stories are instructive, they do not tell us how the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives is measured. It is time to have a look.

MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS IN PRACTICE

How do we know that a capacity building initiative works or does not work? Typically, the purpose of evaluation is to assess what results have been achieved and what has been learned from the capacity building project.⁶⁸ At ACBF, the end of project evaluations, most of which are by external assessors, tend to focus on seeking answers to the following questions: Have the planned activities and outputs been achieved? Has the project delivered any additional benefits (unforeseen)? What has been the strategic added value? What has worked well (best practice)? Has the project been relevant and efficient? What has not worked well (lessons learned or area of improvement)? What sustainability practices are in place and how can project gains be sustained in the future?⁶⁹

That is how we can learn that 91 percent of users surveyed by the external evaluators express satisfaction with ACBF's clients' products against a cumulative target of 80 percent. And 87 percent of them have been satisfied with the quality of services ACBF provides against a target of 70 percent.⁷⁰

In some cases, the evaluation questions are divided between process/thematic questions and outcome/impact questions. One example of the process/thematic questions is: What is the progress towards attaining the intended results? The outcome/impact questions include: What are the unintended positive and negative results? What are the sustainability indicators that have been achieved by the project? And what are the outputs and outcomes that have been achieved by the project?⁷¹

Best practices include the use of the well-established OECD evaluation criteria: effectiveness, impact, efficiency, relevance and sustainability or the evaluation criteria matrix,⁷² the use of a log-frame based evaluation methodology,⁷³ and the ACBF theory of change.⁷⁴

Evaluators often conduct case-studies using a carefully selected sample of projects and a subtle mix of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods and tools. Considering the complexity of capacity building programs and projects and the multiplicity of stakeholders and beneficiaries, consultant evaluators often consider triangulation appropriate and effective in ensuring cross validation across methods, tools, respondents.

Methods and tools include documents or desk reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, stakeholder mapping and analysis, consultative and validation workshops and corresponding guides.⁷⁵

Surveys may be used as well. For example, in order to further validate findings from interviews, evaluation teams can administer online surveys to policy centers and think tanks in countries that are not selected for in-depth site visits.⁷⁶

68 ACBF n.d.a.

69 ACBF 2013a.

70 ACBF 2016c.

71 ACBF 2011b.

72 ACBF 2011b; ACBF 2015b.

73 ACBF 2011c.

74 ACBF 2014b.

75 ACBF 2011b.

76 ACBF 2014b.

MEASURING OUTPUTS VERSUS MEASURING OUTCOMES

A good number of capacity building programs and projects manage to achieve their intended outputs. For example, the delivery of the ZWRCN outputs is impressive: 500 copies of training package including guides and tools for the stakeholders were developed, 300 stakeholders and 30 trainers were trained on gender budgeting in a series of five workshops a year, 3 study tours provided instruction on best practices once a year for selected ministries, and 12 quarterly issues of “budget watch” were published. There was an enhancement of the ICT through e-group discussion forum and exchange. The project also provided guided and technical guidance for gender budgeting for both the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development and the Ministry of Finance.

However, more often than not, it is difficult to ascertain the delivery of outcomes. For example, with regard to the ZWRCN outcomes, the lack of evidence for the level of participation by women and the establishment of gender disaggregated data is concerning.⁷⁷

It may also be cumbersome at times to attribute to the capacity building programs and projects notable positive changes or to demonstrate change beyond outputs. For example, while ACBF support for short-term training courses and collaborative and professional degree-granting programs has contributed to building the individual capacities of thousands of African professionals, there is only anecdotal evidence of increasing capacity in public sector organizations and civil society—notably in English-speaking Africa. In the same vein, while the delivery of outputs such as one-off trainings including workshops and seminars is established, these might not really lead to impact sometimes.

A problematic feature of capacity building interventions has been their sustainability. A good example is the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum project (SADC-PF). The overall objective of this project was to create an institutional framework for equipping members of parliament, parliamentary staff, and institutions in the SADC region with knowledge, skills, and information that enhance their professional performance in implementing their respective mandates. But, financial sustainability remains a challenge, which is likely to make it difficult to undertake long term planning, improve services, and reach the forum’s full potential in a sustainable way.⁷⁸ Likewise, while ACBF capacity building support to policy centers and think tanks scores high on the delivery of outputs and has played a crucial role in influencing policy, its lower long term sustainability ratings attest to the challenge that sustainability delivery poses.⁷⁹

Moreover, evaluation teams scarcely focus on assessing unexpected or unintended impacts of capacity building projects, a key feature of these change projects.⁸⁰ Spillover effects resulting from the strengthening of this public private partnership were single out and assessed. Thus, the project contributed to changing the mindset of public sector officials and their attitude towards the public sector, which was not planned.⁸¹

77 ACBF 2011b.

78 ACBF 2011d.

79 ACBF 2014b.

80 See table 2 in Ika and Donnelly (2017).

81 ACBF 2013a.

LESSONS LEARNED

- *The concept of capacity building is a high level abstraction and thus difficult to measure:* As practitioners can appreciate, capacity building means different things for different people in different settings.⁸² That does not mean one cannot define capacity building. However, whatever capacity building might be, it remains a matter of perspective. Whose perspective is it: the donor's or the beneficiary's? The concept of capacity building is a high level abstraction and covers an infinite range of project types, activities, and settings.⁸³ Indeed, there are differing capacities. Moreover, capacity building is not about the delivery of activities and outputs but rather outcomes and change. So, the general rule about measuring the effectiveness of capacity building would thus appear to look for an improvement or change in terms of the ability of people, organizations, and society to achieve long term goals. Thus, it is difficult to measure capacity building effectiveness.
- *Capacity building initiatives can be measured by their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability:* All evaluation teams attempt to measure the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of capacity building projects.⁸⁴ Thus, best practices include evaluation questions or the evaluation criteria matrix, the use of a log-frame based evaluation methodology, and a theory of change with monitoring and evaluation framework and clearly defined performance indicators to track project outputs and outcomes.⁸⁵
- *It is difficult to measure capacity building effectiveness in a one-size-fits-all manner because project types and settings matter:* Although all capacity building programs and projects are assessed on their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, this does not mean there is a one-size-fits-all measure for capacity building effectiveness (there are different types of capacity building initiatives). At the very least, one can distinguish between conventional and more advanced capacity building projects. The former includes training, workshops and technical advice focused on specific organizational systems and procedures. The latter include policy advice, institutional support to educational and training institutions, public and private sector organizations, and non-state actors such as civil society, regional integration, and civil society engagement. The latter projects do focus more on ownership and the ability of people, institutions, and stakeholders to elicit developmental change and as such tend to be more complex and thus more difficult to assess.⁸⁶ Thus, project types and organizational settings matter for the assessment of capacity building effectiveness. For example, lack of understanding of the nature and character of the partner organization, its history, culture and underlying political dynamics and actors can harm projects.⁸⁷ Projects implemented outside the existing client organization structures and systems might well compromise sustainability chances.⁸⁸
- *Evaluation teams tend to measure outputs and not always outcomes:* For most capacity building programs and projects, evaluation teams focus more on the assessment of the delivery of outputs and less on the delivery of outcomes. Thus, sustainability remains a big challenge especially for the more complex capacity building initiatives. Indeed, it is often difficult to ascertain the delivery of outcomes or to demonstrate change beyond outputs. For example, it tends to be cumbersome to relate and achieve long term impact with trainings for example.
- *Evaluation teams should assess unintended impacts of projects:* As capacity building projects tend to focus on ownership and change on the part of beneficiary organizations, they may change the project settings in unexpected ways. Thus, evaluation teams should highlight and assess their unintended impacts, whether positive or negative. One way of doing that is to systematically refer to the underlying theory of change to track not only achievements but also impacts.

82 Ika and Donnelly (forthcoming).

83 Wing 2004.

84 Ika and Donnelly 2017.

85 ACBF n.d.b. The lack of such a theory of change and a relevant monitoring and evaluation framework hampered the evaluation of the COMESA project.

86 Ika and Donnelly 2017.

87 ACBF 2011d.

88 ACBF n.d.b.

- *Capacity building projects work when there are high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation:* Capacity building projects work more when there are high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation (Ika and Donnelly 2017). To obtain and maintain these meta-conditions, these authors advise project leaders to give proper attention to sustainability of objectives and demonstrating value, ability of stakeholders and inclusiveness, planning/design and mutual interest, and monitoring and support. This “theory” is supported by a few evaluation reports.⁸⁹

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Capacity is “the missing link” for the successful delivery of development programs and projects in Africa. Thus, the role of the ACBF remains paramount. Notwithstanding the proud achievements of the last three decades, there is still more work to do. Part of the challenge is that it is not clear what makes capacity building work and how to assess its effectiveness. This Lessons Note focuses on what works, what does not work, and the lessons learned from the ACBF experience in capacity building support.

The findings suggest that evaluation reports generally cover systematically the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of capacity building initiatives. However, by and large, the focus tends to be more on measuring outputs and less on measuring outcomes, making it difficult to demonstrate change beyond outputs, not to mention unexpected impacts.

Notably, capacity building projects differ in many ways and one size does not fit all. Thus, without a clear understanding of context in general and project types, settings and complexities in particular, there is no good evaluation of capacity building initiatives. Insights gleaned in this Lesson Note lay the ground for better evaluation and then help the design and implementation of capacity building initiatives that would contribute to achieving Africa’s regional and continental development goals. To that end, the following recommendations flow from the findings of this Lesson Note:

- As one size does not fit all projects, capacity building effectiveness should be assessed in light of the setting, type, and complexity of the project.
- All evaluation reports should showcase the underlying evaluation criteria matrix, log-frame, theory of change, and monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Evaluation reports should go beyond measuring outputs and demonstrate change beyond outputs, especially for the more complex capacity building initiatives (policy influence).
- All evaluation reports should document unexpected impacts, whether positive or negative, for capacity building initiatives.
- All evaluation reports should document the levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation, and how capacity building project leaders attempt to obtain and maintain these four meta-conditions for success.
- The focus of the evaluation should be on learning from success and failure to inform future programming rather than mere accountability to donors.

89 ACBF 2011b; ACBF 2015c; ACBF 2013b.

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Lesson Note #8



BUILDING CAPACITY IN ECONOMIC POLICY MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA: LESSONS FROM REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS



Gautam Raj Jain

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Africa has grappled with multiple economic crises due to the shortage of policy analysts and managers who can design and implement development policies that are relevant to the local and global context. Three decades ago, many African universities lacked the capacity to support adequate standards of education and research. The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) took on the challenge of initiating extensive reforms and building the capacities of African universities by introducing need-based education courses and equipping universities with the required infrastructure. ACBF has supported training in economic policy management (EPM) in seven universities with regional coverage on the continent, namely University of Yaoundé II, Cameroon; University of Cocody, Cote d'Ivoire; University of Ghana, Ghana; Makerere University, Uganda; University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo; University of Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique; and University of Zambia, Zambia. For the purpose of this paper, the following training programs in Economics and related issues have been considered: collaborative master's degree programs (CMAP), collaborative PhD degree programs (CPP), Nouveau programme de troisième cycle interuniversitaire en économie (NPTCI), professional degree programs, and short courses in different modules of economic policy. This Lessons Note examines ACBF's support of coordinating training in EPM (and related programs in Economics) over about three decades and draws lessons from that experience.

The information and data for this note were extracted from annual and mid-term review reports available at ACBF. The two key assessment criteria, based on the objective of capacity building, were the effectiveness of training and the impact of training on capacity building of African governments and universities. These two objectives are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Here are the major findings of the analysis:

- Short courses have high acceptability because of their direct relevance to the needs of African governments and their short duration. While professional degree programs have been perceived by graduates as “moderately relevant” to EPM jobs, graduates have been placed in government jobs because of the courses' focus on practical skills. Collaborative master's and PhD programs are seen as relevant and useful to economic policy management with graduates largely filling more academic jobs than jobs in government or the private sector.
- Short courses have high potential for sustainability, as governments are willing to pool resources to pay the cost.
- Collaboration among universities on the delivery of master's and doctoral degree programs is an innovative approach that draws on the academic expertise of different categories (A, B, and C) of universities and contributes to cost effectiveness.

ACBF's approach to building capacity in economic policy management relied on a closely linked demand and supply construct. The demand side consisted of African governments in need of qualified and competent policy analysts, researchers, and managers, who would nominate students for the programs. The supply side consisted of the higher education institutions that ACBF supported with curriculum, infrastructure, and academic capabilities for offering master's and doctoral degree programs. This approach needs to be evaluated in view of the outcome and impact on sustainability.

The following recommendations emerged:

- EPM courses have served African governments for more than three decades. These courses are also opened up to fee-paying students. These institutions will have to compete in the open market for high-quality student as well as for employers for job placement of graduates.

- To ensure the smooth delivery of high-quality courses, regular capacity audits should be introduced to assess the capacity and preparedness of the university at the beginning of each academic year, with improvements measured by feedback from employers and students. At the end of each semester, the quality of course delivery should be reviewed, and appropriate action taken if gaps are found.
- To reach high-caliber prospective students, both women and men, universities need to establish career counseling and admission services. Universities should reach out to undergraduate students and to young executives working in public and private sector organizations and build awareness about EPM courses and career opportunities. Eligible students can be offered scholarships sponsored by governments and private bodies as well as education loans from banks and other financial institutions in the country
- To improve tracer studies, regular tracking systems should be established with employers. The systems would make it mandatory for graduates to register on the tracking portal and would encourage regular updates, with incentives including facilitation of networking with other students, access to new job openings, and sharing of research and other academic resources. Universities should establish alumni associations with country-wide chapters for regular interaction and the exchange of knowledge and experience. These chapters should receive contributions from universities as well as from students to meet costs.

INTRODUCTION

ACBF is completing three decades of supporting capacity building in Africa and hence wishes to reflect on the lessons learned in order to identify best practices and to improve its ongoing and future capacity building efforts.⁹⁰

This Lessons Note identifies what worked and what did not, the challenges and critical factors for success and failure, and innovations in ACBF's regional capacity building training programs in Economic Policy Management (EPM) in Africa. It focuses on assessing the following areas:

- Strengthening of the capacity of African education institutions to generate new cadres of academic and senior professionals to fill the gaps in EPM;
- The main factors behind current challenges and highlighting what works and what does not for countries in their policy implementation;
- Contributions by training programs to increases in the cadre of trained economists for both the private and public sectors;
- Strengthening of institutional capacity in both public and private sectors and in tertiary education institutions;
- Strengthening of human and institutional capacity for EPM in Africa.

CAPACITY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Africa has grappled with multiple economic crises due to the shortage of policy analysts and managers who can effectively design efficient policy response to development issues in the local and global context.⁹¹ At the same time, many African universities have lacked the capacity to adequately support high standards of education and research. ACBF took on the challenge to initiate extensive reforms and build the capacities of African universities through the introduction of need-based courses. It also equipped universities with the required infrastructure and academic resources to create a cadre of economic policy researchers, practitioners, and managers.⁹²

90 The terms of reference on "Building Capacity in Economic Policy Management in Africa: Lessons from Regional Training Programs."
 91 Ayako 2013.
 92 Sako and Ogiogio 2002.

ACBF has supported training in economic policy management (EPM) in seven universities with regional coverage on the continent, namely University of Yaoundé II, Cameroon; University of Cocody, Cote d'Ivoire; University of Ghana, Ghana; Makerere University, Uganda; University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo; University of Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique; and University of Zambia, Zambia. For the purpose of this paper, the following training programs in Economics and related issues have been considered: collaborative master's degree programs (CMAP), collaborative PhD degree programs (CPP), Nouveau programme de troisième cycle interuniversitaire en économie (NPTCI), professional degree programs, and short courses in different modules of economic policy. This Lessons Note examines ACBF's support of coordinating training in EPM (and related programs in Economics) over about three decades and draws lessons from that experience.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

ACBF and partner organizations have provided support to these courses and programs by offering scholarships to government nominees to attend these trainings. ACBF support has largely been in building infrastructure and academic capacity—including libraries, information and communication technologies, academic staff, and access to international expertise. Of the 3,168 students enrolled in these courses over 1998–2015, 75 percent were men, and 25 percent were women. Of the 2,678 who graduated from these courses, 88 percent joined the public sector, 8 percent the private sector, and 4 percent went to other jobs.⁹³

More than 50 universities in 34 countries have been supported in offering different courses (see annex 1). These ACBF-supported training programs have increased the cadre of trained economists within public and private sector organizations. This support has strengthened institutions in both sectors and in tertiary-level education institutions. Graduates have reported that the training enabled them to bring new knowledge and skills to their workplaces. They felt that the training helped them undertake high-level economic analysis, report on critical issues, work on national development programs and project plans, and carry out mid- to high-level managerial tasks. As a result of the ACBF training programs 4 (2 CMAP + 2 PTCI) Category A universities have graduated to Category B status leading to increased staff capacity.⁹⁴ For detail of category A, B and C. As a result of the ACBF training programs, four Category A universities (two CMAP and two PTCI) have graduated to Category B status, leading to increased staff capacity (for an explanation of categories A, B, and C).

Box 1 presents a few highlights of changed scenario of African economies due to improved capabilities in economic policy management since 1990.

Box 1 Africa Today: A marked difference from 1990

- Africa's growth outlook is more positive, with marked resilience anchored mainly on strong domestic demand.
- Africa's growth is less dependent on natural resources and is increasingly favored by improvements in the business environment and in macroeconomic governance.
- Increased structural diversification has significantly improved the continent's ability to withstand external shocks.
- Policy is important in mitigating external imbalances, as macro fundamentals are weakening.

Source: AfDB 2017.

93 ACBF Excel sheet data.

94 ITAD Ltd. 2012.

Methodology: Analysis framework

The analysis for this note is based on desk research using ACBF-supplied materials, mainly evaluation reports on EPM training, but supplemented by information from other publications (and cited appropriately).

The assessment is based on the premise that well-designed and well-executed training is critical for producing graduates who can do competent work as economic policy researchers, policy-makers, and managers. The two main assessment dimensions considered are effectiveness of the training process or delivery of knowledge and skills in economic policy management, and capacity building of African economies developed by well-trained and competent economic policy-makers, managers, and researchers. The assessment criteria under these two dimensions are explained below.

1. Assessment of the effectiveness of the training process considers three core activities or capacities of training strategy and the content and structure of EPM courses:
 - Demand generation: Do the courses generate adequate demand to achieve quality enrollment? Supply-driven courses, with demand determined largely by available scholarships or donor funding, are less likely to generate a positive impact on the economy and have the least potential to be sustainable.
 - Relevance: Are the courses seen as addressing the key development issues facing an African economy, and do graduates and employers find the skills developed useful?
 - Career path/advancement: Were graduates accepted in jobs related to EPM within government and at institutions offering courses in economics?
2. Assessment of the contribution of training to capacity building of African economies considers the following three dimensions:
 - Institutional capacity building: To what extent have ACBF interventions supported the building of an institution's capacity to offer quality education through sustainable training programs that do not rely exclusively on external funding?
 - Increase in the supply of competent EPM experts in government: Have governments benefited from the competence of the EPM graduates selected for key positions in relevant departments?
 - Social inclusion: Do the courses support the mainstreaming of gender and ensure the equal participation of women and men in training

This analysis, which is based on a review of evaluation and other reports, has several limitations:

1. Data deficiencies and weak tracer reports and evaluation studies: There were very few tracer studies, most of them being descriptive, based on a very small sample, and lack critical inferences. The tracer studies do not have enough information/assessment of graduates from the employers' perspectives. As a result, it was difficult to assess the impact of EPM courses on the capacity building of African economies. There is no regular tracking of graduates and their employers, which is needed to provide critical feedback for continuous quality improvement of training courses. Most of the evaluation/review studies and tracer reports used opinion-based surveys (subjective perceptions of graduates about themselves and their employers' views about their work). The reliability of such surveys is generally considered low.
2. Inconsistency in analysis: The note follows a specific assessment framework for the analysis of courses. As a consequence, it is possible that some inconsistency arose in the analysis as the reports reviewed did not cover details of these courses consistently.

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC POLICY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

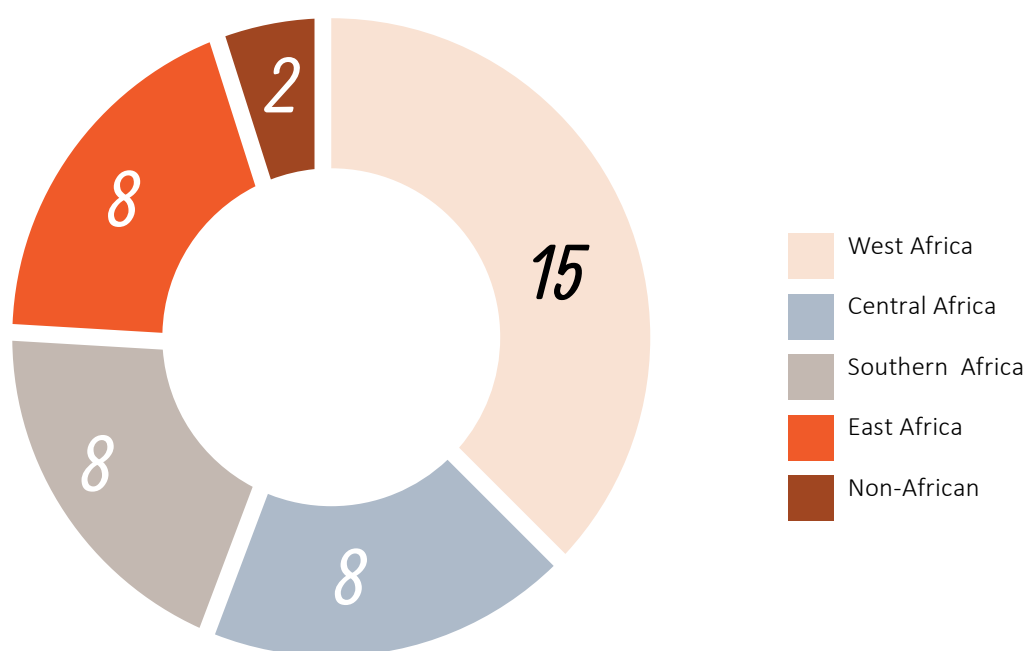
Effectiveness of training in economic policy management in Africa

Three key dimensions were examined to assess the effectiveness of the EPM training courses: whether these courses generated adequate demand to achieve quality enrollment and whether participants are willing to pay for the courses in future, whether the course were relevant and useful to participants and employers, and whether the courses were linked to career paths and career advancement in EPM jobs?

Demand generation for the courses

Figure 1 shows the number of African countries that have taken part in the EPM programs. A total of 41 countries have been supported to successful attend the EPMs program, suggesting the large coverage of the program in Africa and the high demand. The enrollment is higher in in West Africa – largely explained by the high number of non-ACBF sponsored trainees in EPM Ghana.

Figure 1. Number of Countries Represented in the EPMs per Region



Source: ACBF documents

Table 1 presents an analysis of demand generation and the relevance and usefulness of CPP/CMAP (including professional degree programs and short-term courses) courses based on various evaluation reports. Both institutional stakeholder and graduate focus groups reported that the demand for all types of training provided by ACBF exceeds the supply. Each of the two categories of degree-granting programming had between 100 and 200 % more applicants than spaces available (Table 1).

Table 1 Demand generation and relevance of economic policy management to graduates and employers

Assessment dimension	Collaborative Academic (master's and PhD degree programs (CPP/CMAP)	Professional degree programs	Short- term courses
Demand generation	100%–200% CPP: low registration	100%–200%	NA
Employers' willingness to pay	No	No	Yes
Scholarship	Critical	Critical	Not critical
Relevance and usefulness			
Meets the needs of my work	Low	Moderately	High
Employers' needs of knowledge and skills	Very low	Low	High

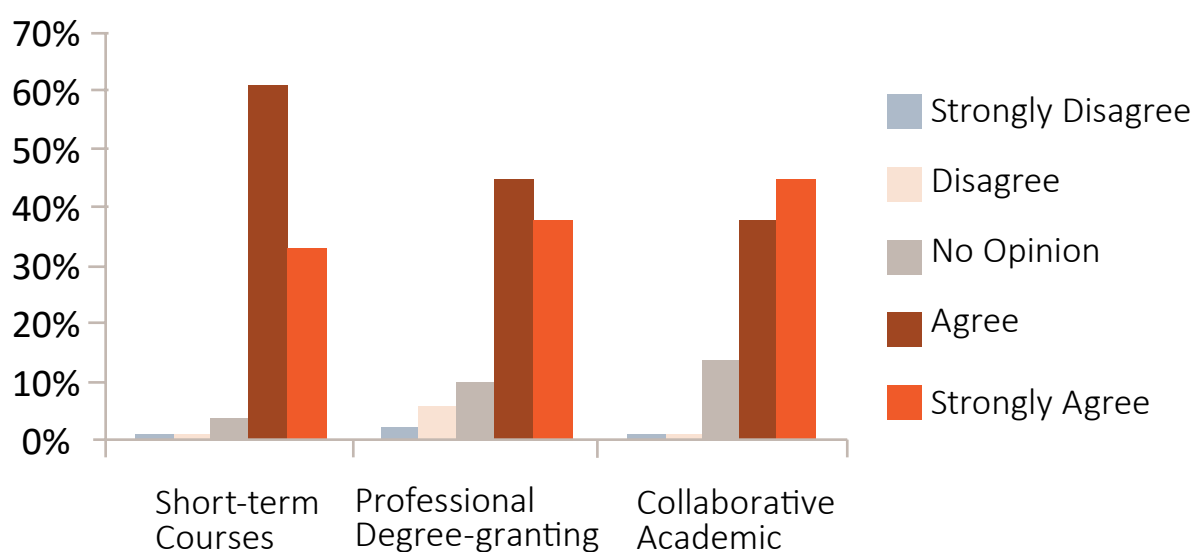
Note: CMAP is collaborative master's degree program; CPP is collaborative PhD degree program.

Source: Author's review of Ayako (2013) and Makerere University (2010).

Relevance and usefulness of the courses to participants and employers

Figure 2 captures whether graduates perceive these courses as relevant to policy work and to their employers.⁹⁵ Central banks and government officials are almost unanimous in indicating that the training programs, with its variety of modalities, have consistently strengthened the national ability to plan and manage. Moreover, university administrators also have indicated that they tend to view, especially CPP/CMAP/PTCI graduates, as having superior qualifications to assume teaching positions within their institutions. In francophone Africa, the PTCI has allowed francophone universities to staff the Faculties of economics which, in turn, produce young graduates. A particular example was the case of Rwanda. Our interviews with the alumni from Rwanda who completed the PTCI program indicated that the Faculties of economics of the national universities survived after the war because of the PTCI. Many Faculty members of the economics department had died or had fled the country, depleting the universities from most of its professors of economics.

Figure 2. Survey Question on “the content of the training program responded to the needs of my work environment”



Source: The Independent Evaluation of ACBF supported training program

95 The perceptions are based on participant opinions and not directly from employers.

Career path and career advancement in economic policy management jobs

EPM courses should be clearly connected to specific career lines in employers' organizations. Table 2 presents the analysis of career path and advancement linked to EPM courses based on the placement of the graduates.

Table 2 Capacity building of graduates in economic policy management: Career path and advancement

Assessment dimension	Collaborative master's and PhD degree programs (CMAP and CPP)	Professional degree programs	Short- term courses
Personal skills development of graduates (confidence)	Moderate	Moderate	High
Career path of graduates of EPM in public sector and academic institutors	58% in academic jobs and 24% in government jobs, including central banks Majority of CPP/CMAP graduates went back to sponsoring institutions	65% in all key departments of government including 3% of graduates in the offices of president and prime minister	79% linked to all jobs in departments of the government – finance and planning, and central banks
Career advancement/ promotions, increase in salary, and general employability	Majority of EPM graduates felt the training contributed to their career advancement; 52%–64% felt it contributed in increase in income or salary. In Anglophone countries, CPP/ CMAP graduates occupy mid- and senior-level positions. In Francophone countries, graduates were poorly linked to career advancement. NPTCI: only 16% graduates got promotions and 8% of NPTCI graduates, 78% of graduates did not get employment, 66% received no salary increase, and 67% had no increase in income.		

Note: CMAP is collaborative master's degree program; CPP is collaborative PhD degree program; EPM is economic policy management; NPTCI is Nouveau programme de troisieme cycle interuniversitaire en économie.

Source: Author's review of Ayako (2013) and Makerere University (2010).

Skills development of graduates. Participants in short and long courses have found that these courses have contributed to their skill development. Short courses are more focused and respond to the immediate needs of employers and graduates and are seen as contributing moderately by the graduates.

Linkages to career in economic policy. Short-term courses have contributed the highest number of graduates to all key departments. A majority of graduates of the collaborative degree programs found them to be good for academic jobs (58 percent of 413 graduates worked in universities, while 24 percent worked in government). A majority of professional degree programs and short courses were found to be suitable for government jobs. Of 251 respondents who took professional degree programs, 65 percent worked in government jobs and 8 percent in academic jobs. In the case of short courses, 79 percent of 908 respondents worked in government, 8 percent in public sectors, and 2 percent in private sectors. But none worked in academic jobs.

A significant contribution of professional degree programs is that graduates found places in the offices of the president and the prime minister. Surprisingly, graduates of collaborative degree programs were not considered for policy jobs. The world over academic courses have contributed practicing professionals too. This indicates the need for a review of the quality of the academic capabilities of the universities delivering collaborative degree programs.

Career advancement in policy jobs. Some 52-64 percent of EPM graduates have benefited through career advancement, which includes an increase in income in Anglophone countries. This can be lauded as a significant success of EPM.

Capacity building of African economies

Academic capabilities delivering EPM courses. To assess the effectiveness of EPM courses, it is important to examine the effectiveness of universities in delivering long and short courses. ACBF has supported capacity building interventions in a large number of universities across Africa for delivering different types of EPM courses. These institutions benefited largely from infrastructure development. Most of these universities lack the capacity to retain qualified academic staff.⁹⁶

Knowledge transfer and networking and collaboration among participants. All types of courses (collaborative graduate degree programs, professional degree programs, and short courses) lack a systematic approach to knowledge transfer to non-academic jobs. There are some instances where graduates have indicated that professional and short courses had a greater focus on the application of skills to policy level jobs than collaborative graduate degree programs. Knowledge transfer and networking and collaboration have been found to be weak in collaborative degree programs. However, long courses have completely ignored this finding and have failed to facilitate connections among graduates after graduation. The websites of most of the universities offering long courses do not provide any information or opportunity to connect with earlier graduates. Short courses have a directory of graduates and facilitators, which helps them connect with each other.

Delivery of core and elective courses. The Joint Facility for Electives (JFE), which offers elective courses to students in the collaborative master's and PhD degree programs, as found to be helpful as it offered a large number of elective courses. However, the delivery of the elective and core courses varied significantly in content across universities. Thesis supervision in the case of CPP has also been affected by weak supervision capacities and a lack of commitment on the part of students. This has resulted in low rates of thesis completion and graduation. Most of the universities have not implemented course evaluations by students. Further, these institutions do not track graduates and their employers to seek feedback on courses in order to make the courses and methodology more relevant to the changing needs of African economies.

Table 3 Capacity of universities involved in the delivery of economic policy management courses

Assessment dimension	Collaborative master's and PhD degree programs (CMAP and CPP)	Professional degree programs	Short- term courses
Knowledge transfer	Overlooked/ Lack methodology	Somewhat overlooked	Somewhat overlooked
Networking and collaboration	Informal	Informal	Support effectively
Regional capacity gaps	Francophone countries weak in academic rigor, faculty commitment, and infrastructure – PTCL/ NPTCI		
Academic delivery of core and electives	Wider choices of electives due to Joint Facility for Electives Capacity gaps in delivery of core and electives Lack of course evaluation Low rate of thesis completion Removal of requirement for one year of foreign attachment for students in CPP		
International recognition	CPP degrees are accepted in many universities but awarding universities not part of international rankings Universities in Africa are not listed in the QS World University Ranking (except Cape Town University)		

Note: CMAP is collaborative master's degree program; CPP is collaborative PhD degree program; EPM is economic policy management; NPTCI is Nouveau programme de troisieme cycle interuniversitaire en économie.

Source: Author's review of Ayako (2013) and Makerere University (2010).

International recognition. A major justification for CPP was to help retain quality scholars on the continent. The QS World University Ranking, which ranks universities offering post-graduate and doctoral degrees, is considered the most reliable ranking service. With the exception of the University of Cape Town (one of the collaborating universities, ranked at 192), none of the universities in Africa offering economics degree programs is included in the QS ranking. Lack of international recognition will discourage high-quality students from applying for doctoral degrees in economics in Africa. The requirement for one-year of foreign attachment of students was lifted in the interest of timely program completion and retention of students within the continent. However, the foreign attachment was critical to improving the overall quality of graduates, by exposing them to diverse approaches to development policies in other developed and developing countries.

Capacity building of higher education institutions

ACBF has supported capacity building in Africa by making high-quality tertiary education available across the continent. Some of the contributions of ACBF in capacity building of higher education institutions include the following:

- Over 50 universities supported by ACBF are superior to other universities in academic and infrastructure capabilities in the area of EPM.
- These universities are better in terms of a contemporary curriculum, qualified academic staff, access to international experts, sophisticated infrastructure, increased academic rigor, and joint education facilities.
- Graduates of collaborative degree programs were employed in sponsoring universities of other implementing partners.

However, very little is known about the capacities of these institutions for knowledge generation through research, consulting, and publications that influence industry practices in the region.

Capacity building in African governments

Stakeholders agree that graduates of ACBF-supported EPM training are better qualified than graduates of other programs within Africa. ACBF-supported courses have added 2,378⁹⁷ qualified economists to public sector organizations and 272 to private sector entities. Professional and short courses have contributed to the capacity building of African economies through graduates who have become policy-makers and managers in various government departments, while collaborative graduate degree programs are seen as building the capacity of academic institutions. Available data show an increase in the number of trained EPM professionals, but there is no information on their effect on local economies through policy-making. Review studies that claim that EPM programs and courses have been instrumental in retaining African talent are not supported. Tracer study II found that 44 percent of graduates who were contacted lived outside their home country.⁹⁸ Retention of talent depends largely on the human resources management policies of governments and the international recognition of courses and programs.

97 As per statistics supplied by ACBF.

98 Makerere University 2010.

Table 4 Capacity building output of African economies

Assessment dimension	Collaborative master's and PhD degree programs (CMAP and CPP)	Professional degree programs	Short- term courses
Institutional capability enhancement in Africa in EPM	50 universities capable of offering long and short courses in EPM with improved academic and infrastructure capabilities Graduates of CMAP and CPP join universities as faculty members Access to international experts Qualified academic staff Joint programming Category A and B institutions moved up to Category C Most (88%) recipients of the UK Commonwealth Scholarship returned to their home country		
EPM professionals	Africa has now qualified and better quality policy experts		
Increased capacity building in public sector and civil organizations	A total of 2,678 graduated completed the training, of which 2,378 went to the public sector and 272 to the private sector Majority contributed to institutional capacity building with academic and research skills		
Social inclusion	Gender imbalances in all ACBF-supported courses; only 20%–25% of candidates admitted were women Lack of institutionalized approaches and active policies to promote female recruitment		

Note: CMAP is collaborative master's degree program; CPP is collaborative PhD degree program; EPM is economic policy management.
 Source: Author's review of Ayako (2013) and Makerere University (2010).

Women made up only 20–25 percent of students admitted to EPM courses and programs, indicating wide gender gaps. ACBF's partner institutions had clear policies on improving the rate of female admissions, but that was not enough to overcome gender bias. Gender imbalances in EPM programs are due to a number of factors that go beyond institutional strategies and policies. Gender gaps are attributed to five main factors: low levels of math preparation in high school, family responsibilities, financial problems (especially for graduate studies), greater pressures to earn incomes after graduation, and an absence of role models.⁹⁹ Achieving gender mainstreaming requires efforts beyond the policies and efforts of education institutions.

Sustainability of courses and programs

Cost management

The high cost of EPM training makes it unaffordable for stakeholders. Cost reduction for long-term courses has been implemented through a series of innovative strategies initiated by ACBF. The cost of short courses is still high largely because of the high cost of hotel accommodations. However, short courses are in demand because they deliver desired skills in a short time. While the cost of these courses has been found to be internationally competitive, it is not clear in what respect they are competitive. Some cost reduction strategies, like JFE and the removal of the one-year of foreign attachment requirement, should be reviewed.

Potential for sustainability/continuity of EPM courses and challenges

EPM courses have been offered for almost three decades, and it is high time that courses become self-sufficient and sustainable. Table 5 presents some of the potential measures identified to ensure the sustainability of EPMs. Short courses have shown better potential to be sustainable as there is a good demand for these courses.

Table 5 Sustainability of economic policy management courses

Assessment dimension	Collaborative master's and PhD degree programs (CMAP and CPP)	Professional degree programs	Short-term courses
Management support	Competitive remuneration package Transparent and stable governance systems of implementing agency		
	100% capitalization by ACBF and co-funders	ACBF and other donors	ACBF funding plus stakeholder willing to pay
Funding support	Medium to high (only PTCL) (12%–65%)	Medium to high (45%–100%)	Low (4%–18%)
	Likely to be discontinued in the absence of funding		Wider base of funding and fees from participants
Cost effectiveness	Cost reduction measures: Decentralizing joint elective programs, scaling back on travel support, virtual inspection mission, and state-sponsored accommodation Integration of all PhD programs was likely to reduce costs and generate academic synergies as well Internationally competitive in terms of cost efficiency		High cost of short term courses is due to cost of hotel accommodation
Financial dependence on ACBF	Collaborative courses supported by multiple donors	Professional degree courses heavily dependent on ACBF funding	Short term courses receive contributions from stakeholders
	Budgetary deficit for collaborative degree courses as donors are withdrawing		
	African government not willing to contribute to the pool of funding for training programs		
	PTCL/NPTCL continues to be a challenge and is far from sustainable.		

Note: CMAP is collaborative master's degree program; CPP is collaborative PhD degree program; EPM is economic policy management.
Source: Author's review of Ayako (2013) and Makerere University (2010).

ACBF funding is the oxygen for both the governments that demand graduates of long courses and the universities that deliver these courses. Funding support that continues to sustain the development assistance diminishes the value delivered through capacity building. Sustainability is like a profit, which is kept in mind or planned while conceptualizing an idea of capacity building as an investment and not as a cost. Ownership, shared vision, cost sharing, and indigenously developed capacity building are the foundation of sustainability. The hard lessons of experience in many countries have shown that much of the past aid had been ineffective and unsustainable because it had been driven or owned by donors. The host country and the intended beneficiaries must have a direct stake and sense of ownership at all stages; otherwise, projects become unwanted burdens on stakeholders. Every donor-driven project not only promotes dependency, but also undermines the necessary processes of development.¹⁰⁰

ACBF has taken several steps to support the continuity of these courses. These include competitive remuneration packages, full capitalization of ACBF and other donor funding, and transparent and stable governance and leadership at the implementing agency.¹⁰¹

100 OECD n.d.
101 Ayako 2013.

Short courses have shown the highest potential to be sustainable. They have produced the highest number of trained EPM professionals, who have been placed in all key departments of the government. Stakeholders are willing to share part of cost for organizing need-based training for their staff members.

Professional degree programs also have high acceptability among stakeholders for their direct relevance to the needs of African governments. However, the programs are still dependent on ACBF funding support, and few donors have shown any interest in funding professional degrees, calling sustainability into question.

Collaborative graduate degree programs have the least acceptability in terms of government jobs for graduates, who are considered more suited to academic jobs. African governments have not been willing to share the costs of such programs.

LESSONS LEARNED

A few important lessons drawn from the analysis are presented here for reflection, reinforcement of positive experiences, and consideration of the actions that can be taken to improve ACBF and other partners' efforts in EPM capacity building. The lessons incorporate the possible positive and negative factors that led to the success and failure of the strategy adopted and the actions taken by ACBF.

What worked in ACBF's support to economic policy management?

Lesson 1: Short courses have high acceptability since these are directly relevant to the needs of African governments and are able to deliver the needed skills within a short period.

What works well in the African market is need-based capacity building training that delivers value in a short time. Short courses focus on the immediate needs of governments and are seen as viable since governments find it fairly easy to spare professionals for a few days to upgrade their skills.

Lesson 2: Specialized institutions with a good track record in theory and practice (research and consulting) have high potential to deliver high quality training

Credit for the success of short courses can be given to two institutions that consistently earned high ratings from the graduates of their courses: the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI) and the West African Institute of Financial and Economic Management (WAIFEM). The evaluation study on MEFMI indicated that the institute's main value was in supporting countries to implement and update macroeconomic tools according to best international practices.¹⁰² WAIFEM is also known for its core competence in capacity building in macroeconomic management.¹⁰³

Lesson 3: Graduates of professional degree programs are well placed in key policy jobs due to a focus on practical skills and the relatively short duration of training.

Professional degree granting programs have an edge over collaborative graduate degree programs due to a stronger focus on practical skills in EPM. Participants produce a paper or complete a project, a method that has worked positively for professional courses. Despite the high acceptance of graduates of professional degree courses in key government departments, the course is still dependent on ACBF and other donors for funding. This aspect needs to be examined

¹⁰² SIDA 2015.

¹⁰³ <https://www.mfw4a.org/stakeholder-engagement/african-partners-directory/stakeholder/63/action/list/Category.html> (accessed on March 23, 2018)

What were the innovations in ACBF's support to economic policy management?

Lesson 4: Collaboration in the delivery of master's and doctoral degree programs is an innovative approach that drew on the academic expertise of different universities and that also ensured cost effectiveness.

JFE has allowed equitable capacity building in Sub-Saharan African countries. The collaborative training model brought together 26 universities in 21 countries; the CPP was extended to 8 universities in 6 countries. The collaborative approach facilitated the academic capacity building of these universities, and some of the universities advanced from Category A and B to Category C over time.

What did not work in ACBF's support to economic policy management?

Lesson 5: The graduates of EPM courses are prepared largely to return to government jobs. Therefore, the training courses focus on the needs of public institutions that are relevant to the African context. The courses therefore lack a broad perspective on economic issues as well as career diversity

ACBF has created several degree and non-degree courses and programs designed largely to meet the needs of government departments and higher education institutions. CMAP, CPP, and professional degree programs mainly admit nominated working professionals from government departments (except a limited number of seats for open categories). But the purpose of a university education is to open up the minds of students who are not under any obligation to any institution so that they can explore diverse perspectives in diverse situations and explore opportunities for careers that match their career goals. Such processes create thought leaders and not just doers, and such students are likely to compete to carve out new development paths.

Lesson 6: Long duration (collaborative master's and PhD degree programs) courses have shown low potential for sustainability in their current structure and are more relevant in preparing for academic jobs

It is difficult for any government to spare working professionals over a long period, especially when they are facing a shortage of good professionals in policy-making jobs. These programs also have low acceptability because they have been positioned as training for academic jobs. The world over, academic-oriented courses have produced thought leaders and excellent practicing professionals.

What were the challenges?

Lesson 7: Limited continuous traceability of graduates and weak tracer studies and review/evaluation studies limit the knowledge about institutional capacity building and whether universities are turning out competent graduates who may become effective economic policy-makers and managers.

In the absence of data about EPM courses and about graduates' work in formulating and implementing economic policies, it is difficult to establish the effectiveness of capacity building for the various types of courses and programs. Three tracer studies were available for analysis, and these indicated that only 23–38 percent of graduates were traced or included in the study. The methodology used in tracer studies and review/evaluation studies—opinion-based instruments for self-assessment by the graduates—did not yield appropriate information for this study. Such assessments do not provide insight into the actual skills learned and applied by graduates.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

For almost three decades, ACBF has been supporting capacity building in economic policy management for African economies to help them manage development challenges. The development approach taken by ACBF saw demand and supply as closely linked. The demand side consisted of African government departments (planning, finance, and central bank), public and private sector organizations, research organizations, and think tanks that were in need of qualified and competent policy analysts, researchers, policy developers, and implementers. On the supply side, ACBF supported tertiary educational institutions and higher education bodies with curriculum, infrastructure, and academic capabilities for offering master's and doctoral level degrees to the staff of government agencies, as well as to a few in open categories. Long courses were offered using a collaborative framework in which a large number of universities worked with each other to offer core and elective courses as well as to supervise master's and PhD theses preparation. The duration of these courses ranged from two years to five years. This approach contributed to good synergies among institutions and academicians and was considered cost effective.

ACBF also supported programs offering professional degree courses in seven countries. These were designed to train mid-career policy advisers and managers. Programs were offered independently by the universities assigned. The duration of the programs was 12 months. Finally, short courses in financial management were designed by highly specialized institutions to develop indigenous executive capacity in economic policy. These short courses were much more successful in placing graduates in key departments of governments than the collaborative and professional courses.

Evaluation reports show that stakeholders are unanimous in indicating that the training programs have consistently strengthened the national ability to plan and manage. More specifically, university administrators have indicated that they tend to view, especially CPP/CMAP/PTCI graduates, as having superior qualifications to assume teaching positions within their institutions. A particular example was the case of Rwanda where it is shown that the Faculties of economics of the national universities survived after the war because of the PTCI – now called NPTCI.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were drawn from the lessons learned in order to improve the sustainability of courses:

1. To reach out to high caliber prospective students, both women and men, universities need to establish career counseling and admission services to aspirants. Universities should reach out to undergraduate students and to young executives working in government, and private sector organizations to generate awareness of EPM courses and career opportunities. The selected students can be offered scholarship sponsored by governments and private bodies, as well as education loan facility from banks and other financial institutions.
2. To improve inputs to tracer studies, regular tracking systems should be established at the universities in collaboration with employers. It should be mandatory for universities to register graduates on the tracking portal and encourage them to provide regular updates. Incentives could include facilitation of networking with other students, access to new job openings, and sharing of research and other academic resources. Universities should establish alumni associations with country-wide chapters for regular interaction among graduates, including knowledge and experience exchanges. These chapters should receive contributions from the university as well as from the students to cover costs.

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Lesson Note #9



MOVING BEYOND CAPACITY BUILDING TO CAPACITY RETENTION AND UTILIZATION



Moses N. Kiggundu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Development is impossible without capacity. Lack of capacity and the effective retention and utilization of existing capacities are among the most pervasive impediments to the achievement of development goals and improvement in the human condition in Africa. After almost 30 years of capacity building and the accumulation of a wealth of lessons from experience, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and other capacity development agencies recognize the need to reconsider traditional approaches, strategies, and modalities and come up with innovative, fit-for-purpose ways of addressing Africa's apparently intractable capacity challenges.

The strategic area of concern for this Lesson Note is capacity retention and utilization. The note addresses issues and challenges relating to capacity retention and utilization and discusses the strategies and intervention modalities currently used in capacity development initiatives. It also presents results, impacts, and lessons on capacity retention and utilization: what was achieved, what worked or did not work, the challenges, critical factors of success or failure, and innovations. The note concludes with recommendations and policy implications for African governments, ACBF, and other development partners actively involved in capacity development interventions in Africa. It also draws attention to the retention and utilization of such capacity countries affected by conflict (CACs) or violence.

Documentation of results and impact relating to retention and utilization is limited because a number of ACBF-supported projects do not seem to systematically focus on downstream activities once project funding is ended. As well, the recipient organizations may not have good performance management systems that would provide data on retention, utilization, and performance. Still, while limited, the available evidence suggests that training programs offered regionally and collaboratively across established institutions and networked ecosystems have better records of trainee retention and utilization after graduation. This is more so if the trainees remain connected to the professional/academic network and the home country or employing organization and if the employing organization and wider context are supportive and not resource poor. Strategies and modalities from the private sector may be potentially useful for public service organizations. The challenge for ACBF is to develop new approaches to capacity building that provide evidence of results and impact for all value chain activities. There is a need to mainstream capacity building, retention and utilization while ensuring common and shared understanding not only among experts but, more important, among local beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

Assessing the results and impact over the years, an analytical framework is presented using the value chain analysis of capacity building initiatives from beginning to end. Capacity building initiatives supported by ACBF are conceptualized as a system of value-adding components made up of clearly identifiable activities. This allows for contextualization of capacity retention and utilization in the broader context of other related capacity building activities. This shows that capacity retention and utilization do not exist in isolation but are interdependent with other upstream and downstream capacity building activities. The value chain analysis framework shows the activities where ACBF has been most active and areas where, because of its project business model, it has had less engagement. Specifically, there has been far less involvement with tracking activities related to retention and utilization. It is possible for created capacity to be retained without being utilized (for example, because of alienated employees, poor supervision and management, unfamiliar technology, equipment in disrepair). Building capacities in one part of the system (institution, service) but not in other parts may not lead to improvements in overall retention, utilization, and performance. Individual and organization performance take place when created capacity is both retained and utilized.

The lessons learned are presented separately for retention and utilization, with more evidence for retention than for utilization. For retention, what seems to have worked is a combination of careful planning based on detailed and relevant capacity/training needs analysis, design of integrated training programs with a regional reach, and a network of relatively strong organizations working in partnership. For utilization, what seems to have worked is a combination of mutually reinforcing individual, organizational, and contextual factors focused on driving organizational performance and the achievement of development goals.

It is also worth noting that what seems not to work is the opposite of what worked. For example, for results and impact, training programs or other capacity development interventions that were small in scope and reach, isolated, projectized, unrelated to the wider public service, and implemented by weak, stand-alone organizations within a weak institutional environment did not contribute to retention, utilization, or performance.

Specific recommendations and policy implications are presented for African governments, ACBF, and other development partners. The first set of recommendations relate to the way capacity and capacity development have been conceptualized and how capacity interventions have been designed and implemented. Here the recommendations call for a more strategic, sustained, system-wide approach to capacity and capacity development, with active involvement of all key stakeholders, and paying attention to results and impact in all value chain activities, including retention and utilization.

For the African governments, the recommendations speak to the need to re-confirm the critical importance of capacity and capacity development for national development and to give it the highest policy priority, even, where necessary, declaring capacity a national crisis, especially for countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence. As for Africa's development partners, the policy implications of the recommendations are clear: Africa still needs a lot more capacity building support, using more innovative, targeted, contextualized, and strategic, fit-for purpose approaches that go beyond supporting capacity building to its retention and utilization.

INTRODUCTION

Development is impossible without capacity. This is more so in Africa, where it has been long recognized that lack of capacity at the individual, organizational, institutional, and societal levels has impeded effective and sustaining achievement of development goals and sustainable goals (Millennium Development Goals [MDGs], Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]), poverty alleviation, service delivery, shared prosperity, and overall improvements in the human condition. Despite capacity building investments by ACBF, bilateral and multilateral development partners, regional economic communities, the African Development Bank, the African Union (AU), national governments, and others, capacity remains a critical challenge for Africa in all sectors of government, the economy, and society. Shortages of professional and technical skills, competencies, and resources still constrain the achievement of development goals, and this is especially so in countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence. Evidence suggests that there are few enduring success stories relating to capacity retention and utilization in public administration. After almost 30 years of capacity building and the accumulation of a wealth of lessons from experience, most experts believe that the timing is right for ACBF and other capacity development agencies to reconsider traditional approaches to capacity development and find innovative ways of addressing the capacity challenge. Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030, SDGs, especially SDG 16 calling for effective, accountable, and development-oriented institutions, all require renewed efforts to build the capacities needed for the fulfilment of related goals and aspirations

Although some progress has been made in capacity building at the country level (see, for example, the results reported in the Africa Capacity Reports for 2011–18), issues of capacity retention and utilization are still a key challenge facing African countries. For example, ACBF field experiences and studies show that the lack of a systematic approach to retaining and using capacity, by ACBF and the recipient organization, is a major impediment to the effective and sustaining implementation of the Agenda 2063's long-term goals and aspirations and the specific ambitious medium-term goals of Agenda 2030. Even once developed, capacity is most of the time not retained or utilized. The ACBF report *African Union Agenda 2063: Capacity Requirements for the New African Vision: Agenda 2063—"The Africa We Want,"* highlights the need to pay attention to the development of retention and utilization policy packages at national and regional levels. ACBF observes that even when skills development initiatives are in place, it is important to craft capacity retention and utilization policies that should go beyond standard human resource management work. A recent World Bank study observed that available indicators suggest that in the past few years, institutional capacity in Africa has either remained flat or weakened and that weak capacity is one of the significant risks and challenges to Africa's growth, development, and transformation.¹⁰⁴

104 World Bank 2017.

Against this background, the World Bank, in collaboration with ACBF, proposed undertaking an analytical series of Lessons Notes aimed at documenting and sharing lessons in capacity building efforts in strategic areas over the years. The series, entitled “Lessons on Capacity Development in Africa,” is intended to document the lessons of experience and to clarify the impact of capacity building interventions, while also understanding what may or may not have worked and why. The objective of these Lessons Notes is to produce and share knowledge on the lessons of the past three decades of capacity building efforts in Africa and to provide a framework for understanding how to better design, implement, and manage more effective capacity development programs that would enable the continent to achieve its development goals and aspirations. The Lessons Notes should inform the design of better fit-for-purpose and innovative capacity building interventions that can sustainably support Africa’s socioeconomic transformation.

The key aim of this Lesson Note is to distill lessons of experience beyond capacity building in capacity retention and utilization, addressing key challenges in retaining and utilizing built capacities in Africa, considering impact and cases where capacities have been retained and utilized, what works, what does not work, and why. This note also addresses the lessons that can be learned from ACBF and others relating to capacity retention and utilization interventions that can inform future capacity development programs for Africa’s development and transformation. The note offers some recommendations and policy implications for capacity building retention and utilization. It is generally accepted that Africa needs new and innovative approaches to capacity building to strengthen institutions and escape the fragility trap. This Lesson Note is organized in seven parts. After a brief outline of the methodology, it discusses the issues, definitions, and challenges associated with capacity, capacity building, retention, and utilization. It provides a conceptual framework for placing retention and utilization in a broader context of capacity development for long-term development and transformation. Drawing on the review of the literature, it then analyzes the strategies and intervention modalities used for capacity development retention and utilization. It uses a value chain analytic framework to present evidence of the extent to which intervention modalities commonly used by ACBF and others adequately address issues of capacity retention and utilization. The next section reports on the results of the analysis, with a focus on what was achieved and what were the results and impact. It also discusses the challenges of showing achievements and impact for capacity retention and utilization when relying on commonly used capacity building intervention modalities. The following discussion of lessons learned considers what worked, what did not work, and what were the challenges, critical factors of success or failure, and innovations relating to capacity retention and utilization. The final two sections offer a set of recommendations and policy implications and suggested improvements for the design, implementation, and management of innovative capacity development programs that can be scaled-up for better capacity retention and utilization at national and regional levels.

The research for this Lesson Note involved a literature review undertaken in phases. The first phase was a brief review of the academic literature dating back to before the ACBF’s founding in 1991. This literature included a long tradition of conceptual, empirical, and “how to” practitioner-oriented contributions to human capital capacity retention and turnover, and some literature on non-human capacity utilization (such as equipment, vehicles, physical plant, and supplies). The second phase reviewed ACBF reports discussing its founding, role, modalities, achievements, and impact as a leading capacity building organization in Africa. Examples include “Achievements and Impact of ACBF’s Capacity Building Interventions, 1991– 2015” (undated), “Evaluation of ACBF’s Flagship publication, Africa Capacity Reports, 2011–2014” (September 2015), and the “*Secretariat Authorized Funding Window (SAFEWIND) Evaluation Report*” (undated). Together, these reports provide a historical assessment of ACBF’s contributions and corporate mission statement, “to build strategic partnerships, offer technical support, and provide access to relevant knowledge related to capacity building in Africa.”¹⁰⁵ The third phase was a review of ACBF–supported capacity building initiatives as reported in midterm reviews (MTRs) and end of project evaluation reports (EPRs).¹⁰⁶ Although most ACBF–supported capacity building projects undertook both MTR and EPR evaluations, these evaluation reports do not contain much information pertaining to capacity retention or utilization. Rather, the focus is on matters of project management and compliance (program of work and budgets) and less on after-end-of-project issues of retention, utilization, performance results, or impact.

105 www.acbf-pact.org, accessed April 14, 2018.

106 These included “Enhancing capacity of the COMESA Secretariat to support economic and trade policy analysis and research project”-Midterm Review Report (2016), Richard Sikananu, Consultant and Mid-term Review of the Performance of the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), Accra, Ghana, 2010. EPRs reviewed included the ACBF (n.d.), GIMPA (n.d.), and Ayako (2015).

The fourth phase was a review of tracer studies of ACBF–supported capacity building projects – tracer studies mainly focused on after-end-of-project issues, including capacity retention and utilization. In addition, reports on the retention of highly skilled returnees in Mozambique and the brain drain studies in Malawi, although not designed as tracer studies, provide useful information pertaining to capacity retention and utilization. Having more tracer studies would have provided more useful information and lessons of experience relating to retention and utilization. The fifth phase looked at retention and utilization studies of non-ACBF-supported capacity building projects in Africa. These included a 20-year (1991–2011) study of turnover rates of academic staff at the College of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa, and universities in South Africa; a study on the introduction of information and communication technology in commercial banking in the Sudan; and a review of public service reform in Tanzania by a former permanent secretary.¹⁰⁷ The final phase was a brief review of select World Bank reports on what’s next for capacity building in Africa, education in Africa, and strengthening of the civil service in a context of fragility, conflict, and violence.¹⁰⁸

Together, these sources, though not comprehensive, provided adequate information to accomplish the objectives of this Lesson Note as outlined above. The Lesson Note draws on published studies and unpublished project reports not all cited in the references to make it easier to read. In the references section, uncited references are marked with an asterisk (*). This is done to provide readers with a more complete list of published and unpublished sources used to prepare this Lesson Note.

Challenges of retention and utilization

Box 1 provides a summary list of key issues and challenges of capacity creation, retention, and utilization in Africa. While it is beyond the scope of this note to discuss each of them in detail, a few are highlighted here.

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Concepts, definitions, and operationalization

Although ACBF, the World Bank, and other development partners each give detailed multidimensional and multilevel definitions of capacity and related concepts, it is not always clear if these definitions are understood and shared by Africans involved in capacity building activities. To some, capacity building (or development) is associated with donors because of the dominant role they play in designing, funding, and managing various capacity initiatives. A small but vocal group think that capacity building ideas were introduced to undermine utilization of indigenous capacities. For example, in a 2013 EPR of an ACBF–supported think tank, a staff member observed: “The biggest issue in Africa in research is not capacity building, but capacity utilization. There are lots of talented people in Africa, but they are not utilized because of slow procedures.” Others still think that capacity building is identical to off-site training and the provision of equipment and other “goodies” that the employing organization is otherwise unable to supply. The challenge is to mainstream capacity building and ensure common and shared understanding not only among experts but, more important, among local beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

107 Rugumyamheto 2004.

108 World Bank 2010, 2016, and 2017.

Box 1 Summary of key issues and challenges of capacity creation, retention, and utilization in Africa

1. Concepts, definitions, and operationalization.
2. Projectization, fragmentation, and “drop in the bucket.”
3. Lack of consistent unit of analysis—from individual trainee to national development.
4. Inadequate attention to or understanding of ecosystems that shape capacity creation, retention, and utilization.
5. Inadequate diagnosis or understanding of changing capacity needs at different levels.
6. Need for innovative capacity strategies and modalities.
7. Need to attend to broader sustainability issues beyond project funding.
8. Lack of data, tools, and research on critical issues and factors of capacity retention and utilization.
9. The need for ongoing system-wide support beyond end of project reports: individuals, organizations, and others.
10. Limited engagement of capacity retention and utilization by key stakeholders along the value chain.
11. Weak tracking and performance management systems: baseline, audits, measurements, and more.
12. Poor documentation and diffusion of retention and utilization “best practices.”
13. Need for collaboration, mentoring, professional and technical associations, networking, continuous learning, development, career management, and more.
14. Schools of public administration and other capacity creators need more and better-quality resources, capacities, coordination, clarity of mission, institutional strengthening, and more.
15. Factors, risks, and impediments beyond local control (brain drain, donor behavior, political influence, and so on).
16. Need for better, more committed leadership, management, and supervision (for example, within the recipient organization).
17. Countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence need special attention for capacity creation, retention, and utilization.
18. Better use should be made of diaspora contributions to capacity creation, retention, and utilization.

Source: Author

Although the words are widely used in discussions of capacity and capacity building, both “retention” and “utilization” can mean different things to different people in different settings. In capacity building discussions, the word “retention” is used to refer to retention of trained personnel or other created capacities such as information and communication technology (ICT), equipment, and physical plant in an organizational setting. Here, the essence of retention is that created human and non-human capital physically remain in the organization. Retention, in the context of the brain drain, can concern the local, national, regional, or international level, depending on where the people who leave an organization move. Another meaning of retention draws from learning theory and refers to the extent to which the knowledge and skills acquired during training are retained by the trainee and successfully applied to job and organizational settings. Here the emphasis is not so much on the physical presence of the trainee as on the trainee’s ability to retain the knowledge and skills acquired and transfer and apply to improve job and organizational performance. Successful completion of a training program or course does not necessarily translate into successful transfer of acquired knowledge or skills to the job or workplace organization. There is a difference between capacity gaps and performance gaps.

Utilization can be defined as the extent to which trainees are able to consistently apply acquired knowledge and skills and other created competencies to better perform their job and contribute to the effective achievement of the organization’s goals and ultimately to national development and transformation. Other created capacities may refer to non-human inputs such as ICT, equipment, and financial resources. Utilization is intimately related to performance, and therefore it is almost impossible to discuss utilization without reference to performance at the individual, group, organization, and public service levels. Utilization and performance are so related that they both depend on the organization’s systems and practices of performance management, audit, measurements, compensation, and performance-related incentives.

Projectization, fragmentation, and “drop in the bucket”

Although capacity development is defined as long-term, holistic, thematic, and strategic, project design and projectization is the dominant business model for supporting capacity building in Africa. The project business model puts more emphasis on inputs of program of work and budgets than on results and impact as measured by retention and utilization. The most important information about retention and utilization— and possible lessons of experience— take place after the end of the project cycle.

When capacity development interventions are limited in scope and reach, attributions of development outcomes are hard to make and justify. Moreover, even improvements in the performance of a single organization (agency, ministry, directorate) may not have significant effects service-wide or lead to effective and sustainable attainment of the wider development goals, such as poverty alleviation, inclusive growth, or the “Africa we want” (MDGs, SDGs/Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063). There are simply too many externalities—intervening or moderating variables—along the chain of events from capacity development interventions to retention, utilization, performance, and development goals and indicators. The drive to demonstrate results and impact must be tempered by the realities on the ground and by the modest contributions such capacity development interventions can make even under the most ideal conditions. Some of the capacity development interventions, such as introducing laptop computers in local government offices, are rather basic. This calls for more differentiated interventions to consider unique local capacity needs and challenges.

Making better use of diaspora contributions to capacity creation, retention, and utilization

The African diaspora is increasingly seen as making positive contributions to development in general and capacity creation, retention, and utilization in particular. For more than 20 years, international organizations such as the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), bilateral donors such as the UK Department for International Development, and more recently African governments (for example, Malawi and South Africa) have developed programs aimed at “bringing back” qualified diaspora nationals to contribute to the development of their native countries. The early programs such as IOM’s Transfer of Know-how Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) and the Return of Qualified African Nationals Programme (RQAN) focused on addressing critical skill gaps in areas such as health (doctors, nurses, pharmacists), education, and economic management. More recently,

multi-generation diaspora communities promise to play a bigger role in Africa's development by contributing to development finance (such as through remittances diaspora bonds), private sector investments (venture capital, small enterprises), and addressing technical and professional critical skill gaps in both public and private sectors. Countries like Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, and Uganda are developing targeted interventions aimed at more effective utilization of diaspora resources. ACBF, working with schools and institutes of public administration (SIPAs), should act proactively to study the long-term impact of various diaspora initiatives and draw lessons for capacity creation, retention, and utilization for other countries.¹⁰⁹ For example, do first and subsequent generations of African diaspora professionals make different contributions to capacity creation, retention, and utilization in the public and private sectors and nongovernmental organizations (NGO)?

Analysis of strategies and intervention modalities

Box 2 lists select capacity building strategies and intervention modalities.

Box 2 Select capacity building strategies and intervention modalities.

1. Training: off-site, academic, on-line, one-off, classroom instructions, mobile buses.
2. Study tours: national, regional, overseas.
3. Workshops: local, regional, continental, advocacy, information, networking.
4. Project management activities.
5. Institutional strengthening.
6. Technical assistance support.
7. Direct financial support (equipment, support for institutional costs).
8. Use of private sector modalities.
9. Collaborating/partnership institutions.
10. Regional strategies and modalities.
11. New or established institutions.
12. Networked ecosystems.
13. Use/support of insider champions.
14. Scientific, political, and economic strategies to address brain drain.

Source: Author

¹⁰⁹ In 2012, the African Union established the African Institute for Remittances, which held its second Diaspora Engagement Forum on the theme of Leveraging Diaspora Remittances for SME Development in Africa: Implementing Innovative Strategies, 3-4 May 2018, Vienna, Austria (www.au.air.org). While remittances are of growing interest to African governments as a source of development finance, this Lessons Note, consistent with the broader diaspora literature, takes the view that multi-generational diaspora individuals and communities have much more to contribute, especially in terms of capacity creation, retention, and utilization. Two ACBF studies illustrate this point: Kiggundu and Oni (2004) and ACBF (2018).

Commonly used strategies and modalities

The most commonly used modalities fall under the project business model, as discussed above. These include training of various types, study tours (local or overseas), workshops, institutional strengthening, and short- and longer-term technical assistance, often presented by non-nationals. Most of these are difficult to assess or to relate directly to specific outputs such as retention and utilization. This is especially so when there are no baseline data or information on capacity or performance gaps before and after implementation of capacity development interventions. Off-site training, conducted away from the workplace, is particularly difficult to successfully transfer in ways that benefit other employees and the rest of the recipient organization.

A review of the MTR and EPR evaluation documents shows that ACBF has supported many degree-granting graduate training programs, such as Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and Economic Policy Management. The interventions were designed and delivered collaboratively across established institutions (rather than newly created organizations such as think tanks, African Research and Resource Forum (ARRF), and African Women's Development Fund (AWDF). The programs operated regionally (such as GIMPA's Public Sector Management Training Program and AERC's Collaborative PhD Program and Collaborative Master's Program) and took advantage of networked ecosystems in support of design, delivery, and to some extent the retention and utilization of graduates. Limited available evidence suggests that training programs offered regionally and collaboratively across established institutions and networked ecosystems have better records of trainee retention and utilization after graduation. This is more so if the trainees remain connected to the professional/academic network and if the employing organization is supportive and resourceful. Problems of retention and utilization are more likely in stand-alone projects undertaken by fragile or newly created organizations whose sustainability depends on continuing ACBF or donor funding (such as AARRF and AWDF). In countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV), there tends to be an overreliance on short-term, supply-driven, gap-filling modalities such as technical assistance and equipment purchases. While these interventions may stop a bad capacity situation from getting worse, there is no evidence that they contribute significantly to system-wide capacity retention, utilization, or performance. Rather, they create temporary and isolated "islands of efficiency in a sea of bureaucratic inefficiency."

Retention and utilization are negatively affected by turnover and brain drain. This is particularly so for long-term training programs lasting years that require trainees to become productive members of their professional or academic communities (in addition to being members of the employing organization). For this type of training, capacity development modalities that use a combination of trainee connections, inside champions, and scientific, political, and economic strategies improve retention, utilization, self-confidence, and acceptance as valuable members of a profession. For long-term overseas training, trainee connections can be reinforced by sandwich training (first and last third done in home country or region), strong mentoring at home and abroad, strategic in-country selection (in favor of candidates with strong attachments at home), professional/academic networking and support, continuing access to professional resources and funding, and with a re-entry strategy that includes internships and involvement of the leadership and key members of the employing organization.

A U.S. study found that these modalities and strategies raised the average rate of return of high-skilled African trainees from overseas training to 80 percent. This compares with a U.S. average of 44 percent (Kupfer et al. 2004). When trainees return to their employment organization, retention and utilization are determined to an extent by the reception and quality of interactions with other members of the organization (co-workers, support staff, supervisors, managers, leaders, ICT, human resources managers, and other professionals). Inside champions are individuals in the organization who are selected to work with the trainees before, during, and after training to help them with training and re-entry. If this is done systematically, it can reduce alienation and turnover/brain drain and improve trainee retention, utilization, performance, and professional development. The understanding and support of the wider public service and society is also necessary.

Strategies and modalities from the private sector

ACBF has limited dealings with the private sector and therefore with how private sector organizations create capacity and improve retention and utilization in line with company mission, goals, and objectives. As part of a rethinking of strategies and modalities for innovative capacity building initiatives, it may be instructive to look at some of the more successful and cost-effective private sector practices.

Most successful private sector organizations give training and human capital formation high priority, with support from both line and staff functions. Training is not an off-line budget item. Training and development and other human capital initiatives are part of the organization's strategic plan and annual budgets. Companies conduct ongoing needs analysis for individuals, the teams they work with, and the organization to distinguish training needs from the organization's non-training development needs. The training budget is an integral part of the operating budget, subject to the same rigors of accountability and operational controls. Training and development are an investment with expected returns in terms of higher retention, utilization, and performance. Capacity development interventions are strategically and operationally linked to the organization's performance management systems and practices. Digital and mobile ICT are widely used. Some of these principles and practices are potentially applicable to ACBF-supported capacity development partners in the public services.

Several private sector strategies and modalities may also be relevant for ACBF capacity development, retention, and utilization. Private sector organizations do not routinely use academic training leading to graduate degrees. Rather, they use a combination of integrated and phased in-house and off-site training programs with built-in rigorous continuous assessment and a focus on retention, utilization, and performance. In-class training is complemented by formal and informal development modalities such as mentoring, job transfers, short-term reassignments, taskforce assignments, and temporary assignments. These activities emphasize the trainee as an integral part of the organization's ecosystem of development, assessment, feedback, support, performance, and rewards. Trainees are given clear expectations relating to retention (membership in the organization), utilization (applying acquired capabilities), and performance (meeting organizational goals). Increasingly, in partnership with local partners (universities, consulting firms, and so on), the private sector is combining classroom instruction with on-line e-learning, self-learning modalities, especially for long or phased programs.

In addition to technical skills development, businesses are increasingly paying attention to the development of non-technical "soft skills" such as the social and behavioral skills, non-cognitive skills, teamwork, and cross-cultural skills that are needed to meet the demands of increasingly changing workplaces in Africa.

The strategies and modalities used by businesses such as Goldman Sachs in its 10,000 Women's Initiative¹¹⁰ (which trains women entrepreneurs in Africa and other developing countries) provide potentially useful models of new approaches to capacity development, retention, and utilization. They offer new ideas for capacity needs analysis, design, scope, reach, partnerships, uptake, performance, follow-up, and overall improvements in the human condition, including poverty alleviation, inclusion, and empowerment. While not all private sector tools and practices are applicable to public sector capacity retention and utilization, ACBF and other capacity development partners would benefit from a closer look and systematic study of how successful private sector organizations create and improve capacity retention and utilization.

110 www.goldmansachs.com/10000-women

RESULTS AND IMPACT: WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AND WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

Over almost three decades of service, ACBF has achieved a lot, especially in supporting capacity building initiatives at individual, institutional, national, regional, and continental levels. It has been the leading organization advocating for capacity building and making sure that it remains a key strategic issue on the continent's development agenda. This section focuses on the results and impact: what was achieved and what was the impact of ACBF-supported capacity building initiatives? Most of the results and impact documented by MTR and EPR reports are short to medium term because, as pointed out earlier, these documents do not cover in a substantive way the results and impact after the end of the projects. More tracer studies would provide evidence of longer-term results and impact. The combination of lack of sufficient data from systematic tracer studies and weak institutional performance management systems in the public service undermines the quality of information needed for assessment of capacity development interventions of retention and utilization.

Analytical framework for assessing results and impact: The capacity building value chain framework

To assess results and impact over the years, an analytical framework is presented using the value chain analysis of capacity building initiatives from beginning to end. Capacity building initiatives supported by ACBF are conceptualized as a system of value-adding components made up of clearly identifiable activities. Table 1 shows an assessment of capacity building initiatives using the value chain analytical framework. It also provides brief definitions of each capacity building activity and an assessment of the extent to which ACBF seems to have been involved in those activities. More important, table 1 contextualizes capacity retention and utilization in the broader context of other related capacity building activities, showing that capacity retention and utilization do not exist in isolation but are interdependent with other capacity building activities before and after.

Table 1 Assessment of capacity building results and impact using the value chain framework

Capacity value chain activities	Definitions and illustrative activities
Strategic planning, conceptualization, needs analysis, and operationalization	The ability of individuals, organizations, institutions, and societies to identify opportunities and constraints and to plan and manage development effectively, efficiently, and sustainably. This includes the development of human resources, organizations, institutions, society, and a supportive local and international policy environment. Definitions, dimensions, themes, profiles, developing measurement tools, indicators, and policy notes.
<i>upstream</i>	<i>Much more work needed for the public service, recipient organizations. Baseline data/information needed.</i>
Capacity creation and advocacy	The creation of effective human, organizational, and institutional capacities through learning, doing, transferring, and putting in place systems, structures, technologies, and processes that change attitudes, behavior, enhance performance and adaptability for dealing with internal and external dynamic environments. Spreading the word, networking, publications, outreach, professionalization, knowledge management, brain drain.
<i>primary</i>	<i>Most ACBF efforts in the last 27 years concentrated here, such as the Africa Capacity Indicators Report/ Africa Capacity Report (ACIR/ACI), support for think tanks, public service graduate training, women's organizations, private sector foundations. Innovative approaches, modalities needed.</i>

Capacity retention	Keeping in usable form existing and created human and non-human capacities for effective deployment to achieve individual and organizational missions and societal development goals.
<i>downstream</i>	<i>Limited attention. Limited data/information or best practice. More is needed for the next generation of capacity building initiatives.</i>
Capacity utilization and performance	Effective and efficient use of existing/created capacities, capabilities, and competences to achieve organizational goals ethically and sustainably. Transfer, adaptation, diffusion, internalization, brain gain.
<i>downstream</i>	<i>Limited ACBF attention. Much more is needed for the next generation of capacity building strategies and initiatives. The need to demonstrate attribution.</i>
Capacity renewal, upgrade, and innovation	Keeping, sustaining, upgrading, replacing, and renewing created capacities and capabilities at the individual, organizational, institutional, and societal levels. Re-training, maintenance, adaptation, upgrade, transformation, publications, service to the profession, renovation.
<i>downstream</i>	<i>Not discussed in most ACBF studies, evaluation reports, etc. Needed for the next generation of capacity building strategies & initiatives</i>

Source: Adopted from ACBF (2004).

The capacity building value chain framework is divided into three parts: upstream, primary, and downstream. The upstream part is made up of capacity building strategic planning, conceptualization, needs analyses, and operationalization (design, resourcing, and so on). Strategic planning activities are important at the outset because capacity building is defined as strategic, systematic, and holistic. Primary and downstream activities depend on the quality of strategic planning undertaken upstream. Other upstream activities include capacity conceptualization in specific settings, needs analyses (training and non-training, human and non-human), operationalization (such as design and selection of strategies and modalities) and diagnosis (training needs analysis, organizational assessment, performance gaps, environmental scanning, and so on). These upstream activities are important for subsequent activities. For example, results from training needs analyses and organizational diagnoses help to distinguish between training and non-training capacity gaps and needs.

The primary part of the value chain is made up of activities related to capacity creation and advocacy. Capacity creation includes all the activities aimed at addressing identified capacity gaps, training and non-training needs, and organizational and contextual impediments to performance and the achievement of developmental goals. To be effective, capacity creation must be aligned with the work done upstream (planning, needs analyses, design, selection of modalities, tools, and so on). This is the most visible part of the value chain and the one that receives the most attention from different stakeholders and beneficiaries (donors, trainees, management, experts, leaders, politicians). The MTR, EPR, and AWPB documents tend to focus on these primary activities.

For evidence of results and impact, we look at the downstream activities of retention, utilization, performance, capacity renewal, upgrade, and innovation. Most of the discussion on retention focuses on retaining human capital, avoiding turnover and brain drain. Almost equally important is the retention of non-human created capacity in the form of technology, equipment, organizational procedures, systems and resources, physical plant, work ethic, aptitude, and so on. When the recipient organization is resource poor, national institutions are weak, and the wider context is hostile or disabling, retention of human and non-human created capacities is seriously compromised. This negatively affects utilization and in turn performance. Table 1 combines utilization and performance into one set of downstream activities because the two are inexplicably linked. Effective utilization of created human capacity is a long process that requires trainees to learn, internalize, adapt, transfer, and apply acquired knowledge and requires the organization to be supportive and ready to take advantage of the collective competences of the trainees. *It is possible for created capacity to be retained without being utilized (such as alienated employees, poor organization systems, supervision/management,*

unfamiliar technology, equipment in disrepair, disabling environment). Individual and organization performance takes place when created capacity is both retained and utilized. The last set of downstream capacity building activities involves renewal, upgrade, and innovation (see table 1). Examples of innovative downstream activities include retraining, renewing, upgrading, adapting, and transforming created capacities.

Table 1 Shows that most of the results and impact of ACBF are at the primary value chain activities of capacity creation and advocacy. *Documentation of results and impact relating to retention and utilization is limited because some of ACBF-supported projects do not focus on downstream activities once project funding has ended. As well, the recipient organizations may not have adequate tracking system to provide data on retention, utilization, and performance. The challenge for ACBF is to develop new approaches to capacity building that provide evidence of results and impact for all value chain activities shown in table 1.*

Retention and utilization results and impact

Table 2 summarizes retention and utilization results and impact from a tracer study of a regional Master of Arts degree program in economic policy management offered by Makerere University. The study covers seven cohorts over the 1998–2005 academic years, using a combination of online and personal questionnaires with 300 useable returns. Regrettably, it had no baseline data. Of the 300 respondents, 14 percent were in management jobs, 20 percent in service provision, 20 percent in policy-making, 18 percent in information dissemination, and 16 percent in project implementation. The remaining 12 percent were not identified. We do not know what type of jobs the respondents had before taking the training. Asked about promotion after graduation, 24 percent reported that they had been promoted three times, 42 percent twice, and 34 percent once. No data were available for those not promoted across cohorts. Although the sample includes respondents who graduated in different years, the data do not differentiate the rate of promotion for different cohorts. Regarding possible brain drain, 54 percent of the respondents reported that they were permanently in their home country, 46 percent that they were permanently working and residing outside their home country. The data do not show how many respondents resided permanently outside the continent. The poor design and reporting of the results of the Makerere University tracer study limit the quality of definitive conclusions.

Table 2 Retention and utilization results and impact from a tracer study of a Master of Arts degree program in economic policy management at Makerere University

Retention/utilization measure	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree
Gained ideas/knowledge	36	32	32
Made useful contacts	20	58	22
Strength of academic partnerships	42	16	42
Made professional partnerships	34	24	42
Increased confidence for work performance	20	58	22
Progression in same job	32	20	48
Gained higher mobility across jobs	44	32	24
Achieved higher income	16	60	24
Skills recognition by employer	32	14	52
Relevance of enhanced skills for my country	36	44	20
Economic policy making			

Source: Makerere 2011.

Respondents were asked to respond to 10 items intended to measure aspects of retention and utilization on a scale of Strongly agree, Moderately agree, and Agree. (The scale did not provide room for disagreements on the 10 items.) Forty-four percent of the respondents strongly agreed that because of the training they gained more mobility across jobs (employability), but only 16 percent strongly agreed that they had achieved higher incomes because of the training program. Thirty-six percent strongly agreed that they had gained ideas/knowledge from the program, and the same percentage strongly agreed that the training program and the skills it enhanced were relevant for economic policy-making in the trainee's home country. Thirty-two percent strongly agreed that the skills they acquired during training were recognized by the employer. The study did not provide much information about the respondents' employing organization, especially regarding support for created capacity retention or utilization. Although the study has serious limitations, it is one among very few that provide data on retention and utilization well after the end of the capacity building training program. *More tracer studies are needed for better understanding of the results and impact of retention and utilization of various capacity building strategies and modalities.*

LESSONS LEARNED

This section summarizes lessons of experience: what worked or what did not work, the challenges, critical factors of success or failure, and any innovations. These lessons do not offer a blueprint for what worked, for there is none. Rather, they are based on limited evidence from the review of the literature. As well, there are different lessons for retention and utilization. Retention is more about keeping created capacity in place while utilization is more about behavior, performance and goal attainment. Box 3 provides a provisional list of some of the lessons of what worked derived from a limited review of the literature.

What worked

For retention, what seems to have worked is a combination of careful planning based on detailed and relevant capacity/training needs analysis and an integrated training program design with regional reach offered by relatively strong collaborating institutions with quality program support and management (see box 3). Particularly important is the character and treatment of the trainees; the design, implementation, and relevancy of the training program to the organization; and the leadership, management, and resourcefulness of the recipient organization. Employee propensity to stay is strongly determined by existing working conditions. The role of the government can be critical for providing leadership, guidance, resources, and political support. Support of the wider society is necessary but not enough.

Box 3 What worked: retention and utilization results, impact

What worked: retention	What worked: utilization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detailed capacity needs analysis and organizational diagnosis (AERC). ● Integrated capacity development interventions (scientists trained in the United States: Kupfer et al. 2004). ● Regionally based training program (GIMPA Public Service Sector Management Training Program). ● Collaboration among capacity development creating institutions (AERC collaborative PhD programme). ● Established institutions not dependent only on donor funding (GIMPA, Makerere). ● Professionally enabling capacity development ecosystem (private sector capacity development interventions). ● Quick wins linked to wider public service performance goals/needs (Rugumyamheto: Tanzania civil service reform program). ● Fit-for-purpose capacity development strategies and modalities (AERC). ● Quality of capacity development program management (ACBF). ● Planned government engagement (Malawi brain drain crisis). ● Supportive, resource-rich employing organization/ public service (Kenya vs South Sudan). ● Overall quality of working conditions (several African universities). ● In countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence, short-term capacity development for short term gains (Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Capacity development interventions linked to individual and organizational performance needs/goals. ● Functioning performance management system, practice. ● Trainees connected to learning-doing ecosystems. ● Critical mass of capacity development interventions, participants. ● Sound human resources management policies, practices. ● Capacity development interventions in high-performing organizations. ● Trainees' sense of contribution: valued, recognized, rewarded, supported, aligned incentives. ● Complementary trainee attributes. ● Connected to professional community, support networks (scientists trained in the United States). ● Applied/applicable/usable capacity development interventions. ● Capacity development interventions with built-in staying power (AERC). ● Shared experiences/learning/lessons

Source: ACBF, various evaluation reports

Available evidence suggests that lessons of what worked for capacity development utilization were hard to come by. Evidence-based studies linking capacity development interventions to utilization (and performance) are rare and therefore so are the lessons learned. *For utilization, what seemed to work was a combination of mutually reinforcing individual, organizational, and contextual factors focused on driving organizational performance and achievement of development goals (see box 3).* Individual attributes and traits (such as applied knowledge, ethics, professionalism, personality), organizational systems and practices (performance management systems, incentives and working conditions, human resources management policies, overall organizational strength and resourcefulness), and a supportive wider environment (government support, professional infrastructure and learning systems) together contribute to effective and sustaining utilization. *Having a critical mass of capacity development interventions—a critical mass of trainees from a critical mass of interconnected organizations in the public service and a critical mass of capacity development interventions—which is the opposite of the “drop in the bucket” approach, improves the chances for utilization, performance, and goal attainment.*

What did not work

What seemed not to work is the opposite of what worked. For example, for results and impact (training, utilization, and performance), program or other capacity development interventions that were small in scope and reach, isolated, projectized, unrelated to the wider public service, and implemented by weak, stand-alone organizations within a weak institutional environment did not contribute to retention, utilization, or performance. Trainees who were alienated, disconnected from providers of the training program, the employer, and the professional infrastructure, would most likely not complete the program or not stay with the same employer or remain in the home country. Poorly resourced or managed employer organizations operating in a context of weak public institutions, public /political leadership, management, and supervision would not contribute to retention or utilization. Factors driving the success or failure of capacity development retention and utilization are to be found at all levels of the capacity development ecosystem: individual, group, organizational, institutional, and societal.

Innovations

Box 4 lists strategies and modalities considered innovative for retention and utilization:

Box 4 Identified capacity retention and utilization innovations

1. Strategic in-country trainee selection.
2. Strong mentoring of trainees in the home and foreign country/institution where training takes place.
3. Ongoing professional networking and support—before, during, and after formal training.
4. Strategies for trainee re-entry and re-integration in home country and place of employment.
5. Training, briefing and coaching key stakeholders in the trainees' recipient organization/home country about the importance of the capacity development intervention, participants and other beneficiaries.
6. Strategic and active involvement of all stakeholders in all value chain activities.
7. On-going support for professional equipment, funding, access to professional/academic resources.
8. Contractual, familial, social, moral, cultural, obligations to return to home country.
9. Development of regional collaborative high-quality academic training program to keep trainees/ graduates connected to the continent or sub-region (AERC, GIMPA, Makerere).
10. Quick wins for public service reforms to encourage buy-ins (Tanzania Public Service Reform Program).
11. Strategic planning and implementation of integrated government-supported program to deal with national diaspora crisis (Malawi).
12. Critical mass in select country priority public service functions (e.g., economic policy management).
13. Private sector use of venture capital conditional on funding returning migrants.
14. In countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence, short-term interventions to respond to critical capacity needs (e.g., Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support).
15. Creation and support of policy think tanks and centers of excellence to advance evidence-based policy work on the continent (ACBF).

Source: ACBF, various evaluation reports

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion above, the following recommendations (and examples) are offered for consideration by all key stakeholders in the capacity development community in Africa:

1. Reconfirm the critical importance of capacity and capacity development for Africa's development. For some countries (those affected by fragility, conflict, or violence), sectors, or services, consider a declaration of a capacity development national crisis and consider instituting of capacity retention and utilization strategies (Malawi case study of the brain drain of medical staff).
2. Rethink current strategies and modalities of capacity development with a view to more strategic, holistic, system-wide approaches that consider all capacity development value chain activities, especially the downstream activities focused on results and impact—retention, utilization, performance, innovation, and development goals (example of Tanzania public service reform program).
3. Mainstream capacity development in national public services with a view to renewed efforts for overall strengthening (or stopping further weakening) of public institutional and governance infrastructure in the public sector (national SIPAs, regional capacity building institutions such as Eastern and Southern African Management Institute).
4. Facilitate and support strategic collaboration/partnerships among established institutions to jointly undertake capacity development, retention and utilization initiatives at national, regional, or continental levels. Such strategic collaborations could include SIPAs, universities and colleges, think tanks, top levels of public service ministries, NGOs, professional associations, the private sector and development partners.
5. Ensure active and informed engagement of all key stakeholders in all capacity development value chain activities, with emphasis on strategic planning and the demonstration of achievement of results, impact, and development goals and outcomes.
6. Invest in evidence-based tracking of the results and impact of capacity development interventions, with emphasis on demonstrated accountability, transparency, and responsibility for retention, utilization, performance, innovation, and national development goals and outcomes
7. As a matter of policy, make well planned tracer studies mandatory for all capacity development interventions and use the results to learn more and to document what works, what does not work, best practices, and what are the factors/drivers of success/failure for retention, utilization, and performance in different public service settings (good example of institutionalizing tracer studies is by Makerere University Faculty of Economics and Management).
8. De-projectize capacity development interventions or, at the very least, use innovative strategies, modalities, or tools that minimize the worst effects of the project business model. Experiment with more targeted, clustered, sectoral, modular approaches within and across countries or sub-regions (the example of Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa trade development project).
9. Invest in digital e-learning, multimedia, electronic education technologies to deliver innovative, dispersed capacity development interventions; monitor and track retention, utilization, and performance results (collaborate with private sector operators).

10. Facilitate and support a study to examine the feasibility of establishing a continent-wide African capacity development resource mobilization strategy/fund to address imbalances between demand for capacity development interventions and available resources.
11. Apply scientific rigor to the planning, design, and implementation of capacity development interventions. Examples include mandatory comprehensive capacity needs analysis and organizational diagnosis, systematic collection of baseline data, and application of experimental or quasi-experimental control designs and implementation. Other development interventions such as the universal basic income, early childhood education, and child and maternal health already use some aspects of randomized control trials/groups.
12. Gather more evidence about retention, utilization and performance. Undertake a comprehensive study of capacity retention and utilization in Africa and organize an expert panel/workshop to review the evidence and make policy recommendations based on evidence collected from field settings.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations above have policy implications for all key stakeholders: African governments, ACBF, the World Bank, other multilateral and bilateral donors, and other friends of capacity development in Africa.

For Africa governments, issues of capacity and capacity development must be brought back to the top of the national policy agenda. For countries where evidence points to stagnating or declining institutional and governance capacity, in countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence, *it may be necessary to declare a national capacity crisis*, as Malawi did. Without capacity there can be no development, but if the created capacity is not retained or effectively used, the desired service delivery, development goals, and outcomes cannot be achieved. There is evidence that when governments focus on a critical development challenge (such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, poverty, and national security), progress can be made. It may be time to revisit the lessons and best practices of more systematic approaches to development such as sector-wide approaches for useful lessons for the development of new approaches to capacity retention and utilization. For low-capacity countries, the national capacity crisis/challenge deserves no less policy and programmatic attention. *Other developments, such as the growing digital economy, present new and potentially beneficial opportunities as well as challenges for delivering innovative capacity development interventions, eLearning, monitoring and tracking, retention, utilization, and performance management across the public service.* Lessons from recent developments in mobile technology and inclusive finance (such as M-PESA, FinTech) provide ACBF and other capacity development partners with innovative approaches to capacity retention and utilization. For example, using mobile phones, citizens can report on the behavior and performance of public servants (such as traffic police officers), farmers and patients can connect with extension workers and health care providers, and students can report on the attendance and performance of teachers in real time. The results can be used as part of a system-wide performance management system. GPS technology and drones offer possibilities for improving capacity retention, utilization, and performance, especially in rural and dispersed areas.

Since the 1990s, ACBF has almost singlehandedly carried the capacity development torch to all corners of Africa. For its accomplishments and expected demands, in January 2017, ACBF was honored and received the status of specialized agency of the Africa Union (AU) on capacity development. As a specialized agency, it is charged with responsibility for strengthening the capacities of African member states, regional economic communities, the AU institutions/organs. It also has to coordinate collaborative strategies, approaches, mechanisms, and programs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Africa delivering services to its people. *With recognition comes responsibility, but at current funding levels, the demands for capacity development on the continent far exceed available resources.* Other issues related to individuals, public institutions, and systems as well as the wider society also need urgent attention.

For the World Bank and other development partners, the strategic message is clear: talk of an exit strategy is premature. As well, recommendations relating to changes in the way donors approach capacity development in Africa, and the need for more scientific and rigorous approaches, have not been heeded. Capacity building institutions such as the national SIPAs need to build their own institutional capacities. Many countries still face critical skill gaps in critical emerging sectors and cross-cutting themes (such as energy, security, and climate change). For other multilateral and bilateral donors, the policy implications for the recommendations above are no less compelling.

It may be time again for the African Caucus of the Governors of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, together with other critical stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, think tanks, foundations, and others) to reconvene on the critical matter of capacity development, its retention and utilization in Africa.

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ANNEXES



ANNEX 1: LIST OF ACBF EVALUATION REPORTS REVIEWED

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ANNEX 2: AN EXAMPLE OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH FOR CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT EVALUATION

Key evaluation dimensions	Evaluation questions	Assessment approach	Tools	Output
Relevance	How relevant is the ACBF support to think tanks and policy centers?	Comparative analysis of activities with the needs/demands of relevant stakeholders	Semi structured interviews Desk research and document review Surveys	Identification of program features that are relevant and those that no longer are recommendations for new program objectives
Efficiency	What could be done to ensure more efficiency use of resources in the current context?	Analysis of program burn rates, and expenditures; analysis of partnerships and the policy impact ecosystem; analysis of financial and program management systems	Semi structured interviews desk research and document review Surveys	Assessment of the program's resources and recommendations
Effectiveness/ impact	What has been the impact on building the capacity of policy centers and think tanks and influencing policy uptake? Strengths and weaknesses?	Understanding the impact of ACBF support to policy centers and think tanks and highlighting examples of impact on the policy environment	Semi structured interviews	Assessment of ACBF's programmatic impact
Sustainability	Does ACBF support provide sustainable approach in the short, medium and long term?	Assessment of funding approach	Semi structured interviews desk research and document review Surveys	Qualitative analysis on sustainability of program-to-date and recommendations for future initiatives

Source: ACBF 2014b.

ANNEX 3: SCOPE OF CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT SOUGHT FROM ACBF – OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Institution / program	Scope of capacity building support sought from ACBF	Outputs achieved	Outcomes and impacts identified
STPC	Build institutional capacity on strategic reflection, planning, and management; international negotiations and policy coordination for policy makers and the private sector; forecasting and strategic planning; macroeconomic analysis and management; assessment of financial market and private sector development; and assessment of globalization and regional integration, project analysis, institutional development, and reforms coordination	Training in industry and trade competitiveness indicators for 13 beneficiaries; training trade competitiveness indicators and value chain analysis for 16 beneficiaries; two week course on T21 dynamic macroeconomic model, for the M&E technician; course on ACBF administrative, accounting, and financial procedures; advanced Excel II and MS project for CPE staff funded by CPE funds; monitoring and evaluation for CPE staff	The training helped CPE staff draft the III Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2012–2016
CAPEC	Training CAPEC managerial staff, private sector and civil society on 6 themes: public debt management; project preparation; public investment programme (PIP); financial programming; techniques for drafting synthesis notes; monitoring of public expenditure; budget execution	224 managerial staff members, including 192 men (86 percent) and 32 women (14 percent), participated in the different seminars organized between 2002 and 2005	Staff conducted efficient and timely diagnosis of economic problems; CAPEC signed agreement for technical support with the Ministry of Economy and Finance; CAPEC provided support for the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the policy of regional integration within the UEMOA and ECOWAS

Institution / program	Scope of capacity building support sought from ACBF	Outputs achieved	Outcomes and impacts identified
HESPI	Assisting in building and strengthening effective institutional capacities and processes of socioeconomic policy formulation	HESPI staff have participated and presented research outputs in international and national workshops and conferences including: Presentation Skills (Accra), Measurement of Inequality (Khartoum), Trade Off Analysis Model for Multi Dimensional Impact Assessment (Dar es Salaam) (50 percent implementation status). The training for government officials (208 in total) was on accounting and computing, auditors training, rebuilding viable state in Somalia, leadership and good governance, training for TFG for Somalia officials; training for parliamentarians from South Sudan and Somalia and seminar for members of finance and planning committee of Somalia on fiscal legislations	Auditors learned new skills in legal and administrative steps in establishing functional audit institution in post-conflict situation. Additional skills/ knowledge in approaches and methodologies of audit cycle management, methods of instituting and implementing Regulatory Audit Manual (RAM), reporting and working relationships with the parliament. The Transitional Government of Somalia received hands-on support on budget and budget planning. Supported the Federal Government of Somalia to produce 3 successful budgets, thus contributing to improvement of the country's financial integrity and to the enactment of the Public Financial Management Act
EEA/EEPRI	Strengthen the policy research and analysis capacity of EEA/EEPRI to facilitate policy research in support of reinforcing the economic policy reforms; strengthen the Institute to enable it develop relevant data bases for research and policy analysis and publish and disseminate research findings; provide short-term training for public sectors officials on development policy analysis and economic management	10 short-term trainings (398 participants); 2 public lectured, 23 participants in the internship program for post-graduates (from Utrecht University, the Netherlands; other students from France, Italy, and the United States, other than Ethiopia); 63 staff training workshops and professional advice on 12 occasions	Increased awareness and knowledge of stakeholders on emerging policy issues

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EDRI	Support EDRI to build its own research and management capacity; support for 10 PhD level training, 4 master's degree training for EDRI staff, 10 short-term external training and 160 in-house training for staff from relevant economic MDAs including National Bank of Ethiopia, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Central Statistical Authority	14 PhD, 11 master's degree, and 25 first degree and diploma candidates undergoing training or have completed and 387 participants in short courses; received capacity building on social accounting matrix (SAM) and macroeconomic modeling	Though strengthening of EDRI capacity, contributed to increased research outputs. Research and training activities of EDRI were effective and relevant including supporting staff from EDRI, National Bank of Ethiopia, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Statistical Agency, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Industry, in master's and PhD programs. Staff returned to work having completed their programs. The SAM/macroeconomic model of the Institute has impacted on the curriculum of AAU, the university now teaches SAM/CGE modeling
IDEG	(i) To strengthen the development of interface mechanisms and capacities of both State and non-state actors to advance the ongoing and concurrent process of democratic governance, poverty reduction, accelerated growth and sustainable development in Ghana. (ii) To increase IDEG's institutional capacity to enable it to continue championing sustainable interface between the state and non-state actors	13 training workshops with 1396 participants topics included education, training for media and civic educators and election observers under the elections project, training on public deliberation and district budget process, on public expenditure and small-scale agriculture; on participatory monitoring and evaluation; on AU protocols to media; on action research; on economic literacy; on biometric voter registration, two national forums with 90 participants and three consultative dialogues with 312 participants tackling quality education and national constitution review. 150 volunteers trained on citizen police; training workshops for women groups and local officials on tax and employment in 18 districts is ongoing	The capacity development projects effectively built necessary capacity of people and institutions. Government issue forums (GIFs) mobilized citizens around community issues, empowered them and facilitated several engagements and sustained dialogues between policy makers and civil society. The acquired knowledge and skills enabled (GIFNet) members, who operate in 26 out of 168 District Assemblies in Ghana, to play active and lead roles in the local government structure. The demand for its services by the government, development partners, Ministerial Departments and Agencies and other beneficiaries of the project has increased

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CEPA	To deliver tailor made courses to senior government officials	Training on “From a Cocoa Economy to an Oil Economy” where 116 participated, 10 from the government. Training on managing the emerging oil economy, with 80 participants, 5 of whom from the government. Ghana Economic Review and Outlook 2009–2015, where 92 were trained, 15 from the government	The research training building and information outreach had positive contribution towards building relevant capacities in economic policy analysis, formation and debates
KIPPRA	To build human capacity building through the recruitment, training and development of professional staff; short-term in-country and external training to build/strengthen the research and policy analysis capacities of KIPPRA staff and line ministries; secondment of professional staff of line ministries to KIPPRA for the enhancement of policy analysis skills; to strengthen stakeholder capacity in public process; to enhance sustainability of capacity building programs	Staff attended courses on “costs and benefits of Regulation” in Germany and a privatization workshop in the United States. The macro division professionals attended courses on econometric modelling and research methods. As of the November 2001 MTR, KIPPRA reported 16 people had been seconded to KIPPRA for the purpose of capacity building; 826 the officers from various line ministries trained; as of July 2014, 51 young professionals in the program, according to the KIPPRA YP Tracer Study (2012); 2 researchers completed their PhDs with another 10 staff members pursuing PhDs at various universities in Kenya and South Africa under the sponsorship of KIPPRA and AERC. KIPPRA supported relevant staff to pursue in-service courses including communication administered to all research staff and strategic leadership to management. The short-term training was given to professional staff	Improved research and analysis skills, analytical knowledge, report writing, innovation, and networking skills. The skills led to better understanding of government policies and public policy process Staff seconded from client departments of KIPPRA (various ministries and agencies). The training collaboration with Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands which resulted in assistance in building the KIPPRA-Treasury Macro Model. The Institute strengthened government ministries’ capacity in public policy analysis and there is evidence that government agencies and County Governments are requesting for capacity development support/training. Institute’s Young Professional (YP) Program continues to be popular and on high demand. KIPPRA’s Young Professionals Tracer Survey 2003–2011 indicates that the program is relevant and valid making the YPs more productive at their work place

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CCG	To develop training modules, manuals, courses, materials, case studies, sector-specific and generic codes of best practices; designing tailor made training and educational programs; collaborate with institutions of higher learning, universities and professional bodies	866 directors trained, 1382 received induction course training, 18 received training of trainers, and 43 participated in workshop for chairpersons. On education, CCG and KCA University established a 6-month Executive Diploma in Corporate Governance	Boards that received CCG training were capacitated in development of strategic plans, establishment of committees, development of board work plans, board manuals and board evaluations; performance contracts; evaluation and review of quarterly reports. The Centre experienced increased demand for training revealing an interest by the private sector and CSOs in good corporate governance practices
AERC	To implement the Collaborative Master's Program (CPP); strengthening individual and institutional teaching and research capacity; continue to pursue innovativeness in PhD training to produce internationally recognized, but contextually relevant PhD graduates in economics and increase the pool of professional economists at a cost-effective rate, thus enhancing sustainability	140 students enrolled, 16 privately sponsored, 23 sponsored by the government of Kenya, and 63 co-financed by ACBF, with the rest financed from other sources. Since 2009, 12 students have been discontinued from the program after failing coursework, while one student was deceased	The CPP II was very effective in achieving its designated objectives, including the enrolment of 63 students and putting through jointly designed core courses at the host DAUs and electives at the JFE
IPAR-RWANDA	(i) To enhance the human and institutional capacity of IPAR for conducting relevant research studies to inform policy making processes in Rwanda (ii) To improve the capabilities of state and non-state actors who are involved in policy analysis and management in Rwanda. This is to be achieved through: Strengthening capacity for Research; Enhancing capacity for public policy Dialogue; and, Human capacity Building	500 person days trained in short courses; 414 person days for research and support staff trained; 300 person days to Economic Policy Research Network (EPRN) members on policy analysis and research. The project also strengthens Economic Policy Research Network (EPRN), rendering active 140 members	The training contributed to improved capabilities of state and non-state actors involved in policy analysis and management. Through the coaching and mentorship for young researchers, research papers were published in regional and international research journals. Interventions under the project contributed to raising IPAR's profile and visibility and strengthen its capacity to generate its own resources. Demand for IPAR services among the state and non-state actors in Rwanda increased

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CEPOD	To consolidate research, training and dissemination programs on essential economic problems	61 training conducted, where a total of 3543 were trained as at November 2006. Training conducted to various stakeholders on various topics including monetary policy, medium-term expenses framework, project valuation, MBA and finance, computer science and New Information and Communication Technologies, statistics, remote sensing and town and country planning. Trainings conducted on the regulation of infrastructures (in partnership with the Institute of the World Bank (WBI)); advanced public economy; on valuation of assets and financial models of water / electricity regulation; on negotiation techniques applied to public / private Partnership contracts (PPP); PPP in the sector of transport facilities—regulation instruments and practices; regulation in the sector of water and accountancy for regulators. seminar took place on the topic “consumers associations faced with reforms and regulations related to the sectors of infrastructures”	The performance of the component “training and seminars/conferences” of the project was satisfactory. The recipients were generally satisfied of the contents and the quality of the courses given in the training
FANRPAN	To strengthen human and institutional capability of the FANRPAN Secretariat to coordinate development of FANR policies in ESA; and enhance the node’s (country) capacities to facilitate advocacy on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) policies	5 staff members received language training	SPARC project made progress addressing capacity and competency gaps identified in the Needs Assessment Report of 2011; strengthen human capacity at FANRPAN improved effectiveness of the FANRPAN Secretariat in supporting FANR policy processes in ESA and to diversification of funding sources. The node’s capacities to facilitate advocacy on climate smart agriculture were improved and stakeholder engagements and interactions between nodes improved

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EPM-Makerere	(i) Train a critical mass of economic policy analysts and managers required for meeting development management challenges facing Sub-Saharan Africa. (ii) Strengthen the institutional and human capacity of the Faculty of Economics and Management of Makerere University to continue to offer a graduate-level program in economic policy management (iii) Extend the program to post-conflict areas and under-represented countries in the EPM training	At the mid-term review a total of 183 master degrees; 56 trained person, 5 courses, 10 masters, and 10 short course teaching /reading materials developed. Training to post-conflict countries included 47 master degree trainees (between 2006/7 to 2009/10. The overall outputs of EPM-III included: training policy analysts and managers; developing training and teaching resource materials; improving institutional capacity; institutional networking and extension of program to post-conflict countries. At project completion there were a total of 216 masters degrees, 56 trained, 5 courses. 13 master's program modules and 10 short term course modules	EPM had a positive impact on the public sector capacities to formulate and manage economic policy. Other aspects include policy analysis, design, and management, participation in policy dialogues, drafting of policy positions and in activity participation in strategic plans, budget formulation, and financial analysis. A number of graduands perceive the EPM as having qualified them for jobs; The graduates of the EPM program are employed by a diverse set of employers including government, international/regional organizations, and so on. About 70 percent of the EPM graduands occupy high level positions in the public sector, while the rest are middle level positions. Analytical and managerial skills acquired enabled graduates to perform in their places of work. Demand of EPM increased
EPM-Ghana	Phase II and III grant: To train a critical mass of economic policy analysts and managers required for meeting the development management challenges facing the Anglophone West African countries	116 students enrolled in M.A degree in economic policy management between 2003/04 and 2005/06. 17 completed. In Phase III training of 310 students in long-term degree training in 310 students were trained in economic policy management	Improved policy initiation; policy advice and policy monitoring and other desk studied amongst EPM Programme students. Courses offered found to be useful. During the Phase III, the overall teaching and learning environment of the Programme improved significantly through the development of teaching and learning in some key Programme Courses, provision of on-the job training of academic and non-academic staff

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MSCBP	Help to achieve the government's development objective by creating a performing and efficient public sector capable of managing the country's transition towards a service-oriented economy	Program improved institutional capabilities of 3 of the most important training institutions in Rwanda: refurbished classrooms; provision and installation of new equipment, training of faculty members up to PhD level and facilitation of training of trainers in the use of new training techniques and methodologies. Increased enrolment levels to 300 post graduate students and over 3000 undergraduate students at NUR. The program improved the quality teaching and learning at the beneficiary institutions—51 students (37 Master's degree, 14 PhD) benefitted from training at NUR and 4 Master's and 2 PhD's have benefitted from RIAM under the grant. 168 members of both chambers of the parliament trained on emerging legislative issues and gender budgeting	Ranking of NUR by Webometrics improved as the 28th and 4th best tertiary institution in African and East Africa respectively; (1) the capacity building support was very effective and useful in creating/strengthening institutions as well as improving skills and competencies of staff and students of beneficiary institutions; (2) contributed to effective and efficient execution of the country's development agenda; (3) enhanced the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of Rwanda's development strategies. (4) Study tours, workshops and training, organized for parliamentary staff helped to improve the capacity of the parliamentary system; members of both chambers of the parliament improved their skills and competencies in emerging legislative issues including gender budgeting

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PSF	Contribute to (i) increased private sector competitiveness; (ii) enhanced public–private interface; (iii) strengthened national business development centers (BDCs); and (iv) strengthened human and institutional capacity of the RPSF; enhance the advocacy role of members of the PSF, to take part in policy formulation process as a measure of ensuring that their interests are reflected in the respective policies governing various economic sectors	Skills upgrading and knowledge building: 9 training modules developed and tested; 850 entrepreneurs and 8 struggling women and youth entrepreneurs mentored; 10 BDC staff received long term training; policy studies, publication and dissemination; quarterly newsletter developed; (v) Pilot Program for Youth and Women Entrepreneurs; (vi) Coordination and Networking: facilitated 74 entrepreneurs to participate in the regional and international trade fairs; 4 MOUs signed between PSF and strategic partners (Swedish chamber of commerce, small scale industry association of Bangalore, IFC, and Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries) to strengthen BDSs to provide services to private sector; (vii) Knowledge and Information Management; and (viii) Institutional and Human Resources Strengthening of the RPSF and BDCs	(1) The PSF capacity building project contributed to strengthening of SMEs functional capacity through training of the entrepreneurs in basic business management skills and facilitation of members to participate in regional and international trade fairs. This is in line with the SME development policy which seeks to strengthen functional capacity of MSMEs that account for 98 percent of the total business in Rwanda and account for 41 percent of the total employment by the Private sector. (2) The initiation and successful completion of the PSF capacity building project triggered positive responses and unveiled enormous need for increased investments in capacity building efforts for private sector to effectively take on its envisaged leading role in the country's development process
SADC-PF	To create an institutional framework for equipping MPs, parliamentary staff and parliamentary institutions in the SADC region, with knowledge, skills and information that enhance their professional performance in implementing their respective mandates	The Forum succeeded in compiling a Compendium of all SADC Protocols and other Instruments and disseminated them widely. Its Secretariat grew in terms of numbers of its staff members, budgets, program diversity, and visibility. The forum was able to recruit additional staff	The forum was able to create a valued brand within the region's national parliaments, the donor community, academic institutions and with some civil society organizations. The forum accumulated in-house expertise and capacity; the grant significantly increased training activities, which enhanced skills of the staff of the Secretariat, who were then able to facilitate the running of the meetings for policy organs during the plenary assembly

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ZWRCN	To build human capacity in civil society and government; to promote knowledge generation in gender budgeting to create the knowledge base and evidence for advocacy; and to promote the effective participation of all key stakeholders through advocacy and networking	500 copies of training package including guide and tools for the stakeholders; 300 stakeholders and 30 trainers trained in a series of five training workshops per year (including training of trainers) for the stakeholders on gender budgeting; Best practices learned through three study tours, at least technical support provided once per year to selected ministries; A series of 3 advocacy workshops per year, advocacy meetings and events held; 4 researches per year conducted and results published on selected sector policies, budget analysis, and macroeconomic issues; The provision of technical guidance for Gender Budgeting for Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD) and Ministry of Finance	Increased number of macroeconomic policies and sectoral policies influenced by civil society organizations with gender perspectives: (i) Through intervention by the Ministry of Finance, the project institutionalized gender budgeting within sector ministries through the 2010 Call Circular No 10 to mainstream gender issues in the planning process as well as implementation of their expenditure proposals. (ii) The Zimbabwean government's adoption of gender budgeting as a mainstream planning and budgeting tool and the MOU signed with MWAGCD under the project ensured that the ministry review and restructure itself to ensure that gender budgeting remains a pivot of its mainstreaming activities under its department of women (iii) the Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency is now producing gender disaggregated data following the budget call circular which required all budget submissions to be engendered
AMICAALL	To build the technical capacity of Local Coordinators, representatives of municipality HIV Teams and community groups through workshops and study tours	(i) The project succeeded in establishing Community AIDS Action Committees; (ii) The program was successful in motivating all targeted municipalities to establish local AMICAALL offices (iii) The program established strong partnership with National Emergency Response Council HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. NERCHA provided funding and invited the program to sit in some of its committees. The ministry invited the program to sit in its meetings of heads of departments and agencies	The program was successful in creating an operational space for an urban response. The AMICAALL-Swaziland program is now recognized as major component of the Swaziland national response by government, NERCHA and other actors. The program is also a member of the Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanism and the expanded UN Theme Group

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AU-CAP	(i) To support the AUC institutional transformation process and implementation of the AU Strategic Plan, thus enabling the African Union to effectively promote peace, security and governance; (ii) promote regional integration; and (iii) build and strengthen a shared vision among Africans	The AU-CAP was a timely program and is of continuing relevance to the institutional transformation process of the African Union Commission; improvements in areas of strategic planning and results-based management, as well as the strengthening of the Commission's business model and management of its financial and human resources; (ii) human capacity of the AU-secretariat was strengthened and a fully functional program steering committee established; (iii) the Commission embarked upon a journey of change of its core systems in the areas of finance, procurement, auditing, reporting, planning and budgeting	The impact of a large number of training activities implemented/ funded by the by the AU-CAP was not measured
CANGO	To strengthen CANGO's institutional and human capacity, to enable civil society to contribute to the development of policies and programs for the eradication of poverty as well as to improve the quality and quantity of resources allocated to the poor through the national budget	In 2006, CANGO teamed up with the government to draft the NGO policy	The Capacity Building Programme raised the level of policy debate in Swaziland significantly and contributed to a more questioning society. The budget debates won government recognition and became standard procedure

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CAPAN	(i) improve the capacity of the National Assembly in the design and evaluation of development policy; (ii) improve the capacity of the National Assembly in the formulation and drafting of Public and Private Members Bills (iii) improve the capacities of the National Assembly in the analysis and control of State Budget; (iv) reduce the communication deficit between the National Assembly and the public; (v) improve on the exchange of experience between the National Assembly of Benin and the Parliaments of the Sub Region	(i) 14 members of staff trained; (ii) organized 22 activities (training workshop, seminars, symposium, and so on) covering various aspects of legislative functions and public policy in Benin; a total of 1453 participants attended the training workshops which brought together members of parliament, government officials, parliamentary staff, civil society, committee assistants, and so on; (iii) undertook 19 studies covering aspects of legislative functions and public policy issues targeting the needs of the beneficiaries of the project and the general public (iv) 10 publications on privatization, poverty and inequality in Benin, budget analysis, legislation, monetary and fiscal policies and a guide for members of assembly were distributed to the targeted stakeholders; (v) established institutional linkages with other stakeholders (such as the Canadian Cooperation; DANIDA); (vi) staff training for the National Assembly of Mali; and examination of the structural organization of the Finance Committee of the National Assembly of Mali	A well-informed legislature, civil society and public on the budgeting cycle, legislative functions, and public policy process
CMAAE	Consultancy to assess progress made in implementing the CMAAE II Programme as required under the grant agreement	Achievements by end of 2015: 329 admitted and 131 scholarships granted; 1 curriculum review conducted; 4 SFSE sessions held; 2 departments accredited; 6 publications from departmental research; 8 PhD faculty staff trained; 4 retooling workshops conducted; 4 partnerships developed; 12 smallholder farmer workshops conducted; 1 AAE conference held	(i) Graduates of the CMAAE program teach at universities where they have improved the human capacity of those institutions in terms of both numbers and quality; (ii) some graduates working in agriculture ministries and departments in their countries, apart from influencing policies, they are promoting the development of agriculture in their countries.

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GICAP	To enhance the capacity of key players such as government, civil society and private sector, in public policy dialogue to achieve sustainable social and economic development in the Gambia	(i) Establishment of the Gambia Social Forum that brought together various civil society actors; (ii) establishment of the National Farmers' Platform; (ii) 3 staff members trained on policy analysis; (iii) a documentation center/depository library established but not stocked with relevant reference materials as envisaged	The project implemented training in policy analysis for all three stakeholder groupings as well as stimulated the formation of the Gambia Social Forum as a new platform for interface around the MDGs and other local issues; strengthened policy analysis capacity for civil society and the private sector to participate effectively in policy formulation
IGE	To improve the state audit function in Djibouti to enhance accountability and transparency in the management of public resources	(i) The rate of disbursement stands at 42 percent; (ii) four out of seven auditors recruited during the course of the project; (iii) all auditors received training in relevant areas	(i) The Office of the President systematically acknowledges audit reports and regularly sends out queries and follow-up letters to concerned parties. (ii) increased awareness in the public sphere of IGE and its mandate; overall satisfaction expressed by donors with the results achieved by the project
MSSP	Institutional capacity building of the National Statistical System (NSS) in Malawi and human resource development and training within the framework of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) which is for the period 2006–2011	There was a delay in achieving the envisaged outputs. The project started on the wrong footing nearly one year after approval had been given by the ACBF Board. For example, the procedures of applying for project funds from ACBF had not been fully grasped; very few project-related activities accomplished in first 12 months following approvals of funding	By the time MTR was conducted, no visible impact from the project was identified
NEPAD	To strengthen the capacity of the NEPAD Secretariat through institutional and organizational development support and program delivery capacity support	(i) Recruitment of Finance Manager, and Human Resources Manager; (ii) implemented new financial/procurement management system and user training; (iii) draft financial management guidelines prepared; (iii) improved/new human resources systems and process initiated; Initiated a performance management system: formulation of draft benefits and welfare policy	Development and improvements of institutional systems, tools and procedures

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NGOCC	To contribute towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goal 3, by promoting gender equality and equity through empowering women in Zambia; to be achieved through the capacity building of NGOCC and its member organizations	10 gender and development training workshops held; 253 NGOCC members and other stakeholders attended gender and development workshops; 60 people trained in entrepreneurship and business development; 28 people trained in governance; 20 people trained as gender budgeting TOTs; 220 traditional leaders sensitized on contemporary gender issues including gender based violence; 15 female and 80 government officials trained in gender budgeting and tracking; 76 radio programs on gender and development aired; 1 gender budget dissemination workshop undertaken annually; A draft M&E framework was developed; training in results based management for NGOCC partners; 1 training on advocacy for NGOCC and 5 Member Organizations and action plans developed	(i) The basket fund enabled Member Organizations to diversify their businesses or to start new business. Livelihoods were improved and children were given access to education. (ii) Training enabled staff to input into the development of the draft M&E Framework for NGOCC. (iii) increase in women's leadership and representation at member level; (iv) bill on gender based violence law tabled before Parliament, incorporating comments from NGOCC; (v) NGOCC strategized on its advocacy programs; (vi) the National AIDS Council has incorporated NGOCC recommendations in the new National HIV/AIDS policy and NASF for 2011–2016
PAP	To enhance the capacity of the Pan African Parliament	The ACBF grant enabled PAP to hire four research personnel to support the conduct of timely evidenced-based advice to inform the decisions and deliberations of the Permanent Committees, the Bureau and the MPs in general during Session deliberations	PAP successfully conducted 2 regional consultative meetings in Central Africa and West Africa whose goals was to develop a framework to harmonize regional economic communities and parliamentary bodies with the ultimate objective of creating a framework which would lay a foundation for achieving continental unity as envisaged by the AU

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PSMTP-AU	To improve the performance of the public sector through the provision of a balanced academic and professional training in public sector management in Africa; to support a master's degree training program and short-term training in public sector management in Africa in four notable training institutions located in Zimbabwe; Gabon, Ghana, Senegal)	(i) Establishment of a PSMTP at AU for Anglophone Eastern and Southern Africa; (ii) building/strengthening the institutional and human capacity of AU to organize a masters; 97 percent of the students participating in the program graduated as expected; (iii) criteria to select participants (120 in 4 cohorts of 30 each) established; (v) 30 participants are enrolled annually in 4 cohorts and 90 percent of them successfully completed the program; (vi) short-term workshops and seminars organized for auditors from the regions covered by the program; (vii) distance learning capacity established at AU; (viii) a PSMTP network linking AU and 4 national IPAs established; (ix) training arrangement finalized with northern and southern institutions specialized in PSM; (x) procurement of training materials (ICT and library materials) for IPAs; (xi) TOT activities for PSMTP institutions organized; (xii) exchange of faculty took place and trainers exchanged best practices in public sector management; and (xiii) a PSMTP Alumni Association established and operationalized	(i) Increased supply of well trained and skilled master's degree holders in PSM; strengthened capacity of the PSMTP-AU to deliver the master's program; (ii) strengthened management skills and competencies of public sector managers in the region; (iii) enhanced linkages, partnerships and collaboration among IPAs and between IPAs and Africa University; (iv) increased demand for the program in the region; (v) employer satisfaction with management skills and performance of PSMTP master's graduates; (vi) improvement in action research skills of PSMTP graduates. The program equipped them with the knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to adequately address public sector issues; (vii) promotion within two years of graduation of many PSMTP graduates; (viii) increased use of IT knowledge and skills by PSMTP graduates; (ix) PSMTP has made a positive impact on public sector management in Africa. Most governments recognized the program as reflected in the increasing number of nominations sent

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TANGO	To build the capacity of TANGO to increase the participation of NGO's/ CBO's in national decision making processes and as such promote broad-based economic growth and poverty reduction in the Gambia.	100 stakeholders and TANGO staff members trained in gender sensitive policy analysis; 100 stakeholders and TANGO staff members trained in data collection, analysis and usage for evidence-based policy analysis; 24 seminars, round tables, and agenda setting meetings conducted; 16 newsletters and 1 annual reports produced; 10 training workshops conducted; 3 collaborations achieved (with the Gambia Bureau of Statistics; and with the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies and Political Parties; and the West African Network for Peace Building) on women's representation and participation in politics and decision making processes	TANGO contributed towards improving the capacity of CSOs/ NGOs in the policy making processes of the Gambia; increase in conduct of policy dialogues; increase in number of collaborations and participation in decision making processes, and participating in observing elections
UCCBP	Overall goal of the program is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency in the use of public resources to attain the objectives of national development priorities as contained in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) thereby improving economic governance	(i) Training of 21 officers from participating institutions in M&E; (ii) training of accountants on PFM and financial reporting	(i) Training in M&E training improved reporting and information retrieval and improved easing decision making process. (ii) Substantial improvement in PFM due to training given to accountants, internal audit staff, and economists on financial reporting. (iii) Public accountability improved with the PAC of Parliament and the public demanding greater transparency and accountability. This led to clearance of all the backlog of government accounts.

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WAIFEM	To enhance training for middle, senior and executive levels of government in central banks, ministries of finance and planning, parliaments and the media in the region in areas of debt management, financial sector management and macroeconomic analysis to address the critical capacity gaps	(i) Organized 33 workshops/ courses in financial sector management, 12 of which were demand-driven; (ii) organized 3 national and 2 regional courses on budgeting, public expenditure programming and management for staff of central banks, public and relevant private sectors of the member countries; (iii) exceeded all targets set for the program; (iv) capacity building for banking supervision and payment systems through partnerships with international institutions such as the European Central Bank, Bank for International Settlements and Toronto Leadership Centre, Canada, to ensure that best banking practices are deployed in the sub-region	(i) Strengthened capacity for public domestic debt management; improved legal framework and appropriate institutional and organizational arrangements for debt management; and, strengthened advocacy for debt management policy issues among the highest level of government; (ii) a critical mass of skilled officials in fiscal and financial management trained; (iii) improved strategic understanding of the executive levels of central banks and governments regarding financial sector policies; (v) improved understanding of macroeconomic policy issues by parliamentarians and media practitioners
WUA	Grant to support the university's capacity building activities, supporting three major expenditure categories, namely: core, institutional support/capital expenditure, administrative expenditure, and contingency line items	(i) Facilitated acquisition of computer equipment, generator, library resources and systems and upgrade of internet connectivity; (ii) enhanced WUA's interaction with other institutions; (iii) scholarships offered to disadvantaged students	(i) Substantial improvement in the University's ICT infrastructure (internet, computers, wireless network, library management system; setting up of digital library; (ii) project was very effective in improving the quality of education and programs offered at WUA
BIPDA	To develop and strengthen sustainable local capacity for policy analysis and management through in-service training, fellowships and seminars and workshops	(i) Trained four economists at the PhD level through the fellowship program, 2 of which are senior government officers. (ii) Trained 14 members of research staff to Masters level, 11 of whom are still in the Institute. (iii) Implemented an in-service mentorship program	BIDPA has played an important part in capacity building in areas of economic and social development of Botswana through formal training at the master's and PhD levels and suitable training seminars and workshops; enhanced staff development programs.

Institution / program	Scope of capacity building support sought from ACBF	Outputs achieved	Outcomes and impacts identified
EGN	Establishment of a pool of human resources with adequate capacity to serve as peer reviewers	Staff development program implemented; training of staff on knowledge management; 5 postgraduate students under subject matter network (SMN) on agricultural economics, 4 under macroeconomics, and 4 under statistics and data management. 45 e-seminar articles on different topics posted	Improved effective use of ICTs especially in software, use of Internet as a means for generating and exchanging information. Skill transfer achieved through subject matter specialists (SMS) mentoring and working closely with young professionals within their area of expertise. Website developed

ANNEX 4: CAPACITY BUILDING AREAS SUPPORTED BY ACBF PROGRAMS

Scope of support sought from ACBF	Beneficiary of capacity building program	Strategies employed
Developing Internal Institutional capacity	Think tanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attending In-house/short courses through seminars and workshops ● Staff development through long duration courses; diploma, master's and PhD scholarships; fellowships ● Support in recruitment, training and development of professional staff ● Support in organizing seminars, workshops, conferences, round table events, media briefings, surveys ● Funding to install financial, administrative and other pertinent software ● Establishment of knowledge management systems/ infrastructure ● Partnerships with international institutions ● Mentorships/associates programs ● Staff exchanges ● Study/benchmarking tours ● Development of manuals/tools for internal capacity building
Institutional sustainability	Think tanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-financing strategy ● Short courses on strategic leadership, corporate governance, fundraising, strategic planning, PFM ● Support in institutional networking ● Endowment funds
Developing capacity for stakeholders	Government, legislators, think tanks, CSO, membership institutions, students, private sector associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of training manuals for tailor made courses for stakeholders drawn from public, private and CSO sectors ● Knowledge management systems ● Organizing seminars, workshops, conferences, round table events, public policy dialogue ● Mentorship/secondment programs (such as KIPPRA young professional program) ● Study/benchmarking tours ● Provision of funds for micro-lending to member institutions ● Short-term training for public sectors officials ● Training for media and civic educators and election observers (such as IDEG-Ghana) ● Short courses/training on aspects such as gender budgeting and tracking, advocacy, Training of Trainers (TOT), gender mainstreaming, evidence-based policy making (such as NGOCC, TANGO) ● Collaborate with institutions of higher learning, universities and professional bodies; outsourcing to consultants ● Signing MOUs for services and product support/cooperation ● Setting up committees/multisectoral working groups ● Mentorship program/internships/secondments**

Scope of support sought from ACBF	Beneficiary of capacity building program	Strategies employed
Support for parliamentary forum/networks	Legislators/parliamentary networks (such as SADC-PF, AU, PAP, CAPAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops, seminars, conferences ● Training secretariat staff, parliamentarians and parliamentary committees in short course including corporate governance; PFM; protocol, regional integration, finance, procurement, auditing, reporting, planning and budgeting; drafting of public and private members bills ● Establishment of regional and international networks ● Study/benchmarking tours
Support for institutes of higher learning	Universities, other tertiary training institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen institute to enable it to develop relevant data bases for research and policy analysis ● Provision of funds for awarding scholarships; supporting in scholarship and administration of academic programs ● Student exchange programmes and collaborative degree programs with regional training institutions (such as CMAAE, AERC-CPP, EPM, PSMTTP) ● Support for institutional networking ● Development of physical infrastructure such as buildings, ICT network and other knowledge infrastructure (such as WUA) ● Establishment of alumni association ● Distant learning programs ● In-service training, fellowships and seminars and workshops; classroom-based learning; industrial attachments

**Secondment refers to the temporary transfer or detachment of a professional from their place of employment to another institution or on an assignment often aimed at fostering exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences.

ANNEX 5: SUMMARY OF KEY CAPACITY BUILDING OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS, AND OUTCOMES

Key capacity building objective	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Building or developing Institutional capacity through training of think tank staff to build capacity in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy formulation ● Policy evaluation ● Technical skills to carry out a specific assignment (such as to draft an industrial competitiveness report) ● Economic policy development ● Policy and institutional reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training on technical aspects, policy, research and analysis and professional training (for instance audit, finance, corporate governance) ● Staff participated in workshops, seminars, consultative dialogues and public lectures ● Staff exposed to analytical tools ● Staff had access to international experts 	<p>Skills that addressed different business needs including basic business management skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promotion of public private consultative forums ● Establishment of mentors to entrepreneurs ● Enhanced networking opportunities (one way this was achieved was through business associations) ● The need for increased investment in capacity building efforts for private sector emerged <p>CSOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased awareness on various issues with evidenced emphasis on public private dialogue and emerging policy issues ● Enhanced public private dialogues and networks ● Increased participation in local government structures ● Establishment of structures for engaging with the policy makers (such as forums and networks) ● Enhanced capacity to facilitate advocacy ● Provide input into development of various laws <p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased demand for training programs ● Some training had wider reach and/or acceptance outside the country of the host institution ● Economic empowerment of women through entrepreneurship training
<p>Build/strengthen institutional capacity through on-the-job/in-service learning and mentorships</p>	<p>Different strategies adopted by different Institutions. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On-the-job learning ● Mentorship and supervision ● Professional advice through professional associations/networks ● Secondment 	<p>Beneficiary (individual staff):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Able to participate in public policy process more effectively ● Can conduct timely diagnosis of economic problems ● Capacity to carryout functions more effectively ● Improved job performance with application of new skills ● Capacity to implement research effectively ● Enhanced networks and collaborations amongst graduates (consequently amongst institutions) Enhanced leadership skills <p>Institution (employer):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-funding or collaborations with partner institutions ● Increased demand for services and products offered by the beneficiary institute ● Increased demand for training programs ● Improved knowledge and support infrastructure, such as libraries, analytical tools, and so on ● Enhanced credibility ● Enhanced institutional partnerships (for example, in one institute a model was jointly developed with an institutional training partner) ● Enhanced collaborations with universities and training institutions ● An appreciation of staff capacity and competency gaps

Key capacity building objective	Outputs	Outcomes
Build capacity on different technical issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International negotiations ● Policy coordination ● Macroeconomic analysis ● Business development ● Specialized courses for specific groups for instance draft party economic programs to offered political parties; advocacy skills offered to CSOs or citizen policing offered to volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training conducted often with support from partner institutions. ● workshops, seminars, consultative dialogues and public lectures ● Training beneficiaries included public sector, Central Banks, universities, private sector; political parties and CSOs and volunteers ● Majority reported the training was relevant this result related to demand-driven courses. Some findings however reveal that in some instances the training was not oriented towards the stakeholders ● General satisfaction with the content and quality of training 	Public sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practical skills that has informed policy formulation, planning and budgeting ● Improvement with respect to governance, accountability and financial integrity ● Enhanced networking and engagements with stakeholders Private sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skills that addressed different business needs including basic business management skills ● Promotion of public private consultative forums ● Establishment of mentors to entrepreneurs ● Enhanced networking opportunities (one way this was achieved was through business associations) ● The need for increased investment in capacity building efforts for private sector emerged CSOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased awareness on various issues with evidenced emphasis on public private dialogue and emerging policy issues ● Enhanced public private dialogues and networks ● Increased participation in local government structures ● Establishment of structures for engaging with the policy makers (such as forums and networks) ● Enhanced capacity to facilitate advocacy ● Provide input into development of various laws Overall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased demand for training programs ● Some training had wider reach and/or acceptance outside the country of the host institution ● Economic empowerment of women through entrepreneurship training
Capacity development to think tanks through master's and PhD programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PhD and master's degrees awards ● Some students have been discontinued for falling coursework revealing the rigor involved 	Beneficiary (individual staff): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved job performance with application of new skills ● Capacity to implement research effectively and conduct policy analysis ● Increased mobility and promotions Institution (employer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased institutional capacity ● Enhanced collaborations with universities

Key capacity building objective	Outputs	Outcomes
Strengthen technical capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PhD and master's degrees awards; focus mainly in economics; economic policy and public sector management ● Key beneficiaries were think tanks, public-sector officials, and students with limited outreach to CSOs or private sector. ● Scholarships awarded ● Majority of beneficiaries who were employed prior to the degree program, returned to work. ● Majority of the students graduated ● There was low completion in some instances 	<p>Beneficiary (individuals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training assisted them in getting employed; they felt they were more competitive ● Graduates received promotions at their work place ● No change reported in some graduates ● Enhanced analytical and critical thinking skills: graduates reported ability to undertake economic analysis, report on critical issues and contribute to national development at their place of work ● Improved policy initiation, policy advice and policy monitoring ● Enhanced leaderships skills <p>Training institution involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge transfer from the think tank to universities for instance on institution reported the training module now forms part of the partnering university's curriculum ● Improvements with the teaching and learning environment ● New training techniques and methodologies adopted ● Increased demand for training ● Increased enrollment of students <p>Employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employers reported knowledge and skills gained by degree holder were relevant and useful in their current employment ● Knowledge transfer from the individual to the employer contributing to strengthen technical capacity at the institutional level
Strengthen capacity in research and policy analysis through internship programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2-month internship programs for under graduate and post-graduates which attracted trainees from other countries outside the host country ● 12-month internship for post-graduates drawn from public and private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhance networks of think tank with partners outside the country as a result of foreign internship alumni ● Improved research and analysis skills, analytical knowledge, report writing and networking skills because of the 12-month internship programs ● Better understanding of the public policy process
Develop training modules and manuals to promote, implement and monitor corporate governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training manuals developed accessible to stakeholders ● Training modules utilized in training institutions ● Distance learning capacity developed in a university ● Toolkits for capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishment of institutional linkages ● Increased demand for training ● Enhanced interest from the private sector in training opportunities ● In one instance, a training module was utilized to establish a 6-month diploma course in a partnering university ● Establishment of e-learning modules

Key capacity building objective	Outputs	Outcomes
Strengthening institutional capacity through recruitment	Recruitment of qualified staff in research and non-research capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced institutional developments ● Contributed to functional improvements within the think tank; including research; evidence based advise; human resource, financial management and performance management
Training of trainers to build competencies in groups	Trainers trained who later offered training largely at the community level	Increase access to information at the community level
Improve capacity of different public-sector officers on how other institutions implement certain activities	Study tours were taken in country and out based on the objective of the project; professional exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitated learning and practical knowledge on the organized and implementation of projects and programs ● Increased awareness on alternate and best practices
Development and strengthen capacity for policy analysis through fellowships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training of economists at PhD level through fellowship program ● Focus was on public sector officials 	Enhanced analytical skills and knowledge which is utilized that the workplace thus contributing to strengthen technical capacity at the institutional level

ANNEX 6: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE REGIONAL TRAINING IN ECONOMIC POLICY MANAGEMENT SUPPORTED BY ACBF

Collaborative master's degree program in economics (CMAP), Duration: 18 to 24 Months

Objectives/thrust	Regional training structure/support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhance the capacity of mid-level economic managers and policy analysts ● Prepare students for academic careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 26 universities in 21 countries participate in the program ● Students in 15 Category A universities can enroll in an MA program in 7 Category B universities or 4 Category C universities) ● Category B universities can teach core courses and supervise theses ● Students in Category B universities have to go to the Joint Facility for Elective (JFE) for elective courses ● Category C universities can offer both core and elective courses and supervise theses

Collaborative PhD program in economics (CPP), Duration: Four years

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen teaching and research capacity in Sub-Saharan African countries ● Increase the pool of potential researchers and policy analysts ● Gradually build up and retain African scholars in Africa ● Integrate theory, tools, and African-specific applications into academic teaching, thus ensuring that the theory is firmly grounded on the empirical side | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A total of eight universities in six countries is participating in the CPP ● There is one host degree-awarding university for each region. These are: ● University of Cape Town for Southern Africa ● University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Eastern Africa) ● University of Ibadan, Nigeria (Anglophone, Western Africa) ● University of Yaoundé II, Cameroon (Francophone Africa) |
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Professional post-graduate degree in economics (12 months)

Provide training to mid-career policy advisors and managers in economic policy management at the master's degree level	The program is offered in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Zambia
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Short courses (one day to two weeks)

Develop indigenous executive capacity in core economic policy management institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI) and the West African Institute of Financial and Economic Management (WAIFEM) ● Short-term courses are offered in 10 counties in East and Southern Africa and five countries in West Africa
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Source: Universalia Management Group 2011.

ABOUT THE AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION

Established in 1991, ACBF builds human and institutional capacity for good governance and economic development in Africa. It is the African Union Specialized Agency for Capacity Development in Africa. To date, the Foundation has empowered people in governments, parliaments, civil society, private sector and higher education institutions in more than 45 countries and 6 regional economic communities. ACBF supports capacity development across Africa through mobilization and leveraging of resources for capacity development; grants, investments and fund management; knowledge services; promoting innovation in capacity development and capacity development advisory services. The establishment of ACBF was in response to the severity of Africa's capacity needs, and the challenges of investing in indigenous human capital and institutions in Africa. ACBF interventions are premised on four principles: the centrality of capacity to the development process in Africa; the critical role of a partnership and demand-driven approach in tackling capacity challenges; African ownership and leadership in the capacity development process; and a systematic, sequenced and coordinated approach to the capacity development process that pays attention to capacity retention and utilization. For further information go to: www.acbf-pact.org



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