

ACBF officially closes its 20th anniversary celebrations in Harare

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe, celebrated the closing ceremony of its 20th anniversary year on 8th February 2012. The theme of the year-long 20th Anniversary has been 'The Future of Africa is Now! The Critical Role of Capacity Development'. The series of events were aimed at mobilizing the attention of African LEADERS and development partners on the importance of adopting innovative solutions to the challenges of capacity facing the continent, fostering peer learning and experience - sharing on capacity development on the continent. The Forums also interrogated the short, medium and long term capacity development strategies and supporting processes; and examined how capacity development efforts and interventions can be better devised to meet unique needs.

The High level Forum was officiated by HE Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe. Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps and Heads of International Agencies, Captains of Industry and other Private Sector Chief Executives, Heads of Civil Society Organizations, Youth Groups and National Media were all present.

The 20th Anniversary celebrations were launched in February, 2011 in Kigali, Rwanda - under the theme '**The Future of Africa is Now! The Critical Role of Capacity Development**'. This High Level Forum, one of several thematic Forums held during the year, was aimed at sharing lessons on what has worked and what has not in capacity development in Africa and renewing stakeholders' individual and collective commitment to capacity development on the continent. The Kigali Summit also saw the launch of the Africa Capacity Indicators Report (ACIR), recognising of the important role played by data in effective policy development. The inaugural ACIR has become a definitive knowledge product for policymakers, public and private sector officials, civil society and other capacity development experts. The first ACIR focused on capacity development in fragile states. The next issue will focus on building capacity for agricultural productivity and food security. The ACIR provides measures of capacity and highlights what needs to be done to fully enable Africa's development, recognising the causes and barriers to achieving positive results, GOING beyond physical achievement AND gauging achievement in final outcomes. The ACIR was also launched, in French, to ACBF's francophone markets in Cotonou, Benin. It is now an annual process designed to keep track of progress and achievements in capacity development.

The Kigali Summit was preceded by Forums in Accra, Tunis and Paris.

ACCRA

The first High Level Forum (HLF) was held on 10 February 2010 in Accra, Ghana, entitled "**Unearthing the next twenty years of capacity development in Africa**". The objective of this forum was to delve into capacity development issues that would propel the continent to deal effectively with development challenges in this decade. The Forum coincided with the 10th Anniversaries of two successful programs supported by ACBF—the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF).

TUNIS

The second forum was held in Tunis, Tunisia on 24 March 2010. The main discussion was centred on "**Building Capacity in Post-Conflict Countries**". This meeting was attended by His Excellency Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso; Hon. Anastase Murekezi, Minister of Public Service and Labour,

representing H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda; Mr Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank Group; and Dr. Frannie Léautier, Executive Secretary of the African Capacity Building Foundation. Also in attendance were ACBF Governors, Ministers, development practitioners, policy makers, academics and others. The Tunis High Level Forum (HLF), aimed at mobilizing the attention of African people and African partners on the importance of adopting innovative solutions to the challenges of capacity development in fragile and post-conflict environments.

To this end, the HLF, being a key 20th Anniversary build-up activity, provided a unique opportunity for ACBF to reposition and rebrand itself, while retuning its key development messages, in view of the evolving scenarios on the region. This event enabled ACBF to leverage its position as the leading capacity building institution on the African continent to get messages on capacity development in Africa on the international agenda. In line with the strategic objectives of the 20th Anniversary activities, the HLF provided ACBF with a unique opportunity to look back and learn from what has worked and what hasn't over the last 20 years, and to look forward at the challenges facing Africa. The visibility and media exposure achieved, as well as the individual and collective voices of invited partners, donors and stakeholder, invigorated the Foundation's resources mobilization drive.

PARIS

The Paris HLF held on 28 September 2010 discussed the theme “**Repositioning Africa in the 21st Century: Progress, Prospects and Challenges**”. This event, too, was well attended by a wide range of participants, including international development practitioners, policy makers, academics, decision makers and ACBF Governors. This conference was graced by distinguished guests, among others, His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, Former President of the Republic of Ghana, and Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson, African Union Commission.

The Paris Forum shed new light on the implications of the emerging consensus on capacity building/development in Africa – especially the issues related to new financial regulations, international competition, crisis exit strategies and future technologies.

HARARE HIGH LEVEL FORUM (HLF)

Two plenary sessions WERE HELD - ONE on the anniversary theme: DELETE OF (of) The Future of Africa is Now! The Role of Capacity development in Africa! AND another on Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship: Africa's Hidden Wealth.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT – AFRICA'S HIDDEN WEALTH

ACBF has used the 20th anniversary year to lead and respond to the pressing issue of Youth Employment in Africa.

Leading up to the African Union Assembly in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in July 2011, the Government of Mauritania, in collaboration with the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), held a workshop on “Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment in North Africa” in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

The workshop created a platform for dialogue and experience-sharing between stakeholders from 12 countries, 6 institutions, notably national youth associations, representatives of public services and

employment agencies, young entrepreneurs and private sector and women's organizations. Several international organizations, including the NEPAD Agency, ILO, World Bank and UNDP, also participated.

A major outcome of the workshop has been a 'Nouakchott Declaration' containing specific recommendations. These are:

1. Address the skills and competency gaps to create individuals ready for the labour market, through partnerships with universities and training institutions, and ensuring that training matches the needs of the labour market. This includes looking at curriculum review to introduce technical skills in high demand by the labor market, access to education for disadvantaged youth and science and technology;
2. Work with the Regional Economic Communities to create an enabling policy environment, support decision-makers to develop appropriate legal frameworks, and generate the critical mass of practitioners who can shape the job creating potential of economies. Policies impacting labor markets, trade, trans-border migration and multi-country infrastructure investments are particularly relevant in creating opportunities for the young;
3. Create platforms for dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector to generate a positive environment for economic growth and job creation with particular focus on public-private partnerships for supporting entrepreneurship and creating jobs for young people. Regional solutions to conflict are extremely critical for providing alternatives to young people caught up in difficult choices between famine and active soldiering;
4. Support learning and knowledge-sharing to speed up change and uncover ideas that unlock the potential of young people at the national and regional level particularly ideas for encouraging entrepreneurship among the young in the areas of agriculture and the green economy;
5. Examine alternative investment and financing instruments for their adequacy to micro, small and medium enterprises for young people and to investigate the possibility of creating an Africa-wide fund for youth employment;
6. Uncover and share successful practices in supporting young entrepreneurs at the pre and post enterprise creation stage;
7. Strengthen labour market data systems including development of sector, age and gender disaggregated data and utilise them for decision-making. Labour market information on job search techniques and career guidance play an equally important role.

Underpinning all these recommendations is the need to explicitly integrate job creation, and specifically youth employment, into country development policies

The learning events throughout ACBF's 20th Anniversary year have rejuvenated and reinvigorated commitment to capacity building on the African continent at the highest levels of policymaking; shared lessons and best practices in capacity building; and, raised further awareness about the ACBF. The Forums have shed light on the implications of the emerging world order for capacity development in Africa, with special emphasis on new finance regulation issues, new international competition, crisis exit strategies and future technologies. In so doing, the discussions have identified and interrogated

potential roles that can be played by capacity development institutions such as the African Capacity Building Foundation.

Today, more so than ever before, our Continent is confronted with many challenges on its path to sustained growth and development. There is no denying the fact that Africa needs to substantially improve growth performance if it is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The development challenges confronting Africa in the 21st century are therefore substantial. Central to the myriad challenges facing our Continent are the inadequacy of human and institutional capacity and the absence of a systematic and institutionalized mechanism for peer learning and experience-sharing amongst countries. As a result, there is an urgent need for a public sector that is knowledgeable, efficient, empowered and committed; a private sector that is not only innovative and growth oriented, but also driven and competitive; civil society that is constructively responsive and capable of collaborating with both the public and private sectors with a view to achieving development goals; a policy making system that is responsive to its citizens and premised on good governance; and a socio-economic and geo-political environment that is enabling and inclusive of all.

The High Level Summits have brought together a wide range of the Foundation's stakeholders, country teams led by Heads of State, senior cabinet ministers, senior representatives of multilateral, bi-lateral, continental and regional organizations, members of the diplomatic corps, ACBF Executive Board Members, ACBF Board of Governors and many others, who DELETE IN OUR OPINION in our opinion, represent the family of ACBF.