

Knowledge Networks

Thus far, the Foundation has launched two types of networks — the highly specialized Technical Advisory Panels and Networks (TAP-NETs), six of which have been launched, and the Country Level Knowledge Networks (CLK-NETs), the first of which is being set up in Ghana. Both types of networks aim at encouraging the emergence of communities of practice among development stakeholders in the Foundation's core competence areas with a view to facilitating knowledge generation, sharing and dissemination for good governance, sustainable growth and poverty reduction. Two other Knowledge Networks, the African Policy Institutes Forum (APIF), and Economic and Financial Policymakers' Network (EFNET), are to be launched by the end of 2004.

All six TAP-NETs in the Foundation's six core competence areas are in operation. These are: Economic Policy Analysis and Management (EPANET), Public Administration and Management (PAMNET), Financial Management and Accountability (FIMANET), Professionalization of the Voices of the Private Sector and Civil Society (VOICENET), Strengthening of Policy Analysis Capacity of National Parliaments and Parliamentary Institutions (PARLIANET), and Strengthening and Monitoring of National Statistics (STATNET).

TAP-NETs are networks of highly competent and experienced professionals, intellectuals, development practitioners, researchers, policymakers, civic leaders, captains of industry and commerce, among others, in the six core competence areas of the Foundation's operation.

The TAP-NETs were set up to achieve three major objectives. First, to improve the quality of ACBF project and program operations so that the Foundation can serve, more effectively, the African continent through projects, programs and knowledge generating and sharing activities in capacity building and development management. Second, to work with ACBF to identify, refine and apply best practices in the capacity building process. Members of the TAP-NETs are therefore expected to contribute their skills, experiences, strategies, techniques and tools, among others, and through the Foundation make these available to policymakers and other development managers in African countries with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of their capacity building programs and enhancing their access to a pool of experts who can contribute valuable inputs to solutions to development management problems. Third, to work with ACBF to synthesize information and share skills, experiences, and best practices that could be of value to African countries and regions in the management of development policies and programs for sustained growth.

As communities of professionals and practitioners, the TAP-NETs offer many benefits. First and foremost, they serve as a pool of experts that strengthens the effectiveness of ACBF's operations. Beyond the Foundation's immediate operational needs, the TAP-NETs offer African countries the following, among others: a platform on which African policymakers and development managers can seek information and knowledge on specific development policy issues; a tool for expanding the frontiers of policy research and analysis on specific development policy problems; a pool from which to

draw and learn from country cases in development management; a mechanism for tapping into the skills of Africans in the Diaspora to make the best use of the brain drain; and a platform for the confluence of global experience and best practices in policies and programs for national and regional development. The membership of the TAP-NETs is global, comprising African and non-African experts who have distinguished themselves professionally in each of the six core competence areas that are guiding the Foundation's interventions in capacity building.

The TAP-NETs will provide the Secretariat with a pool of experts that will supplement the Secretariat's skills in each of the core competencies. As part of the evolutionary process, they will form the technical arms of the communities of practice that the TAP-NETs will support.

The Foundation's TAP-NETs are global knowledge networks comprising African and non-African experts and institutions. They are set up to provide the Secretariat with a pool of experts that will supplement its skills in each of the six core competencies. The TAP-NETs will also form the technical arms of the broader thematic networks that will eventually evolve from the TAP-NETs.

The Secretariat in 2003 launched the Country Level Knowledge Networks (CLK-NETs) program that is designed to encourage policy institutes, professionals, development practitioners, academics, researchers and other stakeholders in national development to form a country-wide community of practice that will generate, systematically collate and share knowledge for the management of economic and social policies and programs. A CLK-NET is hosted by an existing well-established national policy institute or specialized training institution, a number of which have been set up or are being supported by the Foundation. So far, the establishment of two CLK-NETs has been approved by the Executive Board. These are for Burkina Faso and Ghana. The Burkina Faso CLK-NET will be managed by Centre d'Analyse des Politiques Economiques et Sociales (CAPES). That for Ghana is being hosted by the Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), Ghana.

The grant agreements for both CLK-NETs will be negotiated and signed in the second quarter of the year for the formal launch of their operations. Meanwhile, the CLK-NET for Ghana that was approved by the Executive Board much earlier (May 2003) has started to put in place institutional structures for its activities. Known as the Network on the Economy of Ghana (NEG), the Ghana CLK-NET already has in place most of the fundamentals, including subject-matter specialists, for the commencement of its operation.

As part of its program, which seeks to support the emergence of knowledge-based economies in Africa, the Foundation will be establishing a fully functional economic and financial policymakers' network (EFNET) by the end of 2004. EFNET is an information and a knowledge sharing community of African ministers of finance and economic development/planning as well as other senior development practitioners. The network is aimed at fostering dialogue, information and knowledge sharing (including best and replicable practices) in policymaking and implementation, and supporting continuous mutual

learning among finance and economic development/planning ministers and other senior development managers.

The Foundation's Technical Advisory Panel and Network on Economic Policy Analysis and Management is currently reflecting on the details relating to the operational modalities of EFNET, the knowledge products, services and solutions that it will offer, and the value that it will add to the development process. Meanwhile, EFNET will assist finance and economic development/planning ministers to acquire knowledge that can help them in the discharge of their responsibilities. It will capture and process information into useable knowledge, provide opportunities for continuous learning, distil and codify unique experiences into accessible replicable practices, and support advisory services that will provide quick responses to questions and queries raised by members of the network or users of its knowledge warehouse.

The main objective of EFNET is to contribute to the growth of intellectual capital on the African continent and create a mutual learning community for economic and financial policymakers. To this end, it will offer a platform for closing information and knowledge gaps through:

- Access to peer experience among finance and economic development/planning ministers.
- Access to replicable best practices in economic and financial policymaking, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- The development of a community of practice for information and knowledge sharing.
- Provision of advisory services for the members to have quick responses to questions and queries.
- The development of a web site that will offer EFNET members access to regional and global data and information required for the efficient performance of their duties.
- Provision of support to mutual learning, professional exchanges and for the deepening of understanding of concepts, tools and techniques in policy analysis and development management.
- Access to independent professional opinion from subject-matter specialists on economic and financial policy issues through links to the Foundation's Technical Advisory Panel and Networks and Country Level Knowledge Networks.

EFNET will constitute the third of the Foundation's knowledge networks that are geared towards operationalising aspects of its knowledge management strategy. These networks are vital instruments for generating and sharing knowledge among stakeholders in Africa's development in the area of capacity building and development management.

APIF will constitute the fourth of the Foundation's knowledge networks. To date two workshops for Directors of Policy Research and Specialized Training Institutions (Policy Institutes) have been held. The first one, organized by ACBF in collaboration with the International Center for Economic Growth (ICEG), was held in 1997, March 23-26. Participants brainstormed on an African Research Agenda for Accelerating Development in sub-Saharan Africa (ARAADA). The recommendations of the workshop helped lay stepping-stones for the institutionalization of a forum that would enable policy institutes directors to meet regularly and exchange views and share information on development issues and the performance of their institutes.

A second workshop of Policy Institutes Directors entitled The Role of Policy Institutes in Knowledge Generation, Utilization and Dissemination for Development Management and Poverty Reduction in sub-Saharan Africa was held on 21 – 22 June 2001 in Harare, Zimbabwe to address the area of knowledge generation, utilization and dissemination. The 2001 workshop institutionalized the African Policy Institutes Forum (APIF) and provided a vehicle for the review of leading issues in development, including institutional capacity building for development policy analysis, management and poverty reduction.

As a follow up to the 2001 workshop a move is necessary from knowledge generation, utilization and dissemination for development management and poverty reduction in SSA to knowledge sharing among policy institutes and establishment of APIF Knowledge Network hence the workshop on Knowledge Sharing Among Policy Institutes and Establishment of APIF Knowledge Network that is to be held by the end of 2004.

The main aim of APIF 2004 is to utilize the Forum to review the experiences of policy institutes in knowledge sharing, challenges faced, successes and failures in influencing policymaking, and establishing APIF Knowledge Network.