

Technical Advisory Panels and Networks

Looking closely at countries' development trajectories, the African Capacity Building Foundation is of the view that the fundamentals for sustainable growth and development are no longer simply the traditional factors of production - labor, capital and technology - as we know them. Knowledge has increasingly become a very significant factor in the development process. For a country to seize development opportunities in the 21st century, its economy must move progressively and vigorously towards emerging as a knowledge-based economy. African countries must welcome the knowledge revolution and make effective use of knowledge in all sectors of their economies. Countries must make a significant shift from factor-based to knowledge-based development strategies. To do this, they need to integrate key knowledge-related policy components in their development strategies, improve relevant economic incentives and institutions, upgrade their educational and training systems, build and enhance their information infrastructure and invest more in development research. The implication of this is that governments in African will need to increasingly take on a new role of serving as builders of appropriate institutions and providers of incentives for the establishment of economies that are driven by shared knowledge. To take advantage of a knowledge-based development strategy, African countries will need to apply new technologies throughout their economies and tap into the rapidly growing stock of global knowledge.

To tap into global knowledge, African countries need effective mechanisms that can "scan globally" and assist to apply knowledge locally. One of such mechanisms is the Technical Advisory Panels and Networks (TAP-NETs) that the Foundation is pioneering. As a community of professionals and practitioners, the TAP-NETs offer unlimited benefits. Some of these readily come to mind. First and fundamentally, 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.

Thus, in launching the TAP-NETs, the Foundation was not content that they would simply serve as vehicles for strengthening ACBF's operational activities. Policymakers and development managers in Africa need to have access to the intellectual resources that they provide. Through the efforts of the Foundation a number of African countries have established policy units in the core public sector. These units have high-powered links to the TAP-NETs knowledge and information sites and use them as a source for refining development policies and programs.

Inauguration of TAP-NETs

The first set of TAP-NETs were set up at an inaugural meeting that was held by the Foundation on November 21 - 22, 2002 in Harare, Zimbabwe. The TAP-NETs that were established during that meeting were for Economic Policy Analysis and Management (EPANET), Financial Management and Accountability (FIMANET), Public Administration and Management (PAMNET) and the

Professionalization of the Voices of the Private Sector and Civil Society (VOICENET). The second set of TAP-NETs, for National Statistics (STATNET) and National Parliaments and Parliamentary Institutions (PARLIANET), were established at a launch meeting on October 23-24, 2003 in Harare, Zimbabwe. The TAP-NETs constitute an integral part of the Foundation's emerging knowledge management strategy.

The 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 core competence areas of the Foundation's operation. The Foundation's operations are supported by six TAP-NETs in the following areas of its core competencies:

- Economic Policy Analysis and Management
- Public Administration and Management
- Financial Management and Accountability
- National Statistics
- Professionalization of the Voices of Private Sector and Civil Society
- National Parliament and Parliamentary Institutions

Objectives of the TAP-NETs

The TAP-NETs are set up to achieve three major objectives:

- 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.
- To work with ACBF to identify, refine and apply best practices in the capacity building process. Members of the TAP-NETs will therefore be 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.
- To work with ACBF to synthesize information and share skills, experiences, and best practices that will be of value to African countries and regions in the management of development policies and programs for sustained growth and poverty reduction.

Membership of TAP-NETs

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 present list of members for each TAP-NET can be found in the web pages of the relevant TAP-NET.

Operational Modalities

Activities of the TAP-NETs are conducted through electronic discussion boards, special assignments and direct meetings by members. For each TAP-NET, the activities are coordinated by a Chairperson who works closely with ACBF Knowledge Management Department.