



3rd Pan-African
Capacity
Development
Forum



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Let's support the ACBF

Future generations will never forgive us if we don't support the ACBF, says VP Mphoko.

Those looking for more on the second day of the combined Third African Capacity Development Forum and the 25th anniversary celebrations of the ACBF were not disappointed. Zimbabwe's Vice President Phelekezela Mphoko came to officially declare the 25th anniversary open, but before he rose to speak, a line up of sharp speakers had watered the ground sufficiently enough to make his work easy.

Apart from the ACBF executive

secretary, Prof Emmanuel Nnadozie, setting the scene for the day with a wide-ranging speech thanking member countries for the support they had given the Foundation over 25 years, there was Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, the UNDP director regional for Africa, firing the audience with the assertion that the "Africa rising" narrative can no longer be denied.

"Africa has over the past decade made the greatest economic gains than any other region in the world", Dieye insisted. "The largest

11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have seen growth rates of over 51% in the past 10 years according to Bloomberg, twice the global average of 23%.

"At the same time, poverty is declining. Since 1996, the average poverty rate in sub-Saharan African countries has fallen by about one percentage point per year, and between 2005 and 2008, the portion of Africans living on less than \$1.25 a day fell for the first time, from 52% to 48%."





The good news story was continued by Mrs Mary Manneko Monyau, the AfDB officer in charge of the Zimbabwe Field Office. Though before she gave the good news, she gave the bad one first. "Energy is the engine that powers economies and creates a prosperous society. As our president says, Africa cannot remain in the dark in nearly 140 years after the light bulb was invented." This became a most interesting point to tweet. But nobody remembered that for 90 of those 140 years, Africa was in the hands of European colonisers.

The thought probably encouraged Mrs Monya to say African countries must be in the driving seat and domestic resources must be the key. "Africa certainly has untapped potential to generate the resources needed for its socio-economic transformation," she declared, adding that "remittances to Africa have risen from \$11 billion in 2000 to over \$62 billion in 2014. Sovereign Wealth Funds assets under management in Africa have risen from \$114 billion in 2009 to \$162 billion in 2014. Pension funds currently stand at \$334 billion. And Africa today generates about \$500 billion in domestic taxes."

Based on this, the AfDB is now encouraging African leaders to think differently to mobilise all these domestic resources to accelerate development.

Then came the turn of the former ACBF executive secretary, Dr Soumana Sako, who is also a former prime minister and finance minister of Mali. He had a piece of good advice for donors who try to be backseat drivers, remote control in hand. He likened their approach to African development to a car being driven while being managed by remote control. Such donors, Dr Sako said, should stay in the car, so that if the car should crash, they and the African driver would crash together. This drew approving laughs from the audience.

Thus, when VP Mphoko finally came to the podium, the audience had been primed enough for his words. He praised the ACBF for the good work done in the last 25 years, saying "25 years ago, wherever one looked in Africa, the state of capacity had been very alarming. [But] while admitting that a lot still needs to be done, the picture is quite different



Above: Zimbabwean Vice President Phelekezela Mphoko at the official opening

today with most African countries supported with capacity building – thanks to institutions, such as the ACBF."

Based on this good work, the Vice President called on "fellow Africans who have a vision for the continent in the spirit of pan-African solidarity" to support the ACBF for the implementation of sustainable capacity building solutions for inclusive socio-economic development.

"Future generations will never forgive us, if we do not provide the required support and attention to a pan-African institution such as ACBF," VP Mphoko implored.

This rhymed well with what Prof Nnadozie had said earlier: The continent's current share of global engineers stood at 35 engineers per one million people, compared to 168 for Brazil, 2,457 for the European Union, and 4,103 for the United States.

"Just in 2011, over 10,000 medical graduates who were born or trained in Africa migrated and were registered to practice in the United States alone ... The continent has only 2% of the world's doctors though it bears around 24% of the global burden of diseases. And only 28% of students in Africa are enrolled in science and technology."

The morning session was crowned with the launch of the ACBF 25th anniversary book, *ACBF in Action – 25 years of Capacity Development, Impact Across Africa*.

Africa therefore needs to support the ACBF for it to support Africa to overcome these challenges.

Baffour Ankomah

VOICES:

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS?

TIMOTHY SHAW

Research Professor, University of Massachusetts, USA



I think some of the new challenges the ACBF faces in its second 25 years were outlined by the Executive

Secretary's comments in response to Vice President Mphoko – namely, questions about global warming and what it means for Africa's agriculture, land, food and water; and secondly the issue of migration, both within and outside Africa, for example Africans moving to Europe, Canada, the United States and the Gulf States. I think learning how to develop the capacities of migrants to help their countries of origin will be a very important aspect of the ACBF's next 25 years.

ALI ISSA ABDI

Managing Director, The Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute, Ethiopia



The ACBF has done tremendous work in the last 25 years on knowledge generation, knowledge

dissemination, and building the capacity of member countries. Now the onus is on our governments and authorities to implement what they have learnt from the ACBF programmes and projects. Another takeaway from this conference is that as much as has been done, there is still a lot more to do. The ACBF was important 25 years ago and now it is much more vital in two specific ways: first, moving from country-specific policies to a continental vision. Agenda 2063 has to be the central issue.

In order to truly transform, Africa needs to address its health deficit as well. Not only do we need a mass expansion in health infrastructure and delivery, but we also need to retain the doctors on the continent.



Private business is not a colonial construct

The lingering perception that private sector interests represent those of the “enemy” is not helping Africa.

For the private sector to identify where it can play a role in identifying and addressing capacity gaps in Africa, there needs to be more engagement between government and organised business.

This was a main thread of the debate at Tuesday’s Parallel Session, *Developing the capacity of governments to create a conducive environment for private sector development*. But it is not that simple. The private sector is not always easy to access because it is seldom unified and there is a deep mistrust between the two parties that affects the way they work together.

Panellist Dr. Nkosana Moyo, executive chair (above), MINDS, in South Africa, attributed this to the lingering perception that private business is a colonial construct and decades later, many Africans continue to see private sector interests as representing those of the “enemy”.

The view that big business represents foreign nations’ interests rather than local interests makes true engagement difficult because of trust issues.

Public officials seem to be unaware of what it takes to attract investors or are not convinced of the benefits of private investment and can make life unduly difficult for

investors. Corruption on both sides complicates matters.

Panellist Eric Chinje, the CEO of the African Media Initiative, suggested that governments often lacked the political will, rather than the requisite capacity, to deal with issues affecting the private sector.

The panellists were in agreement that if the right leadership was in place driven by a strong vision, there would always be a way to work around the capacity issues by finding innovative solutions.

It was pointed out that the private sector was not just made up of large companies: more than 60% of business in most countries is carried out by small, informal entrepreneurs, and therefore there is a need for capacity building to enable them to grow and formalise their operations. This is a clear case where capacity interventions can make a tangible impact on economic transformation.

Civil society too can play an active role in championing the economic and social transformation agenda if capacity is built in these institutions. NGOs similarly have a role to play in building linkages between the private and public sectors. An example is the Bank of Industry in Nigeria, which is hiring NGOs and others to build capacity in businesses which they have targeted for funding.

Dianna Games

Accountability and political will are critical

THE LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY HAS been identified as one of the major hindrances limiting the achievement of set targets in Africa. During a side event on the multisectoral interlinkages between health, human development and Africa’s capacity for social and economic transformation held on the first day of the Third African Capacity Development Forum, speakers decried the shortage of medical doctors and persistent violence against women across Africa, as they raised other challenges facing the continent, including the lack of drinkable water, illiteracy and malnutrition, among others.

The picture painted was dismal. According to the speakers, 69% of Somalis and 54% of Congolese have no access to drinkable water. And when it comes to the effects of climate change, Chad typifies the continent’s dilemma. Lake Chad, for instance, has lost more than 10% of its 1963 size.

The chair of the side event, Prof Abdi Issa, the managing director of HESPI in Ethiopia, led the charge when he called attention to the lack of political will on the part of leaders in implementing decisions.

Beyond inadequate accountability and the lack of political will, Prof Issa contended that tackling these issues in a holistic manner was most crucial to the continent’s development, especially meeting targeted goals under the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the African Agenda 2063.

Mr. Rotimi Sankore of Afri-Dev Info, said if Africa did not act on the issue of accountability, little could be achieved. He pointed out that most African leaders gave priority to cabinet members who helped their political careers as against those who were in the core development and health sectors.

Tomisin Oretolu



More arts students, less progress for Africa

African countries should invest more in skills for the youth in order to address the challenges facing the African transformation Agenda, according to key speakers at the first plenary discussion of the Third Pan-African Capacity Development Forum being held in Harare. According to them, deficiencies remain a binding constraint to Africa's economic and social transformation.

With "more than 80% of students in Africa graduating in social sciences, the arts, and humanities, Africa lags behind in innovation, science and technology skills that are necessary to implement the AU Agenda 2063", the panellists agreed, and urged "higher learning institutions in Africa to change focus of their curriculum and educate the African youth to solve African problems. This means investing more in research development and innovation courses."

With regard to implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063, Apollinaire Ndorukwigira, founder of the ACBF, said the Foundation had supported the Africa Union in undertaking assessments of the capacity requirements needed to implement Agenda 2063 and develop implementation strategies to achieve the desired goals.

Christabel Ligami

"Higher learning institutions need to change the focus of their curriculum and educate the youth to solve African"



Youth unemployment is a 'ticking time bomb'

A USAID statistic: 62 million girls who should be in school are not, 30 million of them in Africa. Growing up in Kisumu, Kenya, Vivian Onano saw these statistics first hand in her immediate community. Had things played out differently, she admits, she herself could have been one of those numbers.

Instead, thanks to a supportive mother and generous educational sponsors, she graduated from top schools in Kenya and the US. Today, she works at the Africa 2.0 Foundation as community & partnerships manager (in charge of sponsorship & fundraising), sourcing funding and partners for the Foundation, a community of

more than 600 entrepreneurs in 50 chapters and 25 African countries.

Entrepreneurs are a vital solution to youth unemployment, so Onano was in a good position to discuss how to support the African youth at yesterday's panel, *Developing Private Sector Capacity for Accelerated Job Creation for the Youth*.

"Africa needs to be pro-youth, providing ample opportunities for young people [through] quality education, access to mentorship, networks and funding," she said.

The first is especially important: for the youth to be able to sit at the table, they must be informed on the issues and able to articulate grievances, as Vivian has experienced first-hand.



During the panel discussion, Dr. Felix Fofana N'zue described the problem of youth unemployment as a "ticking time bomb", as terror groups recruit frustrated and unemployed youth.

While groups like Boko Haram have historically targeted young men, they are increasingly recruiting girls now. This makes the issue of youth empowerment, like all development issues, an issue of gender.

"Poverty still has a female face...[and] gender issues must be integrated into every sustainable goal," Dr. N'zue argued. "If half of the population is not included in the conversation, how are you going to move the agenda?"

Wanjiku Mungai

VOICES:

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS?

DR BIOLA PHILLIP

Association for the Advancement of African Women Economists, Nigerian Chapter



We are an organisation working towards capacity building for African female economists. As female economists, we want

more emphasis on gender, because there is a need for capacity building in the economic profession. In Nigeria, for example, the Nigerian Economists Society is 51 years old and to date there has not been a female president.

In most faculties in our universities, it is common to see only one female lecturer in the economy departments, while there are more females in undergraduate programmes. When it comes to professionalising that area, the gap is still very wide.

Income inequality is also very high in Africa. Thus, as far as women are concerned, there is a need for capacity building all across the disciplines. We need to go back to secondary education and groom girls from there so that they can specialise in STEM disciplines. The ACBF is doing a good job, but it needs to extend its reach broadly to women in Africa.

FERNANDO DOS SANTOS

Director General, African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO)



We are now in the knowledge era, so it is important for us to shift our focus from commodities and start thinking about

developing this continent based on knowledge. At ARIPO, we deal with intellectual property, which is a tool we need to harness to develop capacity to innovate the continent and add value to our natural resources. We need to develop these capacities in order to make this continent more creative and innovative. It is also important to share capacities and disseminate knowledge across the continent.

How African institutions can help Agenda 2063

THE CREATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL

by training institutions is a key to Africa's social and economic transformation, according to experts in a parallel session meeting at the African Capacity Development Forum.

"Training institutions in Africa should therefore work closely and develop courses that model the African society with the focus on research and innovation in order to develop the human capital that the continent is lacking," said Prof. Burton Mwamila, the vice chancellor of the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology in Tanzania.

"Training institutions should also enroll more graduates in courses that are innovative and entrepreneurial," Prof Mwamila added, saying such an approach would greatly help the continent's socio-economic transformation agenda.

Supporting Prof Mwamila's view, Dr Bernadin Senadza, a senior lecturer of the University of Ghana, said African institutions should prioritise science and engineering courses in their curriculum in order to solve Africa's problems.

"Building human capital will require both the capacity building and training institutions to work closely together," Dr Senadza said, adding that "there is a need to harmonise the training institutions as well as developing human resource policies to address Africa's development issues."

Contributing to the debate, Prof. Mama Ouattara, the director of EPM-Abidjan, argued that rather than just creating more institutions offering the same courses, African countries should now shift to research pools where countries specialise in offering certain courses on research. "This will not only enhance communication among countries and dissemination of knowledge, it will also strengthen the capacity of academic institutions in terms of skills," Prof Ouattara added.

Christabel Ligami



Le leadership, pierre angulaire de la transformation de l'Afrique

Quel est l'apport des acteurs clés, tels que les gouvernements, les partenaires au développement, la société civile ou encore les médias, dans le renforcement des capacités ? Comment allons-nous impulser la transformation économique et sociale de l'Afrique ? Autant de questions, et bien d'autres, posées dès le démarrage de la 3^{ème} séance plénière du Forum.

L'ancien Secrétaire Exécutif, le Dr Edwin Nembo Forlemu y répond : « Sans un leadership transformateur sur le continent, aucun développement n'est possible ». Tel a été le leitmotiv de la Fondation durant ses 25 ans d'existence et qui fait d'elle aujourd'hui, une organisation mature. L'Afrique doit acquérir son autonomie et son indépendance à travers sa propre politique de mobilisation des revenus. Le continent doit offrir un cadre régulateur favorable pour palier aux fuites des cerveaux vers d'autres pays offrant de meilleures conditions de vie.

Les différentes institutions ainsi les gouvernements doivent avoir comme focus l'intérêt des populations. Dans ce sens, le Dr Desire Sibanda, Secrétaire permanent au ministère du Zimbabwe pour la planification économique et promotion de l'investissement met l'accent sur la gestion d'un leadership efficace qui va permettre de développer des pools de compétences que l'Afrique ne possède pas. Selon le professeur Alain Kenmogne, Master en Banque et Finance du CESAG au Sénégal, il est impérieux de procéder en amont au renforcement des capacités du secteur bancaire parce que c'est de lui que dépend la santé financière de tous les autres secteurs de développement. Parallèlement, les gouvernements doivent également interagir avec les acteurs non étatiques qui représentent la voix de plusieurs acteurs.

Christiane Munoki

Les entreprises privées ne sont pas un héritage colonial

La perception acharnée que les intérêts du secteur privé représentent ceux de « l'ennemi » ne rend pas service à l'Afrique.

Pour que les acteurs du secteur privé puissent déterminer où ils peuvent jouer un rôle et ainsi combler les lacunes en termes de capacités en Afrique, un engagement plus fort entre ceux-ci et les gouvernements

est primordial.

Cela a été le sujet principal lors de la session parallèle de ce Mardi : Développer la Capacité des Gouvernements à créer un environnement favorable au développement du secteur privé.

Ceci n'est pas une mince affaire. En effet, le secteur privé n'est pas toujours facile d'accès, car il y a rarement d'unité entre ses acteurs et les représentants gouvernementaux. D'autre part, il existe une profonde méfiance entre eux. Méfiance qui affecte considérablement leur collaboration.

Nkosana Moyo, président exécutif de MINDS, en Afrique du Sud, a attribué cela à la perception que l'entreprise privée est un héritage colonial. Il affirme que, même après plusieurs décennies, de nombreux Africains continuent de voir les intérêts du secteur privé comme représentant ceux de « l'ennemi ».

En raison de ce manque de

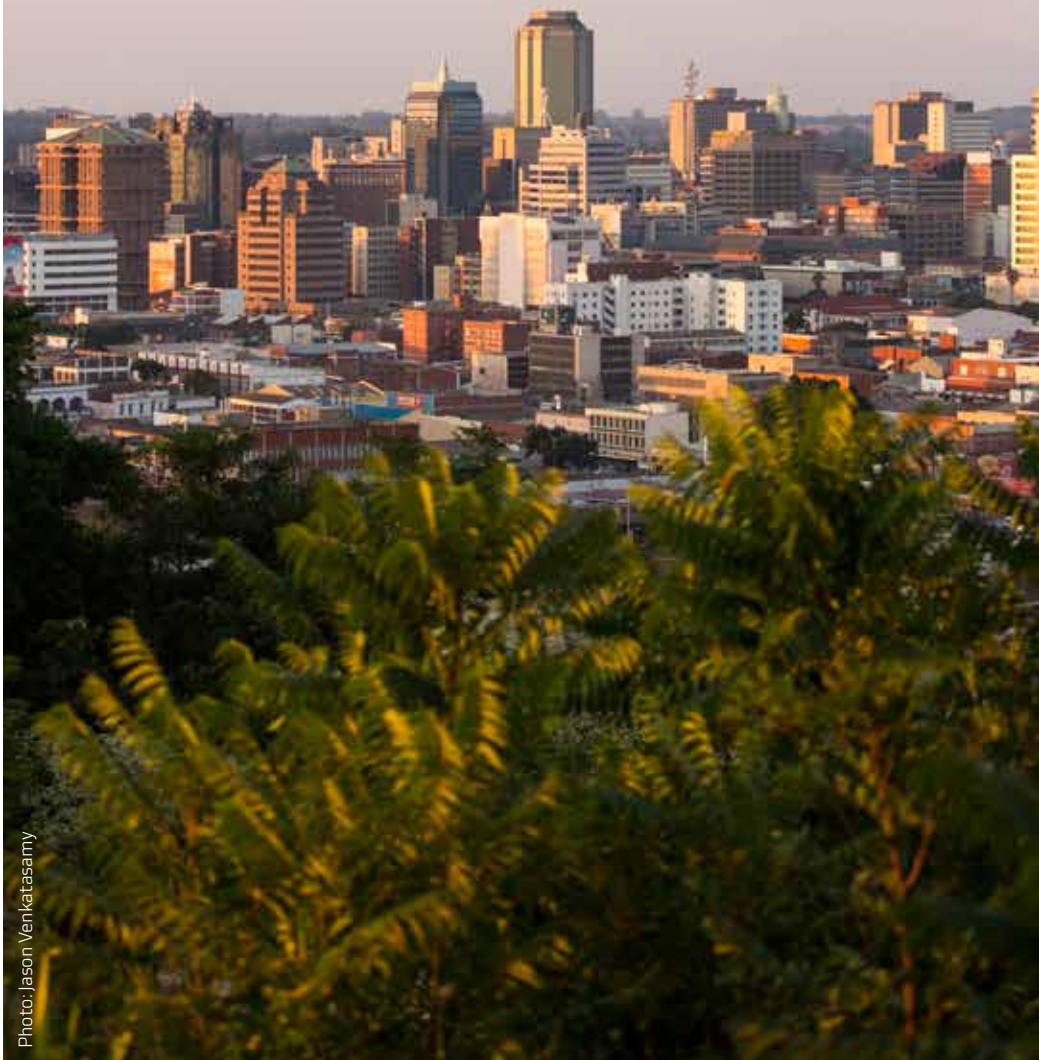


Photo: Jason Venkatasamy

confiance, cette conception rend en effet l'engagement des différentes parties très compliqué.

Les fonctionnaires semblent ignorer ce qu'il faut pour attirer les investisseurs, ou alors, ils ne sont pas convaincus des avantages qu'ils apportent à leurs économies. La corruption des deux côtés complique davantage les choses.

Eric Chinje, PDG de l'African Media Initiative, a déclaré que les gouvernements ne disposent pas de volonté politique suffisante leur permettant de faire face aux problèmes affectant le secteur privé. Il s'agit donc, selon lui, d'un problème de détermination plutôt qu'un manque de capacité.

Les intervenants étaient unanimement d'accord sur le fait que si un bon leadership, motivé par une vision forte, était en place, il y aurait toujours un moyen de contourner les problèmes de capacité et de trouver des solutions novatrices.

Dans la plupart des pays, le secteur privé, n'est pas uniquement composé des grandes entreprises. Au contraire, plus de 60% de l'activité est réalisée par des micro-entrepreneurs, opérant dans le secteur informel.

Par conséquent, le renforcement des capacités est nécessaire afin de permettre aux entrepreneurs de se développer, d'« officialiser » leurs opérations et in fine, d'impacter tangiblement la transformation économique de leurs pays.

La société civile ainsi que les ONG ont un rôle important à jouer dans l'établissement et le renforcement des liens entre les acteurs privés et publics. Un exemple est la Banque de l'Industrie au Nigeria, qui fait appel à des ONG et d'autres experts, pour renforcer les capacités dans les entreprises qu'ils ont ciblées pour le financement.

Cependant, la question de confiance n'est pas à négliger. Les gouvernements ont souvent tendance à penser que la société civile sape leur travail et se méfient donc du soutien que leur démontrent les bailleurs de fonds, suscitant ainsi diverses craintes au sujet des organismes de financement.

Dianna Games

Le chômage des jeunes est une «bombe à retardement»

Selon l'USAID 62 millions de filles qui devraient être à l'école ne le sont pas ; 30 millions d'entre elles sont en Afrique.

Ayant grandi à Kisumu, au Kenya, Vivian Onano a vu ces statistiques de première main dans sa communauté immédiate. Si les circonstances avaient été différentes, admet-elle, elle-même aurait pu faire partie du lot.

Grâce au soutien de sa mère et à la généreuse contribution de ses parrains durant son cursus, elle a pu obtenir des diplômes de grandes écoles au Kenya et aux États-Unis. Aujourd'hui, elle travaille à la Fondation Afrique 2.0 en tant que Directeur de communautés et partenariats.

Les entrepreneurs sont une solution vitale pour remédier au chômage des jeunes. «L'Afrique a besoin d'être pro-jeunesse, offrant de nombreuses possibilités pour les jeunes à travers une éducation de qualité, l'accès au mentorat, les réseaux et le financement», dit-elle. Afin de pouvoir s'intégrer, les jeunes doivent être informés sur les problématiques les concernant et doivent être capables de les adresser.

Au cours de cette discussion, le Dr Felix Fofana N'zue décrit le problème du chômage des jeunes comme une «bombe à retardement». Selon lui, les jeunes frustrés car dépourvus d'emploi, représentent la cible par excellence des groupes terroristes.

Des groupes comme Boko Haram ciblent historiquement les jeunes hommes. Maintenant, ils recrutent de plus en plus de jeunes filles. «La pauvreté a encore un visage féminin ... [et] les questions de genre doivent être intégrées dans tous les objectifs durable», a fait valoir le Dr N'zue. «Si la moitié de la population n'est pas incluse dans la conversation, comment allez-vous avancer dans l'agenda?»

Wanjiku Mungai

VOIX:

AGNÈS FOUFFÉ

Secrétaire Exécutive d'une ONG. Parallèlement, je suis Apporteur d'investisseurs en Afrique.



Je retiens de cet événement que la mission de formation commence à apporter des impacts qui sont mesurables sur le

terrain, et j'en suis très fière. Je souhaiterais qu'il y ait des accès renforcés aux connaissances et qu'il y ait de meilleurs partenariats, avec de nouvelles sources d'investissement pour le continent africain.

L'ACBF prodigue déjà des formations, certes, mais il en faut plus. Le monde rural, par exemple, n'est pas assez formé. Il est vrai que dans certains pays on fait de l'alphabétisation, mais après l'alphabétisation, cela s'arrête. Ceci est notre combat.

D'hier, je retiens que l'Afrique avance. D'aujourd'hui, que tout le monde commence à s'impliquer et cela est merveilleux.

NOËL MBOUMBA,

Ministre délégué au budget et aux comptes publics du Gabon.



Ces deux jours nous ont permis de faire un état des lieux des difficultés inhérentes au renforcement des capacités en Afrique, et

comment optimiser la transformation économique et sociale au niveau africain.

Nous avons appris qu'il est important de pouvoir intégrer à la fois les gouvernants, la société civile, mais surtout le secteur privé qui constitue un moteur de croissance et de développement social et économique au niveau africain.

Aujourd'hui, l'état gabonais impulse une politique axée sur la mise place de réformes administratives et l'investissement dans les projets d'infrastructures, facteurs importants du développement économique et social.

Le gouvernement attend de l'ACBF un appui à la mise en place d'un centre d'analyse de politiques économiques et sociales. Le Gabon en a besoin pour accompagner son développement.



Zimbabwe: A case study

Evidence-based policymaking is still a new idea to policy makers.

The effective use of research evidence can play a crucial role in ensuring desired policy outcomes, according to Dr Joseph Tinarwo of the University of Zimbabwe. Participating in a panel discussion on “Strengthening Capacity to use research evidence in policymaking in Zimbabwe”, Dr Tinarwo said, “notwithstanding the contribution of research evidence in policy formulation in many countries, in Zimbabwe evidence-based policy making is still a new idea to the policy makers.”

Researchers in Zimbabwe rarely take into account the different

audiences of their research outputs and this creates a disconnect between the researchers and their target audiences.

Dr Tinarwo said academic researchers in Zimbabwe were rewarded through tenure and academic publications, and rarely respond to issues before government policy makers. Thus, “there is a lack of trust between researchers and policy makers, resulting in governments showing reluctance to work with think tanks,” he added.

The moderator of the session, Dr Ibbo Mandaza, the executive director of SAPES Trust, said some of the gaps seen should make policy makers

appreciate the use of research evidence in policy making.

Contributing to the debate, Botswana’s ambassador to Zimbabwe, H.E Kenny Kinitiro Kapinga, said the tragedy of Africa was that policy was made at campaign rallies, without being subjected to debate or criticism.

“As a result, no preliminary examination is made of the implications of such policy decisions made under emotions,” he said, adding that sometimes such policies could be contradictory to existing ones. “All this can be avoided if a proper process is followed and implemented.”

Capacity building is a long-term project

To remain ahead of the game, it is important that the ACBF develops capacity innovation and original thinking within its own house, argues Tammie Mbakwe.

There seems to be a general consensus today that Africa is in need of transformational growth. Transformational growth is a bold term and one that is dominating the development lexicon.

In sum, it is growth that will create jobs – and more of it so that it leads to double-digit growth whilst increasing productivity across different sectors of the economy. Or more simply, it is the substantial improvement of the quality of life of the majority.

Which brings in the Africa Rising narrative. In many ways a foreign construct, it has in fact been based on a growth that has been far too narrow. The talk now is transformative and inclusive growth. And the challenge, for an institution like the ACBF and for governments in general, is that when everything is a priority, it is difficult to know where to start.

Given the ambitious targets the AU and its member states have set themselves and the limited resources at hand, there is an imperative for greater collaboration and greater harmonisation. But this is still lacking. There is undoubtedly a critical role for the ACBF to play in helping execute the road map as set out in Agenda 2063, as without leadership and the right skills, a road map will remain just that ... a map.

So what are the skills needed to help Africa grow? Unfortunately, the list is long and the metrics still make for sad reading, whether you are looking at the number of engineers, doctors or even financiers.



And then you have skills deficiencies at an institutional level, where parliamentarians for example are in some cases insufficiently trained to deal with complex matters. This was something the former ACBF executive secretary, Dr Edwin Forlemu, was keen to stress.

Ultimately governments and parliaments have to provide the leadership, the vision, and the incentives. If that fails, everything else is bound to fail too.

Here, Ozias Tungwara from the Open Society Institute made a salient point when he asked for greater introspection from African institutions. Why have some institutions that were set up only 10-15 years ago failed in their mandate, he asked.

The failure of these institutions, that were supposed to contribute to the emancipation of the African continent, should be a lesson to us all. Was it because of a lack of capacity or a lack of continental will?

Mr Abel Thoahlane, a former ACBF executive secretary, and Dr Desimba of Zimbabwe remained upbeat. The ACBF had indeed changed since it was first set up in 1991, initially to enable African countries to deal with the structural adjustment programmes they had been forced to undergo.

Thankfully in a more complex and interconnected world, the ACBF has managed to widen its remit and scope. And the structure was more able and better adapted to grow and help solve some of the challenges facing the continent.

However, the fact that the ACBF has reduced its programmes from 300 a few years back to 70 today, is symptomatic of some of the problems the Foundation is facing, especially in terms of funding.

And the institution, as the current executive secretary Prof Nnadozie reiterated, will only be as effective as the funding it gets. This point was an opportunity to brainstorm original ideas to mobilise resources not only for the ACBF but also to ensure the sustainability of certain think tanks and other important civil society organisations supported by the ACBF.

And, to remain ahead of the game, it is important that the ACBF develops capacity innovation and original thinking within its own institution, without forgetting that capacity building is not a fad but a long-term project.



And then the singing and dancing took over...

The official silver jubilee celebrations were marked with local entertainment and the cutting of the ceremonial cake. And here's to the next 25 years as we train a golden generation.







Wanted: Responsible industrialisation



For a long time, Africa's civil society has had confrontational relationships with governments and the private sector. However, panelists at a side session at the ACBF's 25th anniversary celebrations challenged the continent to look beyond this paradigm and consider the opportunities for cooperation between the trio.

This is important because CSOs and the private sector share common interests, for instance, in having political and macroeconomic stability. Additionally, the private sector plays a role in improving livelihoods through corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, and also create jobs and facilitate industrialisation, which is necessary for economic growth.

CSR is one area in which there needs to be more cooperation between the private sector and CSOs. As NGOs have greater experience in this area, drawing them

in ensures that businesses are not simply replicating tried and tested (and often failed) models of giving back to the community.

But this cooperation necessitates that CSOs build capacity in the area of communication, not just for the sake of having a better relationship with the private sector, but also in order to build their own repository of knowledge.

Which is not to say that confrontation is completely unnecessary. At the end of the day, civil society is uniquely positioned to hold the private sector accountable and to ensure that the industrialisation that does take place is "responsible industrialisation", meaning it does not happen at the cost of environmental safety or human rights. To do so capably may require borrowing models of engagement from labor groups who use confrontational tactics to achieve their ends.

VOICES:

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS?

SURESH BABU

Head of Capacity Strengthening in the Director General's Office, International Food Policy Research Institute



The key take-away message from this conference is that capacity is crucial for the social and economic

transformation of Africa. It is not only crucial to operationalise the multiple sectors that drive the African economies, it is also critical for the next 50 years to achieve the goals that Africa has set for itself with Agenda 2063.

Another key message is that without investing in capacity for designing, formulating, adapting and implementing policies or programmes, it will be difficult for African countries to implement the programmes that are needed for achieving socio-economic transformation.

The capacities and the investment for building these have to come from within the countries. The technical assistance that we have been given for the development programmes and policies must be translated into local capacity.

Finally, non-state actors and the media have to be brought together to increase the visibility of the policies and the problems the countries face in order to dialogue and find solutions that are sustainable and long-lasting.



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