

How and when the six core competencies were decided upon and approved

In 2001, the ACBF Board of Governors approved the Foundation's Strategic Medium-Term Plan (SMTP I) for the period 2002 - 2006. The Plan set out the Foundation's vision, mission, objectives and priority areas of intervention. In addition, the strategy emphasized the need for ACBF to learn lessons from its own operational experiences and to share these to further the course of capacity building implementation in Africa. As a result, during the life of the plan, the knowledge management function was cultivated and nurtured. In terms of the programming approach and implementation mechanism, there was no significant change from previous strategies. Indeed, the SIWP was kept intact within the framework of this plan. During this phase, there was an increase in the number of member countries. Attempts were also made to design multi-sector capacity building program (MSCBP) in a number of countries.

SMPT I aligned the Foundation's core business with six core competency areas, namely:

1. economic policy analysis and management;
2. financial management and accountability;
3. strengthening and monitoring of national statistics;
4. public administration and management;
5. strengthening of the policy analysis capacity of national parliaments; and,
6. professionalization of the voices of the private sector and civil society.

Within the framework of these six areas of core competencies, the Foundation set out to concentrate on the following

five areas of intervention:

1. strengthening of effectiveness of the core public sector;
2. strengthening of public sector, private sector and civil society interface;
3. strengthening of training and research institutions;
4. strengthening of regional organizations; and
5. establishment/strengthening of country-level frameworks for coordination of capacity building and participatory development.

In 2002, the Foundation's donors announced new pledges amounting to US\$159.240 million to finance the SMTP I. Since 2001, the above-mentioned core competency areas have guided and shaped the Foundation's capacity development interventions and strategies for the continent.

Following the decision to integrate PACT into the Foundation, ACBF's mandate was expanded to develop capacity in the core public sector; in interface areas with the private sector and civil society; in training and research institutions; and in regional organizations across sub-Saharan Africa. The actual guidance to settle on the above-noted six core-competence areas was the result of region-wide capacity needs-assessment missions that were fielded in 2000, stemming from the integration of PACT into ACBF. The needs-assessment missions were undertaken in African countries and regional organizations and provided invaluable feedback on priority areas of needs. The outcomes of the needs-assessment missions were aggregated and reclassified into broad categories of areas of intervention, cumulating in the present core-competence area classification. The six core-competence areas, thus, are the direct result of the demand expressed by countries and regional organizations in response to the PACT initiative.

How and when the first Strategic Medium Term Plan (SMTP I) was approved and rolled-out

The ACBF Board of Governors' special meeting of 24th -25th January, 2000 in London, United Kingdom approved the Foundation's Strategic Medium-Term Plan (SMTP) for the period 2002 . 2006. This was after the Secretariat presented the Draft ACBF Consolidated Strategic Medium-Term Plan (2001 . 2005), whose cost was estimated at between US\$ 701.954 million (full program option) and US\$ 553.292 million (reduced program option). The Governors also endorsed the development and capacity building challenges presented in the document, as well as the vision, strategy and objectives. The Board requested that the Secretariat be more ambitious and start moving progressively towards a program and process approach to capacity development (through institutional and governance reform) especially in the public sector. It resolved that ACBF should place a premium on quality, networking, experience sharing and dissemination . which would involve direct contributions by the Foundation to improvement in the policy environments of countries, especially through policy dialogue and provision of professional advice to governments. As a result, the Foundation would play an advocacy role and promote leadership and ownership of the development process by African stakeholders. Based on the size and scope of the SMTP I, and on the Foundation's then-current programming cycle and market share, the Governors decided that SMTP I should be scaled down to approximately US\$ 300 million, and should run from 2002 to 2006.

SMTP I sought to incorporate and build upon the holding scenario of the Strategy and Indicative Work Program for ACBF Phase II (Macroeconomic Policy Analysis and Development Management Capacity) that was approved by the Board of Governors for the period, 1998 - 2002. To this end, SMTP I can be viewed as a single-scenario plan that was drawn up in the expectation that it would provide a framework for a systematic and time-phased strategy for mobilizing the required financial resources for its implementation. The strategic priorities and programs presented in SMPT I sought to vigorously address Africa's capacity needs through:

1. Projects and programs in the core public sector (the main focus of intervention), in interface areas with the private sector and civil society, in training institutions and in regional organizations;
2. Support for the emergence of institutional frameworks for country ownership and coordination of capacity building activities as well as for participatory development; and
3. Knowledge networking and program support activities for a strategic orientation and the emergence of the Foundation as a knowledge-based institution.

Implementation and roll-out OF SMTP I

The successful implementation of SMTP I required a significant overhaul of the Secretariat's human and institutional capital. Other elements of the strategy focused on training and re-training programs to re-tool existing staff with skills in the core competencies of the Foundation in order to enhance productivity and pave the way for an effective transition of the Foundation into a knowledge-based institution. Accordingly, the Foundation undertook a hiring drive (of both support and professional staff) and complemented this, later, with the establishment of thematic working groups and technical advisory panels comprising African and non-African specialists . one each for the six core competency areas.

The strengthening of internal capacity was to have been complemented with the progressive growth and effectiveness of national focal points, which would, over time, take responsibility for some of the upstream project development activities. Unfortunately, due to a myriad of reasons . all of which cannot be addressed here . the initiative did not materialize. It is however important to note that the Foundation managed, somewhat successfully, to foster some strategic alliances and networks with partner institutions, as well as establishing technical advisory panels to supplement the internal capacity of its Secretariat. To date, it can be said that the technical advisory panels and networks (TAPNETS) have been instrumental in supporting ACBF's research agenda, undertaking project/program mid-term reviews and evaluations, and supporting ACBF knowledge generation.

Undoubtedly, SMTP I marked a significant watershed in the evolution of ACBF and its efforts, aimed at building sustainable capacity on the continent. At its inception and roll-out, SMTP I represented a significant milestone in the history of ACBF and a key development on the capacity development frontiers in sub-Saharan Africa. It served as the basis for SMTP II and in no small measure contributed significantly to what ACBF is today. While the road was challenging at times, SMTP I nonetheless deserves a special mention in the annals of ACBF history . and what better moment than now, as we recount and celebrate the Foundation's 20-year existence.

The successor to the 2002-2006 plan was the Second Strategic Medium-Term Plan (SMTPII: 2007-2011). The SMTP II has as its theme: Towards the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. The plan mainly provides for deepening and expanding on the achievements of the first SMTP that provides the framework for the expansion of its operations from an initial focus on economic policy analysis and development management into six core competency areas. Evaluations of the first SMTP concluded that the PACT framework is still valid and relevant to Africa's capacity needs, hence it became the major drive for this plan.

Midway into the implementation of the SMTPII, the Foundation went through a process of re-engineering for internal efficiency and effectiveness. To guide the process, management launched the Management Action Plan (MAP). MAP was implemented from July 2009 and will run until June 2010. One of the by-products of the activities of MAP was the drafting of a new Strategic Plan that will be implemented from 2011-2015. While this plan essentially retains key programming principles such as flexibility, political neutrality in countries of intervention, and remains demand-led, the strategy is a direct response to the pressing needs for improved capacity in Africa and the concerns of international development actors about making development more effective. In this respect, capacity development at country level has been identified as the key instrument.

Thus, a significant departure of this plan from the previous one is the emphasis on country programs, as opposed to isolated interventions with limited impact. The Plan also emphasizes the need to make ACBF a recognized capacity building provider in Africa that contributes to development effectiveness and results in the country of presence. Thus, monitoring and evaluation of performance for accountability and learning is an integral part of the Plan. It also recognizes the need to make knowledge management functions in the Foundation a key component of country program development for enhanced learning. Finally the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 emphasizes in great detail, the need for flexibility, so that it can address the capacity dimensions of emerging global development issues within its programming framework.

Overall, in the last twenty years, ACBF has been consistently guided by strategic plans that articulate its vision, mission, and long and short-term objectives, with in-built mechanisms for programming

implementation, financing of programs, accounting for program performance, and swift responses to new capacity development challenges that may want to erode the gains achieved over the years.