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Forecasting development

This is an interesting ‘prediction’ piece, with some excellent links, by Hannah Ryder who is Team Leader for Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation at the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). She intends reviewing these predictions in a year’s time, much like the Economist’s World In Year X publication.

I have two sub-sets of development forecasts. First, a “national” sub-set. Here, my top three things to look out for are:

- I think we might learn a lot more about cooperation between developing countries this year. DFID recently launched a research call on Chinese cooperation in Africa, building on a 2012 Brazil and Africa call. But there is a lot more work happening on this beyond DFID. In particular, China will release its second ever White Paper on aid. The first was released in 2011. Since then there have been several independent reports about the scale and direction of Chinese cooperation with other countries, but this will give an update from the government, and perhaps more information about its strategy going forward.
- 50 countries around the world – as this infographic shows – will have some form of presidential election, legislative election or a referendum – and of these 6 are countries that DFID works in directly. There may be unrest in some of these countries, and there is already conflict in South Sudan, Central African Republic and elsewhere. In this context, we can probably expect a continued debate on how to ensure governments strengthen institutions and use aid and their own taxpayer’s money the best they can...
- From the UK, more aid will be spent on programmes that deliver economic growth in developing countries. Other countries are making similar shifts. So expect more announcements of results around infrastructure development, financial development and business start-ups, in addition to traditional results – such as on health and education.

My second subset is “international”. Three big events stand out – and I predict a theme of “careful balance” will run through all of them. Starting with the earliest first:

- In April, Mexico will host the inaugural meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) – bringing together governments, businesses and other non-governmental organisations to find ways to work together better to end poverty. I do have insider knowledge as I work on the GPEDC – but I think we’ll see quite a few new initiatives launched – possibly similar to this water partnership launched by Matt Damon and others a few weeks ago. We’ll also see some healthy in-depth debates (which no other international forums really cover) around big dilemmas such as what tools the international community should use to help tackle poverty in middle income countries, or how global tax rules can shift to better support development. The balance here will be in summarising consensus on these debates in the GPEDC’s first ever communiqué – but in the meantime it’s worth visiting the GPEDC blog to see the debates build up.
- In September, the UN Secretary General will host a Climate Summit to support formal negotiations in Lima in December 2014 and Paris in December 2015. The careful balance to strike will be between building momentum and optimism by strengthening practical action on energy use and deforestation, for instance, and raising expectations – so as to avoid a crash in Lima or Paris of the kind many felt took place in Copenhagen in 2009.
- Perhaps the most careful balance of all will be around the release of various documents on the post-2015 development agenda, including for negotiation by governments in the UN. A huge amount of work went into generating ideas for this last year – including the report from the High Level Panel which proposed 12 goals and 54 targets. If my experience in UN negotiations is anything to go by, I’d expect a much longer list for formal negotiation – but don’t ask me to give a specific number!

Source: http://blogs.dfid.gov.uk/2014/02/forecasting-development/

The CAP sets out the following as development outcomes that should form an integral part of the post-2015 agenda:
- Sustainable economic transformation and inclusive growth;
- Innovation, technology transfer and Research and Development (R&D);
- Human Development; and
- Financing and partnerships.

Development enablers have also been identified as prerequisites, some of which include peace and security, good political and economic governance, strengthened institutional capacity, promotion of the rule of law and respect for human rights, gender equality, participatory processes with cultural sensitivity, domestic financing (with the recognised role of the private sector in public-private partnerships) and regional integration.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

South Africa’s creative economy stagnating instead of flourishing

As the 20th year of democracy gets into full swing, [South Africans] should be celebrating a cultural renaissance as well as the rebirth of a nation. But many will argue that the South African creative economy has been stagnating instead of flourishing.

The Department of Arts and Culture’s Mzansi Golden Economy strategy trumpets the potential of South Africa’s artists and crafters to parade [its] artistic wealth in foreign markets, and the Department of Trade and Industry offers incentives for local artists, workers to access international opportunities. Yet recent trade figures paint a very different picture.

As one of the primary importers and international consumers of South African creative products, the European Union (EU) — including partners the British Council, Visual Arts Network of South Africa, Arterial Network and EUNIC South Africa — commissioned a study to probe this relationship in more depth. The aim was to help the South African cultural sector better understand how to increase trade with the rest of the world.

The research findings, alarmingly, reveal that South Africa’s creative and cultural industry goods exports rose only marginally between 2002 and 2010 — from $331m to $351m.

This is in stark contrast to the creative goods imported from other countries, which rocketed from $465m to $1.72bn during the same period. So the balance of trade is woefully skewed. In 2010 we were importing nearly five times the value of what we were exporting. Global trade in creative products more than doubled in that time, even in the midst of the financial crisis.

South Africa’s cultural exports to the US and EU have declined significantly. Meanwhile, imports of industrially manufactured creative and cultural goods from China have been flooding in — a more than sevenfold increase. Although more of [South Africa’s] cultural goods are finding their way into Africa, this may be because items produced elsewhere are using South Africa as a gateway to the continent. But South Africa’s inclusion in the Brics formation seems to have had little effect on creative exports.

The study recommends installing more support mechanisms to help businesses promote their goods and services internationally. Most significantly, perhaps, it suggests developing a coherent international strategy to bring together the different strategies and mandates of the various government departments. Let us hope the powers that be are listening.


The Southern Africa Scan newsletter has previously referred to the potential of the so-called creative economy (see in particular the March 2012 edition), however, the article above does not portend well for that potential.


Perhaps as a counter, the launch of a series of easy-to-use toolkits on the Creative Cape Town website, aimed at providing practical advice to local creatives wishing to start their own business, may prove useful.

In the words of project manager Mike Purdham, “We’re seeing many people who are very entrepreneurial in spirit but who lack the real-world experience and business acumen to start their own company or go out on their own. These toolkits will provide a map of sorts, not only providing step-by-step advice on practical matters like types of finance or business plans, but also a more inspirational aspect, in which we will be featuring successful local entrepreneurs as case studies.”
Each toolkit will be published on the Creative Cape Town website, eventually forming a toolkit “library”, intended as a free and easily downloadable resource for the creative community in Cape Town.

And for a more upbeat, topical view on the potential of the creative economy, see here http://www.daily Maverick.co.za/article/2014-02-28-design-indaba-cape-town-20-years-on-the-creative-economy-thrives-and-could-even-compete-with-mining/

Lessons to grow by: Private equity in sub-Saharan Africa

This is an edited opinion piece by Mimi Alemayehou and Astri Kimball that appeared on the Brookings Institute Africa in Focus blog. It features in the horizon scan newsletter because development practitioners must never underestimate private equity, and its multiplier effect, as an underlying driver of socio-economic development and institutional reform. It is fundamentally transforming Africa right now. For some good recent information and data on private equity activity in Africa see here http://www.ev.com/GL/en/Industries/Private Equity/Africa-roundup-2013 (this incidentally also mentions impact investing); and see the inaugural joint study of private equity exits in Africa by the African Private Equity & Venture Capital Association (AVCA) and Ernst & Young entitled Harvesting growth (opens pdf).

Private equity has been a recent and powerful catalyst for economic growth on the African continent, and it shows every sign of continuing to do so. The key to the effectiveness of the private equity model is that, by addressing the funding needs of African companies, it gives its investments a multiplier effect: Private equity not only creates profits for investors (e.g., limited partners, general partners and portfolio companies) but also engenders economic and social benefits for consumers, and has indirect effects on the stability and vibrancy of local and regional economies. At the same time, private equity channels significant flows of international capital into Africa. In other words, whether it is in building sustainable housing or health services options, private equity ultimately offers Africa more than just capital. Furthermore, each private equity success story represents one more step for Africa in its quest to permanently establish itself as a preferred destination for global capital flows.

Such successes are, however, still too few and too recent. Against them is the stark lack of liquidity with multi-faceted consequences. Despite the scale of rapidly growing populations and economies in many countries, capital markets in Africa are still, by international standards, nascent, and access to funding therefore scarce. Consumer and commercial lending markets in Africa are largely non-existent because perceived lending risks are too high for many African banks to enter into with any vigour, and interest rates are discouragingly high for borrowers. Fortunately, this disconnect has emboldened a handful of new private equity funds—those who have been able to spot “low hanging fruits” in these economies—to respond with resources to meet pent-up demand.

Compare the African private equity landscape of a decade ago to that of today. We witnessed the field go from a small number of generalist equity funds with comparatively low levels of funding to a diverse, dynamic ecosystem of funds that have increasingly targeted regional and sector (e.g., agriculture, healthcare, etc.) strategies. More local general partners are also entering the fray. In short, the African private equity sector is rapidly maturing. It has, at the same time, broadened its usefulness by filling gaps currently left vacant by more traditional sources of finance. African private equity will likely continue to increase its visibility and influence in Africa’s evolving economic landscape.

Consider the example of Celtel (currently known as Airtel). Prior to 1998, the telecommunications industry in Africa was virtually non-existent, and what little existed was dominated by inefficient, government-owned landline operators. Most Africans privileged to afford a phone had to wait months and sometimes years to get a phone line. Enter Mo Ibrahim—along with fellow pioneers like Miko Rwayitare and Strive Masiyiwa— with the idea to create some of the largest mobile telecommunications companies on the continent. The aspiration was not simple in sum or task. One aspect of Mo Ibrahim’s genius was to anchor the raising and investing of some $415 million (an astronomical sum at the time) principally from private equity firms. Over five to seven years of herculean efforts, the network was deployed.

It is not an overstatement to say that his tapping into private equity investment helped him transform the telecommunications industry in sub-Saharan Africa, introducing mobile telecom to over five million Africans across 13 countries who can today get a phone line within minutes and at a fraction of the cost previously
offered by the mostly restructured, privatized or defunct government phone operators. In doing so, the continent largely leapfrogged the landline era of telephone technology and positioned itself as the fastest growing mobile market in the world, with a penetration rate of over 80%, as well as innovating on the broad usage of prepaid services ahead of developed countries like the U.S.

Tellingly, the advancement of this industry continues to be driven by the investment and guidance of private equity firms. Indeed, a new wave of fund managers is facilitating a next-generation shift, from captive tower networks to independent tower networks in countries such as Nigeria. Such a change will allow mobile operators to more seamlessly compete and expand their reach to the respective hinterlands of the mobile market, which in turn will help answer the socio-economic needs in rural areas.

Maturity of the private equity sector in Africa, however, is not inevitable. As any investor knows, liquidity itself is not sufficient to sustain a financial ecosystem, nor is political or macroeconomic stability alone. For African private equity to be effective over the long run, it must be in constant dialogue with central and local governments and regulatory agencies, it needs to proactively cultivate the development of capital markets, inform and engage consumers, partner where possible with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and engage the other constituents relevant to the economic ecosystem. The private equity managers who succeed in the long run will be those with the ability to adapt their mandate to the needs of the changing African environment.

Such funds are truly on the frontiers of the African economy, and their prospects will rise or fall in part through the amount of liquidity available in and around the pockets of economic potential they seek to target. They will rise or fall alongside public sector investment, development finance and commercial finance. Most importantly, private equity managers must engage local, highly visible captains of industry who profoundly shape the economic destiny of their respective countries. This orchestrated involvement helps immediately and narrowly benefits the economic ecosystem, but in the long run principally benefits the people of Africa.

Clearly, a key challenge facing Africans today continues to be food security, along with the development of a sustainable agricultural sector. In particular, the African agricultural sector is deficient in capital needed to improve farm productivity, enhance crop yields and produce more food for local consumption. Studies show that growth in the agricultural sector has up to three times greater impact on poverty reduction than growth in other sectors. Agricultural growth can help fight poverty, develop technology that changes lives, empower women, give kids the nutrition they need to go to school, usher in community and regional stability—with global implications—and create new markets and new jobs.

Despite its accomplishments, private equity is far from a panacea. To benefit Africa in the short and long term, it will need to be more nimble and solutions oriented than it has been in most other emerging markets. This will require the creative and concerted involvement of other financial and non-financial intermediaries (e.g., international financial institutions, governments, banks, NGOs, political leaders and consumers) that comprise a proper and fully developed economic ecosystem. As we look forward to the next decade of Africa’s economic evolution, the best measure of private equity’s success will not be merely its rate of return, but how evolved and balanced the ecosystem of Africa’s economy has become.

Source: http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/africa-in-focus/posts/2014/02/10-private-equity-africa-alemayehou-kimball

Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) knowledge programme

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is planning a five-year knowledge programme for the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector. [Their] goal is to create a policy environment that supports more secure, dignified livelihoods for miners, that helps to empower them, that promotes collaboration within the sector, and that addresses other social and environmental challenges. The programme’s core components will be country learning groups; multi-stakeholder dialogues on contentious issues; an online ASM resource centre and virtual network; and global policy engagement and communications.

Governments have long ignored the problems facing artisanal and small-scale mining, but interest is now emerging. The number of miners is growing. Their activities can cause severe social and environmental impacts. But the sector has significant potential to provide livelihoods for 20-30 million people, including some of the world’s poorest. But governments, companies and ASM organisations face huge challenges to implement effective ASM policy and practice including:

- Knowledge gaps and poor information-sharing
### IIED's programme aims to help improve knowledge, policy and practice among those whose role supports the ASM sector, or whose activities affect it – including governments, large-scale mining companies, international mining initiatives, ASM representative organisations, donors, technical experts and NGOs.

The programme will achieve this through three linked components:

1. **National Learning and Leadership Groups**: The programme will help groups of ASM leaders and practitioners within countries to meet regularly to exchange ideas and information. These groups will produce specific research, policy analyses and tools, and will engage the media and other stakeholders in order to catalyse change in the sector. Their activities will include coordinating a National ASM Outlook, which will assess the state of ASM in their country, and sharing findings across the global network.

2. **Sector dialogues**: A series of in-depth international and national dialogues will bring diverse stakeholders around a table to discuss and find solutions to contentious issues.

3. **Website, global policy and communications**: The programme will develop an online hub for stakeholders to access and share up-to-date information and tools on ASM. The programme will support better global debate and governance of the mining sector by advocating findings from the learning groups, dialogues and miners' own experiences in key forums.

These three components will run in parallel, with significant information sharing across national, sector and global levels. Piloting innovative ways to involve ASM miners or their representatives in programme activities will be integral to its approach.

**POLITICAL ISSUES**

**Behind the rise of protest action in South Africa**

An excellent, slightly longer than usual (though it has been edited) piece by Frans Cronje who heads up the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR). IRR hosts the Unit for Risk Analysis, which is designed to inform business, political, government, and diplomatic leaders about risks likely to emerge on South Africa’s social, economic, and political horizon. This article features in the horizon scanning newsletter because South Africa is by no means the only country in the region characterised by high levels of youth unemployment, lack of opportunity and rising expectations, hence watch this space.

Interestingly Cronje says increasing private sector employment is key to defusing popular anger against the state.

**The scale of protest action**

Data from the South African police (published in IRR’s most recent *South Africa Survey*) shows that the country is averaging around four to five violent anti-government protests a day. Last week the police said Gauteng alone had experienced more than 500 protests since the beginning of 2014, of which over 100 had turned violent. A research group, *Municipal IQ*, has also tracked a sharp increase in protest action over the past five years.

**Corroborating trends**

The rise in demonstrations has not occurred in isolation from other trends. The protests follow a trend of declining voter turnout, as well as a number of opinion poll findings across the global network.

**What is causing the protests?**

The protests are often described as ‘service delivery protests’, but this is something of a misnomer. Erratic water supply, electricity disconnections, poorly built RDP (Reconstruction & Development Programme) houses, and instances of sewerage flowing through the streets may all spark protests, of course. However, there is a distinction to be drawn between the immediate sparks that set off demonstrations and the deeper reason for the protests.

This deeper reason is rooted in very high levels of youth unemployment and the

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| - Poor communication and relations among ASM stakeholders |
| - Weak voice and representation of ASM miners in policy-making. |
dependency on the State that the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has fostered. The upshot is that many communities lack the self-reliance that comes from private sector jobs and income - and have become dependent on the Government to improve their standards of living.

The ANC is partly correct in saying that the protests reflect the Government's successes in service delivery. As the organisation says, if the State builds houses for one part of a community, other people in that community will want the same benefit - and might turn to protest action to compel the State to extend its largesse to them as well. There is merit in this argument, and it deserves to be taken seriously.

Many observers think it ironic that the rise of the protest movement has coincided with a decade of unprecedented improvements in the living standards of all South Africans. As the IRR has repeatedly pointed out, it is not true that service delivery has failed, or that South Africans have seen no improvement in their living standards since 1994. Popular dissatisfaction with the Government is increasing despite such improvements - which has led us to develop our theory of rising expectations.

According to this theory, rising living standards generate expectations of further improvements in people's quality of life. However, South Africa, these improvements have been driven mainly by the redistribution of existing wealth under service delivery and welfare programmes. Improvements have not been the product of investment-led economic growth and job creation.

As a result, South Africa has experienced an unusual coincidence of increasing living standards and increasing unemployment. Current government policy is creating high expectations of yet more improvements in living standards, but it is not encouraging investment, growth, or the generation of new jobs. Instead, with unemployment remaining very high - especially among the country's youth - jobless people look to the State to fulfil their expectations, while the Government is unable to meet the scale of need.

**Other (seldom diagnosed) contributing factors**

We agree with the ANC that a crisis of rising expectations is the primary driver of protest action, but many other factors also play a role. These include:

- the breakdown of services, particularly water, which is often a function of affirmative action and cadre deployment at local government level. This point is not mentioned nearly often enough - although the term 'capacity constraints' is now in effect a code for affirmative action. Until analysts are willing to overcome their self-imposed political correctness in identifying the root causes of delivery failures, those failures are unlikely to be overcome;

- factionalism and jockeying for position within the ANC, particularly at this time when parliamentary and provincial lists are being drawn up and contenders want to show their support on the ground;

- the fracturing of the ANC itself, with the breaking away of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), along with the splintering of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the growth of non-Cosatu unions, such as the Association of Mining and Construction Union (Amcu);

- the ANC's decision at its Mangaung national conference to re-affirm mass action as a key pillar of its current strategy and tactics, which is also backfiring on the organisation as much of this mass action has come to be directed against the Government;

- years of ANC rhetoric about the need for 'revolutions', 'second transitions', the overthrow of market systems, and punitive action against the 'criminal' private sector, which is now helping to inspire an upsurge in demonstrations. The irony, however, is that much of this anger is now directed at the ANC itself.

- a lack of political choice within the country, which is largely a product of the ANC's having greatly weakened its black opposition in the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Black Consciousness movement before the first all-race election in 1994. As a result, there is still no credible black rival to the ANC. Hence, the idea that dissatisfied people should use their votes to signal their anger against the ANC is not a realistic option - and helps explain why so many voters choose to vent their frustration through violent demonstrations instead of via the ballot box;

- the Government's mistake in 'rewarding' violence by increasing its efforts to deliver in areas where protests have involved arson attacks, such as the burning down of libraries. People thus believe that the best way to get the State to respond is to burn and destroy.

- poor policing by a police service seemingly unable to contain protest actions and create an environment conducive to peaceful demonstration. The Marikana massacre and other allegedly unwarranted deaths at police hands have also fuelled anger against the police, and
helped turn police officers and police stations into targets for attack.

**Better service delivery is not the answer**

In the light of these factors, it makes little sense to argue (as many analysts suggest) that service delivery must improve and that South Africa will then experience a concomitant decline in protest action. Even if delivery does improve, this will simply drive new expectations that will not be met unless many more people are able to find jobs and the income they need to advance their own lives.

With factionalism within the ANC and its allies also on the rise, a surge in private sector employment is now the best means to scale back South Africa’s protest movement. Once many more people have jobs, this will break their dependency on the State - and help defuse anger at a Government unable to deliver sufficiently to them.

**Support for policy reform**

Policy reform will need the proactive support of the business community. At present, rather than addressing the core reforms necessary to double levels of economic growth, many in the private sector find it easier to seek concessions for their industries in direct private negotiations with the Government. Many also try to demonstrate their commitment to the country, and the Government’s social justice goals, by investing in important but small-scale social projects that cannot begin to change the policy environment.

There are many countries in which such an approach might be appropriate. However, in South Africa’s case, they amount to playing for time as the outlook for the economy darkens. As we have often said, business leaders need to expand the scope of their social investment initiatives to include support for vital policy change as well.


**Political economy of regional integration in Southern Africa: Case studies**

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) have released a new set of short case studies that shed light on regional integration in Southern Africa - where it has worked well, where new thinking is underway, and what and who can drive concrete regional cooperation.

The cases are organised under three headings:

1. The role of private sector in public-private cooperation towards regional cooperation;
2. Governance of regional public goods, with cases on energy, water, wildlife and forestry;
3. The complexities of infrastructure planning being an essential element of fostering intra-regional trade and cooperation.

**SOCIAL ISSUES**

**Civil society is playing a greater role in the fight against corruption**

In recent years, civil society groups have become major actors in the fight against corruption, both [within African states] and on the global stage.

In January 2012, [South African] community leaders, trade unionists and civil servants launched Corruption Watch, a civil society organisation that “relies on the public to report corruption, and uses these reports as an important source of information to fight corruption and hold leaders accountable.”

The watchdog reported that in its first 11 months of operation, it received 1,227 reports alleging corruption, many of them sent through Facebook or via text messages, highlighting the modern character of the campaign.

Allegations of corruption have often swirled around oil exploitation in the Republic of the Congo. Only in the late 1990s, however, did the fight against corruption start gaining momentum, first through a campaign led by Catholic bishops, then starting in 2003 through a group of NGOs assembled under the national chapter of the Publish What You Pay coalition, a global network of civil society organisations calling for openness and accountability in the extractive sectors.

Since then their relentless denunciations have led to significant attempts at transparency by public officials.

Despite their courageous, sometimes heroic actions, and support from vocal...
outsiders, civil society groups involved in the fight against corruption in Africa face significant challenges. For many, harassment and threats to their lives are not rare.

In their monthly bulletin, Uganda’s Black Monday activists chronicle their difficult interactions with the country’s police. In Congo, members of the Publish What You Pay campaign have faced what they consider “judicial harassment” by the authorities.

Another more insidious threat to civil society mobilisation against corruption is its inability to maintain momentum in some contexts.

In Nigeria, for example, laments Debo Adeniran, executive chairman of Coalition Against Corrupt Leaders, “Our arsenal as civil society organisations is being depleted by the powerful cabal who keep on poaching on our rank and file.”

The good news remains, however: civil society groups in Africa have become actors in the fight against corruption on the continent, a noticeable contrast from just two decades ago, when they were virtually absent.

Yet combating corruption effectively also takes engagement by governments, official watchdogs and justice systems.

As Marianne Camerer, a South African political scientist and anti-corruption activist, puts it, in Africa as much as elsewhere, “the involvement of civil society actors is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to reduce corruption.”


City adopts informal settlement re-blocking as policy

The City of Cape Town [late last year] adopted the re-blocking policy, which the South African alliance of community organisations and support NGOs affiliated to Shack / Slum Dwellers International (SDI) has been supporting and lobbying for. The informal settlements of Flamingo Crescent in Lansdowne, Kuku Town in Kensington and Mtshini Wam in Milnerton are mentioned as the pilot projects the City seeks to push forward in the [2014] financial year.

“Blocking-out” and “re-blocking” are interchangeable terms the South African SDI Alliance uses to refer to the reconfiguration and repositioning of shacks in very dense informal settlements in accordance to a community-drafted spatial framework. The aim is to better utilise the spaces in informal settlements to allow for better service provision. Moreover, re-blocking is done in “clusters” identified by the community, and after implementation, “courtyards” are created to ensure a safer environment for women and children via neighbourhood watches (all shacks face the courtyard), productive places (such as washing lines, food gardens), and generally provides space for local government to install better services.

A successful example of re-blocking is the Mtshini Wam informal settlement, which has also been included in the World Design Capital 2014 official programme. The process involved an incremental in-situ rearrangement of shacks in accordance to a community design framework which open up safer and more dignified public spaces. Forty-five short term employment opportunities were created through the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) signifying that the community took full ownership of the development project. The EPWP initiative built on the community’s initiatives to save towards their own development, to conduct a self-census, to establish community project committees, and to design their future settlement layout.


Corruption Watch is engaging with corruption fighters in a whole new way - the organisation has launched two digital collaborative communities, and a new television advert hit local screens in February. Corruption Watch has partnered with Mxit, Indigo New Media and Concursive Corporation to provide South Africans with digital collaborative platforms to engage on issues of corruption. The Mxit App (CorruptionWatchconnect) is now available on both feature and smart phones; while the Concursive mobile app will only be available on smart phones. To access the platform go to http://corruptionwatchconnected.org

Watch the advert on YouTube: http://bit.ly/1gls4nY

Source: http://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/content/online---corruption-busting-community-platforms-launched

**ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

**Zimbabwe needs “more urban, more public” climate change strategy**

Zimbabwe’s climate change strategy should focus on urban communities, give a greater role to civil society participation, and learn lessons and gain experiences from other highly vulnerable nations, according to a new briefing paper published [earlier this month] by ZERO Regional Environment Organisation (ZERO) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The paper draws substantially on research and discussions with civil society organisations, as part of a wider project on adaptation to climate change led by ZERO, a Zimbabwean non-governmental organisation involved in environment and development issues.

The paper’s authors — Donald Brown, David Dodman and Shepard Zvigadza — outline recommendations for policymakers and agencies that work on climate change adaptation. These include the following:

- **Focus more on vulnerable urban people:** Zimbabwe’s development policies have strong rural bias. Policymakers often state that only 20-30 per cent of Zimbabwe’s population is urban but, thanks to rapid urban growth in recent years, the true figure is between 38 and 50 per cent. A continued focus on rural areas will mean that Zimbabwe misses opportunities in urban areas and could face yet bigger challenges there as climate change takes hold.

- **Take advantage of knowledge and skills in civil society:** Civil society organisations (CSOs) can help to close the gap between vulnerable people and the policymakers and planners whose job it is to protect them. In Zimbabwe, a growing number of CSOs works on climate change. Their knowledge and skills — and their connections with the most vulnerable communities — make the critical partners for policymakers to work with as they design, implement and evaluate climate change projects.

- **Learn from other vulnerable countries:** Zimbabwe shares many vulnerability traits and climate change challenges with other nations, but is not formally listed by the United Nations as one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world. The LDCs have generated many important lessons in how to plan for, and finance adaptation activities, and Zimbabwe could learn from these and other highly vulnerable countries to prepare more effectively for climate change.

“A growing number of Zimbabwean non-governmental organisations, which have come together to form the Climate Change Working Group, have a wealth of experience that policymakers can draw upon as they develop the national response to climate change,” says author Zvigadza.

David Dodman, a researcher at IIED and co-author of the new paper, says: “Climate change is a significant threat to Zimbabwe’s development, but the country can take a number of steps now to help ensure it can adapt effectively to the changes ahead.”

“One of the biggest challenges will be to pay adequate attention to the needs of the urban poor,” adds Dodman. “The urban poor make up a growing proportion of the country’s population but receive only a small fraction of policy support. Ignoring their needs will create new challenges and could mean that Zimbabwe misses important development opportunities.”

Source: http://www.iied.org/zimbabwe-needs-more-urban-more-public-climate-change-strategy

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**Valuing Mozambique’s mangrove forests**

In a recently published South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) Research Report, ‘Balancing development and coastal conservation: mangroves in Mozambique’, author Romy Chevallier considers the value of mangroves ‘services’ and explains that their non-market benefits need to be better incorporated into the development choices that countries make. She reports that the total economic value associated with managing ecosystems sustainably is often higher than the value associated with the conversion of the ecosystem through farming, mining, logging or other intensive, unsustainable practices.

This quantification is important so as to understand the ‘true’ value of a mangrove forest, and to use this cost to entice investment back into conservation. These decisions are particularly pertinent in countries like Mozambique, poised to acquire significant new wealth from oil, coal and gas deposits with potentially devastating consequences for the physical environment. African countries need to fully understand the
The consequences of natural resource exploitation on their fragile ecosystems, in order to minimise the negative impacts and avoid unwise trade-offs.

The report examines a range of governance approaches and tools to strengthen the management of mangroves in Africa. Reversing the trend of mangrove loss and the growing vulnerability of coastal people will require a real commitment by governments to develop and implement robust high-level policies, good management practices and the establishment of clear frameworks for mangrove ownership, use and management to guide human activities. Restoration has also been widely applied in many countries and can reverse the patterns of loss while bringing considerable socio-economic benefits to coastal areas. Restoration and protection is more likely to occur if strong economic arguments and incentive structures are used, including new opportunities such as Blue Carbon financing through climate change mitigation frameworks.


**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION ISSUES**

**Elementary, dear Watson: One computer’s plan to save Africa**

Watson is a computer – a supercomputer, to be precise – but he’s got a lot more personality than your average, run-of-the-mill desktop. He’s the pinnacle, so far, of humanity’s development of and interaction with artificial intelligence. Think of him as Siri on a lot of steroids – a vast processing unit that couples advanced data-mining techniques with a unique cognitive ability, allowing it to understand and respond to sophisticated human queries.

IBM has just put $100 million into a ten-year project to bring Watson to (or at least make his intelligence available within) the African continent. “In the last decade, Africa has been a tremendous growth story – yet the continent’s challenges, stemming from population growth, water scarcity, disease, low agricultural yield and other factors are impediments to inclusive economic growth,” said Kamal Bhattacharya, director of IBM Research for Africa. “With the ability to learn from emerging patterns and discover new correlations, Watson’s cognitive capabilities hold enormous potential in Africa – helping it to achieve in the next two decades what today’s developed markets have achieved over two centuries.”

Watson, in other words, is on a civilising mission, following in the illustrious footsteps of the likes of Bono and Bill Gates. Africa’s got problems, and Watson is here to fix them. Yes, that is a touch of hubris from IBM, who seem to think that a machine will succeed where humans have failed. Then again, Watson has done it before.

In 2011, Watson virtually appeared as a contestant on *Jeopardy!*, a long-running TV series which describes itself as “America’s favourite quiz show”. He took on record-holding *Jeopardy!* champions Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter in a battle of general knowledge and wits, and won handily.

Watson, of course, was not the first computer to beat humans at their own games – that honour probably belongs to Deep Blue, the machine who shocked the world by defeating grandmaster Garry Kasparov at chess. But Watson’s *Jeopardy!* win is an achievement of an even higher order.

“Chess kept Deep Blue in the realm of what computers are good at, using statistics and probabilities to determine strategy. *Jeopardy!*, on the other hand, pushed Watson into an unfamiliar world of human language and unstructured data,” explains Will Grunewald of *Popular Science*.

Game shows are one thing; tackling Africa’s health, education, and agriculture challenges is quite another. But IBM is confident that Watson can help, specifically through the supercomputers’ unparalleled ability to uncover insights by analysing vast amounts of data, making connections between various data sets that human beings simply don’t have the brain power to come up with for themselves. Initially, the company envisages that it will help with understanding food price patterns, calculating more accurate GDP figures and generating current poverty statistics (the ones we have now are often woefully outdated).

Of course, Watson still needs some direction, and the plan is that this will come from African researchers and scientists who will be given access to the supercomputer, from IBM’s new research station in Nairobi. This is an encouraging sign that Watson will be made available as a tool for Africans, rather than used to impose yet another set of rules for the continent to follow.
Businessmen will also have access to Watson’s systems, which can do everything from improving delivery times for logistics companies (by giving accurate traffic pattern predictions, taking potholes and broken traffic lights into account) to providing advanced cloud-based computer resources in places where technology is a little behind the times.

Whatever Watson comes up with, it won’t solve the fundamental issue at the root of so many of Africa’s problems, for which there are plenty of solutions floating around (I’ve thought of a few myself): poor governance. Without the leadership to implement the supercomputer’s ideas, IBM’s investment in Africa’s development won’t be worth the memory chips it’s written on.

For IBM, however, there’s a consolation prize – or possibly the main objective, a cynic might observe. After declining profits for seven successive quarters, the company is in dire need of a new strategy, and Africa has been identified as the most promising market for growth. The more Africa develops, the bigger that market will be. If Watson can help achieve that goal, then everybody wins. And even if Watson can’t help, IBM won’t object to the barrage of free publicity that its supercomputer has generated on the continent.


A slightly tongue-in-cheek, yet very intriguing article. However, given Africa’s complexity in general, and the complexity around Africa’s data in particular, the editor of the Scan newsletter remains to be convinced. Having said that; IBM has an astounding track record, $100 million is a lot of money and 10 years is a long time. This is a very interesting space to watch.