# POVERTY, DEVELOPMENT AND DONOR ISSUES

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Gates Foundation expands its sanitation programme

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently announced that it is to significantly expand its sanitation programme with a US$42m grant scheme to spur innovation in this area, together with a greater emphasis on encouraging behaviour change in communities.

In a speech to the AfricaSan 3 conference in Rwanda on 19 July, Sylvia Mathews Burwell, president of the foundation's global development programme, said: "No innovation in the past 200 years has done more to save lives and improve health than the sanitation revolution triggered by the invention of the toilet. But it did not go far enough. It only reached one-third of the world. What we need are new approaches, new ideas. In short, we need to reinvent the toilet."

The foundation, in partnership with governments, universities, the US development agency, USAid, and the African Development Bank, wants to encourage the development of relevant tools and technologies that will improve basic sanitation, such as waterless toilets that do not rely on sewer connections and hygienic ways to empty pits and process and recycle waste. New ideas must cost no more than US$0.05 per person per day and be easy to install, use and maintain. They must also be ideas that are relevant to specific communities and are what people in poor countries want.

Eight universities in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America have already been allocated a grant totalling US$3m to invent a stand-alone toilet without piped water or sewer connection, while US$12m is being used to develop pilot sanitation projects in sub-Saharan Africa, which may include faecal sludge management services. A grant of US$8m will be used to support postgraduate education in water and sanitation.


Google Ideas think tank gathering former extremists to battle radicalization

Technology giant Google is taking on a new challenge: violent extremism. The company, through its eight-month-old think tank, Google Ideas, paid for 80 former Muslim extremists, neo-Nazis, US. gang members and other former radicals to gather in Dublin at the end of June to explore how technology can play a role in de-radicalization efforts around the globe.

The “formers,” as they have been dubbed by Google, will be surrounded by 120 thinkers, activists, philanthropists and business leaders. The goal is to dissect the question of what draws some people, especially young people, to extremist movements and why some of them leave.

“We are trying to reframe issues like radicalization and see how we can apply technology to it,” said Jared Cohen, the 29-year-old former State Department official who agreed to head Google Ideas with the understanding he would host such a conference. In forming Google Ideas, company officials said, they were eager to move beyond the traditional think tank model of conducting studies and publishing books, saying their “think/do tank” would make action a central part of its mission. In the future, Cohen predicted, the think tank will take on the challenges of fragile states, democracy building, and questions about the Internet and society.


The summit’s rationale, as explained on its website is that: “With 52% of the world under the age of 30 and the vast majority of ministers, policymakers, NGOs, civil society groups and academics from across the world, are attending the event. More than 230 African civil society organisations, along with international organisations, such the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, WaterAid and the End Water Poverty, are using the conference to put pressure on their leaders and international governments to take urgent action to improve sanitation on the continent. According to these organisations, only 31% of people living in Africa have adequate access to sanitation, despite sanitation and water being a recognised human right.
those characterized as ‘at risk’ either socially, economically, or both, there is an oversupply of young people who think and act based on a perception that their best options are provided by those violent extremist groups closest to them either in terms of proximity or identity. By focusing on the differences between violent extremist groups, rather than the similarities, we run the risk of trying to solve the wrong problems. Instead, if we remove the religious and ideological masks cultivated by violent extremists and focus on the youth behind them, we stand a better chance of mobilizing the world against violent extremism.

An interesting development may also be that Google Ideas inspires other firms to go the ‘Think / Do Tank’ route and in doing so go far beyond the normal boundaries of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in putting resources into finding solutions to some of the world’s most intractable problems. There is much opportunity for firms to revamp their CSR to have more global, visible and lasting impact. Newer players in particular (especially from the technology and creative media sectors) may likely follow Google’s lead.

**Fundamental questions about scarcity and fair shares seen as the new front line for international development.**

On 20 July WWF and Oxfam co-hosted a workshop in London on scarcity, fair shares and development. One of the arguments put forward at the workshop is that, as the 21st century global economy hits natural resource limits and planetary boundaries, fundamental questions about fair shares will start to arise – and these questions will increasingly come to be seen as the new front line for international development.

A discussion paper entitled Resource scarcity, fair shares and development (pdf), which was prepared for the workshop aimed to contribute to this evolving debate by providing an overview of some of the main issues involved. Part 1 sets out some examples of access and equity issues that arise in the context of scarce resources, both within countries and internationally. Part 2 sets out a discussion of some of the underlying issues involved, including different ideas of fairness and some of the potential dilemmas involved. Part 3 explores some of the concrete policy implications of this agenda and sets out ten tentative policy recommendations and suggestions for further work. These are:

1. **Invest in improving the data.** Any agenda of “fair shares in a world of limits” will depend on accurate data. But current surveillance systems on resource scarcity suffer from major gaps, and are poorly integrated across both issues and levels of governance.

2. **Recognise that scarcity isn’t just relevant to specialists in environment, climate and rural livelihoods.** On the contrary, resource scarcity will become increasingly central to governance, economics, social development and conflict advisers, and should be incorporated into training and professional development across these areas.

3. **Understand how scarcity shapes politics in poor countries.** Rather than seeing scarcity as a stand-alone issue, donors and NGOs need to understand how it fits in to the larger political economy context and relates to urban / rural tensions, political parties, spending decisions, civil society dynamics, the politics of ethnic groups and so on.

4. **Focus on access to justice.** Even where legal frameworks are in place to ensure a certain level of resource access, poor people may find their rights abrogated – for example through forced displacement from land – as scarcity increases. Focusing on access to justice will therefore be critical for governance specialists.

5. **Be clear that this isn’t just an in-country agenda.** It is at international level where there is most to be done, given that the key drivers of resource scarcity are global – so donors should scale up work on areas like policy coherence for development, international institutional reform and sustainable consumption in OECD countries.

6. **Start developing policy options now, before the policy space for them opens up.** As impacts of scarcity and climate change increase in frequency and severity, political space will open up – often aftershocks, for a limited time. This places a premium on having ideas “on the shelf”, that can be deployed rapidly when opportunities open up.

7. **Focus on basic needs to start with.** Much support for development already depends on the idea that all people have a right to the basic needs of life. The fact that resource scarcity imperils these basic needs can create a bridgehead narrative that opens up space for talking about more difficult aspects of fair shares.

8. **...but start building up the broader ‘fair shares’ narrative too.** Donors and NGOs should do everything they can to deepen awareness that individual consumption choices have global
impacts, and that taking equity seriously is a prerequisite for sustainable management of shared resources – not just a "left wing" agenda.

9. **Focus on poor people, not just poor countries.** A focus on resource scarcity necessarily implies looking at inequality within countries – partly because poor people are most vulnerable to resource scarcity and environmental shocks, but also because scarcity will create new opportunities for elite rent-seeking, corruption and exploitation.

10. **Don’t jump straight to the limits to growth question.** Debate is starting to open up on whether limits apply just to certain resources, or to growth itself. Even if the latter is true (which it could be), it will take time for this to become clear. While campaigners should not try to duck the question of whether there are limits to growth, neither should they risk polarising debate by taking too definitive or didactic a tone at the outset. Instead, they should play a long game: suggest that there is a genuine debate to be had about limits to growth, and that the jury is still out, but above all underline that it is already clear that there are limits to the supply/availability of crucial resources - and that policy needs to face up to this, and in particular the fair shares issues that are unavoidably involved.


ECONOMIC ISSUES

**Gridlock on economic transformation prevents South Africa from addressing poverty and unemployment – time to look seriously at the idea of an Economic Codesa**

*An edited opinion piece by veteran journalist Allister Sparks (emphasis added)*

Even as new debt crises in Europe and the US threaten to shock the global economy once again, our [South African] trade unions are doing their damnedest to make the bad situation worse for all of us — themselves included — by embarking on their annual winter of disruption, striking for wage increases two and three times higher than the inflation rate.

It happens every year, with a heedless disregard for the national interest. There’s something almost manic about the self-destructiveness of this baneful ritual. And the worst is yet to come: you can bet your life that as the matric [final year of school] exams draw closer the inappropriately named South African Democratic Teachers Union will go on strike to wreck the lives of another million of our children — and worsen still more the skills shortage that is stunting our economy.

One could weep at the folly of it. But of course wringing one’s hands in despair does no one any good. It is time for urgent remedial action instead. Time for the leaders of this country, in business, in the labour unions, in civil society and in the government, to come together and try to reach a common recognition of what has driven us into this deadly downward spiral and what can be done to pull us out of it.

*The author of the discussion paper, Alex Evans, mentions on his blog ([http://www.globaldashboard.org/](http://www.globaldashboard.org/)) that "... we can be confident that markets will adapt and that technological innovations will emerge – as they always do. But that process of transition will take time. It will need to overcome inertia, market failures, externalised costs and perverse subsidies. And until it’s complete, poor people and poor countries risk losing access to resources that they depend on for their basic needs. And so any discussion of limits is also, inevitably, a discussion about fair shares. And this will be a different kind of ‘fairness’ agenda to the one that those of us who think of ourselves as progressives are used to. I think we’ve only just begun to internalise just what a game changer the emergence of environmental and natural resource limits will be for global agendas about justice and equality.”*

In recent weeks, there has been a growing chorus of voices suggesting that SA needs to hold another Codesa [the all inclusive transformative negotiations that ended Apartheid] — an Economic Codesa — a call that expresses the exasperation at the lack of meaningful action on the part of the government.

The first Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) brought all our political adversaries together to thrash out one of the world’s most intractable political problems. We proved ourselves capable of reaching a national consensus on the way out of that deeply entrenched conflict, which some considered to be miraculous. So, seeing we have that capability, why not do it again? Let’s have a Codesa 2 to reach another collective decision on how to deal with our tough economic problem.

We all know what that problem is. It is the failure of the new SA to achieve a
significant narrowing of the wealth gap, between the country’s rich and poor, that we inherited from the apartheid era.

Yes, we have managed to draw a significant number of black people into the middle class, even into the entrepreneurial class of multimillionaires, and that in itself is a considerable achievement. But the gap between the richest and the poorest remains as wide as ever. The Gini coefficient, which measures that gap, remains one of the world’s worst.

That is what is causing the frustration among the millions of have-nots in our society. They are not reaping the benefits of liberation. They are stuck at the bottom of the heap, in rural areas and in squatter camps, and they see no prospect of escape.

I am referring here, of course, to the millions of unemployed, perhaps 40% of our working-age population. Not the trade unionists who are doing the striking. They are employed and economically speaking part of the middle class. But the frustration arising from the poverty of the masses is a racial thing, and so the frustration spreads and leads to irrational action. Because that huge gap has been there for too long and it is not narrowing.

It is plain that we must transform the economy to provide for greater equality, but how to do that without stunting economic growth which would impoverish all? This is where the disagreement lies, between those on the left who are calling for nationalisation, and those on the right, mainly in business, who believe free market capitalism is the answer. The government, meanwhile, is frozen on the issue because the ruling alliance is essentially a coalition, and like many coalitions its component elements are themselves in disagreement on what policies to follow.

Straddling the divisions, President Jacob Zuma shrinks from taking any clear decision for fear of alienating those who disagree and so splitting the alliance and endangering his own leadership of the African National Congress. And so the situation remains gridlocked while the economic crisis deepens.

It is abundantly clear that we shall never reach a workable decision as long as we remain so divided on the way forward, and that the only way to break the gridlock is to bring all major players together to seek a compromise agreement in the national interest on how to reform the economy without damaging its growth potential.

This is what the idea of an Economic Codesa is about. The basic platform for such a national convention is already in place in the form of the National Commission headed by Trevor Manuel, the minister of planning in the Presidency, and his deputy, Cyril Ramaphosa, who was a singularly successful driver of the original Codesa process, of course. The commission, consisting of some excellent people, has already completed the important task of diagnosing the key problems confronting the country.

Now it is supposed to come up with proposed solutions. It is due to deliver a report around November 11, but I would suggest that now is the time to expand its deliberations to include all the key players involved in the national economy — in other words, expand its work into a Codesa 2.

As with the original Codesa, these delegates should be assigned to specific working groups, each led by members of the commission and each focusing on key sectors of the economy — such as mining, land redistribution and rural development, the manufacturing sector, labour regulations, the possible establishment of special development zones in depressed areas, and above all unemployment, especially youth unemployment, skills training and apprenticeships. All working groups could then come together in a plenary session aimed at blending the proposals into a comprehensive report, which could hopefully be presented to the Zuma administration as a nationally accepted policy package.

Without some such national agreement I don’t see our present crop of leaders having the political courage to take the tough decisions required for recovery.

Source: http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.asp?id=148721

An excellent and timely argument for an Economic Codesa in Southern Africa’s largest economy (one on which so many other regional economies depend). Expect more such calls, especially as the battle lines are drawn, the stakes increase and gridlock tightens.

The World Bank meanwhile recently warned South Africa that its contentious labour relations were one of the main impediments to investment in the country, which lags behind the inflows into its emerging market peers. The bank said the low rate of private investment was probably due to risk perceptions and structural barriers to investment and identified poor industrial competition and skills development, low savings rates, high wage levels relative to worker productivity and poor labour relations, which generated uncertainty for business. The comments were made in the
Market-oriented solutions are inappropriate for access to water in sub-Saharan African slums

The policies for improving access to safe water in countries with sizeable slum populations should be revised in the light of the costs and benefits of alternative systems of provision. Our [journal article] discussion casts serious doubts on the potential gains to be attained through the privatisation of network utilities in countries where urban planning and development issues persist. Water networks involve large-scale sunk investment costs. Financing such costs through cost-plus pricing is difficult in many developing countries where welfare and social security systems are absent, and affordability of water prices, especially by the poor and low-income households, is a problem. This places a constraint on the viability of private operation of water and sanitation networks.

There is a growing literature on the importance of small-scale providers in developing economies. These studies increasingly advocate various measures to promote their services explicitly or implicitly as an alternative to public networks. This article [full copy available on request] has presented arguments that raise concerns regarding the pricing, regulation, quality and sustainability of services provided by small-scale water providers, including private suppliers and community projects.

Ultimately, these concerns can be resolved through investment in the expansion of the public water network. In fact, many of the potential solutions to the problems of slum development in general and access to water and sanitation in particular require multifaceted interventions which lie within the authority of governments. Urban planning in general requires a strong public administrative system with good coordination between various ministries to solve the issues of tenure, land division, planning for urban amenities and prioritisation of applications for housing...

... However, there are considerable challenges to public investment and government led infrastructure development. In the end, these problems have to be resolved locally by focusing on country-specific circumstances. At a more general level, however, they imply the need for more donor funding, more long-term finance from the multilateral development agencies without the implicit conditionality of privatization, and better public-spending decisions that reflect social priorities, including investment in water and sanitation. Furthermore, it is also clear that pouring in public money to solve water access problems in squatter settlements is unlikely to be effective in the presence of strong vested interests that sustain the status quo. Greater public investment in water and sanitation must be accompanied by democratic as well as institutional reforms to improve the effectiveness of such spending.

Source: Extract from ‘Access to Water in the Slums of Sub-Saharan Africa’ by Hulya Dagdeviren and Simon A. Robertson published in Development Policy Review, 2011, 29 (4): 485–505. Subscription required to access journal, but pdf copy of article can be obtained from Tanja@hichert.co.za

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Renting farms an option to stem the failure of land reform projects

In a research report released 20 July, South Africa's Land Bank argues that the government should consider renting farms for a few years, with an option to buy them, so that it can accelerate transferring land to black farmers and stem the failure of land reform projects. The report found that almost half of South Africa's small-scale farmers funded by the bank were unable to cultivate their land profitably. The bank said if South Africa's food security was to be guaranteed, there was an urgent need to ensure that
POLITICAL ISSUES

Demonstrations in Malawi against autocratic leadership

In April, the British ambassador to Malawi described the country's President Bingu wa Mutharika as autocratic, saying governance in the country was deteriorating as rights violations increased. The ambassador was promptly kicked out of the country. On 20 July, thousands of Malawians took to the streets to level the same criticisms. Significant demonstrations occurred in the major cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu, defying a court injunction declaring the protests illegal as well as a presidential warning "not to be inspired by events in Egypt". Demonstrators reportedly burnt cars and even houses of government officials, while police used tear gas to disperse them in what a spokesperson for Malawi's Human Rights Commissioner described as "running battles".

The protests were a response to Mutharika's increasingly autocratic governing style, which has seen restrictions placed on press freedom, intolerance of criticism, a major diplomatic incident with Britain and the expulsion from the ruling party of the country's vice-president Joyce Banda. Mutharika's explanations for his actions have also grown increasingly bizarre. When asked why he expelled Banda from the party – a move widely believed to pave the way for the succession of Mutharika's brother to party and country leadership once Mutharika's term runs out – the president replied: "Before you start faulting me for being intolerant because I have sacked Joyce Banda from DPP [the ruling party], fault God for sacking Lucifer from heaven."

Economic issues are also playing their part in the general discontent. The country, already one of the world’s poorest, is experiencing a severe fuel shortage, with corresponding rises in the cost of goods and transport. There is also a severe foreign exchange shortage which is impeding economic growth. These issues have been exacerbated by the recent deterioration in relations between Malawi and Britain, causing Britain to suspend aid packages worth around US$30 million to Malawi.

Source:
For good newsfeed covering Malawi see here
http://www.trademarksa.org/rss/news/focal_countries/malawi

Global Voices Malawi blogger Steve Sharra, reckons that most protesters were not seeking to topple the president. "They just want him to get off the rollercoaster he's been on since the beginning of the year." What the protesters really want is for the president to give guarantees of good governance and the protection of human rights, as well as to embark on more sensible economic policies which will increase the standard of living and bring petrol back to the pumps. They also want Mutharika to apologise to Britain and get the aid money reinstated, seeing that as a big factor in the country's economic woes.

For an interesting article on how alleged company collusion and the collapse of the tobacco price, Malawi's main source of foreign exchange, helped to spark the protests, see here

Swaziland has meanwhile reached an impasse

Political reform, which the Swazi king is reluctant to entertain, is a condition for receiving bailout money (although South Africa has acquiesced slightly despite pressure, see here
http://www.fin24.com/Economy/SA-urged-not-to-bail-out-Mswati-20110707 ). Now unions are striking for reform and civil servants are threatening to join them because salaries cannot be paid. Something has to give.

SOCIAL ISSUES

South Africa’s informal settlements will ‘never be completely eradicated’, therefore upgrade them

The Development Action Group (DAG) recently proclaimed that informal settlements in South Africa will never be completely eradicated. It believes that upgrading them, therefore, is vital as government battles with its growing housing backlog. Western Cape Human Settlement MEC Bonginkosi
Madikizela recently announced that all informal settlements in the province will be serviced with water, electricity and refuse removal by 2014. Cape Town alone has more than 200 informal settlements. DAG’s Kailash Bhana said this is a step to the right direction. “You must ensure that people have access to basic services, in upgrading of informal settlements as one method of housing provision on a long term basis,” she said. According to Madikizela there is just over R1.6 billion [US$240m] to roll out for human settlements in the entire [Western Cape] province. “We must use that money to make sure we provide basic services to everyone,” he said.


A good call, and an example of tough decision-making and compromise in action. Complex, intractable problems can often be successfully tackled by acting on those factors that can be controlled or managed, as opposed to those that cannot. Interestingly in this case, the provincial government in the Western Cape, which is the national opposition, seems to have the support of a civil society organisation to boot.

On the topic of African cities; a TEDx event took place in Stellenbosch on 29 July with the theme CityAfrica. See here http://www.tedxstellenbosch.org/about/ for details TED is a non-profit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. Started a day conference in California 25 years ago, TED has grown to support those world-changing ideas with multiple initiatives. Interesting content will be monitored and shared in the Scan newsletter as and when it becomes available.

Exploring popular support for African traditional authorities

According to a study by public attitude survey specialist Afrobarometer, it has become clear that in most of Africa, traditional authorities are a resilient lot; just as much a part of the “modern” political landscape as any constitution, legislature or local council. Analysts have proposed a wide array of possible explanations for this phenomenon, focusing variously on sources of legitimacy, issues of performance or function, and leadership qualities. They draw sharply different conclusions, most notably with regard to whether they believe that traditional authorities survive and thrive because of the preferences of the mass public, or only at the behest of the state, and in fact in opposition to the popular will.

Data collected in 19 countries during Round 4 (2008-2009) of the Afrobarometer explored these hypotheses more systematically and on a larger scale than previous analyses. The findings are somewhat startling in the intensity of the support for traditional authority that they reveal, presenting a stark challenge to those who still argue that traditional leadership is an unabashedly negative and decidedly undemocratic force in Africa. While Africans find these leaders to be flawed, they nonetheless believe that traditional authorities have an essential role to play in local governance. They place considerable value on the role traditional authorities play in managing and resolving conflict, and on their leadership qualities and their accessibility to ordinary people. There is also evidence to suggest that traditional leaders play an essential symbolic role as representatives of community identity, unity, continuity and stability. In fact, the evidence suggests that traditional leaders derive their support at least as much from who they are as from what they do.

Download the entire study containing good data from here http://www.afrobarometer.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=776&Itemid=39

This research confirms that traditional authorities and customary law is resilient in Southern Africa (see also the article in the July 2010 edition of the Scan). The lesson for development and policy-making is that these are significant role players who should not be discounted or negated. It may be useful to explore alternative approaches incorporating traditional systems when searching for solutions and/or interventions – especially when it comes to local governance.

Male circumcision works in curbing HIV Aids

Three years after the start of a mass male circumcision programme in Orange Farm, in South Africa’s Gauteng province, there has been a marked decline in HIV transmission, researchers announced at the International AIDS Society conference in Rome. The Orange Farm study is the first ‘real world’ evidence that the results of three independent clinical trials in South Africa, Uganda and Kenya that male circumcision reduced the risk of men being infected by HIV from female partners by up to 60%, also hold true in community settings.

Communicate in plain language for ease of policy formulation and implementation
Namibia’s Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry John Mutorwa has implored agricultural scientists in universities and other research institutions worldwide to communicate their research findings to governments in plain language for ease of policy formulation and implementation. He also called for improving the dissemination of research findings to ordinary farmers.

Mutorwa was delivering the keynote address at the start of the world conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) which was co-hosted by the University of Namibia, the Agricultural Association of Namibia and other partners in the country’s capital, Windhoek on 3 – 7 July. Approximately 180 scientists - many of them working at universities - from about 17 countries internationally attended the conference.

Calling for a communal approach to the challenges in agriculture, he said there was a need for the international community to form funding partnerships to find more cost-effective solutions to agricultural problems affecting countries at the global level. The theme of the AIAEE conference was “Sustainable value chain agriculture for food security and economic development”.

Experts say ‘sustainable value chain agriculture’ means agriculture that is guided by the principle of value addition for fuller utilisation of the world’s resources, including human resources. Nearly 50 papers on various aspects of agriculture were presented at the conference and some of them will be published in the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education.


Good food for thought... allocating a bit of (perhaps experimental )resource to translating and communicating the latest scientific (agricultural) research into plain language for Southern Africa policy-makers and farmers to act upon.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Climate change fixation edges out key ecosystem sustainability issues
Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) senior fellow Dr Francis Kornegay has drawn attention to the climate change discussion fixation on emissions levels when, in developing countries, ecosystem sustainability as a whole needs more focus. He notes that the issue of a constantly growing population with decreasing access to resources gets lost in the technicalities of the negotiations.

Biodiversity degradation, wildlife poaching, river basin and water resource management, and deforestation require more attention, as well as sustainable production of food and energy in Africa. Kornegay says the lack of enforcement of environmental law is also a major problem on the continent, and more generally in the developing world. Adequate environmental governance requires that the management of ecosystems be regionally developed, so that resources are well managed across borders. It has also been suggested that the African Union should establish guidelines for resource extraction on the continent.

Kornegay also says that the politics of climate change are complicated by the politics of redress, with issues of historical responsibility coming to the fore. It is recognised in the climate change debate that there must be a transfer of resources but this is fraught with uncertainties, and a blame game fuelled by the geopolitical aspects of the negotiations ensues.

Kornegay would also like to see reinforcement of decisions made at previous climate change conferences on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), because deforestation is an issue that affects Africa negatively, particularly in central Africa and countries such as Madagascar. “We must protect what remaining forests we have in Africa,” he said. Kornegay says there is a need to move beyond the stalemate situation that has emerged at the climate negotiations, and which puts developed nations up against developing nations. This was also seen in the Doha round of trade negotiations.


A very relevant point is made here, especially when timing is taken into consideration. Environmental ‘unsustainability’ and resource scarcity may impact the poor and vulnerable long before climate change impacts. It is also worth contemplating Dr Kornegay’s comments in the light of the ‘Fundamental questions about scarcity and fair shares’ article on page 2 of this Scan. Furthermore, take into consideration that a recent Chatham House survey (pdf) showed that British people think resource scarcity is a bigger deal than climate or development. Therefore, would an international
Forecasting cholera months in advance by looking at weather data

Public health officials may be able to forecast cholera outbreaks months in advance by looking at temperature and rainfall data, according to a study. Researchers looked at cholera outbreaks in Zanzibar and found that they correlated with increases in temperature and rainfall. They calculated that a one degree Celsius increase — from 23 to 24 degrees — was followed by a doubling of cholera cases four months later. And a 20 centimetre increase of rainfall resulted in a 1.6 fold increase in cholera cases two months later. Monthly cholera disease surveillance reports between 1997 and 2006 allowed the researchers to map epidemics over time. These epidemics were then compared with monthly environmental data for the same period, according to the study, published in June issue of *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*.

Cholera outbreaks were closely associated with a rise in the monthly mean of minimum daily temperatures and rainfall levels, and this data could work as a reliable forecasting system for the disease, they concluded. This would enable public health officials to prepare efficient and cost-effective interventions, such as vaccination programmes, to stem the outbreaks before they happen. But reliable data on cholera incidence is lacking in some developing countries, making it impossible to develop similar forecasting models. The study also says that with global warming, there is possibility of increased cholera incidence in many resource-poor regions of the world.


Bottom line: More, and more reliable, data on cholera outbreaks (as well as weather patterns) in Southern Africa could be prove very useful.

Major oil find off Namibian coast

An estimated 11 billion barrels in oil reserves have been found off Namibia’s coast, with the first production planned within four years, mines and energy minister Isak Katali announced recently. The finding could put Namibia on par with neighbouring Angola, whose reserves are estimated at around 13 billion barrels and whose production rivals Africa’s top producer Nigeria. Namibia has long been seen as a potential new source of oil, hampered by a lack of exploration to determine the extent of its reserves. Its offshore geology is similar to Brazil, which is currently seeing a boom in oil.


TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

Opportunity for African tech start-ups to pitch to ‘Angel’ investors

Tech4Africa, one of Africa’s most prominent web and emerging technology conferences, has launched an initiative called *Ignite*, which will provide leading African start-ups with the opportunity to pitch their products to a carefully curated panel of Angel investors, mentors and business leaders. From the initial applications, a select group of the most innovative start-ups will be chosen. This group will each be asked to present a working prototype of their product in front of the judging panel at Tech4Africa which is due to take place from 27 to 28 October 2011.

Gareth Knight, the Managing Director of Tech4Africa, motivated the case for a competition like Ignite by using a number of high profile examples of start-ups who had gone onto greater success because of presentations they had made at tech conferences: “Twitter, FourSquare and Gowalla ‘broke’ in the US market, through their pitch stand demonstrations at SXSW,” he said, referring to the interactive component of the film, interactive and music festival, *South by South West*, held annually in Austin, Texas. The deadline for Ignite submissions is 31 August and the finalists will be announced in the first week of September.


Mobile incubator ‘mLab Southern Africa’ opens for applications

In what it is expecting to be a boon for mobile development across the region, *mLab Southern Africa* — which is positioning itself...
as Southern Africa’s new incubator for mobile entrepreneurs and innovators — has announced that applications for membership of the lab are now open. The lab, which is to be situated at The Innovation Hub in Pretoria, will be officially opened on 15 September. mLab intends to provide support to mobile developers and entrepreneurs through a number of services. In a statement, mLab says that these services will include:

- subsidised office space with meeting rooms – to allow members to benefit from being part of the mobile start-up community;
- training and accreditation on mobile technologies and entrepreneurship;
- business mentoring and coaching;
- business intelligence, such as privileged access to market research information and knowledge repositories;
- testing of mobile apps and services in dedicated test bays; and
- organising regular events for networking and knowledge sharing.

It is also intended that the lab will aid members in getting financial assistance via “grants, seed capital, angel investors or venture capitalists”. mLab states that the decision to locate the lab in Southern Africa was made based on “the enormous potential of mobile technologies for supporting business development, social development and job creation in the region”.

mLab is looking to position itself alongside the likes of Google’s Cape Town-based tech incubator, Umbono. The lab is part of a wider project which has the backing of the Creating Sustainable Businesses in the Knowledge Economy programme, supported by infoDev (World Bank, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Finland and Nokia. mLab Southern Africa has additional backing from the South African Department of Science and Technology.


**Green Revolution in Africa as a computer simulation game**

Future Agricultures Consortium plans to develop an interactive, open-source, web-based computer simulation game as an educational tool to inform and influence policy debates about the Green Revolution in Africa, including the dynamics of agrarian change and governance of agricultural science and technology.

Although students and professionals can grasp the main issues around agricultural change from a theoretical perspective, internalising the reality of what it means to be a small-scale farmer living in a complex environment is much more difficult. Various paper-based role-play games have been developed to simulate the dynamic challenges facing poor farmers and encourage players to test their strategies to overcome them. The computer-based version of the Green Revolution Game will attempt to overcome some of the barriers experiences when playing the paper-based version, namely the requirement for all the players to be physically co-located, and often for an entire day or longer.


**Stench of smelly feet to help combat malaria**

Researchers in Tanzania have chemically reproduced the stench of smelly feet in an innovative new approach to combat the spread of malaria in the country.

The scientific team at Tanzania’s Ifakara Health Institute has developed a potent serum -- similar to that of human foot odour -- to lure and kill mosquitoes, which can carry malaria and other diseases. Four times more powerful in attracting mosquitoes than natural human odour, the synthetic smell is now being used in a pioneering research program aimed at killing mosquitoes outdoors using a “mosquito landing box”. Mosquitoes are lured inside the boxes by the synthetic odour, which is dispersed by a solar-powered fan. Once inside, the insects are either trapped or poisoned and left to die.

Scientific researcher Fredros Okumu, who is currently completing a PhD from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, in England, plans to develop the mosquito landing boxes over the next two years, thanks to a US$775,000 joint grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the not-for profit organization Grand Challenges Canada.


This story beautifully illustrates both the "Keep It Simple" principle as well as the "Local is lekker" colloquialism - meaning that local is nice and/or works well.