POVERTY, DEVELOPMENT AND DONOR ISSUES

What have we learned about institutional change?  
Break gridlock on global challenges or risk an unstable future

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Update on mobile banking and financial inclusion in Madagascar
Creativity can potentially contribute to economic upliftment.

POLITICAL ISSUES

A call for “Afro - Realism” as 2013 Ibrahim Index of African Governance is released

SOCIAL ISSUES

‘Just-in-time’ training at the point of need

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Farmers struggle to adopt climate-smart methods
The role of forest provisioning ecosystem services in coping with household stresses and shocks in Miombo woodlands, Zambia
Local carbon market support in Cape Town whilst composting green waste

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION ISSUES

Zambian phone app allows citizens to participate in drafting their constitution
Plans to develop an African smartphone
What have we learned about institutional change?

It seems the development community is lately quite focussed on institutional change. Hence, the Southern Africa Scan newsletter last month featured Matt Andrews’ new book The Limits of Institutional Reform and its ‘problem-driven iterative adaptation’ approach – also known as ‘purposive muddling’. This month the newsletter features the blog article below, which is by Seth Kaplan who is a Professorial Lecturer in the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. He teaches, writes, and consults on issues related to fragile states, governance, and development. The Global Dashboard blog, where this article was published during October, explores global risks and international affairs, bringing together authors who work on foreign policy in think tanks, government, academia and the media.

A number of noteworthy reports on institutional change, development, and foreign aid have been published recently. There is much agreement between them, suggesting that we have reached a tipping point in knowledge in this area. I will briefly summarize the results here and provide links for those who want to explore the subject further.

The Development Leadership Programme (opens pdf) lays out a framework for how to work politically:

1) Agency matters. This means that the choices, decisions and actions of individuals, groups and organizations and, in particular, their leaders and elites matter.

2) Leadership matters. But the extent to which he or she will be able to pursue a particular vision depends on his or her ability to mobilize an alliance or coalition of other people, organizations or interests in support of that goal.

3) Coalitions matter. This is essential to reconfiguring political dynamics to overcome constraints and take advantage of opportunities. The possibilities depend on the institutional and political context; the interests, strength and nature of the political opposition; the strategies they adopt; the networks they exploit; and the manner in which their tactics and communications are framed.

4) Collective action problems constitute one of the major challenges of development. Collective action problems are best understood as those pervasive problem situations in which people or groups with diverse (and often competing) interests find it hard to agree on an institutional or organizational arrangement from which they would all benefit and without which they would all be worse off.

5) Understand the micro-politics in detail: Who the players are, what they do, where they come from, their organizational affiliations, networks, ideologies and interests and the political dynamics of the issue or sector.

6) Processes are key in development and change, and their evolution and forms, and their institutional expression, will vary from context to context and require both support and time to consolidate.

7) Respect, support, and encourage local leadership to shape or reform institutions to achieve positive developmental outcomes rather than trying to accomplish change directly.

In Unblocking Results: using aid to address governance constraints in public service delivery, (opens pdf) an ODI team identified six factors that were critical to success:

1) Identify and seize windows of opportunity: This requires the right relationships, trust, and inside knowledge -- all of which take a long time (before the window occurs) to create.

2) Focus on reforms with tangible political pay-offs: Those with power are more likely to act when they have a self interest in doing so.

3) Build on what’s there: Look for governance strengths in whatever form they appear and concentrate on enhancing how they work instead of creating new rules and laws.

4) Move beyond dialogue: Better to focus on improving how things work than endless discussions on policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

5) Facilitate local collective action solutions: Bring people together that normally would not meet so they can solve problems for themselves. Locals will be better at customizing solutions to fit local circumstances.

6) Learn and adapt to local needs: Be flexible, allow adjustment to what is learned when a plan meets the reality on-the-ground.’

In the Limits of Institutional Reform in Development, Harvard’s Matt Andrews argues that reforms in large organizations...
depend on a large number of ‘distributed agents’ rather than any reform champion. As such, these distributed agents need to be engaged early on so they can influence and buy into any change process.

Matt’s book suggests outsiders should avoid blueprints and

1) **Focus on identifying, highlighting and exploring problems**, but let locals come up with their own solutions.
2) **Provide opportunities for local actors to meet, debate, and reflect** upon problems
3) **Focus on removing obstacles** to new approaches
4) **Invest in flexible initiatives** that allow learning-by-doing, and a customization of solutions

As was mentioned during his ODI presentation, much of this will be familiar to anyone steeped in the literature of public administration reform, but may be new for development people.

The *Africa Power and Politics Programme*, which wrapped up last year, argues that governance challenges are not fundamentally about one set of people getting another set of people to behave better. They are about both sets of people finding ways of being able to act collectively in their own best interests. They are about collective problem-solving in fragmented societies hampered by low levels of trust. It looks for creative ways to insulate government from politics, improve the incentives facing officials in government, and make use of existing ways of working. Possible answers include:

1) **Creating new ways of power sharing** to deal with sectarianism
2) **Ring-fencing important institutions** and developmental oriented ministries from politicians
3) **Foster the creation of hybrid institutions** that take advantage of how local people actually do things
4) **Learn from what has worked elsewhere** in similar circumstances (rather than what we think ought to work from our own experiences)
5) **Work to change informal social norms and moral sentiments** (through, for instance, creative use of mass media and the power of example) instead of assuming changes to formal laws alone will have a big impact
6) **Work more “at arm’s length,”** delegating planning and funding to organizations that have a better capacity (than aid agencies) to work within the local context

Where positive outcomes are achieved, the reasons are almost always that circumstances have permitted a collective action log-jam to be overcome, usually at several levels simultaneously and interactively.

There is much in common across all these. Other reports and books, such as those produced by *Elites, Production and Poverty*, the *Centre for the Future State*, and Thomas Carothers and Diane de Gramont of the Carnegie Endowment on *development aid and politics* have made similar conclusions.

All of this shows how much more we know about institutional change than just a few years ago. The researchers behind these works deserve much praise.

<table>
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<th>But the most important question remains unanswered: Can donors change how they operate enough to take advantage of knowledge like this?</th>
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Maybe the next research program should focus on the dynamics of institutional change within these organizations?

Source: [http://www.globaldashboard.org/2013/10/04/learned-institutional-change/](http://www.globaldashboard.org/2013/10/04/learned-institutional-change/)

### Break gridlock on global challenges or risk an unstable future

A diverse group of highly respected global leaders is calling for a radical shake-up in politics and business to deliver progress on climate change, reduce economic inequality, improve corporate practices and address the chronic burden of disease. *Now for the Long Term*, published by the Oxford Martin School at the University of Oxford, is the product of a yearlong process of research and debate undertaken by a group of eminent leaders on the successes and failures in addressing global challenges over recent decades.

Chaired by Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the World Trade Organization, the Commission comprises Michelle Bachelet, Lionel Barber, Professor Roland Berger, Professor Ian Goldin, Arianna Huffington, Dr Mo Ibrahim, Lui Lelias, Minister Liu He, Professor Kishore Mahbubani, Minister Trevor Manuel, Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Minister Nandan Nilekani, Lord Patten, Baron Piot, Lord Rees, Professor Amartya Sen, Lord Stern and Jean-Claude Trichet.

Their recommendations include:

- Create a C20-C30-C40 Coalition to counteract climate change; a new coalition made up of G20 countries, 30 companies, and 40 cities. The coalition could accelerate action on climate change, with measurable targets for initiatives that include energy-efficient buildings, faster
market penetration of efficient vehicles and tracking emissions.

- Establish a Voluntary Taxation and Regulatory Exchange to address tax abuse and avoidance and harmonise company taxation arrangements, promote information sharing, enhance transparency and governance.
- Establish sunset clauses for publicly funded international institutions to ensure regular reviews of accomplishments and mandates to ensure they are fit for 21st century purpose.
- Introduce CyberEx, a new early warning platform, aimed at promoting a better understanding of common cyber threats, identifying preventative measures, and minimising future attacks for the shared benefit of government, corporate and individual interests.
- Remove perverse subsidies on hydrocarbons and agriculture, and redirect support to the poor.
- Fight non-communicable diseases with a new ‘Fit Cities’ network, a collaboration of food, beverage and alcohol providers, with public health and city authorities, to reduce the burden on health systems.
- End discrimination against future generations by revising discounting methods and adjusting them to take account of the uncertainties, risks and ethical implications for the long term.
- Set up Worldstat, a specialist agency charged with undertaking quality control on global statistics, assessing domestic practices, regulating misuse and improving data collection.
- Invest in Younger Generations: Social protection measures such as conditional cash transfer programmes should be used to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, whilst youth guarantees would help reduce ‘scars’ of long-term unemployment and disconnection.

Source: 
http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/commission

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**ECONOMIC ISSUES**

**Update on mobile banking and financial inclusion in Madagascar**

Madagascar is among the poorest countries in Africa and also ranks low on the continent for financial inclusion - only 5.5% of the adult population has an account at a formal financial institution. With only 19.5 banks and microfinance branches for every 100 000 people, there is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to increasing access to formal financial services.

The good news is that …. financial innovations [are] taking place with rural populations in mind. About 70% of Madagascar’s population lives and farms in rural and remote areas, so reaching this group is essential. Mobile banking holds immense potential for countries like Madagascar, who lack the physical brick-and-mortar representation of banks, and mobile network operators (MNOs) are not ignoring this opportunity.

Two and a half years after launching their initial mobile money operations mid-2010, the three MNOs in Madagascar which together cover 51% of the market – Telma, Orange, and Airtel - registered 1.7 million mobile money subscribers, exceeding the number of bank and MFI customers (1.4 million) by a quarter of a million people.

In order to comply with the banking law in the country, each MNO operating in Madagascar began by forming an exclusive partnership with a commercial bank. Several banks and MFIs are now operating as mobile money agents and MNOs are showing great interest in extending these partnerships beyond the conventional supply of payment services. Their goal is to facilitate, via electronic wallets, provide access to remote savings and loan services for customers.

For example, in June 2013, Orange Money established a partnership with the microfinance bank MICROCRED that allows MICROCRED customers to conduct remote loan repayment and savings transactions. Similarly, Telma Mobile Money (M’Voila), an independent subsidiary of Telma Telecom, has teamed up with BFV-Société Générale and is in discussions with several MFI market leaders offering their mobile channel to provide financial services.

Airtel provides an especially interesting case because it has established an alliance with the Bank of Africa (BOA) specifically targeting smallholder farmers. BOA is the leading bank in the country with the biggest network of branches (77) and roughly 50% of all bank clients (300 000). BOA’s origins in Madagascar lie in agriculture - it started operations in 1999 by buying the National Agricultural Development Bank - and these roots are evident today through its business line specifically geared towards small farmers. Their tailored services include a microfinance department that manages the supply of credit for smallholder clients and the provision of loans for smoothing financial flows between seasons, equipment
In 2012 Airtel Money built on this alliance with BOA and launched a pilot initiative focusing initially on 500 small farmers in the northern part of Madagascar, home to cashew production. In an effort to reach more people with formal financial services, Airtel teamed up with the NGO FANAMBY, which was already operating in the region working on biodiversity conservation and supporting small farmers in the marketing process of cashew, to educate agricultural producers about firstly the possibility of receiving sales payments through a mobile money account and secondly opening a BOA bank account linked to their Airtel Money account. The results of this pilot exceeded expectations. By September 2013, 1,250 small farmers were directly involved in this operation. Forty per cent had opened a savings account with BOA, with the number of transfers to savings accounts increasing by 10% per month. Since June 2013, a similar operation has been under way in the vanilla value chain in the same region. Next in line will be the red rice value chain in Hautes Terres.

Mindful of the potential impact mobile money can have for financial inclusion, the Central Bank of Madagascar is in the process of adapting regulations on branchless banking as well as the law on microfinance activities and oversight. Changes aim to foster the expansion of mobile money and linkages with the microfinance sector. This is a critical part of Madagascar’s new financial inclusion strategy for 2013-2017 which is about to be adopted and targets vulnerable populations dependent on agriculture. This is also in line with commitments made by the Madagascar Ministry of Finance in the context of the Maya Declaration, as a member of Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI), that aim to increase the household penetration rate of microfinance services an increase by 15% by 2017.

For a country like Madagascar, which has a low population density (36 inhabitants/km²), limited infrastructure, and a large part of the population living in rural areas without physical access to banks, alliances between financial institutions and non-bank players are essential to advancing financial inclusion for the poor. The support of regulators and policymakers will be needed to ensure an enabling environment for these partnerships to develop and succeed.

Mobile banking in sub-Saharan Africa is not new or news; what this article above illustrates, however, is that seemingly effective implementation and roll-out of mobile banking (linked to financial inclusion for the poor) is starting to take place on a scale that could really make an impact on the lives of poor peoples in the region.

Creativity can potentially contribute to economic upliftment.

There is an argument in South Africa which states that it is not possible to compete with the Far East on price or productivity; it’s in the quality of the ideas that are conceived and executed that economic freedom lies. South Africa ranks 45th in the Global Creativity Index, a measurement tool developed by the highly influential urbanist Richard Florida. Florida’s argument has long been that economic success is closely linked to the presence of what he calls the “creative class”; knowledge workers who focus on developing new innovations. Creativity, he argues, reduces inequality, improves quality of life and increases overall happiness.

The criteria used to produce the GCI rankings are Florida’s three critical Ts of economic development: Technology (R&D, innovation), Talent (human capital, education) and Tolerance (attitudes to diversity).

Earlier this year Culture Shift, in partnership with the Hub Johannesburg, brought together Southern African professionals in the creative economy – festival managers, curators, artists, publishers, and others – with top talent from enterprise, technology and design, to a creative and dynamic event to challenge them to build proof-of-concept solutions for problems facing creative and cultural sectors.

The thinking behind Culture Shift is to put together someone who’s creative with someone who can code and someone with business nous, and see what they come up with. "Practical solutions with sustainable impact", as the organisers put it.

The QRIocity team won the first prize of R35 000 (US $3 500), with which they have been tasked to use as seed-funding for their project. QRIocity’s concept seeks to understand, explore, and share all the fascinating stories of Southern Africa. They hit on gathering data about areas in Johannesburg and putting that factual information curated into QR codes and SMS
short codes on buildings, statues, and locations – a bit like English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. They then wanted to crowdsourc... - English Heri...
Summary Results

- Continental average: 51.6
- Highest country score: Mauritius (82.9)
- Lowest country score: Somalia (8.0)
- Highest regional average: Southern Africa (59.2)
- Lowest regional average: Central Africa (40.1)

Top 10

1. Mauritius
2. Botswana
3. Cape Verde
4. Seychelles
5. South Africa
6. Namibia
7. Ghana
8. Tunisa
9. Lesotho
10. Senegal

Bottom 10

1. 43. Congo
2. Côte d’Ivoire
3. Equatorial Guinea
4. Guinea-Bissau
5. Zimbabwe
6. Chad
7. CAR
8. Eritrea
9. Congo DR
10. Somalia

Biggest Improvements

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<tr>
<td>29th</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
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<tr>
<td>39th</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>44.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>31st</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>15th</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
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Biggest Deteriorations

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<td>50th</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
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<td>46th</td>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
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<tr>
<td>52nd</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>38th</td>
<td>Libya</td>
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Since 2000, the strongest improvements at continental level are registered in the categories of Human Development, Sustainable Economic Opportunity and, to a lesser extent, Participation & Human Rights.

Meanwhile the Safety & Rule of Law category has declined worryingly, showing year-on-year declines since 2010. The IIAG shows a growing diversity in governance results on the continent. There is a widening span in performance between the best and worst governed countries; increasingly noticeable differences between the performance across different categories; and conflicting trends within the categories.

In his foreword, Mo Ibrahim says, “Neither Afro-pessimism nor Afro-optimism do justice to modern Africa. This is now the age of Afro-realism an honest outlook on our continent. It’s about a celebration of its achievements but also a pragmatic acknowledgement of the challenges that lie ahead.”

Source: http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/iiag/

Social Issues

‘Just-in-time’ training at the point of need

The Millennium Development Goals have set brave targets for universal schooling – which most of Africa’s education systems are failing to meet. Some pace-setter nations heading for middle-income status (such as Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Ethiopia) will reach full school attendance thanks to a ruthless focus on Primary enrolment. But at the same time, half of Africa’s children will not receive full formal schooling. Building, training, equipping, and adequately running the necessary number of schools requires a capacity that most governments do not have.

And so, when most of the continents’ young people reach the age to work, they will be in need of training. That’s bad news for both employers seeking skilled workers, and for young Africans looking to get jobs. But before we get too gloomy, are there any solutions?

Formal vocational training in low income economies, where it has been rigorously evaluated, seems to have a small benefit at best, and often none. A large study in China carried out by Stanford University, for example, failed to show that teaching vocational subjects delivered better outcomes than general education. A study in Colombia meanwhile found that work-training benefited women in terms of better access to jobs, but had no discernible effect on employment or earnings for men.

There aren’t any robust data for African settings at the moment, but a longitudinal study in Kenya examining how young people consume training is underway. Aside from uncertainty about its usefulness, formal vocational training is costly. I am proud to be sponsoring an IT course fee for one young man in The Gambia, but his year’s training is three times a Gambian’s average income. Who in The Gambia can afford to train themselves with costs like that?
However, when it comes to up-skilling workers in African economies, there are other contenders to formal vocational training which are quicker and cheaper: mobile phones, and ‘just-in-time’ training at the point of need.

Mobile devices are hotly debated as a possible transformation engine on the African learning scene. Enea Education, based in Nairobi, is a start-up that gives quizzes to school children on their parents’ phones. The benefits of mixing the phone platform with learning are so clear that the high demand allows Eneza to operate at a profit.

But according to John Traxler, Professor of Mobile Learning at the University of Wolverhampton, there’s a degree of over-optimism about the power of mobile technology to transform education in Africa. Traxler warns that commercial suppliers will not deliver education to the bottom billion. “There will still be parts of the curriculum or parts of the population left uncovered”, he says. It might in theory be government’s responsibility to plug those gaps, but the more realistic place to look for solutions is “at the spot where market and education might just overlap”.

Traxler foresees that formal school systems funded by government will have diminishing power to raise educational standards. However, there is an alternative: “working with social entrepreneurs, those individuals embedded within their own communities, prepared to blend making a profit and delivering a social service, perhaps analogous to community teachers in rural schools in Kenya or bare-foot doctors in China”.

In most of Africa, this is going to be what I call a ‘Just in Time’ model of learning. This means: work-related information at the point of need, assuming you didn’t get the basics at school. The vector for delivering it is often going to be ICT, but it could be a training session of any kind.

Here are some stories culled from work in African training settings, which give a flavour of what is emerging. These are all projects in action on African soil today:

- A Zimbabwean farmer in a remote village spots udder infections in her cattle. The agricultural extension workers can’t visit as it’s the rainy season. But a village leader holds a set of recordings on an MP3 player describing veterinary treatments in her local language.
- A jobseeker in Lagos visits the top Nigerian jobsite www.jobberman.com, looking for one of its 2 500 new weekly postings. Its “Insider” section offers “advice your momma didn’t give you” including workplace conduct and effectiveness tips. The testing and practicing area trains him or her in working skills.
- A Primary School teacher in Madagascar (where almost half of teachers have had no formal training) gets quizzes and facts on her mobile phone that sharpens up her classroom skills. And for every right score, she gains a little bit of precious phone credit for her mobile.

All these just-in-time training examples represent a useful injection of learning to people who are well placed to improve their performance as a result of it. No-one is enrolled in any programme or visits a college or school. These projects may have backers from the NGO and global communities, but people themselves are also spontaneously investing their own resources in this kind of learning.


An interesting op-ed by Stephen Haggard who is a consultant on education technology and development, and CEO of the eLearning company eDysgu. He has led eLearning projects for governments, schools and companies, and has previously been Executive Producer of the BBC/Open University eLearning partnership and Editor of BBC’s Newsnight.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Farmers struggle to adopt climate-smart methods

Below is a report of the first results from a Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) project looking at “climate smart agriculture” in Malawi, Vietnam and Zambia. The compiler of the Southern Africa Scan newsletter has been contracted to deliver socio-economic scenarios of the future of Zambia and Malawi as part of the project. These may be featured as and when the output of the project is made available.

Preliminary results from a project aimed at helping Malawi, Vietnam and Zambia make the transition to a “climate-smart” approach to agriculture show that some farmers are struggling to adopt the new methods, while others are finding ways to cope well with climate-change problems like late rains.

“To broaden the options available to farmers, we believe that increased investment, coming from both traditional
agricultural finance, as well as emerging climate finance such as the Green Climate Fund, may be required to help farmers make the needed transition,” said Leslie Lipper, leader of FAO’s Economics and Policy Innovations for Climate-Smart Agriculture (EPIC) Programme, which houses the project.

Launched in January 2012, the $5.3-million (US $7.3-million) three-year FAO-EC project promotes a climate-smart agriculture approach in each country, with supporting activities ranging from research to policy support and investment proposals.

Agriculture and the communities who depend on it for their livelihoods and food security are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. At the same time agriculture, as a significant producer of greenhouse gases, contributes to global warming.

"Climate-smart agriculture" is an approach that seeks to position the agricultural sector as a solution to these major challenges, prioritizing food security and the adaptation needed to achieve it, while reaping potential mitigation co-benefits.

It involves making changes in farming systems that achieve these multiple goals, as well as in supporting institutions and policies.

One of the main activities of the project is identifying which agricultural practices are "climate smart" for specific conditions.

For example, the project has studied conservation agriculture (CA), which involves reduced tillage, permanent soil cover and crop rotation. The practice has been promoted by the governments of Malawi and Zambia.

Conservation agriculture can, at least potentially, increase productivity through better soils and help farmers adapt to climate change through better water retention. It also can help mitigate climate change by trapping carbon in the soil.

Project analysis indicates that many farmers in the two countries have difficulties adopting the full CA package, because, for example, they need crop residues for animal feed instead of soil cover. Sometimes the problem is that farmers are too poor to wait several seasons for the benefits of the practice to materialize.

But the project is also finding that climate change is already altering which agricultural practices work best for farmers, which could increase the appeal of CA.

In Zambia, analysis of climate data shows an increasingly late onset of rains in some areas. Since crops are only planted after the first rains, late rains mean late planting, which can seriously shorten the growing season.

Project research shows that farmers in these areas of variable rainfall and late onset of rains are the most likely to maintain CA practices, which has the advantage of preparing the land before rains arrive.

The project works to identify areas of potential conflict between climate change and agricultural policies and supports high level policy dialogues to resolve them. It also brings together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss what climate change may mean for the future and the options available to confront it.

At the international level, the project supports participation of ministry of agriculture staff on negotiating teams at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meetings.

Taking the needed action to address climate change requires investment and that is why building investment proposals that can link agriculture and climate finance is a key function of the project.

While the three project countries have different physical, economic, social and cultural characteristics, the project has found opportunities for the countries to learn from each other. For example, Vietnam is focusing on building climate smart value chains for key commodities, which could hold lessons for Malawi and Zambia. How the African countries are moving to link climate change and agricultural issues at the policy level may hold lessons for Vietnam.

The project also found that variances in how the weather is changing from country to country — as well differences in the capacities of farmers, institutions and economies — mean that there is no single "one size fits all“ CSA blueprint solution, although the approach to identifying appropriate measures is universally applicable.

Source: 

The role of forest provisioning ecosystem services in coping with household stresses and shocks in Miombo woodlands, Zambia

Staying with farmers in Zambia, this paper investigates the use of forest provisioning ecosystem services (FPES) in coping with stresses and shocks in rural households of Miombo woodland systems. It assesses the influence of socio-economic factors (wealth
and gender) in households’ coping decisions. The study employs a mixed methods approach by combining focus groups, in-depth interviews, and interviews of 244 households stratified by household wealth classes and gender of household heads in Copperbelt province, Zambia. The results show that households face multiple shocks and that FPES are the most widely used coping strategy used by households facing idiosyncratic shocks, by households, followed by kinship. A higher proportion of poor and intermediate households rely on FPES to cope with various shocks than their wealthier counterparts. When stratified by gender, more male-headed households used FPES than female headed households. With respect to coping with household food stresses, charcoal production and sale is the most widely used strategy followed by off-farm activities and remittances. In designing forest management strategies aimed at reconciling forest conservation and rural development, such as reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) schemes, it is vitally important that alternate coping strategies are made available to rural households to reduce pressure on forests.


Local carbon market support in Cape Town whilst composting green waste

The blog article below is by a Mistra Urban Futures Researcher, Anton Cartwright, at the African Centre for Cities in Cape Town, where his focus is on the green economy.

Not everybody knows this, but under South Africa’s National Environmental Management: Waste Act (59 of 2008) all solid waste that leaves private property or is placed in a wheely-bin provided by the local municipality, belongs to the State. This is largely a matter of convenience as it allows local governments to plan and provide definitive waste management services. However, as rising commodity prices have pushed the value of the waste stream up and awareness has developed around the greenhouse gas emissions produced by landfill sites, the ownership issue has developed a number of interesting implications.

The City of Cape Town outsources most of its solid waste handling to five large companies. These companies provide a high level of service to rate-paying communities and deploy large logistics fleets in moving waste around the peninsula before it ends up either in a landfill site (over 2 million tons of waste per annum) or it is recycled (roughly 500 000 tons per annum). One particular company, Reliance Compost, has developed highly specialized machinery and processes for converting the City’s green waste into compost.

Reliance’s central business model is simple. Based on a three year rolling negotiation the City of Cape Town pays the company (as they do other waste handlers) to manage several green waste drop-off sites in what constitute large contracts. At these sites, Reliance collects the green waste, breaks it into fine chips, and transports it to its processing plant. Turning waste to compost takes 3 - 6 weeks depending on the weather. During this time the waste rows are turned every day to ensure aerobic decomposition. The finished product is either trucked to bulk clients (which include the City of Cape Town department responsible for parks and flowerbeds) or bagged and sold to nurseries. Reliance manages over 300 000 cubic metres of green waste per annum.

Reliance’s ingenuity does not end there. From the outset they have been aware that by diverting green waste from landfill they are preventing the emission of methane, a noxious greenhouse gas with a global warming potential 23 times that of carbon dioxide. This qualifies Reliance for carbon credits and true to form the company has been pursuing these credits since they began their operations inception. Unfortunately, the flagship carbon market instrument – the Clean Development Mechanism – with its high transaction costs and opaque processes proved hopelessly inadequate for Reliance (and most other African projects).

Not deterred, Reliance looked for voluntary market opportunities and with the help of an NGO called Promoting Access to Carbon Equity began trading their credits through South Africa’s Credible Carbon registry. In 2013 Reliance supplemented their not-insignificant revenue from handling green waste with a further R2.4 million (US $240 000) worth of carbon revenue, generated from the sale of 71 000 tons of CO₂ as measured by the independent carbon auditing firm, Carbon Calculated Pty Ltd. It is a condition of the Credible Carbon registry that carbon revenue is spent on poverty alleviation in southern African and in compliance Reliance has so far spent R1.1 million (US $110 000) on local community projects.

Reliance’s is a Cape Town green economy story of innovation, entrepreneurship, opportunity (if not opportunism) and closed-loop thinking. It also speaks of the manner in which local
carbon markets are emerging in the absence of a global market co-ordinated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These markets pay even less attention to actual mitigation than the CDM, instead taking their raison d’etat from local priorities. To do this they have developed their own accountability procedures. They are unlikely to prove much help in reducing greenhouse gas emission in the short-term but do have a role to play in financing the transition toward a green economy.

The final chapter in the Reliance story will involve the City of Cape Town – the legal owners of the waste that Reliance puts to such good use. It is important that City waste managers are aware of how Reliance has benefitted from the carbon market for two reasons: they need to encourage their other waste handlers to pursue similar opportunities and they need to factor this revenue into their future contract negotiations with their commercial waste handling partners so as to save the City money.

Source: http://urbanafrica.net/blogs/2013/10/21/reliance-supports-local-carbon-market-while-composting-cape-towns-green-waste

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Zambian phone app allows citizens to participate in drafting their constitution

Zambia is in the process of writing a constitution that will reflect the aspiration of the people. In order to make the process inclusive, the government has created a phone app that allows people to read the draft, sharing and commenting on pages. The Zambian draft constitution app is available free for download on Google Play — but not on iTunes. The description of the app reads:

The Zambian Draft Constitution App is aimed at addressing the lack of knowledge of the nation’s laws on the part of the citizenry.

It helps the nation understand their rights and how the country is governed. The project’s focus is to ensure Zambians review and have a working knowledge of the first draft constitution by providing an easily accessible content for mobile phones and tablets, [and] by so doing helping the government reach more people and get accurate feedback for their review process.

The app allows users send comments to the Constitution Review Commission of Zambia, search for key words, as well as share an area of interest with a friend via sms, email, Facebook, twitter or any other social network app installed on a phone.

This is Zambia’s third attempt to write and ratify a constitution and the government seems determined to get it right this time — primarily by making the process as transparent, inclusive and consensual as possible. The Technical Committee on Drafting the Zambian Constitution (TCDZ) has a comprehensive, link-rich website that includes the names of all the committee members with their bios, as well as previous drafts and the current draft in seven local languages.


Plans to develop an African smartphone

Seemahale Telecoms and CZ Electronics have entered into a partnership to manufacture smartphones and tablets in South Africa.

“This project is a first in Africa as far as I am aware. It’s not right that out of a billion or more phones in Africa, none are made or assembled in Africa. Some are designed here, but they’re then made in China,” said Seemahale CEO Thabo Lehlokoe.

The printed circuit boards that will be used in the production of the locally-made smartphone will be imported, but everything else will be done locally, which includes the assembly of components such as chips and wiring, housing production and the printing of user manuals.

According to TechCentral, the companies will manufacture a 5-inch smartphone and a 10.1-inch tablet. “Both devices will be powered by Android and will cost ‘considerably less’ than big-name products.

The smartphone is expected to make use of a 960×540-pixel LCD capacitive-touch screen, have 4GB of storage, while running on a dual-core 1,5GHz processor powered by a 2 250mAh battery. Pre-order sales will open in South Africa in January 2014 with various distribution channels being considered and local repair and after-sales support being offered. Lehlokoe hopes to “entic” a local bank to back the venture and offer cheap financing on the products.