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Potential paradigm shift in the way that
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diseases is funded

A blog post by David Dickson, editor of
SciDev.Net, covering Forum 2012, a three-
day meeting on health research which
opened in Cape Town on 24 April. Forum
2012 is an international meeting being held
under the title ‘Beyond Aid’, which identifies
research and innovation as “key drivers for
health, equity and development”.

Can the governments of both developed
and developing countries be persuaded to back a
paradigm shift in the way that research into
novel treatments for the diseases of the
developing world is funded? This is the
challenge being thrown down by supporters of a proposed international convention on the
funding and co-ordination of health research
that is being proposed to the World Health
Assembly (WHA) next month.

As described to a session of Forum 2012
devoted to the proposal, the case for
change is clear. Carlos Corea, a member of
the WHO’s Consultative Expert Working
Group on Research and Development (CEWG) which draw up the proposal, outlined
three reasons that change was needed.

Firstly, he said, although investment
by pharmaceutical companies has increased
significantly in recent years, product
innovation – measured by the number of new
drugs emerging – has gone down. Secondly,
despite increased investment in research and
development for diseases in developing
countries, a lack of incentives means that
this remains insufficient. And thirdly, “there
is little co-ordination [in drug research].
Global efficiency is not very high.”

Michelle Childs, of Medecins sans
Frontieres, put it more pragmatically. “We
are interested in the proposed convention
because of the frustration of our medical
teams that many of the tools that they need
are unavailable, un-affordable, or ill-adapted
to the situations they face on the ground.”
The reason, she suggested, was that drug
industry relies on recouping the costs of
research and development through high
prices on the resulting products, which it is
able to charge through the exercise of patent
rights.

At the core of the proposed treaty
would lie a fundamental break with this
principle. Namely, the costs of R&D on new
drugs would be de-linked from the costs of
providing the drugs to patients. James Love
of Knowledge Ecology International, one of
the original architects of this novel approach,
described the challenge, “How do you change
the paradigm and come up with something
new that reconciles the needs for innovation
and access.”

Why was this controversial? “Because
it challenges current thinking about how R&D
is financed”. Furthermore, the principles on
which it is based “are seen as a threat to
existing business models”. But Love argued
that the treaty model “should not be
considered that controversial, since it focuses
on areas where the market is not working,
and where the access issues are particularly
acute”.

Source:
http://scidevnet.wordpress.com/2012/04/25/a-
paradigm-shift-that-promises-a-better-future/

The fate of the proposal at next month’s
meeting of the WHA is uncertain, and it is
unlikely to progress speedily. This is because
it fundamentally challenges the developed
world pharmaceutical companies’ business
model, which is where the (eye-wateringly
high) costs of R&D are ultimately borne by
the consumer. This model is also the reason
why some diseases and ailments are more
likely to be researched than others. But at
least the proposal, and the bid to do some
innovative thinking around a new paradigm,
are on the table.

Also at Forum 2012, South Africa’s science
minister, Naledi Pandor, said that it is
essential that African researchers become
involved in finding solutions for the problems
of Africa. She made explicit reference to
Africa’s reliance on drugs and other tools
discovered and developed outside the
continent, and urged that “African-led
innovation should be applied to address
African health needs”. Self-reliance is one
way of developing resilience.

How the poor cope with crisis

When the global financial crisis struck in
2008, the World Bank’s social development
unit and the Institute of Development
Studies in the UK set out to examine in “real
time” how around 3,000 people in 17
developing countries coped with the shock of
higher food and fuel prices.

The joint project has resulted in a
book, Living Through Crises. The book,
published last week, covers eight countries –
including Bangladesh, Cambodia and Kenya –
and research is leavened with lots of voices
from the ground. In a foreword to the book,
Prof Robert Chambers says it covers what is
so often missing in the development
discourse: “The personal and emotional cost,
the stress, the exhaustion, the tension within
families, and the agony of the cruel choices
that poorer people at the margins are forced
to make.”
As one Cambodian villager said: “My children dropped out of school a few months ago. I did not want them to stop but they stopped themselves. Now they go out to collect wild mushrooms and morning glory to sell to help the family.”

The researchers found a common set of responses from interviewees. The adults worked for longer hours, ate less and bought cheaper and less nutritious food, switched their children from public to private schools or reluctantly took them out of school altogether. Families skipped medical treatment, sold off assets such as jewellery and animals, and sank deeper into poverty. Some people turned to prostitution, selling drugs or – more commonly – to theft and other crime. Women were particularly hard-hit as they continued to bear the burden of household responsibilities despite experiencing long hours in paid work.

An important finding was that the analysis of macroeconomic indicators alone can be misleading. In particular, the resumption of GDP growth in late 2009 and 2010 in many developing countries gave optimism to governments and donors that the impacts of the crises were relatively short-lived and that the poor were not strongly affected.

However, even temporary shocks to the formal economy have long-lasting impacts. The reason is that the initial impact – incurring debt, foregoing healthcare – is followed up by a second round of negative impacts: sale of assets and more competition in the informal sector.

“In many surveyed countries, poor people were living through this second round of negative impacts at the same time the national economies were showing strong signs of economic recovery,” the study said.

Three years of compounded crises have meant that households across east Asia lost their land or houses to creditors while smallholders in rural Kenya have become impoverished.

The study found that in all eight countries, the informal safety net – families, friends, neighbours, community groups – played a key role. Often such networks were the only support for the poor. In Cambodia, construction and garment workers pooled money or rice sent from villages and cooked and ate together in large groups. In Senegal, small traders shared market spaces.

“Informal safety nets provided by relatives, friends, and community and religious organisations were important for coping everywhere. Even though the amount of support through informal safety nets was inadequate relative to the large and growing need, it was often the only source of support available,” said the study.

The case studies lead inexorably to one conclusion: the need for more effective and more generous social protection systems. In fact, in the countries with pre-existing social protection schemes – formerly socialist states such as Kazakhstan and Serbia – poor people were better protected in comparison with countries that lacked such schemes. Meanwhile, existing social assistance programmes suffered from several weaknesses: not generous enough, poorly targeted and, in some cases, an inability to sustain pre-crisis initiatives because of budgetary pressure.

Current social protection programmes that tend to focus on modest cash transfers should be widened, the study said. It noted the value of free or subsidised health and education programmes in protecting the poor during the worst of the crises. But providing a safety net costs money. How realistic is it that governments will cough up at a time of economic hardship?

Hossain, one of the study’s editors, argues that it pays to have a strong safety net in the long run. “Whenever I talk to policymakers about this I always say, ‘beware the false economies of the woman-powered resilience’. It costs more in the medium-term not to deliver better social protection. And social protection can be better designed – both to catch the vulnerable not-very poor and to work with the grain of people’s coping strategies. Supporting people so that they don’t pursue damaging coping strategies is good value for money.”


Duncan Green, in his Oxfam blog states that the studies are an excellent example of a ‘rapid social anthropology’ approach. The methodologies are varied, but typically involve focus group discussions, repeated over a period of months or years, in a sensitive, skilled effort to dig into the experience of poor people living at the sharp end of a global economy in turmoil. This adds to the traditional ways of exploring the impact of crises, amongst others, because the ‘deep listening’ identifies and fills some important gaps in our understanding, i.e. that indebtedness to microfinance organizations can become an acute burden in a crisis, or that intra-family violence (men on women, adults on kids) is likely to increase. He says this approach identifies the importance of social capital and relationships as well as the ‘erosive nature of coping’ – for
all their energy and invention in confronting shocks, poor people run down their assets as well as their stock of social capital, with knock-on consequences for their future well-being. Rapid social anthropology also identifies gender differences, for example in the impact of crises on the care economy, which are usually overlooked altogether by conventional analyses. According to Green, the book launch generated some thought provoking discussion and ideas, including:

- **Role of the State:** the research finds that the state is often ‘absent’ during a crisis. Rather than turn to the authorities, poor people turn to family and friends, their religious organizations, and other community structures. So does that mean we give up on state provision of social protection, crisis response etc.? No. But we need to think differently. For example, adopt a ‘Portfolios of the Poor’ approach of researching what community ‘social coping’ mechanisms function well and support those, as well as identifying gaps that the state needs to fill directly; or identify which aspects of state provision are effective and back those – school feeding programmes emerged as really significant.

- **Beyond the state:** but the research does suggest looking beyond the state and seeing how to cooperate with the other institutions that matter. What about providing disaster management training to religious leaders? Putting money into community savings schemes as a way of getting cash quickly into a shock-hit village?

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

**Chinese traders in Southern Africa the poorest of the diaspora, yet they may influence China-Africa policy if tensions increase**

This slightly longer than usual article below is included because it is entirely new knowledge, it is very interesting and hypothesises that, should tensions continue to escalate over traders’ activities in Africa’s towns and cities, it will become harder for China to remain indifferent to their plight.

In a study, which is perhaps the first to investigate and compare the perceptions of Chinese traders in a systematic way, across several African countries. The Brenthurst Foundation conducted nearly 200 in-depth interviews with Chinese traders in five countries in Southern Africa - South Africa, Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana and Angola - between April 2011 and February 2012. This Discussion Paper distils the key findings of the interviews and, supplemented by additional research, considers inter alia why Chinese traders have proved so successful in Africa and what their experiences might tell us about the future of Chinese-African relations.

The ‘China in Africa’ story brims with ambivalence and ambiguity. Nowhere is this more evident than on the African street. The influx of Chinese products and the proliferation of small Chinese enterprises are affecting ways of life in African towns and cities, but exactly how and to what extent is hotly contested. Their presence has sparked outbreaks of xenophobic violence, led to increased competition with local businesses and prompted calls for tougher regulation and government intervention. They have become the whipping boy for Africa’s politicians, merchants and labour unions upset by Beijing’s growing ties to the continent. However, Chinese traders have also afforded millions of African consumers the opportunity to purchase a range of goods for the first time. Whilst debate over their impact on Africa’s development escalates, they have remained a largely unknown newcomer, scarcely understood and rarely examined.

There is no reliable data on how many Chinese citizens are in Africa, although some estimates put the number at over one million. Of those, we know least about the Chinese migrants who are making a living as traders in rural areas and urban marketplaces across the length and breadth of the continent. They have forged their own pathways in Africa and are seemingly entirely divorced from the policies often associated with China’s African interests. Yet the experiences of traders could weigh heavily on the future of Chinese-African relations, more so than even big business or high politics.

Overwhelmingly, Africans and Chinese meet, interact and explore each other’s worlds on the street, at the grassroots level. By restricting our in-depth interviews to this sphere, numerous findings and insights not captured in the wider ‘China in Africa’ narrative were exposed. At the most general level, this Paper reveals the complex and multi-layered nature of the Chinese presence in Africa, so frequently misrepresented as one great monolith. Although across the five countries examined in this study there are sharp differences in the opinions and perceptions of Chinese traders, it is the striking similarities that are most telling.
Africa is the bottom-rung destination for China’s migrants. The continent draws the poorest and least educated of the Chinese diaspora. Nearly all are in Africa because they could not make a living in the pressure-cooker that has become China’s job market. If they had a choice, they would be elsewhere, but only Africa possesses the minimal entry requirements and light regulations that enable Chinese migrants with limited capital and low levels of skills to compete.

Still, only a tiny minority intend to make the continent their home. The vast majority of traders long to either return to China or resettle somewhere other than Africa. In one country in our survey, Lesotho, not a single interviewee definitely wished to remain in the country. In part this is due to issues such as rampant corruption, high crime and low quality of life which figured prominently in responses throughout our study. More and more, however, traders have become fearful of the rising tide of resentment amongst locals, fuelled by China’s perceived dominance over many sectors of their respective economies. This was especially pronounced in Lesotho, Angola and Zambia, and less so but increasingly in Botswana.

This survey paints a bleak picture of the place of Chinese traders within African societies. Only in South Africa did traders express any sense of belonging or attachment to the country. Almost without exception, Chinese traders seal themselves in cocoons, completely cut off from local communities. Their experience suggests that, at least for now, it is pointless to even speculate on the prospects for deeper integration of Chinese migrants into African society. In some countries, just halting the rise of mutual suspicion and tension could prove a colossal task.

Yet this study also sheds light on the values and mind-set that have enabled Chinese traders to succeed where many others have failed or feared to tread. Their capacity to endure hardships and sacrifices to earn a living, not least long separations from their families, seems inestimable. Evident throughout our interviews was also their abiding commitment to learning a new profession (only 1 in 5 had experience of trading back in China), often moving from the lowliest position in a workplace to owning a small business; a marked tolerance for risk, forging opportunities where none seemed to exist, where profit margins were minimal and supply chains weak; an ingrained sense that a person is nothing without a job and only hard work will prevent someone else from taking it; and a willingness to compete.

In the view of most Chinese traders, this mind-set is not shared or understood by the Africans who purchase their goods and work in their shops. Instead, traders feel besieged by charges that they are using illicit means to rob and cheat Africans, rather than simply out-compete them. In some countries, ill-will is clearly growing amongst their customers over the (poor) quality of some Chinese goods and shopkeepers’ business practices, namely their refusal to respect consumer rights. As the clamour for action against Chinese traders intensifies, they will be less able to sidestep the contentious issues which surround their businesses, especially related to tax, imports and their failure to establish links with local firms and supply chains.

In some Southern African countries more than half of the traders come from just one province, Fujian, home to less than 3 per cent of China’s total population. Networks in Fujian have been exceptional in creating opportunities that facilitate greater migration from China to African countries - both legally and illegally - yet Fujianese traders have been the source of considerable tension, not least amongst the wider Chinese migrant community, who are widely critical of their approach to business, if not their character. Revealingly, traders often reserved their harshest comments for their putative guardians in African countries - Chinese diplomatic and consular officials. Ninety-five per cent of our survey claimed that they had never received assistance of any kind from their respective Chinese embassies. With rare exceptions, the perception of ‘Beijing’ amongst them was extremely negative.

Should tensions continue to escalate over traders’ activities in Africa’s towns and cities, it will become harder for China to remain indifferent to their plight. Sooner or later, Beijing will have to define its relationship with Chinese traders in Africa. The large numbers of Chinese migrants living in volatile countries across the world, not least in Africa, could become China’s Achilles Heel. The fear is that violence against Chinese migrants abroad could stoke nationalist reactions at home and threaten the country’s unity. So the question arises from our study, might China be compelled to involve itself in the internal affairs of unstable or conflict-ridden countries, not least in Africa, to a far greater degree than hitherto? If so, then Chinese traders - the most vulnerable of China’s migrants - could find themselves on the frontline of their country’s foreign policy rather than the furthest margins.

The formidable obstacles Chinese traders have overcome to earn a living in
Africa during the past decade, from insecurity and loneliness to language difficulties and xenophobia, are well documented in this Paper. As for the coming decade, the emergent challenges to their supremacy on the African street are likely to be even more arduous. Prominent among them are changing government policies, new market competitors and shifting dynamics within China. Despite the obvious drawbacks, however, life in Africa still makes economic sense for Chinese traders, at least for now. Research suggests that traders in Africa are making about three times what they might theoretically earn in China. That essential difference is where much of the Chinese trader phenomenon in Africa starts and stops.

Yet there is an acute precariousness to their existence in Africa that is not generally felt by Chinese migrants elsewhere. It may stem, in part, from the anxiety evident across Africa over whether the continent can address the manifold challenges that threaten its economic growth, such as high youth unemployment or an unexpected fall in commodity prices. Doubtless it also relates to the lowly place of Africa’s Chinese traders in the wider Chinese diaspora: if they don’t make it in Africa, they have nowhere else to go.

Source:

New, more flexible model for land reform in Namibia

The Namibian government has introduced a new model of land acquisition in order to encourage commercial farm owners, most of them whites to make more land available for the land reform programme so as to re-settle the previously disadvantaged.

Farmers now have the option to withdraw their offer of selling their farm to the State if no satisfactory price agreement is reached. “This model opens the way for flexibility and negotiations between government and the landowner before the Ministry makes a final counter-offer,” the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement said in a recent newsletter.

If a commercial farmer wants to sell, he must first offer the farm to the Ministry, who can issue a waiver if the land is not suitable for resettlement. This rule is still in force but prices can now be negotiated.

The previous procedure was that, once government makes a counter-offer, the farm owner could no longer withdraw his/her offer, but could still appeal to the Lands Tribunal for price determination. This non-withdrawal clause, some farmers argued, was one of the reasons why agricultural landowners were afraid to offer land for acquisition by the government.

The modus operandi now is that the commercial landowner first offers the land to government and the ministry sends out its assessment and valuation teams for a thorough valuation of the farm. In the case where government valuation meets the price asked by the farm owner, the transaction will proceed normally. However, should the government valuation not meet the owner’s asking price, the ministry will invite the landowner to attend a special Price Negotiation Committee meeting where negotiations will take place. During the negotiations, the farm owner has the option of being accompanied by a private valuator of his or her choice. If the parties reach consensus on the farm price, the Ministry will make an official counter-offer and the sale proceedings will go ahead.

In case the parties cannot reach consensus on the price, the owner may now withdraw his/her offer in writing. But where the owner and the government negotiation team do not reach agreement on the price and the landowner does not withdraw the offer, the minister will issue a [final] counter-offer to the farm owner, after which he/she may no longer withdraw the original offer. Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) Chief Executive Director Sakkie Coetzee welcomed the move, describing it as exciting and able to balance the concerns of the two parties.

Source:
http://allafrica.com/stories/201204050390.html

As has been mentioned numerous times in the Southern Africa scanning newsletters, access to land, land reform and security of land tenure is a critically important mechanism not only as a pathway out of poverty, but also as a means to aim for food security and resilience. Namibia seems to have developed a model which suits both the commercial (white) farmers and the government’s land reform agenda. These models are absent in other Southern African countries where nearly all large commercial farms are owned by minorities, or otherwise subject to ‘grabbing’ by the elite. The Namibian land acquisition programme aims to transfer 15 million hectares of commercial agricultural land to formerly disadvantaged owners by 2020. Of this, government must buy five million hectares for resettlement purposes and 10 million through the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme administered by Agribank.
**POLITICAL ISSUES**

**Citizens movement for social change launched**

South Africans have ceded authority and responsibility of governance to political leaders and the government, “says social activist and businesswoman Dr Mamphela Ramphele. Speaking at the launch of her trust, the Citizens Movement for Social Change [no website live yet, but watch this video for background], in Cape Town on 24 April, she said: “We have to acknowledge the mistakes made in the past 18 years of democracy. Accountability mechanisms to ensure citizens remain stewards of the democracy and at the centre of governance have not yet been developed.”

“Many citizens took the focus away from public life and occupied themselves with material and other personal interests. We have become a nation preoccupied with wealth accumulation as a status symbol,” she said. Ramphele said she was launching the movement because South Africans carried the wounds of multigenerational humiliation at the hands of colonialism, apartheid social engineering, civil conflicts on both sides of the liberation struggle and “on-going humiliation of poor people in our unequal and status-conscious society”.

Ramphele said: “Our subject identities are at the heart of a vicious cycle of self-pitying, dependence, supplication, apathy and self-sabotaging behaviours including suicidal lifestyle choices, looting of public resources by those meant to be public servants, the destruction of public property in the name of protest and brutal violence at home, work and in public spaces.”

Ramphele said the movement’s supporters included leaders such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, former science and technology minister Mosibudi Mangena, former UCT vice-chancellor Professor Njabulo Ndebele and businessman Bobby Godsell.


**SOCIAL ISSUES**

**The future of South Africa is female, but what will become of the men?**

Below is a recently published op-ed by Prof Jonathan Jansen, Rector of the University of the Free State (UFS) and honorary professor of education at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is well known in South Africa for successfully managing the on-going transformation of the racially and socially divided UFS.

“We are running out of educated men. This is very serious because it impacts on the kind of futures we stand to inherit. And to be blunt, ‘the future is no longer what it used to be’, as the saying goes. A strong and consistent trend has been unfolding under our noses, and nobody's watching.

More women, compared to men, are graduating from high school and from university, with dire sociological consequences for our still patriarchal society. Take the schools' data, for example. At the end of last year 230 846 male students wrote the Grade 12 examination and 166 057 of them passed.

Female students, by contrast, delivered 265 244 students into examination rooms and 182 060 passed. This means, of course, that many more girls wrote (34 398) and passed (16 003) than boys. Now, given that this is a trend, multiply these numbers over a five-to 10-year period and the seriousness of the problem begins to hit home. Attended a university graduation ceremony recently?

Across the disciplines - not only in physiotherapy, teaching and nursing - many more women than men line up to get their
degrees. The top performers are women. The other day I called together all the 2011 matriculants who achieved six As and higher in last year’s NSC [National Senior Certificate] examination. Of the nearly 200 students who showed up, I had enough fingers to count the guys.

Of course we should celebrate the fact that more girls and women do well in schools and universities than before; that is a good thing. But gender equity is not about men dropping out of school and failing to graduate in larger numbers; it is about correcting historical injustices in terms of equity of access to school and university education for women. There are serious social problems and cultural conflicts ahead.

With more women with higher degrees and good jobs than men, this will surely have an impact on marriages. Ralph Banks, a law professor at Stanford, examines this kind of data among African-Americans in his new book, *Is Marriage For White People?*

He found that, as black women made economic and educational progress, black men lagged further behind. So much so that almost twice as many black women graduate from university as black men every year. Many black women then remain unmarried rather than marry men with less money and less education (from the book’s summary on Amazon.com).

So here’s the question for South Africa, where these trends seem to be taking a similar trajectory to what is happening in the US. Will well-educated women marry poorly-educated men? And if they do, what will be the impact on marital relationships?

South African men have been thoroughly socialised into thinking of themselves as the performers, as the head of the family, as the main if not only income generator. For centuries in this country, men carried the social and economic status in the family, aided and abetted by scriptural authority: the man is the head of the home and, in some version of the faith, intercedes on their behalf directly with the Almighty. In the church where I had my roots, the women were not allowed to speak in public worship, to this day.

In the future, this will change dramatically. I predict tension and violence in many homes as men struggle to come to terms with their changed status. Many women might choose not to marry, even as they choose to have children. More and more men will remain out of school, on the streets, and in prison - a decidedly unattractive scenario for social stability and family cohesion. I suspect that, because of this demographic pressure, women and men might marry outside of their primordial affiliations (race, language, religion, country and so on) simply because there are not enough educated men in their traditional social groups. This is not a bad idea at all, given our rigidity around these inherited identities.

Still, I predict problems for men in making this adjustment. In the future I see more and more housefathers (remember housewifes?) increasing among that small proportion of men who swallow their pride and adjust to reality. I see competition among the marrying kind for that small group of educated men. I imagine more and more of these emasculated men following their role models into politics, where in this country you need neither a degree nor any limits on your appetites for the intimate.

The Department of Labour can relax its employment equity targets: women will gradually assume leadership in corporate boardrooms and university senates. The Department of Correctional Services needs to brace itself for a growing intake of men.


Today, most men in Africa have to deal with a sense of inadequacy, exacerbated by fewer employment opportunities and role switches as more women start to earn. Their struggles in both home and work settings, and the emasculation they may experience seem to manifest in sometimes violent and destructive behaviour towards themselves and their families.

Very few organisations work in this space, but some, such as [Sonke Gender Justice Network](http://www.sonke.org.za/) and [One Man Can](http://www.onemancan.org.za/) endeavour to make a difference and build social and gender cohesion by training, conducting policy advocacy, research and running projects such as [The One Man Can toolkit](http://www.onemancan.org.za/resources). Components of the toolkit can be downloaded in various languages (English, French, Xhosa, Zulu and Afrikaans) from the resources section of the site or from the [One Man Can online resource site](http://www.onemancan.org.za/resources).

Ironically the controversial Traditional Courts Bill, which its critics say will take the country back to the era of bantustans, is set to come under review starting with a series of public hearings in KwaZulu-Natal. The sponsor of the bill, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, argues that the legislation seeks to ‘affirm the recognition of traditional justice and its values based on restorative justice and reconciliation’. However, it has come under heavy criticism from civil society movements and legal
experts, who suggest that it might not be constitutional, and that it takes the country back to the era when amakhosi [traditional tribal chiefs] were let loose on traditional communities. The bill was first introduced in 2008, but was withdrawn after meeting opposition. Now it is set to be debated at 10 public hearings scheduled to take place around Kwa-Zulu Natal, beginning in April. Gender activists fear that, given the patriarchal set-up in traditional and rural communities, the bill might discriminate against women and their participation in these courts. See here for more information on the Traditional Courts Bill.

New report on HIV among Zambia’s young people highlights challenges and charts the way forward

For Zambia’s young people the AIDS response has seen a number of important successes, with a significant 25% decline in HIV incidence over the last decade. However, according to a new report, the AIDS epidemic continues to have a huge effect on the country’s youth, especially young women, and much more needs to be done to achieve an HIV-free generation.

Situation Assessment of the HIV Response among Young People in Zambia (opens pdf) provides an extensive synthesis and analysis of recent data, gaps and challenges in AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support for this key age group. It was launched at a high level meeting held from 17-18 April in Lusaka.

The assessment, focusing on 10 to 24 year olds, shows that HIV incidence decreased between 2001 and 2009 among young people and the proportion of young people having sex before the age of 15 has halved, from about 17% in 2000 to some 8% in 2009. There has also been a rise in the number of young people who were tested in 2009. There has also been a rise in the number of young people who were tested and received their HIV test results, from 7% in 2005 to 34% in 2009.

Despite these achievements, HIV prevalence among young people remains high. In 2007 prevalence among those aged 15-19, for example, was 6% for women and 4% for men. This is attributed to a number of factors. Dr Clement Chela, NAC Director General, citing the report said these factors included, “Poor comprehensive knowledge of HIV; gender inequality, poverty and the combination of transactional and intergenerational sex, early marriage, alcohol use, peer pressure, and the negative gatekeeper attitudes towards condom promotion among young people.”

Data shows that only 53% of adults expressed support for condom education for HIV prevention among young people. The report also highlights that there is no comprehensive sexuality education package for pupils in school and a high level of stigma towards young people on treatment from their peers.

One of the key recommendations in the report for increasing protection of young people is the promotion of their meaningful involvement in HIV policy and programme design and implementation. This can be facilitated by building their capacity as change agents and service providers and encouraging them to generate demand for HIV-related services.

According to the report, bottlenecks that need to be addressed in order to meet young people’s needs are those that affect access to condoms, HIV counselling and testing, male circumcision and behaviour change communication among young people in and out of school.


Zambia government intervenes to protect community against mining pollution

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa reckons that governments across southern Africa should take heed of what is happening in Zambia’s mining industry because the new government has recently taken two decisions which could have far reaching implications for the future of mining. And astonishingly, the decisions will not benefit mining company shareholders but ordinary Zambians.

The first decision was to order the huge Mopani Copper Mine (MCM), which is a subsidiary of the multi-national Glencore, to halt operations at its leach plant due to fears about acid mist affecting the health of local communities. The Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) ordered MCM to stop work at the plant until minimum measures to reduce acid mist emission were put in place - so that the people of Mufulira township could breathe clean (or at least cleaner) air for the first time in years.

The company reacted with threatening statements about job losses and economic damage. Normally, this kind of situation would be settled by discussions between the government and mining operators. But this is where the government took its second important decision - to bring all players to the table.

The Vice-President, Guy Scott, called a meeting to discuss the issue with
The situation has still not been resolved but the simple fact that the mining company is meeting with representatives of civil society and local communities can only bode well for the future.

See here: http://af.reuters.com/article/zambiaNews/idAFFL6E8FL0ID20120421 for media coverage of the issue.

**This is a good, albeit, rare example of an African institution, protecting human rights, enhancing good governance and engaging collaboratively in the region. A mechanism to incentivise this sort of institutional ‘behaviour’ in the region would surely be valuable.**

### Southern African countries collaborate on plans for climate research centre

Five countries in southern Africa have joined forces to launch a research centre that will work on combating climate change in the region. South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia signed a declaration on Wednesday to base the initiative in the Namibian capital Windhoek.

The Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (Sasscal) is intended to support cross-border research and land management. Ministers from the five countries were joined by Annette Schavan, Germany’s science minister. Germany is providing €50m (US$66m) in aid for the first four years.

Scientists based in Namibia estimate southern Africa will suffer double the average rise in global temperature because of its regional air circulation system. This could devastate agriculture and result in severe food and water shortages.

John Mutorwa, Namibia’s agriculture minister, said: “It is forecast that the region will be hard-hit by the effects of climate change, leading to the spread of deserts, water shortages, loss of fertile soil, biodiversity and agricultural output. Hundreds of thousands of people could be displaced, aggravating poverty and increasing the spread of vector-borne diseases and epidemics such as malaria, meningitis and cholera. Clearly, nations need to co-ordinate and communicate across political borders to jointly prepare for climate change.”

Namibia said the centre, due to open in August, will equip regional researchers and decision makers with scientific data and services to address future trends of global climate change, the vulnerability of societies and ecosystems, and the potential for improved natural resource management and services.

Mutorwa added: “Sasscal will focus on innovation and knowledge exchange for enhanced adaptive land use and sustainable economic development in southern Africa.”

Southern African countries will help with the creation of trans-boundary early warning systems for floods and drought, and regional climate change projections, the centre said.

Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/ apr/23/southern-africa-climate-research-centre

An excellent example of African cross-border co-operation and collaboration which is normally distinctly lacking, (as in intra-African trade, for example). Also refer to the Kaza Transfrontier Park (reported in the August 2011 edition of the Southern African scanning newsletter) where Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe created a trans-frontier conservation area, allowing animals and people to roam freely across borders and establishing a framework to protect and share precious water resources. Do read an update here as one of the important things that Kaza-type thinking will bring about is a reinforcing of the human rights of those very marginalised groups by the emergence of a transboundary management of natural resources such as water. According to the article, “Forward-thinking ideas in transboundary management are being accepted and understood on a regional level in Southern Africa as it starts to face the reality of a changing climate.”

### Ecosystem services contributing to human well-being and identifying pathways out of poverty.

The study looking at ecosystem services contributing to poverty alleviation that was mentioned in the March 2012 edition of the Southern Africa scanning newsletter, is linked to the Southern African Program on Ecosystem Change and Society (SAPECS) which has subsequently been presented at the Planet under Pressure conference.

SAPECS aims to produce empirical evidence and develop practical theory and tools to improve understanding of how ecosystem services contribute to human well-being, and particularly how ecosystem services can be used to build resilience for poverty alleviation and socio-economic development under conditions of rapid social change.
and ecological change. SAPECS builds on the Southern African Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (SAFMA) and subsequent studies, and will be linked to on-going initiatives in the region aimed at informing policy and governance of ecosystem services.

SAPECS will adopt a multi-scale approach. The project will initially focus on South Africa and consist of national level analyses and syntheses, as well as local scale studies in three connected but very different local authorities: the Eden District dominated by commercial farming and private land tenure, the largely rural and communal Amatole District Municipality characterized by high levels of poverty, and the growing urban hub of the Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality. All three authorities lie in biodiversity hotspots, span from the coast to inland catchments, and face substantial threats from climate change, social and economic change, and increases in extreme events such as floods, storm surge and fire. As the project develops it is envisaged that additional case studies in Madagascar, Zambia and elsewhere will be added.

SAPECS will use a wide variety of methods, from both the social and natural sciences. These will include GIS mapping and modelling, systems analysis and modelling, stakeholder and expert interviews, network analyses, and participatory scenario planning. SAPECS will draw on existing national and local scale datasets, as well as collecting and generating new datasets. These approaches and methodologies will provide much needed insights on identifying and navigating pathways out of poverty.

Source: http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/pup_session.asp?19126

This study and initiative is well worth keeping track of, and sharing knowledge about, as and when it becomes available.

**TECHNOLOGY ISSUES**

New data journalism tool uses open data to hold local officials accountable

Those in power can held accountable in more open, just and democratic societies where freedom of expression and an independent media are free to operate. In a region such as Southern Africa the quality of journalism and reporting is also important. The Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) supports initiatives that promote advocacy, networking and capacity-building in the following media-related areas:

- Providing institutional support to media and advocacy organisations
- Promoting experiments and supporting emergency responses.

An innovative new media initiative that supports the above-mentioned principles, but is independent of OSISA, is a data-journalism tool created by Media 24 Investigations called ‘What’s your Mayor worth’ where ordinary citizens can now find out what their local government officials are being paid and do something about it if she or he isn’t worthy every cent they’re getting.

Service delivery protests, (due to the lack of basic services such as water, housing, sanitation, roads, etc.) are a regular occurrence in the Western Cape’s Overberg District yet the district’s municipal manager gets a total package of R1.106,530 (+US$142,000) for doing their ‘day job’, while the executive mayor takes home a package of R572,108 (+US$73,000). The district’s director of technical and planning gets R982,820 (+US$926,000), while the chief financial officer earns R932,646 (+US$120,000). The total cost for wage bill for the Overberg’s councillors, directors and executive team comes to R6.422,000 (+US$827,000) per annum.

“I am hoping the tool will spur on a bit more community activism once people have a real sense of the rands and cents that tax or ratepayers are putting into the pockets of the people who run these towns and cities,” says Andrew Trench, editor of Media24 Investigations, who built the tool. Trench says once people know what officials in their municipalities earn, measuring up the reality of that performance against the numbers becomes a powerful foil to hold councillors accountable to.

“I hope that after using the tool, people will start tipping us off on stuff, particularly people in smaller towns and other bureaucrats who will be interested to find out what their bosses are earning. People might say: ‘That person that is earning R1-million (and has been off for six months.’ I am hoping it will generate a lot of feedback from councils in the ‘Lallies’ [small towns] that we’ve never heard of.”

Trench says South Africa has a fairly open data policy, but ferreting out the right data and knowing how to make use of, or interpret it, is the real challenge. “For years South Africa hasn’t had an open data policy, but there seems to be a little trickle down, particularly from the Treasury, which has been very active in terms of organising data. With the evolution of the National Planning Commission and the ministry that monitors performance, you start generating data and measurables, which is what we are starting to see,” he says.
The data used for “What’s Your Mayor Worth” was hidden away on the National Treasury’s website in hundreds of excel spread sheets, which is a format that makes it near impossible for local citizens to access or make any real sense of, without high level expertise.

“What I was able to do was to get the stuff out of the spread sheets and into a decent data-base, just for us (the Media 24 Investigations team) to generate queries off and to see if we could write interesting stories using the data,” says Trench. The investigative unit was looking at stories about the total cost of senior management teams in municipalities, which could then be cross referenced to data sets of financially delinquent councils. “We discovered that about 25% of the 30 most expensive councils in the country were also on the list of the most delinquent,” says Trench. “This raises journalistic questions about what kind of quality people are there in municipalities and the kind of money that they are being paid.”

M24i’s editor has been interested with data journalism, and fiddling with code, for quite some time now. “One of the reasons I have been working on projects like this is to get an idea of what journalism might evolve into. There has been a lot of buzz around the world about data journalism, but South Africa has lagged behind partly because there has been very little decent data available for a long time to we could dig our teeth into. But this is starting to change rapidly,” he says.

Source: http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-03-30-how-much-is-your-mayor-worth-and-is-she-worth-it

See here http://datadrivenjournalism.net/ for a superb resource on data driven journalism (DDJ) including the newly published Data Journalism Handbook http://datadrivenjournalism.net/news_and_analysis/the_data_journalism_handbook_is_finally_here which could be a most handy resource / tool to increase the voice and impact of the poor and vulnerable.

The panel also made some interesting observations around ‘uneven development’ mentioning that there is an Africa that is threaded into the future [the topic under discussion] but it is largely urban and it moves fastest in a handful of markets. “There is another Africa where the future dares not speak its name because there is effectively only one telco operator, or two, and they are still struggling to get into the back end of the twentieth century, not the 21st century. There is also a rural Africa where none of us who cherish a future Africa that is different from today have yet described adequately what will make a change.”

The pace and nature of the unfolding future of African connectivity influences a range of issues, not least that of the emerging ‘impact sourcing’ sector, which is the nascent arm of the Business Process Outsourcing sector, which intentionally employs the poor and vulnerable, who would otherwise not have alternative job opportunities.

The future of African connectivity
See here for an excellent blog post reporting on the ‘Future of African connectivity’ which was a recent panel discussion attended by a selected industry audience organised by Gateway Communications. With the exception of a small amount of disquiet over shared infrastructure, there was almost universal consensus about the three items picked out viz: A world of big data, voice without revenue and shared infrastructure for ‘over-the-top’ services.