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One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Lant Pritchett on mimicry in development

Lant Pritchett is a non-resident fellow at the Center for Global Development and chair of the Harvard Kennedy School’s Master’s program in international development. His latest work looks at how the basic functions of government fail to improve in some developing countries (a dynamic he defines as a “state capability trap”). Part of the problem, says Lant, is that donors often insist on transplanting institutions that work in developed countries into environments where those institutions don’t fit at all.

Despite decades of development assistance, on a wide variety of indicators of how well governments provide certain services—policing, delivering the mail, building roads, etc.—some countries are simply stuck in the mud. Lant’s work meticulously illustrates the depths of the problem. “We thought we would be able to replicate the development process very fast. We thought, these [countries] are going to develop in about 10 – 20 years,” explains Lant. “At the current rate of progress, it will take literally thousands of years for many developing countries to reach Singapore’s level of capability. That’s the capabilities trap.”

Lant unpacks the problems inherent in what he calls “isomorphic mimicry”: building institutions and processes in weak states that look like those found in functional states. “They pretend to do the reforms that look like the kind of reforms that successful [countries] do, but without their core underlying functionalities,” says Lant. “Instead, countries wind up with all the trappings of a capable system—organizations, agencies, and ministries—without its functionalities.”

How to break this bad habit? To start with, Lant says, the development community needs to understand that a lot of what it’s been doing hasn’t worked: “It’s just surreal, the disjunction between any grounding in what the empirical realities of the acquisition of state capabilities have been, and the way in which development plans of official organizations often assume that capabilities can be grown.” To paint a more realistic image, Lant suggests that it’s important to develop indicators that showcase real progress (and are resistant to the mere appearance of progress). In the education sector for example, instead of measuring enrolment rates, he suggests more effort to measure learning.


The podcast also includes a discussion of Andy Sumner’s concept of the "New Bottom Billion“ towards the end. For further reading download these working papers: Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) and Capability Traps? The Mechanisms of Persistent Implementation Failure

In a copper mine near the town of Kambove in the south-eastern province of Katanga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), one can see dozens of teenage boys with empty rice sacks on their backs, running to grab small pieces of copper forgotten in the debris and to escape rocks falling from an unloading truck up above.

These children are amongst the many thousands in Katanga who are forced to make a living through artisanal (or small-scale) mining. In 2007, an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 in Katanga province made their living through the informal and illegal activity, working in hazardous conditions for little pay.

This April, Katanga’s Governor Moise Katumbi voiced his concern at the perceived increase of artisanal miners in the copper-and cobalt-wealthy region, but added that his administration can do little to stop illegal mining given that it is a national problem. Indeed, the provincial government has been short on making concerted efforts to tackle the long-standing issue.

Furthermore, while the current global economic crisis and the decline in mineral prices have made artisanal mining less viable, the alternatives in the region are scarce. Reports suggest that while some

1 Andy Sumner asserts that three out of four of the world’s poorest people live in middle-income countries with impressive growth rates but may nonetheless are trapped in extreme poverty.
former miners have turned to agriculture, others have turned to other criminal activities.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>There are two forms of mining in the DRC: formal large scale mining operations (LSM), and informal artisanal and small-scale mining activities (ASM). Artisanal mining can be dangerous and is seen by the state as a burden, but the low start-up costs make it attractive to those with no other options. Indeed, the rise of artisanal mining can be seen an indirect symptom of under-development, lack of employment, corruption, and ineffective government. Without viable formal alternatives, artisanal mining is one way to make a livelihood although local sources told Think Africa Press that miners seldom make more than $3 a day.</th>
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<td>Artisanal mining is problematic for numerous other reasons too. The use of child labour in the industry is prominent, work hours are long especially for women, and the methods used in small-scale mining include exposure to mercury, dust, and fumes which make operations hazardous to both miners and the environment. Mining communities also tend to suffer disproportionately from communicable diseases, poor sanitation, sexual violence and food insecurity, and artisanal miners are often forced to live like nomads moving frequently to seek out new opportunities.</td>
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<td>In conflict-free zones such as Katanga’s Likasi and Lubumbashi, ASM miners sell to numerous stakeholders, including various large-scale mining (LSM) companies, the state-owned Gécamines, security forces, militia groups and local communities. In these exchanges, there is often exploitation or extortion by government officials, as well as fraud, corruption, bribery, and theft.</td>
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<td>Despite the countless problems associated with artisanal mining, a 2007 report by the global networking and coordination facility Communities and Small Scale Mining (CASM) emphasises the importance of these practices to individuals, the mining sector and to the broader economy. “This disorganised and recalcitrant sector probably provides a vital livelihood to many thousands of people dispersed throughout the country, and collectively probably constitutes over 80% of the entire mining sector production”, the report explains.</td>
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<td>Many of the structural reasons behind the DRC’s lack of development and rise of small-scale informal mining can be clearly located in the country’s recent past. During Mobutu Sese Seko’s three-decade rule, the country’s economy sunk and infrastructure collapsed to unprecedented lows. The state-owned La Générale des Carrières et des Mines (Gécamines), which employed thousands of miners, was virtually bankrupt by the end of Mobutu’s kleptocratic rule largely as a result of theft by army “guards.” And, moreover, two successive wars enabled systematic exploitation of the country’s resources by local militias and foreign armies.</td>
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<td>Some recovery took place under Laurent Kabila who overthrew Mobutu in 1997, and Gécamines expanded, but it has never fully recovered. External investments began to flow in and Chinese and other foreign companies started investing in the large-scale mining sector, providing new opportunities and hope for change. A large segment of the population has, however, continued to work in the ASM sector.</td>
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<td>Despite the fall in mineral prices, mining is still one of the few economic lifelines in the DRC and changes in governance and policymaking around mining are becoming ever more pressing. ASM activity is still unregulated due to lack of law enforcement, corruption still looms, and in almost all regions artisanal miners are regularly abused and subjected to a disproportionate informal taxes and fees. These problems could well worsen unless changes are made and put into effect immediately. Source: <a href="http://thinkafricapress.com/drc/uncertain-future-katanga-artisanal-miners-copper-cobalt">http://thinkafricapress.com/drc/uncertain-future-katanga-artisanal-miners-copper-cobalt</a></td>
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<td>Guide to assist micro entities eases the burden of financial reporting</td>
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<td>In response to requests from the accounting profession servicing the SME market and micro entities across South Africa for guidance that will simplify and reduce the cost to prepare financial statements for micro entities, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) has developed a guide for applying the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities (IFRS for SMEs) to a micro entity.</td>
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<td>This guide is in the form of an easy-to-use electronic toolkit that comprises a user checklist, an application guide with practical examples, illustrative financial statements, and a disclosure checklist. The guide is aimed primarily at assisting micro entities such as close corporations and companies with a public interest score (as determined by the Companies Act) below 100 2 The close corporation or CC is a more simplified and flexible business than a company ideally suited to small businesses. The managerial and administrative requirements for close corporations are less formal than for companies.</td>
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points, partnerships and sole-proprietorships, with the practical application of the IFRS for SMEs standard. The guide may also be useful for entities with a public interest score between 100 and 350 points.

Developed in conjunction with W.consulting, the guide enhances the user’s understanding of how to apply the standard to a micro entity by focusing on the most expedient accounting policies permitted and by reducing emphasis on the many elements of the standard that are not likely to be applicable for a micro entity. Basing the guide on an electronic platform allows the user to easily navigate through the guide by making use of the in-built search function and allows for live updates.

SAICA’s Project Director of Financial Reporting Sue Ludolph explains that it was imperative to develop application guidance to assist micro entities that are currently applying the IFRS for SMEs standard, SA GAAP, or IFRS and those that wish to comply with a recognised financial reporting framework, but face a myriad of challenges in practice in preparing their accounts. This guide, would in turn, assist these entities in complying with legislative requirements.

This electronic guide is available not only to SAICA members but to everyone involved in preparing financial statements for micro entities. SAICA will be conducting seminars countrywide on how to apply IFRS for SMEs to Micro Entities.


**POLITICAL ISSUES**

Angolan youth set up alternative website to monitor elections taking place on 31 Aug

See here http://eleicoesangola2012.com/index.html for the alternative election monitoring site (in Portuguese), and here for an excellent analysis of the forthcoming elections: Angola Elections 2012: Dos Santos victory likely to bring more protests and violent repression. The author concludes as follows:

"Much will depend on the result of the elections. If the MPLA wins with significantly more than 50% of the vote — which is likely due to its control of the entire process — the opposition will cry fraud, but the current leadership of the MPLA is extremely unlikely to relinquish power for the creation of a government of ‘national unity’. The reactions of the opposition and youth protesters, as well as the repressive measures deployed by the regime, will be decisive in determining whether Angola remains the electoral authoritarian darling of cash-strapped western countries, or goes down the path of revolt and full-blown repression."

Chatham House’s Angola Forum also provides for some useful background reading stating quite rightly that: “Angola is a complex and challenging country to understand and engage. Combined with cultural, linguistic and historical differences, most non-Portuguese speaking countries, such as the UK, have struggled to develop a strategic approach to the country until recently. Yet Angola is increasingly significant internationally with major oil reserves and an ambitious foreign policy. It also offers corresponding challenges of weak governance, significant corruption, human rights violations, and erratic foreign policy interventions.”

**African Solutions: Best Practices from the African Peer Review Mechanism**

A new book released by the South African Institute of International Affairs and published by Jacana Media examines the governance success stories of a number of African states. Entitled “African Solutions: Best Practices from the African Peer Review Mechanism”, the book is the outcome of research into the policies, programmes and experiences identified as “best practices” from the first 12 countries that published Country Review Reports (CRRs) under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). These countries are Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. The APRM was conceived as a voluntary mechanism and, in the absence of ‘hard pressure’ for compliance, incentives – rather than sanctions – could be the way to strengthen governance on the continent.

Thus, “best practices” are important as potential models for reform, and to counterbalance the temptation to concentrate on what is not working in Africa. In this book, the best practices identified in the CRRs are examined critically and methodically with a view to understanding:
• How “best practices” are conceptualised within the APRM (including how they are intended to be used to achieve the desired results);
• Whether the reported practices qualify as “best practices” by being demonstrably better than the rest, replicable and addressing APRM goals,
• How these practices could be strengthened to be used as material for peer learning within the APRM and across the continent.


African Solutions: Best Practices from the African Peer Review Mechanism is edited by Tsheu Petlane and Steven Gruzd and contributors are drawn from academia and policy research institutions in Africa, who have all been associated with studying and working on the APRM in various capacities. Chapter 1 of the book can be downloaded from here: http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/books/aprm_african_solutions_intro_chapter_nov_2011.pdf. To purchase this book please contact SAIIA’s Publications Department or Jacana Media.

Coverage and analyses of the 'Marikana massacre'
The ‘Marikana massacre’ which took place on 16 August at one of South Africa’s Lonmin platinum mines served as a wake-up call to all sectors of South African society, and caused much of the world at large to re-perceive the post-Apartheid dispensation. It will have myriad political and societal consequences in the months and years to come. For some of the better coverage and more interesting analyses see here: http://mg.co.za/report/lonmin-platinum-mines-in-chaos, here: http://www.bolive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2012/08/29/sas-problem-is-that-zumas-government-is-doing-nothing, here: http://www.leadershiponline.co.za/articles/politics/2012-marikana-conflict and here: http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-08-31-reporters-notebook-finding-a-wounded-miner-is-harder-than-you-think.

For proof that a picture is worth a thousand words see satirist Zapiro’s cartoons here: http://mg.co.za/cartoon/2012-08-23-lonmin and here: http://mg.co.za/cartoon/2012-08-27-lonmin

'Social issues'

'Virtual lectures' to help cope with Zimbabwean brain drain

A virtual lecture hall, enabling lectures to be streamed to university campuses from around the world, aims to plug the gap in scientific teaching staff at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), which has suffered years of brain drain.

The Virtual Lecture Hall (VLH) was launched on 29 June at UZ’s College of Health Sciences and Faculties of Science and Veterinary Science, by the UK-based Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) and Econet Wireless, the mobile communications company funding the project.

The VLH initiative will support academic disciplines suffering from low teaching numbers. It will also foster engagement with the Zimbabwean diaspora and help develop international partnerships, according to Laura Broadhurst, CARA’s Zimbabwe programme manager.

"The brain drain of academic staff [from Zimbabwe] is a critical issue, and CARA was encouraged by a broad section of stakeholders [...] to alleviate some of the problems around this issue," Broadhurst told SciDev.Net.

She added that Zimbabwean university science departments have been hardest hit by the brain drain, — mainly the result of low salaries — with skilled staff leaving the country, often for Australia, Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The VLH will provide a projection screen and adequate bandwidth for students and lecturers to view ‘virtual’ lectures and accompanying slides clearly. "It is hoped that this project will not only enable members of Zimbabwe's academic diaspora to re-engage with the university's future, but will improve standards of teaching and research, and facilitate increased networking and collaboration with universities outside Zimbabwe," Broadhurst said.

Successful trial lectures have already been streamed, Broadhurst says. "In the new academic year, King’s College, London, will stream the lectures required by the UZ-CHS — such as anatomy and physiology — from a large lecture hall in the centre of London."

CARA plans to replicate the model in other universities, although subject to funding, according to Broadhurst.

Two interesting aspects to note here: The first being the role played by diaspora academics, which is something that could be scaled and/or leveraged depending on how effective this venture is. Second, this virtual lecture endeavour could serve as a precursor to Southern African universities more fully embracing and utilising Open Educational Resources (OER). Interesting one to watch.

Can citizen action alone tackle corruption in South Africa?


You live in a society where everybody steals. Do you choose to steal? The probability that you will be caught is low, because the police are very busy chasing other thieves. And, even if you do get caught, the chances of your being punished severely for a crime that is so common are low. Therefore, you too steal. By contrast, if you live in a society where theft is rare, the chances of your being caught and punished are high, you choose not to steal.

This observation by Italian IMF economist Paolo Mauro in his March 1998 article in Finance and Development explains in broad terms how lawlessness naturally flows from systemic corruption. It raises an interesting challenge to the recently released National Development Plan 2030 by the South African National Planning Commission, which highlights as a priority the promotion of an active citizenry to ‘strengthen development, democracy and accountability’. Other priorities include an effective government, a capable developmental state and ‘strong leadership throughout society’ driven by national government and parliament. However, how do we get active citizenry in the constructive sense if there is a belief that corruption is widespread within the state?

Corruption leads to a transfer of public funds into private coffers, general government inefficiency, closed markets and lower economic growth. Mauro warns that if corruption continues unabated, and most people accept it as a necessary evil within which to do business or engage with the state, there is no incentive for the citizenry to stop it or not to participate in it. Has South Africa reached this point? Can citizen action alone curb corruption and lawlessness?

At the heart of the problem lies the concept of civic morality. Civic morality, like the concept ‘ubuntu’, centres on trust and reciprocity of individuals and groups. According to Polish academic Natalia Letski in her 2006 article Investigating the roots of civic morality, civic morality requires a collective sense of responsibility for the public good where public gains are seen as far more important than individual gains. The pursuit of public good then deters participation in corrupt activities or free riding and enhances a general willingness to comply with rules and norms. Ultimately, public order and the rule of law become easier to implement and resources can be redirected away from law enforcement as the means to deter negative behaviour towards socio-economic growth programmes.

Civic morality goes further than individual trust and compliance. All governments need to maintain a status of legitimacy among their citizens, which in turn will increase the citizenry’s willingness to comply with the rules made by the state. Therefore, a democratically elected government is constantly measured by its responsiveness, impartiality and accountability. Letski’s research suggests that the strongest determinants of civic morality are confidence in state institutions as well as the perceived (rather than actual) quality of these institutions. It follows that if any public agency or its officials do not meet the standards required by the citizenry, the public is likely to start breaking the law and find excuses for dishonesty.

In 2005, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) undertook a national survey to test South Africans’ level of compliance with laws and their public confidence in the criminal justice system. The unpublished research showed that most South Africans are not lawless or corrupt and they respect state institutions. Close on 90% of the respondents frowned upon general suggestions of bribery, cheating, breaking of traffic or other laws and the misuse of state resources. They displayed a high level of trust in state institutions such as the national parliament (84%), the government (85%), the public service (82%), South African Police Service (79%), prosecution services (78%) and the courts (82%). However, they had far less trust in the officials who worked in these institutions. Only 37% trusted politicians, 50% police officers, 48% prosecutors and 54% magistrates.

Over the last seven years, however, trust in state institutions has started to decline substantially. The 2011 SA Reconciliation Barometer, released by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, found that only 65% of South Africans had confidence in the national government, while 61% had confidence in parliament, 56% in
 provincial government and only 43% in local government.

The 2011 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) found that 74% of all South Africans believed that corruption had increased in the past three years. Two-thirds of the respondents (66%) felt that bribery and abuse of power for personal gain were prevalent among members of the SAPS. A substantial minority of people also perceived widespread corruption among Home Affairs officials (38%), national politicians (37%), officials awarding public tenders (37%), and people working in the judicial services (36%).

Nonetheless, it seems 82% of South Africans believed that citizens could make a difference in the fight against corruption. However, the HSRC survey also suggests that citizens do not believe that the state is doing enough to tackle corruption. Almost two-thirds (63%) felt that the national government and parliament were not doing enough to fight corruption. Lending support to Mauro’s thesis, 33% believed that corruption flourished because of inadequate punishment by the judicial system. Other reasons citizens believed that corruption occurred include the lack of transparency in public spending (30%), close links between business and politics (29%), and the acceptance of society that corruption is part of daily life (28%).

US-based political scholar Eric M. Uslander’s research findings presented in a 2004 book chapter, Trust and Corruption, found that corruption impacts heavily on societal trust. He cites a Chinese proverb also popular among South Africans, that ‘the fish rots from the head down’, to explain why corruption becomes widespread in society. He and others argue that leadership with integrity is the only way ‘an honest government, one that enforces the law fairly and provides little opportunity for private gain, lead people to have greater faith in each other’.

Strong and honest political leadership by defending the constitution and the institutions that protect our democratic freedom such as an independent judiciary, the media and human rights-based civil society organisations.

Source: http://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/content/can-citizen-action-alone-tackle-corruption-sa

A slightly longer than normal piece for this publication but very relevant and well worth reading especially considering the Southern Africa Horizon Scanning Newsletter’s historic coverage of issues such as ‘active citizenry’, the role of South Africa’s National Development Plan and the whole issue around ‘theory of change’ (i.e. how change happens), (see here: http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=5864&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+r2aresources-monitoring-evaluation+%28Research+to+Action+%3E+%3E+Monitoring+and+Evaluation+%28Research%29 ). For an update on the Citizens’ Movement for Social Change, see here: http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/labour/2012/08/15/citizens-movement-for-social-change-aims-to-give-public-a-voice

The article also includes good data sources. What is very worrying, though, is the trend of declining trust in state institutions.

Regional HIV / Aids update

Key findings of the Together we will end AIDs report by UNAIDS with regard to sub-Saharan Africa are the following:

- In 2011, an estimated 23.5m people (including 3.1m children) were living with HIV in the region.
- Approximately 1.7m people became newly infected with HIV in 2011.
- About 330 000 children were newly infected with HIV in 2011, almost half the number in 2003, when the number of children acquiring HIV infection peaked at 570 000.
- Almost 6.2m people were receiving ARV therapy in 2011 – up from just 100 000 in 2003. This means that 56% of people eligible for ARV therapy in the region were receiving it in 2011.
- Increased access to ARV therapy has reduced the number of people dying from AIDS-related causes from an annual peak of 1.8m in 2005 to 1.2m in 2011. This means that 0.55m fewer people died from AIDS-related diseases in 2011 than in 2005.
- Women and girls comprise 60% of people living with HIV in the region.

What should then be required from an active citizenry? The National Development Plan 2030 predicts that if we as a collective fight corruption, by 2030 we will have a ‘corruption-free society, a high adherence to ethics throughout society and a government that is accountable to its people’. However, a collective does not only refer to ordinary South Africans. The plan is premised on the requirement that we need an active citizenry plus an effective government led by strong and competent cadres. Therefore, as a citizenry, the ultimate protest will be for citizens to unify against corruption in all its forms by insisting on
Between February and May 2012, the Third South African National HIV Communication Survey (NCS) was jointly conducted by Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa, LoveLife and Soul City, involving 10 034 respondents from all provinces. The primary purpose of the NCS is to evaluate the impact of HIV communication programmes on key drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa over time. Key findings are:

- Condom use at first sex increased from 18% to 66% over the past 20 years;
- Over 10m South Africans were tested for HIV in the past 12 months;
- HIV communication programmes have increased the demand for medical male circumcision;
- Social stigma associated with HIV/AIDS has reduced substantially in South Africa; and
- Eight out of 10 South African are now reached by HIV communication programmes.

And interestingly, according to a recent study led by the University of Cape Town and the University of East Anglia, nurse-centred care of HIV patients can be just as safe and effective as care delivered by doctors. The research published in The Lancet shows that neither survival rates nor virus suppression reduced when nurses prescribed ARV drugs to patients. Health benefits included significantly improved detection of TB, increased white blood cell count and weight, and adherence with the treatment programme. Prof Max Bachman of the University of East Anglia said 'There is a critical need to improve access to antiretroviral drugs – not only in South Africa but in other low- and middle-income countries where infection rates are high and doctors are in short supply. HIV programmes worldwide should now consider expanding nurse-centred care, safe in the knowledge that there need not be detrimental effects on patient health or mortality rates if done carefully'.


China exports its crime culture to Angola

[On 18 August] Chinese police brought back 37 suspected Chinese gangsters from Angola, where they were arrested for alleged crimes against other Chinese such as kidnapping, armed robbery, extortion, human trafficking and forced prostitution.

Such crimes are a major concern for China, which has become Africa's main trading partner and a major source of infrastructure investment. As a result, many Chinese work in Africa, and their presence has brought problems such as crime among Chinese, especially in politically volatile countries that provide fertile ground for criminals.

It is a sign that Chinese businesses continue to be troubled by the country's stubborn gang culture as they expand overseas.

The Ministry of Public Security said the Chinese government sent a special police force to Angola in July which worked with local police to break up 12 Chinese gangs, resolve 48 criminal cases and rescue 14 Chinese victims, most of whom had been forced into prostitution. At home, domestic police arrested 24 other people suspected of being involved in the cases, the ministry said.

Following a request from Chinese authorities, the 37 men and women were extradited on Saturday to China, where they face trial on charges including kidnapping, armed robbery and extortion. They arrived in Beijing on a chartered plane, the ministry said. Such crimes hurt Chinese businesses overseas and tarnish the country's image.

As a rising world power, China also wants to be seen as being capable of protecting its citizens abroad and punishing those who commit violent crimes overseas. According to China Central Television about 260,000 Chinese are living in Angola.

Source: http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALegingM5haqysoZEnNdDkpFxpbQvmnET5QPw?docId=c00b7bac5fb34d1f855eac60aebe451f

An interesting scanning 'hit' for no other reason than to dispel the myth that Chinese investment and interest in Africa is all centrally planned, state-controlled and aimed at supplying infrastructure in exchange for access to raw materials and commodities. Chinese investment and interest in Africa includes so-called 'deviant globalisation' – "the unpleasant underside of transnational integration" – see here http://longnow.org/seminars/02010/may/03/deviant-globalization/

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Planned Congo hydropower treaty gets Cabinet nod, but will it materialise...?

The South African cabinet announced [on 21 August that] it had approved a treaty between SA and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for the development of the Grand Inga hydroelectric project.
The project to exploit the Congo River for hydropower of 40,000 MW — nearly the size of SA’s current installed capacity — would be developed in phases. The additional source of electricity would be a welcome relief for SA, which is struggling to keep up with increasing demand.

The treaty could thrust Eskom [South Africa’s state-owned power utility] into a central role in the project. Eskom yesterday declined to comment on Grand Inga, but the power utility has been contemplating its role in regional power projects. In a speech in Pretoria [on 17 August], Eskom CE Brian Dames said there was potential for SA to source power from other countries in the region. Mr Dames said the problem with big projects in the region was that none of them were bankable unless Eskom, which is Africa’s largest power utility, bought the power. “We see ourselves in the role of buying the power,” he said.

“If opportunities arise to work in partnership with other players to be on the investment side of some of the projects, we would look at those. We are already working with independent power producers in the region,” he said.

SA, through the integrated resource plan for electricity (IRP2010), has committed itself to a huge rollout of clean power in the period up to 2030, Mr Dames said. “We have done a modelling exercise on the IRP2010, making certain assumptions about the role of Eskom and of independent power producers. We have found that as it stands, the plan would be extremely difficult to finance, and the cost of implementing it in its entirety out to 2030 might not be affordable for SA,” said Mr Dames.

The cost of the renewable energy, and the nuclear plans, might simply be too steep. SA was committed to reducing its carbon emissions and Eskom supported that. He said SA was keen to leverage hydro in the north and gas fields in the east and west, as well as the extensive land which the region has available for solar generation.

Source: http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2012/08/22/plan ned-congo-hydropower-treaty-gets-cabinet-nod

If the cost of renewable energy is considered too steep now, it is only going to get worse later. Another prime example ‘all form and no substance’, and of ‘kicking the can down the road’ and not making a concerted commitment to implement the policies called for in the National Development Plan (see here [pdf] http://www.npconline.co.za/MediaLib/Downloads/Home/Tabs/NDP%202030-CH5-Environmental%20sustainability.pdf for section dealing with ‘Ensuring environmental sustainability and an equitable transition to a low-carbon economy’). However, it does seem likely that money can be found for ‘fracking’ in the arid, environmentally sensitive Karoo http://mg.co.za/article/2012-08-31-d-day-for-fracking

Addressing climate change in the Tripartite FTA

Climate change poses a serious challenge to sustainable economic and socio-economic development in developing and least-developed countries. This is especially the case for countries in Africa, due to their reliance on rain-fed agriculture for economic growth and development, trade and food security. It is projected that by 2020, 75 to 250 million people in Africa will be exposed to increased water stress, and yields from rain-fed agriculture could be decreased by up to 50% posing a severe challenge for food security in the region.

In order to address these issues the Heads of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed the Tripartite Agreement for the Implementation of the Programme on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Eastern and Southern Africa at the 19th African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in Ethiopia on 15 July 2012 (The complete Programme is available at http://www.gcca.eu/usr/Intra-ACP/Description-of-the-Action_COMESA_revised-annex1_feb2012.pdf). The signing of this Agreement allows for the inclusion of climate change issues as one of the areas of cooperation under the Tripartite Negotiations Framework.

The goal of the Programme is to attract new and increase current investment in climate resilient and carbon efficient agriculture, with its linkages to forestry, land-use and energy practices by 2016. To reach this goal the RECs have identified seven specific objectives to attain through the Programme:

a) mitigation with carbon trading benefits;

b) inclusion of climate change issues in nation planning;

c) increase access to adaptation funds and other climate change financing sources and mechanisms;

d) enhance adoption of CSA in the region;

e) strengthening research and training capacity;

f) implementation of climate vulnerability assessments and analysis; and
g) establishment of a regional facility to support national investment in CSA programmes.

Some of the expected outcomes associated with the successful implementation of the Programme include the following:
- Enhanced human and institutional capacity in the Secretariats of the three RECs;
- Development of CSA on a national and regional level;
- Creation of supporting infrastructure and services needed for conservation agriculture;
- Implementing at least 14 investment projects in conservation agriculture;
- Competitive research on climate change related issues;
- Developing knowledge centres and the international transfer of knowledge;
- Widedly adopted mitigation solutions and technologies;
- Carbon trading benefitting the COMESA-EAC-SADC region; and
- New and increased current investments in mitigation and adaptation programmes.

The responsibility of the Programme is in the hands of the Council of Ministers through existing Tripartite reporting structures, while the Climate Change Unit of COMESA and Programme Coordination Units in the EAC and SADC are responsible for the management of the Programme. One of the key components of the Programme is the monitoring and evaluation of all activities and actions implemented under the Programme. The COMESA Climate Change Unit (Monitoring and Evaluation Division and Department) is the body responsible for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the implementation and functioning of the Programme.


### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

**New fund for African research**

A £15.3 million (US$24 million) fund to build links between African research laboratories and strengthen their research capacity through mentoring has been launched by the Royal Society (the UK’s science academy) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The aim is to provide equipment and training for African scientists, and to establish researcher exchange programmes between the United Kingdom and Sub-Saharan Africa. Start-up grants of up to US$39,000 will assist the formation of research consortia, and larger grants of almost US$2 million will then support specific research programmes over a five-year period.

To qualify for the larger grants, projects must involve a consortium of one UK laboratory and three African laboratories. “At the moment, labs in Sub-Saharan Africa are isolated. For example, it is surprisingly difficult for a lab in South Africa to work with a lab in Ethiopia, as the funding streams aren’t there,” Martyn Poliakoff, foreign secretary and vice-president of the Royal Society, told SciDev.Net. “There are also physical barriers, such as the need to fly between different countries.”

The Royal Society-DFID Africa Capacity Building Initiative will mainly fund research focusing on water and sanitation, renewable energy, and soil, and it will encourage a cross-disciplinary approach to research.

It will build on the “extremely effective” Leverhulme-Royal Society Africa Awards, which were launched in 2008 to support research collaborations between the UK and Ghana or Tanzania, according to Poliakoff. But it will also expand the number of countries involved, and include French-speaking countries. “The Leverhulme awards and the Royal Society initiative will run in parallel, so the two schemes can learn from one another,” Poliakoff added.


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### A noteworthy collaborative endeavour and kudos for involving Francophone Africa

Applications for grants will open in November 2012. For more information and grant details, see [http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/africa/capacity-building](http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/africa/capacity-building).

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**Samsung launches Engineering Academies in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa**

Aimed at addressing the critical technical and engineering skills shortage in Africa, Samsung has launched its [Samsung Electronics Engineering Academy](http://www.samsung.com/za/) in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria as part of the company’s broader goal to develop 10 000 Electronics Engineers across the continent by 2015.
The Samsung Electronics Engineering Academy provides hands-on, vocational skills training for Grade 10-12 students. Opening up skilled, well-paying job opportunities for its students; differentiates Samsung’s quality of service to its customers as we build a workforce of technicians and exclusive service experts in line with the government’s drive of creating decent jobs, especially for young citizens.

Students selected go through a year’s program which comprises of Basic, Intermediate and Advanced engineering skills, aligned to their set Curriculum at a corresponding technical school. Upon completion of the program at the Academy, students earn themselves an opportunity for an internship at Samsung or Samsung’s Channel partners. Outstanding performers stand a good opportunity to participate in a year-long Learnership opportunity at HQ in South Korea as part of the 100 African young leaders program.

The Engineering Academy program is currently being piloted in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria in 2011 and will scale to more African countries by 2015.


**A very foresighted, smart move by Samsung.** Not only is it tailoring its products for the African market (cheap, robust mobile phones and television sets that can withstand power surges), it is also ensuring that it develops the human capital to service, and promote to these potentially lucrative African markets. At the same time it gaining regulatory goodwill in spades with this move. To now beg the question: If Samsung can set up Engineering Academies and aim to develop 10 000 Electronic Engineers in Africa by 2015, why on earth can’t African public institutions do so?

**A crowdsourced digital map of tech hubs in Africa**


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**Is this the Holy Grail of malaria cures?**

Researchers at [the University of Cape Town] (UCT) are optimistic they have found a drug that can cure all strains of malaria with a single oral dose.

South Africa’s Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor announced the discovery of a compound, which will be the first clinical candidate researched in Africa, on 28 August. The synthetic molecule from the aminopyridine class, which has been described as novel and potent, not only has the potential to become a single-dose cure for malaria, but researchers are convinced that it could block transmission of the malaria parasite from person to person.

Professor Kelly Chibale, lead researcher of the collaborative research project, said while the molecule had not been tested on humans yet, animal studies had shown "potent activity against multiple points in the malaria parasite’s lifecycle".

Conducted by UCT’s [Drug Discovery and Development Centre (H3-D)] and Switzerland-based [Medicines for Malaria Venture](http://www.medicinesformalariaventure.org), it is the first compound researched in Africa to enter pre-clinical development.

Chibale said while the malaria parasite was sometimes resistant to conventional multidrug malaria treatment, initial results of the 18-month research showed the molecule had killed the resistant parasites instantly. Animal tests also showed that it was not only safe and effective, but there were no adverse reported side effects.

While it would take another year before human clinical trials, and possibly another seven years before a malaria drug was developed, Chibale described the latest findings as “exciting”, as the single dose would encourage drug compliance. “Our research showed that all the animals were cured with no toxicity or side effects. The molecule has been able to kill parasites that are resistant to existing drugs.”


If this synthetic molecule retains its efficacy and lack of side-effects throughout human trials, it could have a momentous impact on the lives of the poor and vulnerable. In a world where there are hardly any ‘magic bullets’ left, this could be very good news indeed. Here’s holding thumbs.