# Horizon Scan

**SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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African agricultural aid channelled through private sector

President Barack Obama recently unveiled a major new initiative aimed at shoring up food security and combating global hunger. Speaking at an event in Washington on the eve of the G8 summit, the president said that the new programme, focused on Africa, aims to lift 50 million people out of poverty within 10 years.

But aid agencies and watchdog groups worry that the new programme, which includes a significant new role for the private sector, could prove diversionary for donors, resulting in a return to relatively low, unfocused levels of agriculture-focused aid.

Following discussion between the G8 and some African leaders at Camp David, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition will constitute the next phase of a ground-breaking programme begun during the 2009 G8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy. At that time, motivated in particular by the 2007-08 global crisis in food prices, G8 leaders committed more than US$22 billion over three years towards food security. This was a dramatic turnaround from a decades-long trend of falling agriculture-related aid. According to ActionAid USA, a rights group based in Washington, by 2000 international contributions to agriculture had dropped by 50% from the 1980s.

On 18 May President Obama announced an initial investment of US$3 billion by 45 companies, two-thirds of which are based outside of Africa, including Cargill, DuPont and Monsanto. While many have cautiously welcomed such participation, there are clear concerns, including over whether these private pots of money could allow for a downgrading of emphasis on donor aid. Especially worrying are issues of transparency, particularly given the increasing trend of large-scale investments in African land by foreign investors.

Source: http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=107843

See here http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-holt-gimenez/africa-food-security_b_1537279.html for a short, general critique of this announcement which also contains links to further reading. Meanwhile, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the African Development Bank, welcomed the move, see here http://www.starafrica.com/en/news/detail-

Doing development better

The op-ed below is a new, succinct and very interesting piece by Dani Rodrik, professor at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and a leading scholar of globalization and economic development. It deals with the so-called two tribes of development.

Jim Yong Kim’s appointment as World Bank president may have been predictable, given the long-standing tradition that renders the selection an American prerogative. But even the appearance of competition between Kim and the other candidates, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and José Antonio Ocampo, served to expose a deep fissure within the field of development policy, because Kim and his two rivals represented dramatically different approaches.

The vision for which Kim stands is bottom-up. It focuses directly on the poor, and on delivering services – for example, education, health care, and microcredit – to their communities. This tradition’s motto could be, “Development is accomplished one project at a time.”

The other approach, represented by Okonjo-Iweala and Ocampo, takes an economy-wide approach. It emphasizes broad reforms that affect the overall economic environment, and thus focuses on areas such as international trade, finance, macroeconomics, and governance.

Practitioners in the first group idolize NGO leaders like Mohammad Yunus, whose Grameen Bank pioneered microfinance, and Ela Bhatt, a founder of India’s Self-Employment Women’s Association (SEWA). The heroes of the second group are reformist finance or economy ministers such as India’s Manmohan Singh or Brazil’s Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

There is no way of telling whether this move is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and no way of ‘knowing’ what its consequences will be. Perceptions and opinions also depend largely on the mental model of the perceiver. What is known, however, is that large amounts of foreign aid/investment such as this are allied with vested interests, and that these will now join the ‘competition’ of players in the future of African agriculture space. How this future pans out and what it leaves in its wake is certainly an issue to watch and monitor closely. Not least because the issue of African agriculture becomes more and more important given future global resource scarcity, planetary boundaries and food-oil-water nexus tipping points.
At first sight, this might seem like another dispute between economists and non-economists, but the rift runs within, rather than between, disciplinary boundaries. For example, recent work with field experiments and randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which has caught on like wildfire among development economists, lies strictly in the tradition of bottom-up development.

The relative effectiveness of the two visions is not easy to determine. Proponents of the macro approach point out that the greatest development successes have typically been the product of economy-wide reforms. The dramatic reductions in poverty achieved by China over the span of a few decades, as well as by other East Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan, resulted largely from improved economic management (as much as earlier investments in education and health may have played a role). Reforms in incentives and property-rights arrangements, not anti-poverty programs, enabled these economies to take off.

The trouble is that these experiences have not proved as informative for other countries as one might have wished. Asian-style reforms do not travel well, and, in any case, there is significant controversy about the role of specific policies. In particular, was the key to the Asian miracle economic liberalization or the limits that were placed on it?

Moreover, the macro tradition vacillates between specific recommendations ("set low and uniform tariffs," "remove interest-rate ceilings on banks," "improve your 'doing business' ranking") that find limited support in cross-country evidence, and broad recommendations that lack operational content ("integrate into world economy," "achieve macroeconomic stability," "improve contract enforcement").

Development specialists in the bottom-up tradition, for their part, can deservedly claim success in demonstrating the effectiveness of education, public health, or microcredit projects in specific contexts. But, too often, such projects treat poverty’s symptoms rather than its causes.

Poverty is often best addressed not by helping the poor to be better at what they are already doing, but by getting them to do something altogether different. This calls for diversification of production, urbanization, and industrialization, which in turn require policy interventions that may lie at considerable distance from the poor (such as fixing regulations or targeting the value of the currency).

Moreover, as with macro-level economic reforms, there are limits to what can be learned from individual projects. An RCT conducted under specific conditions does not generate usable hard evidence for policymakers in other settings. Learning requires some degree of extrapolation, converting randomized evaluations from hard evidence into soft evidence.

The good news is that there has been real progress in development policy, and, beneath the doctrinal differences, is a certain convergence - not on what works, but on how we should think about and do development policy. The best of the recent work in the two traditions shares common predilections. Both favour diagnostic, pragmatic, experimental, and context-specific strategies.

Conventional development policy has been prone to fads, moving from one big fix to another. Development is held back by too little government, too much government, too little credit, the absence of property rights, and so on. The remedy is planning, the Washington Consensus, microcredit, or distributing land titles to the poor.

By contrast, the new approaches are agnostic. They acknowledge that we do not know what works, and that the binding constraints to development tend to be context-specific. Policy experimentation is a central part of discovery, coupled with monitoring and evaluation to close the learning loop. Experiments do not need to be of the RCT type; China certainly learned from its policy experiments without a proper control group.

Reformers in this mould are suspicious of “best practices” and universal blueprints. They look instead for policy innovations, small and large, that are tailored to local economic circumstances and political complications.

The field of development policy can and should be reunified around these shared diagnostic, contextual approaches. Macro-development economists need to recognize the advantages of the experimental approach and adopt the policy mind-set of enthusiasts of randomized evaluation. Micro-development economists need to recognize that one can learn from diverse types of evidence, and that, while randomized evaluations are tremendously useful, the utility of their results is often restricted by the narrow scope of their application.

In the end, both camps should show greater humility: macro-development practitioners about what they already know, and micro-development practitioners about what they can learn.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Existing HIV/AIDS treatment programmes could become unsustainable in future

A recent World Bank report entitled The fiscal dimension of HIV/AIDS in Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland and Uganda urges African governments and their development aid donors to do significantly more to prevent new HIV infections. Without a significant reduction in HIV infections it is argued that existing national treatment programmes for people living with HIV/AIDS could become unsustainable in the future. ‘How to finance the long-term response to HIV/AIDS is a complex question, especially because the cost of treating new infections is spread over several decades’, said Elizabeth Lule, co-author of the report. ‘Strategic investments in preventing new infections – while also meeting current treatment, care and support needs – can help countries plan for what will otherwise be an unmanageable fiscal burden’. Some of the main findings of the report are the following:

- In Botswana, with an adult HIV-prevalence rate of 25%, the report projects that the fiscal costs of HIV/AIDS will peak at 3.5% of GDP by 2016, slowly declining to 3.3% of GDP by 2030 if new HIV infections decline. With mining revenues slowing down relative to GDP, the fiscal costs of HIV/AIDS could rise to over 12% of government revenues by 2021, presenting an extraordinary fiscal challenge.

- In South Africa, the epidemic has significant implications for public finance and the government’s ability to achieve its other key social and health policy objectives. An important aspect of the fiscal dimension of HIV/AIDS in the country is the impact on social expenditures. ‘By scaling up HIV prevention programs, South Africa stands to save US$2 500 per infection’, said Ruth Kagia, World Bank Country Director for Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland.

- In Swaziland, HIV/AIDS has more serious fiscal repercussions given declining government revenues and the macroeconomic situation. With the highest adult HIV-prevalence rate (26%) in the world, the country has contributed 60% of the costs of HIV/AIDS from its domestic resources over the past couple of years. However, costs of the HIV/AIDS programme are rising and projected to increase to 7.3% of GDP by 2020. External financing will need to increase substantially to meet the financing gap in Swaziland.

- In Uganda, where external financing has contributed about 85% of the total spending on HIV/AIDS, the costs of the national response to HIV/AIDS are estimated to increase to over 3% of GDP by 2020. Costs incurred by a single infection are estimated at about 12 times GDP per capita (US$5 900) per new infection as of 2010.

According to this research, there is clearly a strong case to be made for ‘spend now in order to save later’. Nice too that the study quantifies the impact on the national fiscus, which has to provide for competing future priorities such as non-communicable disease (NCD) treatment, educating burgeoning African populations and climate change adaptation, to mention a few. “A stitch in time saves nine”.

Preventing AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections is at the heart of South Africa’s new National Strategic Plan (NSP) on HIV, TB and STIs (sexually transmitted infections) for the period 2012-2016, which came into effect at the beginning of April. It is based on a 20-year vision for reversing the burden of disease from HIV, STIs and TB in South Africa: The NSP has five goals to be achieved by 2016, viz:

1. Halving the number of new HIV infections.
2. Ensuring that at least 80% of HIV-infected people who are eligible for ARV treatment are receiving it.
3. Halving the number of new TB infections and deaths from TB.
4. Ensuring that the rights of people living with HIV are protected.
5. Halving the stigma related to HIV and TB.

People living in poverty have careful, accurate and complex financial lives

The Financial Diaries project is a year-long household survey that examines financial management in poor households. In South Africa fortnightly interviews were conducted in three different areas: Langa in Cape Town, Diepsloot in Johannesburg and Lilangeni, a rural village in the Eastern Cape. This research evolved into a book called Portfolios of the Poor: How the World’s Poor Live on $2 a Day. Contrary to popularly held myths about the poor, the authors found that people living in poverty have careful, accurate if not complex financial lives. “They save, they take credit, they have their own businesses, they are very active credit givers for a related article.
and they insure themselves: they have burial insurance and personal insurance. What the research showed us is that these people had very active portfolios that they were managing,” according to one of the authors, Daryl Collins.

One thing Collins never appreciated about marginalised locals is how helpful stokvels (community saving clubs covered in detail in the November 2011 edition of the Southern African Scan) are in terms of getting people to save. “Of the people we surveyed, about 21% of what households made each month was put into a stokvel saving. It is a matter of discipline. People would make sure they go to the bank and put money in every month because other people were counting on them for that money. We found that people were much more likely to follow through on a savings plan like that,” she says.

Stokvels work in different ways in South Africa. Some use banks, while for others it’s a matter of keeping the money somewhere safe in an elected member’s home. “Or the people in the stokvel would lend their money out to people in the community. They would charge very high rates – the rates in the townships are about 30% per month,” Collins explains.

“What surprised me is that people in rural areas were just as financially literate as people in urban areas. In rural areas people were lending and borrowing back and forth quite a bit. They arranged credit from each other and the local shops on an informal basis. They were involved in stokvel societies and a lot of them had bank accounts and were getting their social grants through bank accounts,” says Collins.

The research looked at access to capital and here Collins says the assumption that a pipeline to loans equals an escape out of poverty is false. “Access to capital doesn’t necessarily mean that people living in poverty will automatically increase their revenues or profits. It is not as if people make money and open one shop after another to become incredibly successful. I think it is important to remember that not everyone is an entrepreneur, and not everyone has that appetite for risk.”

Collins says often what’s preferable to what could be a projected dream of entrepreneurial success is to prevent vulnerability, so that marginalised families aren’t wiped out by one financial shock. “If a big financial crisis or need hits a family, access to smaller amounts of cash could mean they don’t get themselves heavily into debt or sell all their assets.”

“I came out of this research thinking that aspiring to capital or aspiring to microfinance is not as grounded in reality as one would like to think. What is probably more realistic is a slower path out of poverty. A path where people are able to make adequate money for nutrition, to pay for schools and have business opportunities that are sustained and don’t get derailed,” she says.

There’s this romantic view of poverty – shared by opportunists in financial services – that one bigger lump sum will be invested by those in poverty to grow their businesses and raise them up out of poverty fairly soon. It’s the dream sold by many a loan shark to many a marginalised person who isn’t an entrepreneur.

“Maybe what they need is much smaller amounts of money that help them patch cash flows so that they can ensure they can keep these businesses going,” says Collins. “I think that microfinance is very backward. What these institutions normally do is to give a sum of money that is much larger than most people need, imagining that people will make an investment and try to grow their businesses. Mostly what people were trying to do is just to keep their businesses ticking over.”

Source: http://www1.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-05-17-poverty-how-the-other-half-live

The government and financial industry in South Africa are increasingly aware of the need to provide financial services to poor households, but a lack of understanding of the financial needs of the poor makes this task a difficult one as there is not much detailed knowledge of the extent to which poor households are using formal and informal financial instruments in their struggle against poverty. The study mentioned above addresses this knowledge gap. Key findings can be downloaded from here (pdf)

And see here http://www.economist.com/node/21554506 for an article on the difference hope makes when combined with small interventions. An extract: “Development economists have long surmised that some very poor people may remain trapped in poverty because even the largest investments they are able to make, whether eating a few more calories or working a bit harder on their minuscule businesses, are too small to make a big difference. So getting out of poverty seems to require a quantum leap—vastly more food, a modern machine, or an employee to mind the shop. As a result, they often forgo even the small incremental investments of which
Micro hydro power in Zimbabwe’s rural areas may help break cycles of poverty.

For decades, the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe have been dotted with thatched grass huts in which farmers and their families reside. These homes used to descend into darkness with setting of the sun, but increasingly access to electricity is enabling them to light up when the evening arrives, and the area’s population is steadily but surely growing. The increasing presence of micro hydropower has attracted growing numbers of people to the Honda Valley in Mutasa district hoping for a better life.

According to the international development organisation Practical Action, lack of access to modern energy services remains a major obstacle to the delivery of services such as education and health in most developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, only 30% of households have access to electricity; in rural areas this drops to below 15%, a reality which can contribute to the cycle of poverty. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Zimbabwe Power Company’s five power stations are not generating enough electricity for the whole country. And even though additional power is imported from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and South Africa, supply remains insufficient.

This is where micro hydropower comes in. Micro hydropower is the small-scale harnessing of energy from falling water such as steep mountain rivers. Power stations convert the energy from flowing water into electricity, providing poor rural communities with relatively affordable, easy-to-maintain, and long-term sources of power.

Until recently, there has been little investment in micro hydropower stations by either the private sector or the Zimbabwean government. The 1962 Claremont Hydropower Project in Nyanga district was one of the earliest hydro plants to be developed in Zimbabwe but it was not until 35 years later that the second scheme was initiated. In 1997, an independent public-private partnership built a hydropower station in Rusitu Valley in the Chimanimani district and connected it up to the national grid. The 750 kilowatt project has since been selling power to the Zimbabwean Electricity Supply Authority.

More recently, however, the likes of local firm Nyangani Renewable Energy and Practical Action have been leading a new enthusiasm for micro hydropower. Last year, Nyangani Renewable Energy built a hydropower station for US$3 million. It now produces 1.1 megawatts of power and is now benefiting more than 45 000 people as well as rural businesses, clinics, and households in Zindi, Mapokana and Sagambe villages.

A second one is currently being built and should be completed in August this year. Upon completion, the power plant will generate 2.7 megawatts. The next project, Pungwe B, would generate up to 50 megawatts, and this will be enough to provide electricity to the whole of Manicaland province. Last year, Practical Action also constructed a station in the Mutare district at Chipendeke along the Chitora River, which is now supplying energy to more than 400 homes as well as the local clinic and school. There are hopes too that these successes can be replicated in the likes of Malawi and Mozambique, and Practical Action has embarked on a five-year project funded by the European Commission which “seeks to improve energy access through community managed decentralised micro hydro systems focused on poor marginalised rural communities in fragile mountainous regions of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe”.


This alternative approach to electricity generation can have huge benefits and change the lives of the rural poor, e.g. farmers can store products using refrigeration, schoolchildren are able to study in the evenings and healthcare services are significantly boosted. It is also possible for micro hydropower stations to become self-funded, or at least much cheaper, if there were a feed-in-tariff (FIT) system in place (for example requiring government agencies/utilities to buy excess micro hydropower / spare capacity at a fixed rate). See also here http://www.globaltrends.com/blog/power-to-the-people-the-future-is-distributed-energy.html for a description of the ‘distributed energy’ trend. Distributed energy (also known as distributed generation) is electricity generated from small-scale power generation technologies, which when combined with load management and energy storage improve the amount, quality and reliability of electricity supplies. Typically, such technologies focus on renewable sources. Most importantly, however, because distributed generation projects are small in scale and more numerous, they move supply...
Sugar-cane smallholders ‘create more jobs than large-scale farmers’

Small-scale sugarcane growers, or out-growers as they are known, are creating more jobs than their large counterparts, indicating the partnership between the sugar industry and the government is working, according to Peter Staude, CE of major sugar producer Tongaat Hulett. Mr Staude recently told sugar investors that instead of rejecting smallholders, the sugar industry used an empowerment programme forged between itself and the KwaZulu-Natal agriculture department, to benefit the industry as a whole.

"Despite the scepticism of many people about what small-scale farmers could do for agriculture and agribusiness, we (Tongaat Hulett) can tell you about the good progress made across all the sugar operations to drive growth in future cane supply,” he said. Mthobeli Mxothwa, spokesman for Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti, said the production of quality cane by small-scale holders was proving that the partnership between the government and the industry could improve farmers’ capacity and expertise.

He said the minister thought the recapitalisation and development programme, whose budget had increased from R900m (US$105m) in 2010 to R1.2bn (US$140m) this year, would boost the competence of small-scale farmers to the satisfaction of the agribusiness sectors, because it focused on providing infrastructure and machinery with the technical support of the government and related sectors.

Source: http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=173014

A good example of partnership between the private sector and government to boost small-scale farmers. It is in the interest of business, government, small-scale farmers, increased agricultural production, as well as the unemployed. This sort of model should be encouraged, scaled, incentivised and could even be stimulated by appropriate regulation. The South African government has admitted almost 90% of its land-reform projects have failed, hence its willingness to experimentally engage the private sector.

NEW REPORT AND HIGH QUALITY DATA ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Africans aged between 15 and 24 currently comprise 60% of the continent’s unemployed, with 22-million of those 40-million unemployed youths having abandoned the search for a job, the latest ‘African Economic Outlook’ warns.

The 2012 report, which contains country notes on 53 countries, urges African governments to pursue programmes and incentives that will help facilitate job creation and the acquisition of new skills among young Africans, whose numbers are set to double to around 400-million by 2045, from 200-million currently.

Co-written by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the OECD Development Centre, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the 293-page study has ‘Promoting Youth Unemployment’ as its main theme.

Youth employment, the authors assert, is largely a problem of quality in low-income countries and one of quantity in middle-income countries. “In low-income countries, most young people work but are poor nevertheless. In African middle-income countries, on the other hand, such as South Africa or the Northern African countries, despite better education, more youth are inactive than working”, OECD Development Centre director Mario Pezzini explains.

The biggest obstacle is insufficient demand for their labour, while the lack of skills and of knowledge about where to find jobs, attitudes by employers and labour regulations also present hurdles. A survey shows employer hesitations about hiring young job seekers to be a serious obstacle for the youth in many African countries.
Employers prefer candidates with experience and waiting for those young people who already have some experience allows employers to benefit from the training that job seekers might have received elsewhere.

"Employers, therefore, need incentives to give young job seekers a chance. But these must be designed carefully to avoid negative side effects and displacement of existing workers, the authors assert. Employers should be compensated for taking on apprentices and interns. But it also cautions of unintended side-effects of wage, or training subsidies, such as paying a subsidy for an unemployed person who would have been hired regardless, the substitution effects of creating jobs for a target group by replacing jobs for other groups, or the displacement effects of reducing jobs elsewhere in the market."


The issue of youth unemployment is one of the biggest driving forces shaping the future of Africa. This new report is featured because it is comprehensive and contains high quality content based on the latest data. It can be accessed from here http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/.

The report also highlights that given the small size of the formal sector in many African countries, governments should focus on the informal sector and rural areas, which contain immense entrepreneurial talent, can serve as engines for inclusive growth since they can absorb higher numbers of unemployed youths. It also advocates for policies focused on creating the skills that are necessary for youths to compete in the job market, for instance by improving the quality of education in agriculture and new technologies.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Hits and misses in Mozambique’s bottom-up climate change action plans

Like many African countries, Mozambique is familiar with change and adaptation. Currently, climate change is a new source of pressure that is challenging the nation’s capacity to adapt; Mozambique ranks third among African countries most vulnerable to climate change. It is expected to result in more frequent droughts and cyclones, and higher flooding. These hazards will compound challenges for communities largely reliant on natural resources and burdened with chronic poverty and endemic. Given the linkages to food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development, understanding successful adaptation strategies to climate change is critical in Mozambique and across Africa.

During the last decade, adaptation has become cemented in the climate change lexicon. At the 2001 Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) in Marrakech, Morocco, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) was established to sponsor the development of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) in the 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Mozambique was one of the recipients of funding from the LDCF.

A multidisciplinary NAPA team was assembled in Mozambique by the Ministry of Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA). The team consisted of members representing government departments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, research institutions and the private sector. Over 620 people were interviewed at the national level, representing a mixture of individuals from government, NGOs and community leaders and members. Respondents identified droughts as the most extreme event affecting the country, followed by floods and tropical cyclones. Based on these interviews and a review of national and international documents, a set of criteria was submitted for approval in provincial, regional and national seminars. This process resulted in the development of four national priority adaptation actions:

1. strengthening an early warning system,
2. enhancing the capacity of agricultural producers to cope with climate change,
3. reduction of climate change impacts in coastal zones and
4. management of water resources under climate change.

Strengths of the NAPA in Mozambique

Two strengths of the NAPA in Mozambique emerged in this review. First, the process of the NAPA development, which emphasized a participatory, bottom-up approach, was a critical strength of the program. The participatory nature of the NAPA process ensured that different forms of knowledge contributed to the identification of practical adaptation techniques and the production of a document that reflects priorities from villagers up to national policy makers.

Mozambique’s NAPA was completed in July 2008. The completion of the
document represented a significant success, particularly considering the complex climate impacts faced by the country and the limited institutional, technical and policy capacities to respond. The document itself is a powerful tool that can be used to create greater awareness of climate change, and is a significant step towards reducing national vulnerability.

Shortcomings of the NAPA in Mozambique

Despite the successful completion of the NAPA in Mozambique, there are several shortcomings that may limit the success of the program. Notable among these are the complications created by the number of partners engaged in the process. The large number of partners led to a lack of clarity, inefficient resource use and tensions over who should take leadership on climate change issues. The NAPA group in Mozambique, for instance, consists of technicians representing the MICOA, the Institute for Disaster Management (INGC), the National Directorates of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Environmental Management, Meteorology, Hydrography and Navigation, Mozambique Red Cross and the Environmental Working Group.

In addition to coordination among stakeholders, climate change discourse and framing vary among these groups and can result in disagreements over adaptation priorities. Further, competition for current and future climate change funding can create barriers towards successful collaboration.

Lessons from Mozambique’s NAPA Process

The formulation of Mozambique’s NAPA offers a good opportunity to collect lessons learned. In particular, the participatory, bottom-up approach was a key strength of the program as it ensured that the NAPA document reflected local, regional and national priorities. But, along the same lines, the large number of stakeholders and partners involved in the process resulted in development and implementation delays.

Past experiences with international aid have underlined the importance of national ownership of decision-making processes and resource allocation to ensure that funds reach those in need. Without adequate resources and ownership over their distribution, the NAPAs can become less effective at addressing immediate adaptation requirements.

Source: The full article citing references is available here [http://www.africaportal.org/articles/2012/05/04/hits-and-misses-mozambique%E2%80%99s-climate-change-action-plans](http://www.africaportal.org/articles/2012/05/04/hits-and-misses-mozambique%E2%80%99s-climate-change-action-plans). It is based on research conducted by the author, Jessica Blythe, who is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Victoria and works at the intersection between social and ecological geography. Her primary research focuses on resilience in coastal Mozambique and on how communities adapt to change.

For most Africa countries, the NAPA process has resulted in contextually relevant plans that are plagued by slow decision making and funding shortfalls. Decision-makers and funders can learn from the successes and failures of the NAPA process as they move into the next phase of climate change adaptation strategy.

TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

African mobile content start-up goes global

Cape-based mobile application start-up Snapplify signed its first client on debut at the 2011 Frankfurt Book Fair, and has gone on to become one of Africa’s leading mobile app developers within the space of 12 months. Most recently, the fledgling firm outshone its African rivals in a competition organised by mobile giant Nokia to come up with “societal, structural, financial and technological” ideas that could foster innovation leadership in Africa.

Snapplify’s turnkey online platform instantly digitises content for mobile devices, including iOS and Android, content producers or distributors such as authors, artists, publishers, retailers and corporates to manage, distribute and monetise content in custom-branded mobile applications. See here [https://www.snapplify.com/faq/](https://www.snapplify.com/faq/) for FAQ of how it works.

Books, magazines and brochures are packaged into digital publications for branded mobile apps which are then distributed globally via the relevant app stores. Snapplify claims to be “the first to offer this kind of service to publishers at zero upfront cost”. Global clients signed up include Peanuts creator Ka Boom Studios, leading Arabic content publisher Kotobarabia, New Holland Publishing SA, Random House Struik, and iMaverick, a daily magazine published only on iPad. According to founder and CEO Wesley Lynch, Snapplify’s choice of mobile apps over physical magazines and books (or “e-pubs”) was critical to its success – “they are easier, more cost-effective and interactive”.

According to Lynch, one client, an academic institution, is converting textbooks into apps, describing it as “a much easier and affordable way to teach and learn”. The company is working on enhancing the apps’ interactivity, to allow publishers to add
features such as quizzes or mobile colouring books, and is also looking to incorporate a social media component.

“It is an exciting time to be African, because we can make a global difference,” says Lynch. “Africa knows mobile, and it is through mobile that we will show the world what we’re capable of.”

Source: http://www.southafrica.info/business/trends/innovations/mobile-310512.htm#ixzz1wo5ejo61

A great example of the emerging future of Africa as the ‘wired’ continent. Instantly digitising content for mobile devices (and where appropriate then making it interactive) bodes well for Africa’s high educational needs and myriad languages, amongst others.

Africa’s mobile operators turn to local content to boost internet usage

As the mobile voice market reaches maturity, companies in the region are focusing their strategies on the provision of data services. With more than 500 million subscribers across the continent inching the mobile voice market towards saturation, mobile technology companies are increasingly looking to data services as a means of capturing new sales.

Although mobile broadband uptake is certainly growing- traffic will increase thirty-six fold in the region between now and 2015- at a mere 4%, penetration is still very low. To get more Africans connected to the World Wide Web via their mobiles, businesses have started thinking local. Local content, that is.

To boost adoption rates, firms are turning to the development of more content specific to the region. The importance of this when it comes to enticing new web users is of central importance to those in the ICT space.: “Providing local content is a key aspect of any content-oriented service and many mobile operators and service providers understand this,” says Arun Tanksali, head mobile lifestyle solution at Comviva, an Indian based provider of value-added services to mobile phone operators in Africa. “Local content forms an important part of the content catalogue of every single service in most countries. This is obtained by tapping into the local traditions and artists of that region,” he adds.

Developing such content is of particular importance on the continent, argues Mr Tanskali: “Content in general has very strong regional ties and nowhere more so than in Africa.” Despite this, a severe dearth of local content aimed at African audiences to attract more users persists. Changing this is fast becoming more of a priority for mobile operators such as South African based MTN, Africa’s largest. “MTN believes that local content is critical, as it has a major role in content and digital strategies,” says a spokesperson for the firm.

Firms are adopting various strategies to stimulate the production of more local content for their users. One of the most popular approaches is the establishment of mobile application stores. Vodacom and Safaricom have already launched their stores and MTN’s is due to go live later this year. The aim is to use the stores for the promotion of locally relevant mobile applications created by African developers.

Firms are also lending greater support to local application developers. Safaricom and Vodafone launched the Betavine Platform in 2011 to help local developers design and test their applications. Safaricom also recently established an academy in partnership with Vodafone and Strathmore University. The centre offers tailored Masters-level training in mobile software application development specifically for the African market.

Mobile operators are also increasingly seeking to promote local content through their own networks. A high profile multimedia platform, which has experienced formidable success over the last year is MTN Play, a portal with a variety of downloadable local content, including videos and music. In addition, MTN has brought in local providers to create more content for them. Last summer, it signed a deal with the music channel Trace to provide its younger customers with access to tailored local multimedia and news. Safaricom has also been heavily focused on developing local content through its web portal Safaricom Live, which offers content particularly aimed at its Kenyan audience.

While other factors, such as underdeveloped infrastructure and high user costs, also play an important role, local content development will play a crucial role in improving broadband uptake. The growing focus of mobile operators on driving this process will be an important trend to watch in the coming years.

Source: http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/broadcast/issue-no130/content/africas-mobile-opera/bc

The article above, and the one before it, signal jobs – especially jobs for young, creative, tech-savvy Africans. Key questions then surface around; how do societies, education policies and individuals adapt faster to supply the skills required, and is it possible for the poor and vulnerable to not only benefit from these services, but also somehow service this market? I.e. can local
A fine project seemingly addressing an issue which often falls through the cracks because the overriding discourse is all about Africa accessing and leveraging the Internet, but forgetting that it is urban Africa that is better able to do so. Meanwhile, huge swathes of Africa are very much rural and destined to be so for quite a while still.

In a related matter, new data reveals that the internet economy in South Africa is growing markedly and is now worth R59-billion (US$6.8-billion), contributing 2% to the South African economy. According to a maiden study, “Internet Matters: The Quiet Engine of the South African Economy”, the sector’s contribution to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) is rising by about 0.1% each year and it has the potential to become a major economic growth engine.

The study, released recently by World Wide Worx, an independent technology research and strategy organisation, was commissioned by Google South Africa and is the first in-depth analysis of the local internet economy. Consumers, small and medium enterprises and the government spent a total of R59-billion last year on products and services through the internet, as well as on internet access and infrastructure. Government spending on infrastructure and access accounted for just over R1-billion of this amount. Putting this in context, the agricultural sector accounted for only 2.2% of GDP in the last quarter of 2011. E-commerce is also growing at a rate of about 30% a year.

World’s largest radio telescope signals new era for Africa

After weeks of speculation, members of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Organisation have announced that South Africa and Australia will jointly host the world’s largest radio telescope. Prof Justin Jonas, SKA associate director for science and engineering, explained that Africa would host all of the mid-frequency receptors - the dishes - while Australia would get the low-frequency receptors, which look similar to television antennae and are unable to swivel.

In addition to the SKA, South Africa’s plans to focus on developing the field of astronomy will be enhanced by the MeerKAT project in the Northern Cape.

Professor Jonas pointed out that South Africa got the majority of what will be one of the largest scientific instruments in the world. “What makes it much more amazing is that if you think back 10 to 15 years, would we imagine (then) a situation where Africa was about to host such a large facility?” asked Jonas. The decision marked “a real turning point in Africa, where we are
becoming a destination for science and engineering, and not just a place where there are resources and tourism opportunities”. “It really does signal a new era in Africa.”

Source:
http://africanbrains.net/2012/05/25/will-africa-be-home-to-the-worlds-largest-radio-telescope/ and here for background,
http://www.ska.ac.za/releases/20120530.php for an interesting Q&A about the project.

The potential of this project was pointed out in the September 2011 edition of the Southern Africa Scan and its significance is all about ‘brain gain’, skills transfer, education and the development of science and technology in Southern Africa. The US$2 billion SKA project represents one of the biggest and most impressive research instalments in the world, a project on par with the construction of the Large Hadron Collider (CERN) outside of Geneva, Switzerland. It will be located mainly in the Northern Cape Province, in an area protected by legislation from development that could interfere with the reception of radio waves from space. It will comprise about 3 000 dish-shaped antennae spread over many thousands of square kilometres. The core of the telescope will lie in the Northern Cape’s Karoo region, with outlying stations spread throughout South Africa, and in Namibia, Botswana, Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, Madagascar and Mauritius. The instrument, which will be the world’s largest radio telescope, is expected to be complete in 2024.

SKA’s precursor, MeerKAT, will be the biggest radio telescope in the southern hemisphere. It is due to become operational later in 2012 with the first five years of MeerKAT’s research time fully booked. The team’s goal is to complete 15 MeerKAT antennae by 2015. To date, R55-million (US$7-million) has been spent on developing the skills needed for SKA, with 398 postdoctoral fellowships, PhD, MSc and undergraduate bursaries given to deserving candidates. An extensive bursary programme has seen hundreds of university students becoming interested in space science and engineering as a career.