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POVERTY, DEVELOPMENT AND DONOR ISSUES

Beyond Low and Middle Income Countries: What if there were five clusters of developing countries?

A new Institute for Development Studies working paper, (opens pdf) by Sergio Tezanos Vázquez and Andy challenges the continuing use of income per capita to classify developing countries as low income or middle income now that most of the world’s poor no longer live in low income countries (LICs) and ambiguity over the usefulness of the middle income country (MIC) classification given the diversity in the group of over 100 MICS. The précis states: “Many have challenged the use of income per capita as the primary proxy for development. This paper continues this tradition with a twist... [In this paper] we use a cluster analysis to identify five types of developing countries using a set of indicators covering definitions of development based on the history of thinking about ‘development’ over the last 50 years from four conceptual frames:

- development as structural transformation;
- development as human development;
- development as democratic participation and good governance; and
- development as sustainability.

We find that the cluster analysis produces five types of developing country using data for the period 2005-2010. Our development taxonomy differs notably from the usual income classification of GNI per capita (Atlas method) used to classify LICs and MICs. Notably many countries commonly labelled “emerging economies” are not in the two clusters related to emerging economies because they retain characteristics of poorer countries. We find that there is no simple “linear” representation of development levels (from low to high development countries). We find that each development cluster has its own and characteristic development issues. There is no group of countries with the best (or worst) indicators in all development dimensions. It thus would be more appropriate to build “complex” development taxonomies on a five-year basis than ranking and grouping countries in terms of per capita incomes, as this will offer a more nuanced image of the diversity of challenges of the developing world and policy responses appropriate to different kinds of countries.”

The five clusters are as follows:

- Cluster 1: High poverty rate countries with largely traditional economies.
- Cluster 2: Natural resource dependent countries with little political freedom. Those countries with high dependency on natural resources, who are also countries with severely constrained political freedom and moderate inequality (relative to the average for all developing countries).
- Cluster 3: External flow dependent countries with high inequality. Those countries with high dependency on external flows, who are also countries with high inequality, and moderate poverty incidence (relative to the average for all developing countries).
- Cluster 4: Economically egalitarian emerging economies with serious challenges of environmental sustainability and limited political freedoms. Those countries with most equal societies, who are also countries with moderate poverty and malnutrition but serious challenges of environmental sustainability and –perhaps surprisingly– limited political freedoms.
- Cluster 5: Unequal emerging economies with low dependence on external finance. Those countries with the lowest dependency on external finance and who are also countries with the highest inequality.

A useful and interesting perspective, especially where development funding criteria is concerned.

UN World Economic and Social Survey 2012: In Search of New Development Finance

This recently released report UN World Economic and Social Survey 2012: In Search of New Development Finance (opens pdf) is the first comprehensive assessment of the evolution, use of, and potential of ‘innovative development finance’ (IDF) to provide resources for addressing poverty, climate change and other global public goods. It has the authority of being both rigorously researched and of thoroughly surveying previous national, multilateral and scholarly analyses.

It is timely too for since the financial crisis of 2008-2009 the fiscal squeeze on many donor countries has threatened or caused reductions in ODA. At the same time promises of financial support for climate change mitigation and adaptation have
ECONOMIC ISSUES

Africa’s energy boom must be managed carefully

A shortened op-ed by Ichumile Gqada who is a researcher at the governance of Africa’s resources programme at the SA Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). See here http://www.saiia.org.za/governance-of-africa-s-resources-programme/governance-of-africas-resources-programme.html for details of the programme.

[South Africa’s] Department of Mineral Resources recently lifted the moratorium on shale gas exploration in the Karoo. According to the US Energy Information Administration, this area potentially holds 485 trillion cubic feet of shale gas. These estimates come in the context of major discoveries of fossil fuels in the rest of the African continent. Conventional gas in Mozambique and Tanzania, coal in Mozambique and Botswana and crude oil in Uganda, Kenya and Ghana, are just a few examples that come to mind.

As governments across Africa scramble to monetise these abundant, yet finite resources, multinational oil and gas companies, state and private, devise strategies on how they can use these newly-discovered riches for portfolio diversification and shareholder benefit.

In many underdeveloped countries, developing these resources has the potential to contribute to the eradication of energy poverty and insecurity while contributing to economic growth. If this resource wealth is to translate into export revenues, access to energy, economic growth and human development in African countries, the following governance imperatives need to be addressed.

1. The legal and regulatory framework governing the energy sector must ensure predictability, equality, fairness and clarity. It must regulate the production of the resource, its internal use and exports. Corporate conduct must be subjected to strict measures such as a legal requirement for a social contract between companies and local communities to ensure that companies obtain a social licence to operate. There must be clarity of jurisdiction between national, provincial or district and local government to promote clear structures of control and responsibility in resource governance. It is crucial that governance structures prevent opportunities for rent-seeking, clientelism and the servicing of patronage networks.

2. Political and administrative leaders must root out corruption in their ranks. African leadership is in dire need of a moral regeneration that encourages putting the needs of humanity above the myopic financially-driven desires of self. Governments are urged to indicate political will and commitment to the values of fairness and transparency through the establishment of well-capacitated oversight institutions that can hold public officials and their decisions to account. This includes accounting to parliament and setting up independent monitoring institutions that are not subject to political intervention or irregular financial incentives.

3. From the outset, policymakers must acknowledge that natural resources are finite, and start thinking about economic diversification to ensure that benefits from the resources outlive the actual presence of the resources in the ground. This involves human resource development and channelling funds to boosting sectors outside of the extractives industry such as manufacturing and services.

This resource boom has tremendous potential, which will only be realised if we acknowledge that while there are no easy solutions, good governance can help lift millions out of poverty. If Africa is to benefit from its natural resource wealth, governments, civil society and companies need to act in concert for the benefit of the citizens, the individual countries and the continent as a whole.

Source: http://www.iol.co.za/business/business-news/africa-s-energy-boom-must-be-managed-carefully-1.1386055#.UGgo9lGIX0Sg

From a resource extraction company perspective the recommendations above complement those contained in a discussion paper about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Africa produced by the Brenthurst Foundation, entitled: The Monrovia
**Principles. A Guideline for Corporate Social Responsibility in Africa** (opens pdf) This paper also contains useful background information on the UN Global Compact and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). It states that CSR strategies should be focused, specific and prioritised, and acknowledges the importance of a holistic approach to development policy and governance initiatives. Accordingly adherence to six core principles will assist in Africa’s inclusive, sustainable development. They are:

1. **A Growth Partnership:** CSR needs fundamentally to be conceived as a growth partnership between business, government and civil society. Only where a country has a sufficiently strong domestic coalition for growth is it likely that growth oriented public policy will be pursued with vigour and determination.

2. **Encouraging Entrepreneurship:** A key problem with Africa’s development is that there is too little business, and arguably too much aid relative to the size of business. Expanding business and the tax base is in the self-interest of government and society.

3. **Ensuring Stability and Inclusive Ownership:** The ‘rules of the CSR road’ need to be clear beforehand to investors, and maintained. If the goal of this engagement [between government and business] includes increasing the local stake in ownership in a sustainable fashion, then the mechanisms to achieve this ‘bargain’ beyond just self-interest could include:
   - A benchmarked commitment by government to investment in technical and business schools; a commitment by business to train through apprenticeships
   - A benchmarked commitment by business and government alike to local procurement and local ownership quotas
   - A commitment by both companies and government to transparent business practices: the use of auctions, not negotiated contracts, is commended
   - A commitment by government to expedite work permits and visas where no local skills exist; and by business to local employment wherever possible.

4. **Government as a Good Citizen:** Government policy should facilitate private sector investment. It needs to respond to and make timely investments in infrastructure, healthcare and education, without which the requirement on businesses to move up the value-chain from the export of primary commodities is unlikely and unrealistic.

5. **Business as a Good Citizen:** Good, ethical practices must extend first and foremost to employees. Beyond that, business should aim to achieve a benchmark of at least 0.7% per cent of profit on CSR – paralleling the donor Official Development Assistance target.

6. **Differentiate and Support:** Any practical CSR strategy must recognise the different size, reach and regulatory abilities of businesses, and the differences between sectors.

See also the Natural Resources: Curse or Cure for Africa? (opens pdf)

discussion paper, which investigates the various methods and frameworks that have been used to explore this phenomenon, and questions the utility of some of the mainstream economic models underpinning the ‘curse’. The paper takes a global perspective in order to understand the types of policy interventions that have proved successful in turning the ‘curse’ into a ‘cure’ for some developing states. Special attention is given to the African case and various recommendations are put forward that could help African governments extract much greater development benefits from their rich resource endowments.

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The seeds of food inflation in southern Africa

Mike Schussler, one of South Africa’s most respected economists, gave a recent presentation on food inflation ... [and provided] the following eye-popping statistic: for South African grain growers, seed prices have been rising on average at almost 18% per year since 1999, almost triple the average consumer inflation rate over the same period of time.

Seed prices have been rising rapidly because there are so few distributors and the takeover of local firm Pannar Seed by U.S. multinational Pioneer Hi-Bred – which is in the throes of litigation but could be settled soon – will leave the country with a seed duopoly, according to Schussler, who is the director of economists.co.za.

That duopoly would be comprised of Pioneer and Monsanto, another American multinational, and between them they would account for about 90% of the local seed market.

In short, “seed inflation” is hardly about to be contained at a time when a scorching U.S. drought is driving maize prices to fresh peaks. Even if these red-hot prices eventually cool, Schussler sees little prospect of domestic maize falling back to earth because input costs will remain high.

This has big implications for the hungry in South Africa and the region. Maize is the staple of the region, which is one of...
the few on the planet where most of the stuff is grown for human rather than animal consumption, though it also feeds a lot of livestock as well.

South Africans at the lower end of the income scale typically spend around 40% of their income on food and so their standards of living and even their health are directly impacted by these events. And as the regional breadbasket, its food price pressures are bound to spread to other southern African countries.

It does raise the question: should the distribution of seeds for crucial crops be left in the hands of so few, especially in developing economies?


**Quality branded bicycles make a difference in rural Mozambique**

Although Africa has seen many bicycle projects come and go, leaving only trails of rusty parts in their wake, the founders of Mozambikes, Lauren Thomas and her fiancé Rui Mesquita believe Mozambikes is different.

"We got the idea for the company back in spring 2009 while we were on a road trip across Mozambique," Thomas said. "We saw people walking long distances with very heavy packages under the burning hot sun and we asked ourselves, ‘why don’t they use bikes?’ ‘We discovered that bicycles are not produced locally and the cost to import them is very high, so we came up with the idea of using mobile advertising as a means to offer low-cost bicycles to those who need them most.’

The concept is that companies pay to brand the bicycles with their logo. Advertising on a bike costs 2500 meticais (US$90), which is much cheaper than many other forms of advertising. This enables Mozambikes to sell a bicycle that would retail at 3500 meticais (US$125), for 999 meticais (US$35), which people with low incomes are more likely to be able to afford.

This type of advertising is attractive to companies because even people with lower incomes are consumers of products such as cellphones, rice and beer, and it is difficult for advertisers to reach this market in remote rural areas.

"We realised that a bike can not only give a Mozambican a way of changing their life and give them access to greater economic opportunities and access to schools and clinics but you are also putting a bicycle in a region where the majority of media forms – television, newspapers, sometimes even radio – do not reach,” Thomas said.

Mozambikes has received orders from several big-name companies, including cellphone providers, microfinance banks, construction companies and a retail grocery store. About 400 bicycles have been sold and the company expects to close orders for more than 1000 bicycles in the next few months. To brand the bikes, the company designed them with a wider top bar that provides more space for a company logo, name or slogan. The bike is also much lighter and has a bigger luggage rack, so people can carry heavy loads, and they have a diagonal rather than horizontal crossbar so that women wearing traditional capulana wrap skirts can use them.

Source: [http://mg.co.za/article/2012-08-17-00-bikes-get-mozambicans-going](http://mg.co.za/article/2012-08-17-00-bikes-get-mozambicans-going)

**POLITICAL ISSUES**

**Sub-optimal IP laws, policies and practice have the potential to impede development**

The Open African Innovation Research and Training (Open A.I.R.) Project is investigating how intellectual property (IP) regimes can be harnessed in Africa to facilitate innovation through collaboration – and through making processes more participatory, knowledge more accessible, and benefits more widely shared. Interconnected, empirical case
studies are now underway, exploring a range of research questions in countries across the continent.

The case studies are connected to six Open A.I.R. themes: copyrights, patents, trademarks, the WIPO development agenda, the traditional knowledge (TK) commons and IP from publicly funded research. At the same time, the project is conducting foresighting research to develop scenarios for the future of IP, collaboration/innovation and development in Africa. Later in the project, training, capacity-building and policy engagement activities will be rolled out, based on the case study and foresight findings.

The decentralised project is administered from the University of Cape Town’s IP Law and Policy Research Unit, with management support from faculty affiliated with the University of Ottawa’s Centre for Law, Technology and Society. The project’s North African hub is the Access to Knowledge for Development Centre (A2K4D), American University in Cairo (AUC), and its West African hub is at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) in Lagos. Open A.I.R. is building on the success of the earlier African Copyright and Access to Knowledge (ACA2K) project, with many Open A.I.R. Team members having worked on ACA2K.

The Open A.I.R project is centred around 19 interconnected, empirical case studies on conditions across the African continent, along with future-focussed foresight research. The research is laying the foundations for training provision to public- and private-sector leaders.

Polarised views on how IP facilitates or restricts innovation and creativity persist because there is little empirical research on this topic. Consequently, relevant actors tend to create or confront sub-optimal IP laws, policies and practices, all of which have the potential to impede development. This project is examining the following two interrelated hypotheses in relation to IP and development in Africa:
1. African innovation and creativity are not properly valued by current IP-related metrics; and
2. African innovation and creativity are being constrained by sub-optimal IP-related policies and inefficient IP-related practices.

Open A.I.R. ultimately aims to determine how Africans can harness existing or potential IP systems to measure and facilitate innovation and creativity for more participatory, effective and just models of “open” development. The project’s short-term objectives are:

- to raise problem awareness and facilitate critical policy engagement; and
- to empower a networked, epistemic IP community in Africa:

In the longer-term, the following outcomes are sought:

- changed discourse and behaviour that engenders fewer bottlenecks and more collaboration; and
- re-configure IP-related valuation metrics, capital and power structures.

The project has a two-pronged research methodology:
1. landscape case studies in six thematic areas; and
2. future foresighting exercises, including strategic and contingency planning.

Qualitative case studies are currently being completed on topics linked to copyrights, patents, trademarks, the WIPO development agenda, the traditional knowledge (TK) commons and IP from publicly funded research.

Meanwhile, the foresight research component is working collaboratively, with project researchers and key stakeholders, to determine drivers of change, identify and dissect possible scenarios for the future, and “back cast” to generate strategic courses of action.

The project’s training components aim to build capacity among researchers, policy and issue leaders, and grassroots stakeholders -- including innovators, creators and entrepreneurs. The training comprises seminars and workshops, the Open A.I.R. Research Fellows programme, and development/delivery of a course curriculum. Source: [http://www.openair.org.za/summary](http://www.openair.org.za/summary)

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**A very interesting and worthwhile project with much potential. It will be tracked and monitored, and the future scenarios with courses of action will be reported once completed. When well done, this is the sort of work that can make a difference.**

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**SOCIAL ISSUES**

**Conference on strategies to overcome inequality and poverty**

The Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality: Towards Carnegie III conference was held at the University of Cape Town on 3 – 7 September 2012. It focussed attention on understanding the ‘lived experiences of inequality and the causes and dimensions of persistent inequality’, and ‘considered policies and actions that are aimed at significantly reducing inequality and poverty in both the short- and long-term’.
The purpose of the conference was to provide a platform for sharing and debate amongst academic researchers, government and practitioners. The conference sought to move towards new ways of considering poverty and inequality, focusing less on describing the problems, and more on practical strategies to overcome them. This requires shifts in thinking, which the conference hoped to stimulate by combining a focus on academic and applied research with a set of demonstrations from the NGO, Business and Trade Union world.

According to the programme the conference sought to provide a platform for serious and deep debate about difficult policy choices that must be made in tackling these issues of poverty, inequality and the underlying facts of massive unemployment. Thus, for example:

- Should the government promote further urbanisation or seek to stimulate growth in rural areas?
- What would be the consequences of a widespread subsidy to the youth wage?
- Is increased tariff protection a feasible way of generating more jobs in the country? At what cost?
- What practical steps can be taken in the short run to meet the challenges of literacy & numeracy in so many of the country’s primary schools?
- Plus a number of other difficult questions....

The conference combined formal presentations of new (including recently published) analytical research papers with panel discussions and presentations of on-the-ground innovation and interventions in practice. It aimed to ask questions about what works, what doesn’t work, and why. In particular, the conference aimed to stimulate thinking around the lessons that local-level initiatives have to offer. It also aimed to show-case initiatives which may provide insight into:

- Ways of mobilising and supporting the energies of people at all levels of society to reduce poverty and inequality.
- Opportunities for establishing closer synergies between government, business, trade unions and the NGO sector
- Strategies for replicating and scaling up initiatives that work.

Source: http://www.carnegie3.org.za/

**“Death on Wheels” in sub-Saharan Africa: How to prevent it?**

According to WHO data, close to 250 000 people die each year on African roads, representing one-fifth of the world’s road deaths, and about 500 000 sustain non-fatal injuries. Severe underreporting hides the real magnitude of the problem; for example, in Mozambique, estimates done in 2011 by a Harvard University team indicated that road deaths and non-fatal injuries were twice as high as those reported in official statistics.

Sub-Saharan African countries, with an estimated death rate of 32.2 per 100,000 population, have some of the highest road death rates in the world although they possess only 2% of the world’s registered vehicles. This rate is double the average rate for Latin America and South-East Asia, and is more than five times that of best road safety performers (Sweden, UK, and Netherlands). Road traffic injuries are already the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 15–44 years; for young men, they are the second leading cause of premature death after HIV/AIDS.

With rapid urbanization, economic growth and higher incomes, and increasing numbers of cars and two wheelers operating in poor road networks, the number of road deaths is predicted to rise in sub-Saharan Africa by at least 80% by 2020 if nothing is done to improve road conditions and traffic safety. Vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and passengers using unsafe public transport, suffer greatest as they account for more than 50% of road deaths.

The economic cost of road traffic deaths and injuries has been estimated at 1–3 per cent of GDP in most countries (WHO/World Bank 2004). This cost reflects the value of medical services used to treat injured people, insurance administration, forgone individual or family earnings, and business costs such as those due to temporary or permanent disability of employees and delayed delivery of goods and services. Road injuries are also a major burden on already overburdened health systems.

So what is needed to make African roads safer? Good roads are now seen as a critical investment for enhancing competitiveness and resilience in sub-Saharan Africa since they facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services
and access to essential services. With the adoption of the 2011-2020 UN Decade of Action on Road Safety, African governments are also committed to reducing the heavy social toll imposed by road traffic injuries. So, too, are international organizations, despite the fact that in many infrastructure projects funded by multilateral development banks, road safety has often been merely an afterthought.

While economic aspirations and political declarations help, international experience makes it clear that making roads safer presumes the adoption of a “safe system approach” to make a country response effective and sustainable. Indeed, the reality in most of sub-Saharan Africa reflects the need to painstakingly build institutions and capacity to plan, manage and implement road safety initiatives at national scale rather than just adopting parallel or isolated sectoral interventions. A 2009 assessment by WHO covering 41 African countries evidenced this reality:

- While the majority (88%) of the countries reported having a road safety agency, in only 10 (24%) has the government endorsed a strategy with targets and earmarked funding.
- Most countries not only lack comprehensive road safety laws to address the main risk factors (speed, drunk driving, not wearing seat belts or helmets, using cell phones or texting while driving), but also suffer from sporadic enforcement, where bribes often prevent penalizing drivers who knowingly break traffic rules.
- The availability of quality data to accurately assess the problem is limited in most countries, constraining planning, monitoring and impact evaluation efforts.
- While 40% of countries reported having a formal emergency medical care system with a national access telephone number, their capacity and quality are poor. In most countries, emergency medical services are usually a marginal element of road safety programs as they are commonly equated with simple transportation arrangements (ambulance service). But to save thousands of lives and prevent long-lasting disabilities, interconnected systems are required to offer a “continuum of care” from first contact with a victim (communication and transport systems, well-trained paramedics), to medical care provided at different health system levels in accordance to the needs of the injured.

The adoption by governments and international agencies of “shared value” principles (Porter and Kramer 2011), which combine economic and social concerns, could help redress Africa’s road infrastructure deficits that hinder economic growth while addressing the societal harm caused by road traffic injuries and premature deaths. This type of approach is needed to generate collective action by winning political and community support to implement the African Road Safety Action Plan 2011-2020 (opens pdf) that was adopted in Addis Ababa last year, forging public and private partnerships to share the cost of enhanced infrastructure and interventions, and building institutional and management capacity to effectively deal with road safety challenges.


Labour brokers: Study finds positive and important role

As the debate on the role of labour brokers [in South Africa] rages on, a new study by a respected independent policy research and advocacy organisation has found that temporary employment services play a big and positive role in helping unskilled and inexperienced young people find jobs. The study was conducted by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) and is entitled “Routes into formal employment – Public and private assistance to young job seekers”.

The CDE commissioned the research to identify the most common “routes to employment” and provide some analysis of how effectively these routes work. Included in the Routes study were the informal sector, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the National Youth Development Agency’s (NYDA) Jobs and Opportunity Seekers (JOBS) programme and temporary employment services (TES) firms, commonly known as labour brokers.

Pointing out that youth unemployment is at crisis levels the study cites National Treasury figures which indicate that 50% of those under the age of 25 – 1.4 million young people – who want to work are unemployed. They account for 30% of all unemployed. If those aged 25-29 are added, the figure rises to 2.5 million unemployed young South Africans.
While blaming this on the slow pace of job creation over the past few decades, the study also found that because of high labour costs and strict labour laws employers “tend to see the employment decision as risky, and may be reluctant to employ unskilled, inexperienced people”. The Routes study also found that:

- While the EPWP created more than a million “work opportunities” between 2004 and 2009, providing short-term, last-resort employment to relatively large numbers of people, it has done very little to increase the employability of beneficiaries;
- That the Setas, having completed 10,000 learnerships in their first four years, provided some people with valuable training and access to job opportunities, largely in the financial sector. But the Setas were of greatest benefit to people who were most likely to find employment anyhow, even without assistance from the Setas;
- Young people employed in the informal sector mostly found themselves trapped there, unable to make the transition into the formal employment sector; and
- Despite a lack of data, the study found that the JOBS programme run by the NYDA “is helping some young people into jobs”.

The majority of employed people in all cases found their work without the help of employment agencies. Yet the study concludes that, although relatively small in overall terms, the number of those who found work through an agency was “still significant in terms of the numbers of people nationally who use this route to employment”.

In 2009, for example, the Confederation of Associations in the Private Employment Sector claimed that TES firms placed over 500,000 job seekers in employment every year. But “more recent estimates suggest the number of placements per year is closer to one million,” the report states.

TES firms operate on a significantly larger scale than comparable government programmes. In 2008/9, nearly 1 500 people found work through the NYDA’s JOBS programme, while one large TES, Adcorp, claims to place over 25,000 job seekers per day.

The CDE research found that 1 000 individuals were placed each month by one Adcorp branch (of which it has 34) showing that the monthly placements of this one TES branch are equivalent to two-thirds of the NYDA’s annual placements.

And while people placed by TES firms such as Adcorp worked for periods shorter than is typical of the economy as a whole, there was no evidence that they are paid lower wages, as claimed by Cosatu and others. TES-placed workers earned median wages of R2 934 (US$350), a figure that is close to the median of R3 000 in the Quarterly Labour Force Survey.

“One on the whole we found no evidence that either the JOBS programme or the branch of Adcorp studied by CDE researchers were placing people in jobs that were markedly less desirable than is typical of the economy as a whole,” the report states.

The research also found that some employers – especially large, capital intensive firms which employ some low and important skilled workers – rely more heavily on TES firms than others, TES services appear to help companies grow and compete globally and much of the reliance on TES firms reflects seasonality in demand for labour and broader international trends towards more flexible (and temporary) forms of work.

The research found that labour brokers were most useful to young, inexperienced workers and those whose link to the labour market was particularly tenuous. These services “may help bring excluded households and workers into the economy” making the economy more inclusive.

This, they say, must be factored into the policy debate. Banning labour brokers would reduce access to the labour market for the most excluded people and would result in costs and consequences that many currently participating in this debate may not have considered. “Closing down vehicles that increase access to work should not be a serious option,” the study concludes.

Source: [http://www.leadershiponline.co.za/articles/labour-brokers](http://www.leadershiponline.co.za/articles/labour-brokers)

The full study as well as a separate executive summary can be downloaded from here [http://www.cde.org.za/article.php?a_id=427](http://www.cde.org.za/article.php?a_id=427), and see here [http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-03-15-labour-brokering-a-new-player-enters-the-ring](http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-03-15-labour-brokering-a-new-player-enters-the-ring) for a good background article around the politics of labour broking in South Africa. In a nutshell, Cosatu, the labour union which is in a governing alliance with the ANC wants labour brokers (TES firms) banned – temporary workers cannot become union supporters – whereas business interests, job seekers and the economy as a whole are supportive of TES firms.
Evidence of a deadly new virus

This excerpt is entered into the Southern African scanning newsletter because it illustrates the following emerging issues / trends / signals:

- New and unknown diseases or pathogens will continue to emerge because of increasing human and domestic animal encroachment on natural areas where infectious agents can then jump between species. This is exacerbated by environmental changes, climate change, human and animal demography as well as changes in farming practice.
- Certain areas of Southern Africa, like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), are very prone to this occurrence and most likely ill-prepared for it.
- In an era where there is unprecedented biodiversity loss, new species/organisms are still being discovered. This signals the extent of how little is actually known about the natural world, whereas the prevailing attitude is one of ‘mastery over nature’ – a mismatch that could prove precarious for humanity.

One odd characteristic of the Bas-Congo virus, Chiu said, is that while a number of other viruses in Africa also cause deadly outbreaks of acute haemorrhagic fever -- Ebola virus, Lassa virus and Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever virus to name a few -- the new virus is unlike any of them.

Genetically it is more closely related to the types of viruses that cause rabies, which are known to infect people with a very different sort of disease -- a neurological illness that is uniformly fatal if untreated but may take months to develop. An antibody test developed in this study was applied to the one patient who survived and to others who had come into contact with him. It suggested that the disease may be spread from person to person but likely originated from some other source, such as an insect or rodent.

The identity of this animal "reservoir" and the precise mode of transmission for the virus remain unclear and are currently being investigated by Metabiota and the central African members of the consortium through the PREDICT Project of USAID's Emerging Pandemic Threats Program. (http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ohi/predict/index.cfm)

An isolated outbreak of a deadly disease known as acute haemorrhagic fever, which killed two people and left one gravely ill in the DRC in the summer of 2009, was probably caused by a novel virus scientists have never seen before. Described this week in the open-access journal PLoS Pathogens, the new microbe has been named Bas-Congo virus (BASV) after the province in the southwest corner of the Congo where the three people lived.

It was discovered by an international research consortium that included the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and University of California, Davis (UCD), Global Viral, the Centre International de Recherches Médicales de Franceville in Gabon, the Institut National de Recherche Biomédicale, Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Metabiota and others.

"These are the only three cases known to have occurred, although there could be additional outbreaks from this virus in the future," said Charles Chiu, MD, PhD, an assistant professor of laboratory medicine at UCSF and director of the UCSF-Abbott Viral Diagnostics and Discovery Center, who spearheaded the UCSF effort to identify the virus. Chiu and his team continue to work on new diagnostics to detect the virus so that health officials in Congo and elsewhere can quickly identify it should it emerge again.

MozMed, the virtual platform of health in Mozambique

MozMed is a virtual platform covering all aspects of health that has recently been launched in Mozambique (August 2012). The platform offers the possibility to ask questions via Internet (www.mozmed.com) and mobile, start conversations and discussions and receive valuable answers from both from other users of the platform and health experts in corresponding areas of health.

MozMed is officially supported by the Ministry of Health and the Mozambique Red Cross. Those institutions, as well as other NGOs, local and international organizations, provide experts in their areas of specialization (sexual and reproductive health, dermatology, oncology, general practice, etc.). The platform will act as a meeting point between individuals interested in getting answers to questions related to all aspects of health. The platform will also function as an early warning system, in that the users can use it to be informed (via their

**On-the-spot AIDS test: Prototype smartphone tests for Aids**

A smartphone application developed by South Korean and South African scientists will allow users to diagnose AIDS infections. Once complete, the app will be released in rural South Africa, where current tests are both remote and expensive.

The new gadget, dubbed the 'Smartscope,' consists of a small one-millimetre (0.04-inch) microscope and light that clip over a smartphone's camera, and the accompanying software, AFP reported. A standard chip containing a blood sample slides into the gadget, underneath the microscope. The phone app then photographs the sample and analyses the blood for a T-cell count, ascertaining the overall health of the subject's immune system.

"Our idea was to obtain images and analyse images on this smartphone using applications," Jung Kyung Kim, a professor in biomedical engineering at South Korea's Kookmin University said. A T-cell (or CD4 cell) count is used to diagnose the immune system's overall health. T-cells are the white blood cells that help the body fight disease and infection. The HIV virus infects T-cells in the body and uses them to replicate itself. A person carrying the virus will therefore have a lower T-cell count than an uninfected individual, as well as a weakened immune system. Eventually, if a person's T-cell count drops below a certain threshold, they are diagnosed with AIDS.

"In community health mobile technology is not a gimmick. It becomes an essential part of access," Professor Jannie Hugo said. Hugo is the head of the family medicine department at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, and is associated with the study. The app is being released in South Africa and Swaziland, which have been hit hard by the disease.


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**African semi-finalists of the Google Apps Developer Challenge**

The [Google Apps Developer Challenge](http://www.google.com/developerchallenge/africa/) is aimed at providing developers the world over the opportunity to find new and innovative ways to use the Google Apps and Drive APIs to build cool apps.

Innovative developers who create applications using the [Google Apps](http://www.google.com/apps) and [Drive](http://www.google.com/drive) APIs would be eligible to win a prize of US$20,000 dollars. Google recently announced the challenge's semi-finalists from all around the world. Some interesting apps made the cut from Africa, including:

**Enterprise / Small Business Solutions**

- **NomiaPro,** Ghana. NomiaPro is a web application that will help businesses organize all their conferences delegates.
- **Form+,** Nigeria. This application brings the power of Google Drive to forms.

**Education / Not for Profit / Water / Food & Hunger / Health**

- **Daktari,** Uganda. Daktari is an application that helps one, specifically patients communicate easily with doctors.
- **Daro,** Kenya. Daro, swahili slang for 'class', is a simple app for managing a class.
- **DoctorPlus,** Nigeria. DoctorPlus is a non-profit online medical service aimed at leveraging the on the Google Apps platform to provide the minimal infrastructure needed.
- **Prep-hub,** South Africa. Prep-hub is a web application that hosts past examination and test papers for students and encourages collaboration between them as they prepare for examinations and/or tests.
- **Realinx,** South Africa. Realinx is an easy way to organise information according their relationships.
- **QuizerApp,** Kenya. An app intended to make classroom revision easier and fun, both for the lecturers (tutors) and the students.
- **Identchip,** South Africa. Service that allows users to search for information about a tag / microchip.