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Technical Co-operation in Sub-Saharan Africa – From New Avenues to Winding Roads?¹

Revisiting the “New Avenues” of Technical Co-operation

For half a decade, international donors have been reflecting on the shortcomings of technical co-operation (TC) in terms of building development management capacities in recipient countries.² In the sub-Saharan context, TC has led to fairly good results when involved with specific project goals (like in providing or improving infrastructures), it is nevertheless widely acknowledged among policy-makers and implementing actors alike that the results in terms of building national capacity and in promoting self-reliance are disappointing. TC as a major form of development aid has yet to arrive at operational and effective modes of capacity building which meet the objectives of its users and providers in a satisfactory, sustainable manner. How to accomplish this goal remains an unresolved question and thus merits closer scrutiny in the continuing development debates on “new avenues for technical co-operation in Africa”.

In recent years, there have been several major reviews of TC effectiveness (DAC 1991; Human Development Report 1991; Cassen 1988, 1994; Berg 1993) which have all criticized the limited impact of technical co-operation efforts on local capacity-building. The bottom-line of these reviews is clear: rather than doing the job themselves, donor agencies should find ways to increase their support for local capacity and institutions. Yet, a critical shortage of clear understandings of how to mould the often promising recommendations and guidelines into operational guidance still remains. Successful capacity building by way of TC to date is still the rare exception rather than the rule.

For too long, debates on TC have been bogged down in seemingly endless reassertions of “what goes wrong and what should be done”. The

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2 The terms “technical co-operation” and “technical assistance” are used synonymously in this paper.

gaps between policy prescriptions and practice, between reform proposals and effective implementation of new approaches have not been visibly reduced.

In 1991, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) attempted to bridge these gaps through an applied research programme that aimed to improve the record of TC in terms of capacity building. The approach adopted was based on an extensive review of the literature and on interviews with nearly 100 competent donor and recipient officials and practitioners. Concrete and practical information on reform attempts in the field were obtained by way of four case studies, (Burundi, Cameroon, Malawi, and Tanzania). The findings from the studies and ECDPM's own investigations were submitted for discussion and review to a forum of politicians and development practitioners from both Africa and the donor community. The results from this interactive research programme were published as an occasional paper under the title "New Avenues for Technical Co-operation in Africa" and widely disseminated (Bossuyt 1992). This document provided a critical inventory of existing reform attempts and of operational approaches to them, thus making a practical contribution to the agenda for change of TC and related aid policies.

TC's bumpy road

While large parts of sub-Saharan Africa remain at the bottom of the pits of human development³ and the daily lives of their populations revolve around questions of survival and emergencies rather than relate in much significance to human development and welfare, the time to adopt and *implement* capacity development as a policy priority, is slipping away. Many development stakeholders and decision-makers have come to realize that rising absolute levels of aid and increased development impact do not necessarily correlate with one another. This is particularly true for TC, which is supposed to be aimed at building and strengthening technical and management capacity, support state and increasingly civil society institutions and help them to reduce reliance upon foreign experts. Shortages in human resources are to be eventually overcome as TC leads to a widening and improvement of the human resource base for development in under-developed countries. In the perhaps extreme example of Mozambique, few if any results of TC in recent years have been achieved: "Foreign 'TC' hired to fill the 'capacity gap' ... was costing Mozambique some US\$ 168m, or 10% of GDP, in 1987. By 1993 it was costing an annual US\$ 200 – 300m. ... A 1991 World Bank study

3 In the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, out of the 55 countries ranked under "low human development", forty are to be found in Africa.

found that many donor actions actually weakened local capacity. 'The practice of hiring (foreign) technical assistance without giving enough attention to training local staff, or paying local 'consultants' to run autonomous units within government ministries and 'topping up' project managers' salaries – have all, often undermined (capacity).' (Southern African Economist 1994)

Such failures are now widely recognized: TC may well be "... one of the least effective ways to foster development".⁴ From within donor implementing agencies voices are being raised to "farewell long term experts" and to critically evaluate technical co-operation. Fears have been expressed that the "... failure to address institutional issues in the 1990s inevitably will result in a continual spiral of foreign-based training and a lack of internal capacity for human development in Africa".⁵ Unfortunately, this may well already be today's development reality.

An important question to ask is what kind of TC is efficient for building capacities? The theory for bold new approaches to TC design and utilization is broadly shared among donors, yet on the ground, implementation has, at best, been slow. It is generally agreed that capacity building remains the "top priority" of TC, and in reference to the 1994 OECD-DAC conference on "Improving the effectiveness of TC", hopes are expressed that donors will adhere to their own guidelines (White/Woestman 1994).

Making progress?

In June 1994, aid donors came together in the context of the OECD-DAC for the conference on "Improving the effectiveness of technical co-operation". Building on the extensive discussions on TC of the recent past, long-standing problems with TC were addressed and issues of recipients' involvement in decision-making were reviewed. Individual donor delegations submitted position papers in which they outlined their updated approaches towards TC. Some new momentum in the debate on how to redefine TC could be generated through the DAC conference, although it does remain regrettable that involvement of recipients in this important policy debate is not actively sought. Still, the DAC policy recommendations on the effectiveness of aid, including those on TC are well worth serious consideration by all donors (DAC 1991). Inconsistencies in donor application of common recommendations like the DAC principles persist and feature prominently among the

4 See: The Economist, Foreign Aid, May 7th 1994, p. 22; "Of the \$12 billion or so which goes each year to buy advice, training and project design, over 90% is spent on foreign consultants."

5 Ibid.

central problems encountered in the process of redesigning TC. Many of these problems have been encountered by all donors employing the instrument of TC. However, only hesitantly do donors revise their own policies and approaches as a result of learning from each other's experiences. Canada has shared its experiences with "best practices, new initiatives, areas for improvement and constraints in implementing the (DAC) principles" (Bolger 1994). In 1993, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) conducted an internal study which came to a number of conclusions which can be regarded as constructive advice to many other donors facing similar problems with TC. The study affirms the value of the DAC principles (underlining the need for a central role of the recipient country), considers country *ownership* as an essential element of effective TC, stresses the long-term nature of capacity development as a process and while ascribing primary responsibility for successful problem solving by way of TC to the recipient country, it fairly acknowledges the importance of donor support in creating an enabling environment (Bolger 1994). Still, progress in harmonizing and co-ordinating donor approaches to TC, particularly at the field level, remains appallingly slow.

While substantial progress in improving the record of TC has yet to materialize, some promising initiatives have been taken in recent years. Most notably, the National Technical Co-operation and Assistance Programme (NaTCAP), launched in 1986 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has helped to enhance management of TC as a development resource and has provided valuable in-country information on types of human capacity available and on policies for employing it more efficiently. Unfortunately, serious implementation constraints have arisen with the NaTCAP approach which have chipped away many of its initial merits unveiling it as an essentially donor-side driven concept.

Among more recent initiatives, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) specifically addresses capacity building issues in sub-Saharan Africa through improved policy analysis and development management. Still in its pilot phase, it is too early to assess the impact the ACBF's progress (ACBF 1992).

Several other initiatives complement and extend the above-mentioned efforts towards enhancing African capacity to take the lead in effectively managing its own development. They include the UNDP Management Development Programme (MDP) and the 1994 UN-Economic Commission for Africa's (UN-ECA) "framework-agenda" for capacity building. Recently, the MDP evaluated experiences with TC and among the "success ingredients in TC" it has identified the use of mixed teams in technical assistance and increased reliance on decentralized modes of aid delivery. Under the UN-ECA "framework agenda", an action programme "to guide the continent's

capacity building efforts" has been formulated. An important issue to be dealt with is how to regain the African skilled personnel that has left the continent for abroad as the "urgency of reversing Africa's 'brain drain'" is growing (Harsch 1994).

Meanwhile recognition among policy-makers, practitioners and analysts is rising that "... African governments are now more active in national priority setting in managing donor involvement, which is crucial to regaining ownership of the process. Such actions must also be accompanied by more efforts to allow local personnel to manage externally supported programmes. Donor awareness of and commitment to these issues should be a priority of African governments and other actors concerned with the capacity building process in Africa" (Picard 1994).

It seems as if the roles of donors might be coming up for redefinition and consequently donors "... will face difficult professional judgements on whether, when and how to intervene where projects are not being competently managed by national institutions" (Maddock 1992).

Meanwhile numerous useful action issues can be promoted under innovative approaches towards sustainable institutional development: the crucial criteria upon which their success is likely to depend, is the introduction of a partnership based and inspired donor-recipient relationship. Reordering the relation between "donor and client" will require a thorough overhaul of the present system of aid delivery in general and of TC in particular.

Before any such overhaul is attempted, a closer look at some of the salient reasons for the slow progress in improving the performance record of TC needs to be taken.

Slow progress in improving TC performance

Among the reasons why redesigning TC has only occurred in a sluggish manner, four causes can be stressed in particular. Firstly, the abounding sensitivities towards the topic, the lack of real incentives to change, bureaucratic constraints, and finally policy incoherencies with respect to TC.

1. A sensitive topic

To start with, sensitivities regarding any fundamental overhaul of the well entrenched system of TC abound at all levels. Both donors and recipients have in the past benefitted from TC and from the way it has been managed. Resistance to any fundamental change of the present system of TC delivery is real, and on all sides stake-holders are apprehensive about being blamed

for the ineffectiveness of their role in the delivery of TC and its merely minimal effects upon capacity building. This scenario persists largely because well-paid expatriate TC personnel and pampered African policy-makers fail to set result priorities for TC usage. Sustainable results in terms of capacity building are not to be expected in the absence of recipient commitment to promote indigenous development management capacity and under conditions where donors continue to "add on" capacity building as an appendix to short-term project implementation while continuously neglecting the need for long-term and holistic approaches. "Institutions are not just conglomerates of policies, systems, procedures, staff, and resources. These are integral aspects of a whole: they interact and are interdependent ..." (Saldanha 1994)

2. Absence of incentives

The lack of incentives to change the existing TC system and to put long-standing policy recommendations into practice is a prominent factor for the inertia witnessed in reforming the TC agenda. The "rush to use expatriates" has slowed only minimally in recent years as the interest in aid dominates genuine interest in sustainable human development. The "... incentive structure within which technical co-operation transactions take place is all wrong" leading to situations where "... supply and demand (for TC) operate largely independently of cost considerations ... the host agency has no incentive to economize on (TC) use. ... On the supply side, donors have many reasons to urge personnel on host governments and few to abstain" (Berg 1993, p. 191).

The donor side policy-makers, who until now are the main politically responsible actors in setting development policy guidelines, rarely venture into new, impasse-breaking ground on innovative, systematically recipient focused forms of TC-delivery. In fact, TC can be seen by policy-makers as an indirect vehicle for tying aid to a particular (bilateral) donor. Again, such a basically counter-productive practice in terms of capacity development has been discredited in DAC reports and studies (Jepma 1991).

In addition to cost factors from this malpractice, issues of aid efficiency arise with regard to TC as a tied form of aid: "Limiting the buyer's choice, tied aid is nearly always inefficient. It can also hamper the development of local skills. Oxfam claims that 100 000 consultants from rich countries are now working in Africa, many doing jobs that could be done by Africans."⁶

On the other hand, many African governments continue to hold a stake in the existing system of TC delivery. The framework in which TC operates

6 See: The Economist, The white man's burden, September 25th 1993, p. 53 - 54.

allows aid administrators and project counterparts to derive considerable personal gains out of the system. TC furthermore often allows responsible actors on the recipient side to accept non-sustainable projects which seldom qualify as national development priorities. Resources are thus channelled into activities with only limited impact in terms of advancing national development. As TC is widely regarded as a "free" aid resource, little attention is given to the capacity building implications of using it: once TC is withdrawn, strikingly insignificant levels of local capacity are to be found that are able to take over responsibilities and meet programme or project objectives in any lasting manner. In the widespread absence of Africans in the designing and formulation phases of TC interventions, commitment to the fulfilment of original objectives often remains minimal.

TC comes and goes, without leaving much of a mark on development standards and management capacity in the receiving country, yet it all too often contributes to the enlargement of personal fortunes or helps to advance personal career prospects.

3. Aid Bureaucracy

Bureaucratic constraints have for long been recognized as impeding factors in improving TC performance. Bureaucracies, in particular of a control-oriented planning and management nature, are known to be slow to change, especially under conditions of "... complexity and uncertainty inherent in development activities" (Rondinelli 1982, 62). Indeed the history of state bureaucracies in Africa documents few instances of undivided attention to a country's development aspirations. This is not meant to ignore how these administrations are now confronted with mushrooming demands upon them to effectively deliver services. Meanwhile policy-makers and aid administrators alike struggle with situations which call for "... reorganization and re-direction and even shrinkage of organization when necessary resources ... are not readily available ... African public organizations face a situation of grand tasks necessitated by the crisis and other developments which demand expenditure of resources ... now in short supply" (Mukandala 1992).

It has been argued that the complexities of the development process require a plurality of institutions within a society in order to effectively advance the process (Esman 1991).

When introducing TC as a tool by which development (in particular of local capacities) is to be advanced, new complexities are easily introduced which may lead to an exhaustion of locally available (administrative/bureaucratic) capacity. This tendency of TC is reinforced by the continued multiplicity of

forms and approaches of donor aid interventions and the associated abundance of differing donor procedures for TC provision and implementation.

How to restructure bureaucracies, which in the past have often demonstrated unresponsiveness to effectively engage themselves in development activities, remains a pressing issue to tackle. Recasting bureaucracies from predominantly mechanistic formations to organic, participatory and adaptive ones is an issue to be given prominent attention by policy-makers. "The challenge is to find more appropriate ways of dealing with the inevitable uncertainty and complexity of development problems and of creating the institutional diversity that allows experimentation, innovation and widespread participation in economic activities (and public services)" (Rondinelli 1993, p.158)

4. Incoherent policies

Performance of TC is further curtailed by a persistent lack of policy coherence on TC among donors and by the lack of information on reform experiences shared between users and providers of TC alike. Co-ordination, or rather the lack of it, in respect of aid policies and delivery becomes a pivotal problem to resolve, both within a recipient country as well as among donors. Shortcomings in co-ordination efforts in the redesigning of TC prove to be particularly upsetting where recipient countries are under severe economic and political stress, as is often the case in the aftermath of emergencies or violent civil conflicts. Such countries are least equipped to assume responsibility for co-ordinating the largely unco-ordinated offers of TC by donors who occasionally even compete over influencing recipient development agendas. Only rarely is a donor prepared to "let go" and allow a recipient to determine which sort of TC it wishes to obtain and where from (Asmeron/Jain 1992).

First steps in redesigning TC

1. More incentives to change

On top of the agenda to redesign TC, is the question of providing incentives to proceed with a change of the current system. The perception of TC as a cost free resource, readily available to close gaps in national capacity, to absorb and manage external resources, or to compensate for shortages in expertise in delivering public services and goods, is deeply entrenched. The idea of attaching a price to TC has been developed as a way out of this careless way of utilizing what are in fact extremely expensive resources

(Berg 1993). By convincing recipients that high reliance on TC must in principle entail a reduced availability of other aid allocations, the inclination to call on TC is likely to decline.

At the same time, strategies for phasing-out TC in specific projects need to become standard features in all TC ventures. Where such strategies are not foreseen, there should simply be no provision of TC: "Except in a few isolated cases, milestones should be established for the phased elimination of technical assistance over a three to five year period" (Berkman 1990). With a clear time horizon in sight, each project which relies on TC will be under pressure to ensure that once the horizon is reached, enough national capacity is in place to carry on the project and to fulfil objectives even after the catalytic aid form of TC is withdrawn. Capacity building may thus eventually turn into the true major performance criteria of TC.

2. Be country specific

Country specificity in designing and providing TC to a recipient country is of prime importance.

A quick look at the 1994 UNDP Human Development Index shows that sub-Saharan countries differ greatly, ranking from the medium human development level of position 87 (Botswana) down to the lowest of 173 (Guinea). Obviously, there are equally great differences among these countries in terms of need for TC, country commitment to utilize aid resources effectively, and most importantly, the capacity to absorb and utilize available forms of aid, including TC. A striking paradox of the current system of TC is that "... countries most in need of TC also have the greatest problem in handling the resources put at their disposal and in deriving the best possible benefit from them. High degrees of aid-reliance co-exist with very low levels of absorptive capacity. TC works well in countries that hardly need it" (Bossuyt et al. 1992).

Levels of commitment towards realizing development objectives vary considerably among both recipients and donors. The extent to which TC is employed as a means to strengthen the capacity to formulate and enact these objectives is equally dependent on individual country and policy circumstances.

Although development themes in many African countries may be similar, the variety of national development priorities and objectives must be amply considered when recourse is taken to TC.

Aid relationships must be seen as expressions of confidence between donor and recipient. The higher this confidence manifests itself the more likely it will be that there will be less "... disappointments experienced in generating a spirit of partnership in development co-operation" (Please 1994).

Adopting country specific approaches also when employing TC is a crucial prerequisite for the successful utilization of this development instrument: "In crisis-ridden countries, 'gap-filling' TC may prove to be a necessity. In other countries, this type of substitution is no longer acceptable. The resources involved could be better used for other purposes – perhaps to retain national skills." (Bossuyt/Laporte 1994)

3. Improve cost-effectiveness

A pronounced focus on cost-effectiveness will help to substantially improve the impact of TC on capacity building. As a rule, any provision of TC must be subjected to a prior assessment of available in-country capacities. Again reference should be made to the NaTCAP approach, where "... the collection of basic data has made visible the 'iceberg of TC', particularly in relation to the global cost of expatriate personnel ..." (Bossuyt et al. 1992, p. 55).

Techniques for assessing costs can certainly be improved and once qualified local capacities have been identified, these should actually be called upon to perform developmental tasks. Of the donor instruments in place to enhance cost-effectiveness and aid performance, some can certainly be further refined. The ZOPP (Objectives-oriented project planning) system of the German GTZ, or the European Union's LFA (Logical Framework Assessment) are such examples; both currently suffer from oversophistication. Once a donor uses a method, it should be ensured that the rationale for using it is not only shared by the recipient but also sufficiently well understood to be effectively utilized.

A newer approach towards increasing cost-effectiveness of TC makes use of decentralized modes of development co-operation. While well-discussed and formally politically acknowledged as being an appropriate mode of aid delivery under conditions of weakened states undergoing complicated transition and reform processes, application of decentralized co-operation in practice has encountered operational hazards. Again, country-by-country approaches are of critical importance while the complexities of the transition processes in many African states require that pragmatic gradualist approaches towards institutionalizing decentralized co-operation as a pivotal, participatory mode of aid delivery are taken into due consideration. Especially in relation to the use of TC, "new interfaces" will be necessary in managing resources under this aid delivery mode based upon the recognition that "... civil society institutions can complement the action of the state, but not replace it" (Bossuyt 1994).

Donors themselves will need to strengthen their own analytical and institutional capacities in respect to employing decentralized co-operation in

an efficient manner. With regard to TC, the decentralized approach opens a wide window of opportunities for building development management capacities at local levels, where skills, leadership, and analytical capacity are often least available.

Finally, mention must be made of the need to reallocate TC budgets as a means towards greater cost-effectiveness. Today, the largest portions of TC are allocated to providing donor staff to perform gap-filling tasks in Africa. Few resources are used for mobilizing local expertise, which often exists but is left idle and not called upon. Much larger parts of TC should be used to identify, attract, utilize, and retain such local capacity. In times of shrinking aid budgets, this necessarily entails a substantial reduction of expatriate staff being sent to Africa. In terms of effectiveness, this can make good sense, in reducing the numbers of non-essential donor staff who are employed. Parallel to a reduction in numbers of TC-staff, other remaining parts of TC-budgets could usefully be allocated to budgetary support to local institutions involved in providing development services and managing national development programmes. This may be seen by rigid and over-purist public sector reformists as a new form of subsidizing poorly performing local bureaucracies. However, this argument can easily be unveiled as hypocritical, once it is recognized that there is a strong relation between poor performance of African public sectors and administrations and the shortage of resources to strengthen and build development management capacity in African governance structures.

This does not preclude continued serious endeavours to advance in comprehensively reforming civil service in Africa and rationalizing, where necessary privatizing parts of the governmental machinery. Margins of manoeuvre exist and can be exploited and experimental approaches like creating a "central incentive fund" for civil servants (attempted in Uganda) or converting TC funds into budgetary support for engaging African expertise (experimented with in Togo) ought to be further explored in a serious manner. Under the pressures of structural adjustment and under the barely abated weight of the debt-burden, the task of utilizing TC for institutional development has gained in importance, albeit not necessarily in recognition. Using greater portions of TC for improved public sector management remains an important way to promote the capacity building function of TC in sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Scale down interventions

Scaling down TC interventions by donors will not easily escape encountering the contradiction between advocated policy recommendations and the actual

course of their realization. An illustrative example of such a discrepancy between policy and practice may result from a quick glance at the reality of TC use by German development co-operation institutions. Among the "new concepts" the German aid implementing agency GTZ advocates, a number of very sound answers to recognized deficits of TC can be found. The most novel concepts include:

- analysis of the interests of various participants,
- promotion of pluralism on an institutional level,
- inclusion of NGOs,
- use of local knowledge and, notably the intention to
- use various TC instruments for appropriate problem solution.

It is explicitly concluded that "Capacity building ... remains the top priority for TC" although the authors do tumble into somewhat over-enthusiastic vocabulary when they ascribe to TC a "... socio-political role for the development of pluralism and democracy" (v. Mitzlaff/Vermehren 1994, p. 25).

A closer look at TC as a development instrument of German TC does raise doubts about the seriousness with which proclaimed priorities are pursued. Official data on the deployment of German TC can be used to elucidate how expatriate TC continues to be heavily utilized in spite of extended possibilities to rely on local expertise.

As can be seen from table 1, over the period 1987 to 1993, the total number of German TC-staff has *increased*, despite of well-formulated policy guidelines aimed at reducing numbers of such staff. Differentiating the figures according to individual aid agencies indicates that GTZ itself has succeeded in reducing the number of assigned German TC staff by over 10%, yet most other agencies have not embarked on much of a systematic approach to reduce the number of staff they send abroad. Furthermore, the continuously declining national budget for development aid (during 1990 - 1993, in real terms from 0.42% of GNP to 0.35%, and still falling) has brought an absolute rise in the level of resources for TC, although a decline in relative terms could be registered (from 28% to 25%).

As is certainly the case for many other donors, such "hard data" developments can be well portrayed by the German proverb which states that "paper is patient". And the paper on which aid guidelines are written, clearly poses no exception.

TC-staff employed by German Organizations	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
- German volunteer service	910	942	987	954	1057	1102	1087
- GTZ, leading public German TC agency	1140	1533	1570	1412	1406	1405	1414
- integrated TC-staff	613	630	694	681	771	736	745
- consulting firms	453	363	259	388	353	345	322
- political foundations	296	308	277	298	315	321	345
- other organizations	766	806	708	718	658	707	770
Total	4478	4582	4495	4451	4560	4615	4683

Table 1: German TC personnel (financed from Development Co-operation budget)⁷

The need to scale down the level of TC interventions remains real. The much referred to "Jaycox-paper" has spelled out a number of radical sounding reform proposals and policy changes. It is almost categorically announced that, from the side of the WB, all future TC projects will require a drastic redesigning, in order for them to "fit within domestic capacity", if they are to receive WB support (Jaycox 1993). Precisely, this matching of local technical and managerial capacity with quantities and qualities of available TC, and the responsible use of TC or the recipient self-confidence to decline offers of unneeded TC, are the critical issues of TC that need to be solved.

5. Combine salary and public sector reform

As a concluding, but by no means final step in the attempt to propel the implementation of some of the main long-standing policy recommendations in respect to TC, the question of civil service reform and management of transition phases comes into focus. While in recent years much attention has been dedicated to criticizing poor performance of many African public sectors and administrations, much less disquiet has arisen over the question of inadequate salaries for African public servants. Promises that a "structurally adjusted", de facto strongly scaled down public sector will be able to provide better conditions and terms of remuneration for the remaining (often too few) public servants have yet to materialize. Mounting local delivery and performance demands under conditions of continuous stress in terms of material, personnel, and institutional resources, coupled with tightened donor demands to improve effectiveness, do seem to be unresolvable dilemmas for "structurally adjusted" African public sectors. There seems to be a profound

⁷ Figures on German aid taken from "Journalisten-Handbuch Entwicklungspolitik 1994, BMZ 1994 and from "The reality of aid 1994", EUROSTEP, May 1994.

donor unawareness of the fact that even much higher paid public servants in a neatly scaled down public sector and administration, will face capacity limitations as well as shortages of staff, time, and resources in the absence of comprehensive institutional reforms and lasting improvements of dismal economic conditions.

The issue of improving performance in African country's civil service, repeatedly circles around the question of remuneration. In clear and precise words: "Poor levels of pay have resulted in low levels of performance, widespread laxity at work, moonlighting, lack of discipline, lack of care for public property, pilferage, brain drain, and a host of other problems" (Muta-haba 1993). How to tackle this problem is an urgent issue to address given that under semi-permanent complex and instable development conditions the African public sector is under severe stress to perform.

Given that the exclusive focus on cost-cutting as in the heydays of structural adjustment appears to be passing, donor attention can finally begin to concentrate on capacity development issues. As African societies continue to struggle hard to arrive at democratic and more equitable social relations, support to their new forms of social organization becomes all important: "Resources will have to be spent for stabilizing and generating consensus on the nature of major institutions of a country. In the short term, resource input into institution building may strain the provision of goods and services (in the absence of additional aid resources), but these will pay dividend in the long run. ... Leaders in developing countries for their part must understand that development of fundamental and basic consensus on the major institutions of the nation by an overwhelming majority of the population is vital to the stability and in some instances the survival of these countries." (Rahman/Thai 1991, 415) TC has a role to play in this process, as it can substantially contribute to promoting African capacities and competence to manage national agendas of change and reform in a self-determined manner.

No easy way ahead for TC

Whether one chooses to speak of new avenues or of winding roads on which innovative changes in the use of TC are to progress is rather a semantical question. What is clear is that debates on new ways of designing and utilizing TC have been underway for some years now and useful policy recommendations have been formulated. While debate continues to be necessary, without accompanying far-reaching actions, the point may soon be reached where further discussion is self-defeating.

While it seems as if donors now do view the capacity development agenda as a crucial one for effective TC, they continue to implement changes only

half-heartedly, with little co-ordination among themselves, and regrettably one must attest, seldom with much or any involvement of recipient side policy-makers and development actors. Some principal reasons for the slow progress in changing TC design and modes of its delivery have been explored in this paper. In conclusion, more decisive steps in advancing necessary changes, are long overdue.

One path to explore which may lead to promising ways out of current impasses, is to embark on new forms of in-country task division with regard to TC and its central function of capacity building (see figure 1 below).

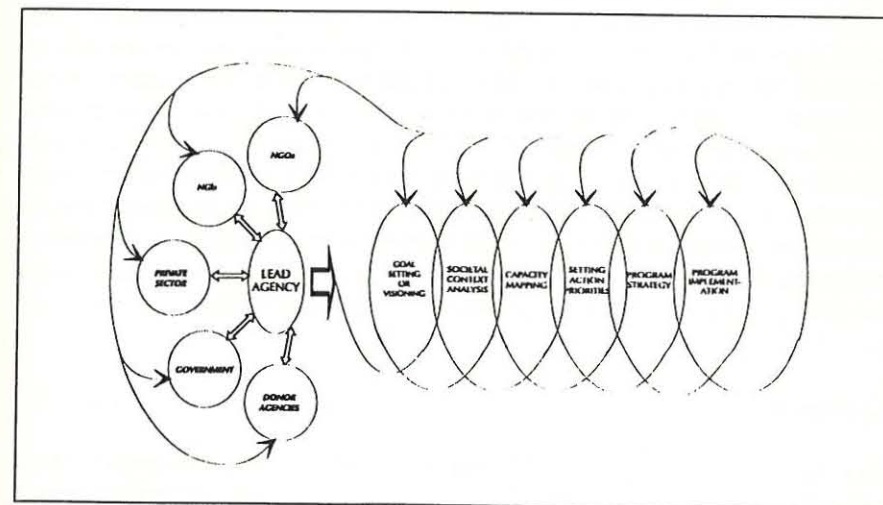


Figure 1: A participatory framework for capacity development

This "framework for capacity development planning" has been proposed to guide reform efforts in a systematic way. TC as a major instrument for developing capacities could benefit from such a framework.

Lead agencies or donors would be identified to co-ordinate, on a country-by-country basis, donor support for capacity building by way of TC. The framework would "... cut across ... the systems ... social, political, economic, and ecological". It would incorporate "... interrelated stages and a series of feedback loops".⁸

⁸ This participatory framework has been presented to the Institute on Governance workshop on capacity development from November 22 – 24, 1993 in Ottawa by Jan Loubser (CIDA). Reproduced from Loubser, J.: Capacity Development – A Conceptual Overview. In: Morgan and Carlan, 1994.

The concept of a task division, with a lead agency taking responsibility of capacity building measures and initiatives of TC in a particular country, would open up opportunities to concentrate relevant donor efforts. Duplications of efforts and inconsistencies in delivering TC among different donors could be reduced considerably. For recipient countries, the administrative and capacity stretching burden of meeting diverse TC related reporting and implementation procedures could be minimized. Once partnership concepts in development co-operation gain ground and recipient involvement in design, formulation, and implementation of TC (and other forms of aid) is thoroughly expanded, it is more than likely that one will witness substantially higher degrees of aid effectiveness. Aid flows should then accelerate and the often heard argument that "money is there but not being used" will be emptied of any justification it may have had. More capacity in Africa to manage national development, utilizing internal and external resources, may then quickly reveal how necessary increased donor commitments to sub-Saharan development actually are. Providing adequate means for human and institutional capacities in Africa to significantly improve in-country development standards will almost certainly help to reduce future risks of capacity breakdowns due to political crisis and the disruptions associated with conditions of economic stress many African countries struggle with daily.

Abstracts

Technische Zusammenarbeit (TZ) als Instrument der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, ist überholungsbedürftig. Trotz gewaltiger finanzieller und personeller Ressourcen, die seit vielen Jahren für TZ aufgewendet werden, ist der Hauptzweck wofür TZ offiziell eingesetzt wird, nämlich der Aufbau und die Stärkung lokaler Kapazitäten, nur unzulänglich erfüllt worden. Im Verhältnis zum Aufwand und gemessen an den formulierten entwicklungspolitischen Zielen der Beteiligten, sind die Erfolge eher bescheiden geblieben. Unter den Gründen für das Ausbleiben gewichtiger Entwicklungsfortschritte trotz intensiven Einsatzes von TZ, sind Unzulänglichkeiten im Umgang sowie Probleme mit dem effizienten und kohärenten Einsatz von TZ hervorzuheben. Anreize zur inhaltlichen Redefinierung von TZ, länderspezifische und kosten effektive Anwendung des Instruments, sowie eine einhergehende Reduzierung des Einsatzes nicht-einheimischen Personals bei gleichzeitiger Verbesserung der Besoldungssituation und der öffentlichen Verwaltungsstrukturen in Afrika, werden als Einstiegsschritte zur Reformierung von TZ vorgeschlagen. Der systematischen Nutzung der, durchaus vorhandenen, sinnvollen Reformvorschläge und Initiativen im Hinblick auf TZ, sollten baldige Chancen eingeräumt werden. Den desorientierten Geberländern wie auch den insti-

tutionell angeschlagenen afrikanischen Ländern bleiben wohl kaum Alternativen hierzu.

Technical co-operation (TC) as an instrument of development co-operation is in need for an overhaul. Despite enormous financial and personal resources which have been invested into TC for many years, the main target of TC, namely the building and strengthening of local capacities, was achieved to an insufficient extent. Compared to the expenses and measured by the policy aims formulated by those involved success remained rather humble. Among the reasons for the failure of essential progress in development to materialize, despite substantial input of TC, shortcomings in dealing as well as problems with efficient and coherent implementation of TC have to be emphasized. Incentives for a substantive redefinition of TC, country-specific and cost-effective applications of that instrument as well as parallel reduction of expatriate personnel combined with improved remuneration and efficiency of public administration in Africa were proposed as first steps in reforming TC. Largely existing reasonable reform proposals and initiatives regarding TC ought to be given speedy chances for systematic utilization. Hardly any alternative is left for the disorientated donor countries as well as for the institutionally feeble African states.

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Rural Development in Africa South of the Sahara: Some Methodological Reflections

A meeting on the problems of rural development and agriculture such as this offers a welcome opportunity for throwing a critical light on some vital issues. Being aware that in sub-saharan Africa development efforts have failed to meet most expectations, I would like to raise five points that have come to my attention when looking for answers to these findings.

1) Top-down approaches obstruct the consideration of the rural, often illiterate population's concerns

For a long time the rural populations were treated as "objects" of development rather than subjects, maybe due to their inability to speak French (English), the foreign language, which nevertheless dominates discussions on development issues at all levels. Reflections, evaluations and designing new perspectives take place almost completely outside the world of the people concerned.

Donors and government services alike tend to focus on a logical framework that concentrates either on productivity or technicality, in total contrast and opposition to habitual ways of doing and managing things sanctioned by the people.

- Normally one finds nationwide just one uniform credit system which does not take into account any local differentiations.
- The programmes of water and agriculture management seldom integrate traditional, widely diverse production systems; thus, the effort to produce more rice makes them ignore other options for crop production (maïs, millet, niébé) or the improvement of cattle-breeding; legitimate interests of cattle-breeders are not respected (f.i. securing tracks for the cattle) and therefore conflicts between cattle-breeders and farmers continue.
- Training programmes for farmers are often standardized, and leave out completely all local knowledge and know-how. Standard topics are being treated and techniques are diffused in a top-down fashion without any previous experience regarding their applicability. This may cause either acceptance or resistance that again obstruct any innovation, even when its relevance has been generally affirmed.