

THE AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION AND STATISTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN AFRICA

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), which is based in Harare, Zimbabwe, is an independent development funding institution established on 9 February 1991 through the collaborative efforts of three multilateral institutions (the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Governments and bilateral donors.

The establishment of ACBF was a response to the severity of Africa's capacity problem and the challenge to invest in indigenous human capital and institutions in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Foundation's principal objectives are to:

- i. build and strengthen sustainable indigenous capacity for macroeconomic policy analysis and development throughout sub-Saharan Africa;
- ii. improve through co-financing and other networking arrangements, the channeling and coordination of donor support for capacity building in the area of the Foundation's mandate;
- iii. contribute to programs for the reversal of brain drain from the continent and encourage retention as well as intensive utilization of existing capacity;
- iv. build capacity in key areas of the public sector with emphasis on the interface between the public sector, on the one hand, and the private sector and civil society on the other; and
- v. provide support for regional institutions and initiatives.

ACBF focused initially on addressing capacity needs in the areas of macroeconomic policy analysis and development management. The Foundation has developed a niche in addressing the paucity of expertise in these areas by providing direct support for capacity-building operations through the African Capacity Building (ACB) Fund – a trust fund managed on its behalf by the World Bank.

In 1999, the Boards of the Foundation approved the expansion of its role in capacity building to include the Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa (PACT) Initiative. The integration of PACT into ACBF constituted the subject of a

feasibility study whose main thrust was subsequently endorsed by the Executive Board and the Board of Governors.

Following the integration of PACT, the Foundation broadened its role to include the following key categories:

- enhancement of public sector performance and effectiveness;
- strengthening of interface among the private sector, the public sector and society; and
- strengthening of regional institutions and initiatives.
- economic policy analysis and management;
- financial management and accountability;
- strengthening and monitoring of national statistics;
- public administration and management;
- strengthening of the policy analysis capacity of national parliaments; and
- professionalization of the voices of the private sector and civil society.

Since the integration of the partnership for capacity building in Africa into its fold in 2000, the Foundation has identified statistical capacity building as one of its core competence areas. For The need to revamp national statistical systems and harmonize measures of national accounts and price statistics to ensure cross-country and international comparability cannot be over emphasized.

To date there are two full-fledged statistical capacity building projects in the Foundation's portfolio:

1. Labor Market Information System (LMIS) project is a ACBF-ILO pilot initiative to support a sub-regional project to build capacity for collection, analysis and monitoring of labor market statistics, with a view to generating poverty-related statistics for monitoring the performance of poverty reduction strategies and programs. The pilot phase covers five countries: Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia.
2. In December 2003, the Executive Board approved the '*Projet de Renforcement des Capacités en Statistiques, Etudes perspectives et planification pour la Lutte contre la Pauvrete en République du Congo RESPEC*' with the view of building statistical capacity of major directorates

in the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning including the NSO, in order to improve the performance of both ministries in policy formulation and management, and the assessment and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies and programs.

The Foundation has also been providing support to statistical capacity building through its policy units and training projects. Some of them have explicit components in national statistical capacity building, such as the '*projet de renforcement des Capacités en Gestion Economique et Financière de la République du Caméroun (CAMERCAP)*' and '*projet de renforcement des capacités en Gestion Economique et financière de la République Gabonaise (PRECAGEF)*'.

Moreover, in October 2003, the Foundation launched the Statistics Technical Advisory Panel and Network (STATNET), which will focus on the sharing of best practices, and contribute to the refinement of definitions, concepts, methodologies, measures, and provide technical advice in statistical analysis and the management of national accounts. The STATNET members constitute a considerable asset and a comparative advantage for the Foundation over other partners in the implementation and monitoring of ICP-Africa program.

Lastly, during its meeting of 5-7 May 2004, the Executive Board of the Foundation approved a grant of one million US dollars to participate in the International Comparison Program for Africa (ICP-Africa), which is a continent-wide initiative to build statistical capacity under the leadership of the African Development Bank, the World Bank and ECA.

It is evident that the Foundation needs to step up and strengthen its intervention in the building of statistical capacity throughout the continent. While this is important for achieving its holistic approach to capacity building for sustainable development, it is more that ever compelling given the need for effective monitoring of programs and projects in the implementation of PRSPs and the assessment of progress in the achievement of the MDGs.

The scope and the complexity of the continent's statistical capacity building needs are so extensive that the Foundation on its own can achieve only a limited result based on available resources. Therefore, while working directly with the countries on statistical capacity needs and the development of strategic statistical development plans, the Foundation is in the process of strengthening its partnership with capacity building initiatives such as PARIS21 and ICP-Africa.