

# eAfrica

The electronic journal of governance and innovation

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## How Much Does AIDS Cost Africa?

AS FAR back as 2003 a World Bank report warned that most studies on the macroeconomic costs of AIDS – as measured by reduced GDP rates – were underestimating the impact of tearing holes in Africa's social fabric. Previous studies estimated that AIDS reduces GDP from between 0.3 and 1.5 %, according to the report, *The Long-Term Costs of AIDS: Theory and Application to South Africa*. But that is only the directly measurable aspects of cost. The impact is altogether larger.

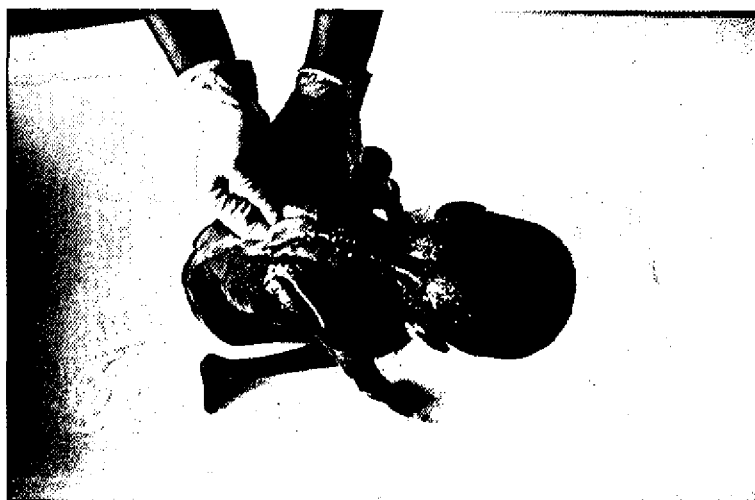
Not only does the disease cancel the lifetime investment in productive adults, but employers must pay to retrain new workers, production is interrupted, funds that might otherwise be invested into productive ventures get diverted into healthcare and funerals, and as people reach the latter stages, children are drawn away from school to tend to ailing parents. The World Bank's chief economist, Shanta Devarjan, argued that 'in those countries facing an HIV/AIDS epidemic on the same scale as South Africa, if nothing is done quickly to fight the epidemic, we face economic

collapse within several generations, with family incomes being cut in half.'

By killing adults in the prime of life, AIDS also is creating vast numbers of orphans. A UNICEF study, *Africa's Orphaned Generations*, found that between 1990 and 2001 the proportion of orphans whose parents died from HIV/AIDS rose from 3.5 % to 32 %. Today more than one in 10 children in Africa is orphaned by AIDS. In Botswana the figure is one in five.

By killing parents, AIDS is severing the flow of knowledge between generations and leaving the young to fend for themselves. In Zimbabwe, the study found, orphaned girls are three times more likely to be infected than girls with parents.

This issue of *eAfrica* looks at how Swaziland is harnessing traditional social institutions and communities to support the growing number of AIDS orphans. We also examine the risks of ethnic war in Côte d'Ivoire and the fight for the direction of South African political culture sparked by the firing of its deputy president.



### PLAY YOUR PART:

*The shocking devastation brought on by HIV/AIDS has left children such as this one at the mercy of volunteers and caring communities in most of southern Africa as parents and family members succumb to the deadly disease. Read more about community responses on page 5.*

*Photo: Southphoto*

# Verbatim

**“Here in my country 10 people die of AIDS every hour. Unfortunately, there is only so much we can do... Africa cannot fight poverty and disease without more doctors and nurses.”** – Hetherwick Ntaba, Malawi’s minister of health, lamenting the recruitment of African healthcare workers by western countries that lure them with better salaries at the expense of Africa’s healthcare systems.

**“Many of Africa’s deaths are preventable, postponable and reversible if only we can defeat the stigma, shame, discrimination, denial and inaction.”** – Canon Gideon Byamugisha of Uganda, on the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. He has been living with HIV for 18 years.

**“The problem that we face is a lack of real commitment by all of Africa’s leaders to recognise the scale of the horror that is taking place in Zimbabwe.”** – Jack Straw, British foreign secretary, on the destruction taking place in Zimbabwe.

**“If there was a plan, we wouldn’t have people sleeping under trees or next to rivers... It puzzles me and it puzzles all sane people.”** – Pearson Mbalekwa, former director of the Zimbabwe Central Intelligence Organisation and a former member of Zanu-PF’s central committee, saying neither the committee nor MPs were consulted before Operation Drive Out Rubbish was kicked off.

**“The campaign has nothing to do with public policy issues and the claimed clean-up. It’s a self-serving agenda of a misguided clique that thinks it can maintain power through vandalism.”** – A senior Zanu-PF official.

**“What is important – and what is lacking on the continent – is [a willingness] to comment on wrong policies in a neighbouring country.”** – Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, saying African leaders must speak out on regimes such as that of Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe.

**“Government does not need parliament’s approval for him to buy a car and it is not true that we have bought the car. All government did was to ask for a quotation.”** – Ralph Kasambara, Malawi’s attorney-general, on a call to impeach President Bingu wa Mutharika who has been accused of



violating the constitution and misusing state funds to buy a limousine worth almost \$900,000 and paying for his grandchildren’s education.

**“Without strong institutions and professional capacities, a doubling of aid is not very useful.”** – Uschi Eid, advisor to German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on African policy, questioning the doubling of developmental aid to Africa.

**“We should look at the problems we are confronting, and ask who can handle these problems best.”** – Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda since 1986. His parliament has lifted term limits, meaning he could be in power if he wins the 2006 elections.

**“I am a young man and the others are old and tomorrow they will disappear.”** – Kumba Yala, former president of Guinea-Bissau and presidential candidate in the June elections, after losing to two others in the first round of polling. He is 52 years old, while his rivals are in their late 50s and 60s.

**“Democracy is a word which many don’t understand or don’t even know, and when you say elections they think that means war. There is a deep fear of elections after what happened in 1992, when war broke out again even stronger than before.”** – Hilde Kusche-Uebber, a consultant, on Angolans and their readiness for next year’s election, the first since 1992.

**“You know we have a greedy government. Even if they cancel the debt, it will not help if the government is greedy. Senior government officials should cut their salaries first.”** – Phillip Khisa, Kenyan student, questioning whether debt relief would help Africa if the continent didn’t get its house in order first.

**“All I want to say to G-8 is, spend some time with the real people of Africa. You’re welcome at my home anytime, if you don’t mind life without running water.”** – Peter Kanas, a Kenyan farmer.

**“We don’t want professionalisation of power so that people are professionally a president for 50 years – that is out of order.”** – Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, reiterating that he wouldn’t stand for president in 2009 as the constitution restricts the term limit to two.

## ANALYSIS

# Côte d'Ivoire: Warning Signs of Another Rwanda

PEACE is within Côte d'Ivoire's grasp, if only the government and rebels honour their pledges, Pierre Schori of the UN mission in Abidjan said last month, after another delay to the preparations for elections in October.

But the insecurities over national identity and economic control that led to the civil war continue to polarise Ivoirians on both sides of the north-south front line. Unless the UN and the African Union ensure that both sides address the underlying causes of this war, the hostility and distrust between them will render paper agreements worthless.

Under pressure from South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki, the African Union mediator, Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo has passed nationality and electoral laws as demanded by the Forces Nouvelles (FN) rebels and the powerful opposition leader Alassane Ouattara. Yet many Ivoirians suspect both sides are still preparing for war.

After two-and-a-half years of 'permanent crisis', government and opposition have grown used to an uneasy status quo that is neither peace nor war. The economic nose-dive and insecurity triggered by the civil war have left the population yearning for peace, but mistrust of their opponents and a taste for power give the divided country's leaders less incentive to break the political and military deadlock.

In line with the UN-backed peace process, the rebel forces have agreed to disarm by early September.

Gbagbo's ruling Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) is a minority party with little core support beyond the 20% of Ivoirians from his western region and risks losing in fair elections. Meanwhile, the rebel leaders in the north are in no hurry to



## TALKING PEACE:

*Tensions are high as President Laurent Gbagbo prepares for elections starting on 30 October.*

give up the power and wealth they have enjoyed since seizing control of 60% of the country in their 2002 rebellion.

Delayed or badly-flawed elections would allow time for both sides to rearm with funds from cash crop exports, despite a UN arms embargo. But the military stalemate on the front line may be hard to break. The danger for Ivoirians is that the UN-supervised peace process could provide cover for a new but deadly kind of war, in which ethnic propaganda is a vital weapon and unarmed civilians are the targets.

## Uneasy truce

The seeds of this conflict emerged in 1993 when the stable era of founding President Felix Houphouët-Boigny ended with his death. Despite three decades of prosperity, indigenous Ivoirians in the south felt overrun by foreigners. Farmers and labourers from Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea and traders from Lebanon were freely granted nationality and made up a third of the population. Common land in the west had been ceded to migrants to grow cocoa and coffee. Banking and industry was controlled by French firms.

**'The hostility and distrust between them will render paper agreements worthless'**

The next president, Henri Konan Bedie, passed 'Ivorianness' laws that barred former prime minister Ouattara from challenging for the presidency because he was partly of Burkinabe descent. The laws also disenfranchised millions of Ivoirians from the mainly Muslim north. Gbagbo's presidency has further whipped up xenophobia through the ruling party's rabble-rousing rhetoric and use of ethnic militias.

The peace deal President Mbeki and the UN are trying to keep on track has done little to ease the insecurity and mistrust that was deepened by civil war. The Linas Marcoussis Treaty, brokered by France in early 2003, ended the war on terms that the government bitterly resented. It gave territory and ministerial posts to the leaders of an armed uprising against an elected government. On his return from France, Gbagbo made it clear that he had signed under duress on foreign soil, with the remnants of his army too weak to reverse the losses to the rebels.

The ceasefire is enforced by UN and French forces along a buffer zone where the northern rebels' advance had been halted, mainly by French intervention. Gbagbo agreed to a government of national unity with the rebels and with opposition parties, mainly Ouattara's RDR, which has the backing of most northerners or Dioulas, and the PDCI, the former ruling party that is strong among the Akan ethnic group in east and central Côte d'Ivoire.

Gbagbo has sidelined the coalition government and runs the southern half of the country with a kitchen cabinet from his own party, including his wife Simone, who heads the majority FPI contingent in the National Assembly,

## ANALYSIS

former prime minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan and former defence minister Bertin Kadet. His advisors have set up and armed pro-Gbagbo militia groups recruited from unemployed youth – in Abidjan and the west – who openly challenge the peace deal and operate either in defiance or with tacit support from the uniformed army and police.

The rebels have held up disarmament, citing the militias' threat and the failure of the FPI-dominated parliament to reform discriminatory citizenship laws and enact an independent electoral commission. The rebels have consolidated their power by levying unofficial taxes and extorting money from civilians, resupplying their army and smuggling commodity exports through Burkina Faso. Local FN commanders, some of whom were of low rank before the rebellion, operate more like war lords than army officers and risk reprisals if they disarm.

The opposition parties demand fair elections, but the government accuses Ouattara, who fled into exile in 2002, of backing the rebellion. This has not been proved, although one of the rebels' first demands was that he be allowed to run for the presidency. Under instruction from Mbeki, Gbagbo lifted this ban in May.

### Arming for peace?

The government broke the ceasefire last November in an attempt to finish off the FN forces with artillery and air strikes on their northern bases. They also hit French targets, and France responded by wiping out the small Ivorian air force.

The deadline for disarmament and reintegration of the rebel army is only three weeks before the presidential election is due on 30 October, raising doubts whether free and fair polls are

feasible. Observers expect a dangerous confrontation if elections lapse. Gbagbo says that, under the constitution, the incumbent remains head of state even after his mandate has expired until elections can be held. The rebels and the opposition say his mandate expires at the end of October and he must step down.

While President Gbagbo was in Pretoria last month insisting on rebel disarmament, the UN found government forces unloading 22 military jeeps and some crates, whose cargo has not been revealed, at the port of Abidjan. The UN says it is investigating this among a series of arms embargo breaches by both sides. The UN mission's military commander, General Abdoulaye Fall, has also rejected as incomplete the arms inventory submitted by the Ivorian armed forces, which listed only small arms and omitted the government's heavy weaponry.

The international community knows the potential sources for illicit weapons and military support for both sides in this conflict. Foreign intelligence reports say there are frequent flights to Abidjan with unexplained cargo from Angola; Eastern European mercenaries pilot the Ivorian air force; Israeli intelligence officers in Abidjan are believed to be intercepting telecommunications traffic. The International Contact Group of nations who have supported the Liberian peace process have reported that the Ivorian government has hired Liberian mercenaries to bolster pro-government militia groups in the lawless west of the country, a flashpoint for land disputes between the indigenous Bete and Guere and Dioula migrants from the north.

President Mbeki has asked the UN

Security Council to withhold the threat of targeted sanctions against defaulters, but this is the most powerful way for the UN to apply pressure on both sides in the peace process. Diplomats in Abidjan argue that missed deadlines on key actions by signatories should trigger automatic sanctions such as travel bans and freezing of offshore assets.

### Patriots and xenophobia

The government position has hardened after Gbagbo reorganised the security forces in Abidjan under a commander with close links to violent youth militias and imposed martial law in the Douekue district, where dozens of civilians died last month in sectarian violence. The chief military spokesman, Colonel Jules Yao Yao, was dismissed last month after contradicting claims by Gbagbo's advisors that sectarian clashes in the west were caused by the rebels and Ouattara. He was later detained and beaten up after visiting the French embassy. An armed colleague arrested with him died days later. A confidential UN report, leaked to the media in July, says the massacre in Douekue was the work of Liberian mercenaries hired by a pro-Gbagbo militia leader.

The paranoia on both sides has parallels with the build-up to the Rwandan genocide. If disarmament and the election process stall and the government army cannot defeat the rebels, opposition groups fear that Gbagbo will rely increasingly on the militias, swelled by high unemployment among the Ivorians under the age of 24 who make up two-thirds of the 18 million population. The largest militia group, the Young Patriots, claims to have saved Gbagbo from attack by French troops in Abidjan in November.

As the International Crisis Group warned in its latest report: 'With each cycle of violence in Côte d'Ivoire, the killing gets worse.' – Paul Adams

**'The rebels have consolidated their power by levying unofficial taxes and extorting money from civilians'**

**'The paranoia on both sides has parallels with the build-up to the Rwanda genocide'**

## SPECIAL FEATURE

# Community Solutions for Africa's AIDS Orphans

ON A maize-covered hill in Swaziland's central belt, 75-year-old Josphethia Sihlongonyane surveyed the coming harvest with her neighbour, Dorkas Dlamini. The ears were fat and drying on the stalk in the April sun. It would be a fine yield, the two women agreed.

'Don't worry,' Dlamini assured the older woman, a stooped and wrinkled grandmother caring for two AIDS orphans and seven other relatives. 'I will be here when it is time to harvest.'

Dlamini's concern for Sihlongonyane is more than simply normal neighbourly compassion; it's part of a concerted effort in Swaziland to renew a sense of community responsibility for social problems, especially the rising number of orphans, in the era of AIDS.

Both women are involved in a project dubbed *indlunkhulu*, meaning 'the big house'. The programme is an attempt to revive an old tradition under which local chiefs kept fields – ploughed and harvested by their subjects – to provide for the community's neediest. In its modern incarnation, the food will be earmarked for families with orphans and other vulnerable children.

'The solution to HIV problems has to come from within the country,' said Derrek von Wissel, director of Swaziland's National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS, which is coordinating the project. 'We must exhaust our thinking and creativity before we start looking at other models. I'm not saying that one must not look at other models, but you mustn't go and try in the first instance to go import some model that worked in San Francisco, because in all likelihood the cultural roots of that model may not fit.'

More than 12 million African children have lost at least one parent to AIDS. In Swaziland, a country of just more



**COMMUNAL SOLUTIONS:** Dudu Mabuzza, a volunteer at the Mayaluka Neighbourhood Care Point, is one of those who have sacrificed their time and the little they have to give support to children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.

Photo: Nicole Itano

than a million, the UN estimates there are 70,000 orphans, up from 20,000 in the year 2000.

The vast majority of such children, perhaps as many as 95% according to the World Bank, are cared for not in institutions, but by relatives, usually by a surviving parent, aunts and uncles, grandparents or older siblings.

## Enduring the strain

Yet the epidemic, most observers agree, is stretching these extended families to the breaking point. In the hardest hit communities, foster parents are themselves dying, and those that remain are struggling to cope. Already, some researchers have estimated that in many hard-hit countries, one in six households is fostering an orphaned child and most of those experience economic stress if not assisted.

And the problem is only expected to get worse in coming years. The number of orphans on the continent is expected to nearly triple in the next five years to more than 35 million, although improved access to antiretroviral drugs may slow or delay the speed of that rise.

In the face of such numbers, and given Africa's limited resources, countries such as Swaziland must find low-cost, high-

impact ways to support and protect orphans within their own communities.

'I think almost everyone is agreed that institutions are not the way to go, everyone except maybe some large church-based, big time US fundraisers,' said Alan Brody, UNICEF country director in Swaziland. 'We all know the best result for orphaned children is to be taken into a warm and caring foster family. And that's the tradition in Africa. There were no orphans. Every child was cared for. The problem is that at the moment, the decimation of families is so extensive that the extended family system is not working.'

'The key issue,' he said, 'is how do you get resources to those families?'

Nowhere is the magnitude of Africa's orphan problem, or the challenges it presents, more obvious than in Swaziland, now believed to have the world's highest HIV-infection rate. The country's last antenatal survey, in 2004, found that a staggering 42.6% of pregnant women were infected.

Many communities like Nsenga chieftaincy, where Sihlongonyane and Dlamini live, are already beginning to groan under the impact of AIDS and, as the epidemic matures, the

## SPECIAL FEATURE

number of AIDS-related deaths, and thus of orphans, is likely to continue to increase, despite the recent rollout of antiretroviral drugs at a handful of urban hospitals.

Society in Swaziland is unprepared to face the growing crisis. The department of social welfare only has 16 employees dedicated to welfare issues. There are no social welfare grants, as there are in South Africa, and no capacity to distribute them even if the money to pay for such a programme existed. So Swaziland is relying on low-cost, community-based programmes to address the growing orphan crisis.

Under government supervision, *indlunkhulu* builds on existing state infrastructure and Swaziland's strong network of traditional leaders. Each of the country's 360 chiefs was instructed to set aside land for an *indlunkhulu* field and oversee the planting, maintenance and harvesting of the crop. Each chieftaincy has a large, central field that will supply food to the area, but in some places like Nsenga, smaller fields have also been planted for individual families. Extension officers from the agriculture department offer advice and oversee the distribution of starter seeds and fertilizer. Eventually, government officials hope the programme will be sustainable, with the fields producing enough so the surplus can be sold to buy inputs for the next year.

Only two years old, the programme has so far had mixed success in feeding orphans, in part due to poor weather. In 2003, according to Von Wissel, 190 *indlunkhulu* fields were planted in the country's about 360 chieftaincies. But because of poor rains, 40% of those failed completely and only 12% were able to produce enough food to feed all the orphans in the area.

It is still too early to tell how the 300 fields planted in 2004, which were harvested

in May, fared. But Swazi officials are hoping for a better yield across the country, in part because this year they required communities in drought-stricken areas to plant crops that fare better than maize in drought conditions, like sorghum and sweet potatoes.

The impact of *indlunkhulu* and similar programmes, however, may extend beyond simply feeding hungry children. Government officials hope that by forcing communities to confront the AIDS problem, it will eventually help inspire them to do more.

'It's a common enemy and we must all gear up to fight it,' said Martin Fakudze, the agricultural officer who volunteered to assist Nsenga on the *indlunkhulu* project. 'That is what we are trying to show people.'

Sihlongonyane, whose own planting is limited by access to seeds and fertilizer, says the food from the *indlunkhulu* field will provide welcome relief. In Nsenga, unlike in other parts of the country, the harvest this season is expected to be good. But she and Dlamini also say attitudes towards AIDS, and the community response towards those affected, are beginning to change.

'I am grateful that this tradition is coming back,' Sihlongonyane said of *indlunkhulu*. 'People are starting to help each other again. Even if you are terminally ill, people are coming to care for you and feed you.'

Of course, food security is only one of many problems orphans face. Orphans are often emotionally traumatised, lose access to education, and are more vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse. *Indlunkhulu* may help those families whose primary concern is lack of food, but it is not a panacea.

Two other orphan programmes in

Swaziland, ensuring that children go to school and have community-based day care, demonstrate the potential of supported community-based responses and the limits of government programmes in weak states.

In 2003, the government set aside about \$2.5 million for school fees for orphans. The first year, the programme was a disaster, government officials also admit.

With no systems in place to ensure that the money was distributed, it is unclear who the fund benefited and there have been widespread allegations that much of the money went to pay the school fees of children with connections rather than to the neediest orphans.

'We don't have a clear framework for the disbursement of resources,' said Emmanuel Ndlangamandla, director of Swaziland's Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO). 'And therefore, you may find at the end that we're not really addressing the problems, because money is lost in-between. Government is spending, but money is not reaching the intended beneficiaries because there are no systems or systems are weak.'

In recent years, the amount of money dedicated to the programme has been expanded dramatically and the system for choosing who will benefit changed. In theory, all orphans in Swaziland should be receiving free education. Today the orphan fund is working better than when it started, but there are still many children who should be benefiting who have slipped through the cracks.

Twelve-year-old Thembinkosi Habile is one such child. The rail-thin, quiet orphan in ragged clothes lives with his grandmother in Mayaluka village and has never been to school. Swaziland's orphan education fund is supposed to fund school fees for parentless children, but the local headmaster says his school's quota of orphans has been filled.

### 'Food security is only one of many problems orphans face'

### 'There are no social welfare grants, and no capacity to distribute them even if the money existed'

## SPECIAL FEATURE

Fortunately, Habile is being assisted by another programme, a UNICEF-sponsored project called Neighbourhood Care Points. NCPs are shoestring operations, run mostly by local women who volunteer to care for, feed and teach orphans and other vulnerable children basic skills. The caregivers also become informal social workers for the orphans: listening to problems at home and, when possible, advocating on their behalf.

Dudu Mabuza runs the Mayaluka care point with four other women, all grandmothers and most caring for orphans themselves. The project is run out of a community member's spare room, which doubles as a classroom and storeroom, although a small building is being constructed for the children. There Habile has learnt to read the alphabet, count, and recite the days of the week and months, although sometimes he still gets confused.

From UNICEF, the care point has received some cooking pots and plates, some educational materials, and mats for the children to sit on. Because they are in a drought area, at the moment they receive food from the World Food Programme. Sometimes though, when that food runs out, they canvass the neighbourhood for donations. Eventually, the idea is to use food from the *indlunkbulu*. But the volunteers receive no salary or stipend.

'We recognised that some kids were poor and had nothing to eat, so we volunteered to help them,' said Mabuza, a plump, smiling woman who uses a ruler to keep time as she leads the children in song. 'We're expecting God to reward us in the end, but if something comes up to help, we would be grateful.'

So far, there are 300 UNICEF-sponsored care points around the country, but as the programme expands they have found that some local communities have been adopting the idea even without outside assistance. In one neighbouring village, Mabuza said, a local woman who had visited their programme began to

take in and feed orphans in her own community. But a few weeks ago, she too died of AIDS.

As the programme grows, UNICEF is trying to figure out a way to support caregivers without destroying the sense of volunteerism and community-based nature of the project. It is, says Brody, a fine line. The trick, he says, is to build community ownership of the programme before flooding it with resources. Much of their job so far has been to simply spread the idea – which was initially conceived by a Swazi villager involved in a UNICEF study – of the extent of the orphan problem.

'We started this on a very ad hoc basis, just encouraging them,' he said. 'All we were giving was a big cast iron pot

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**'We're expecting God to reward us in the end, but if something comes up to help, we would be grateful'**

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and the communities were giving their own food.' As more resources became available, they began to increase the assistance. But each NCP remains at root a community project.

In contrast, a NERCHA programme to build orphan support centres in each chieftaincy has so far floundered. The buildings have been built, but there is little happening inside them.

While even programmes like *indlunkbulu* and the NCPs may be subject to abuse, so far they seem to be running smoother than government-run programmes such as the orphan education fund. One reason for this may be their community-based nature, another that they are less resource-dependent and therefore there is less space for corruption: the total budget for the NCPs has been less than \$2 million, most of which has gone to buy basic materials such as cooking

pots and roofing. And finally, while the programmes are targeted primarily at orphans, other vulnerable children are not excluded, so there is less of a sense of favouritism within communities.

Swaziland's experience offers lessons for Africa's poorest countries, showing that effective orphan care programmes can be developed even in the absence of big budgets and sophisticated bureaucracies. But it may also provide models for richer African countries struggling to deal with growing orphan populations.

The governments of South Africa and Botswana, for example, have taken entirely different approaches to the problem, relying largely on the civil service and government bureaucracy to distribute resources to orphaned children and their foster families.

In South Africa, foster care-givers can apply to receive a Foster Child Grant of about \$84 a month for each orphan they are caring for. In Botswana, orphaned children receive monthly food baskets from the government.

But such programmes often become tangled in bureaucracy and are subject to corruption. In South Africa, for example, the process of signing up for a grant is so onerous that few are able to access them without outside assistance.

In order to register for the grant, families must have birth certificates for the children and death certificates for the parents. They must submit an application to the Department of Welfare and receive an assessment visit by a social worker. Then they must appear before a magistrate to receive legal custody of the children. Once all these steps are completed, the application often takes months or even years to be processed. Still, the government believes it loses about \$225 million a year to fraudulent social grant claims.

Until the social grant system is fixed, perhaps more emphasis should be placed on helping communities help themselves. – Nicole Itano

# Putting Faith in Child Care

**Governments, donors must recognise the role of religious groups in caring for vulnerable children.**

IT IS often said there is no such thing as an orphan in Africa. Children who lose parents are normally taken into relatives' families. But the scale of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa is overwhelming the extended family system, leaving too many orphans and too few caregivers.

Sub-Saharan Africa has 24 of the 25 countries with the highest levels of HIV prevalence and orphans account for 15% of children in 11 countries in the region. The number of children without both parents is forecast to rise from 0.2 to 2.7 million in southern Africa.

The strength of religion on this continent is an under-appreciated factor that helps families and local communities cope with this crisis. More than 85% of Africa's population is involved in a religious association. Despite criticism of their negative response to the epidemic, religious groups' support for community programmes for orphans and vulnerable children is growing.

Most of the work of these congregations is small-scale and its impact difficult to measure. However, a study of 690 religious communities, by the World Conference of Religions for Peace in collaboration with UNICEF, in six countries in east and southern Africa found that 93% were working to help vulnerable children. These community initiatives are largely self-funded and care for more than 150,000 children, mainly regardless of their faith, through 9,000 volunteers who visit affected households, care for pre-school children and HIV-positive babies, or feed, educate and train children at day-care or street child rehabilitation centres.

The national leadership of these congregations is often unaware of this activity while secular NGOs have established orphan support programmes without realising that these

may undermine community initiatives. Few secular NGOs have sought to partner with faith-based groups, partly because there is a clash of approaches to HIV and sexual behaviour. A WHO regional director stated: 'The churches are impossible to work with because they have so many agendas that are actively hostile to HIV prevention.'

The main responsibility of outside agencies is to understand and then strengthen the programmes, activities and endeavours initiated by communities whose children are affected by AIDS. Long-term commitments are necessary to both mitigate the impact of AIDS as well as prevent the spread of HIV. Religious organisations have proven their sustainability through continuous presence in communities for centuries.

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## 'The ordinariness of community action on orphans makes the undervalued'

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Africa can learn important lessons from the approach taken by religious groups and take steps that make them more effective participants in providing the social support that governments often are unable to provide:

- *Obtain the endorsement of religious leaders.* Religious leaders occupy strategic positions of influence, their statements and actions influence the attitudes and practices of whole nations.

- *Appreciate the resilience of community coping responses.* Secular policy makers tend to view community efforts as weak and even local religious leaders in Africa fail to appreciate the HIV/AIDS care provided by their own congregations, 90% of it by women. Volunteers also underrate the services they provide,

and see programmes that attract external funds or appear in the media as more important. The ordinariness of community action on orphans makes them undervalued and this contributes to the weakening of the safety net.

- *Document and evaluate congregations' orphan support activities.* Many orphan support programmes implemented by religious congregations use best practices, but few have been documented and the development community has largely ignored their contributions to social change. Church leaders and NGOs should help them to record their work.

- *Help congregations' responses to develop.* There are more than a quarter of a million congregations in the AIDS belt of east and southern Africa, more than enough to support the region's twelve million orphans but religious organizations require capacity building and support if they are to expand their orphan programmes. National religious bodies can develop the capacity of congregations' HIV/AIDS and orphan programmes through training, development and funding.

- *Ensure that funding reaches affected communities.* Many congregations are looking for sources of external financial support to supplement their own contributions. Relatively large grants are being given to international organizations for orphan programmes but little is spent at the grassroots level based on the priorities of affected communities. Donors generally do not provide grants directly to community groups but to well-established NGOs. New ways are needed to channel resources and technical support to community groups through national coordinating bodies and community foundations.

– Dr Geoff Foster, paediatrician and founder of Family AIDS Caring Trust, Mutare, Zimbabwe



# Weighing Zuma's Sacking

**An explosive mix of corruption and politics has unleashed political rebellion against South Africa's president as corruption and factional fighting grip the ruling ANC.**

THE African National Congress is facing its worst political crisis since the former liberation movement came to power in South Africa in 1994. At the centre of this predicament is the populist revolt against President Thabo Mbeki and in support of his former deputy, Jacob Zuma, whom he sacked last month.

Zuma, who is also deputy president of the ANC, was relieved of his state duties by the President following a damning, high court judgment convicting Zuma's friend and financial advisor, Durban businessman Schabir Shaik. Zuma was not on trial, but his relationship with Shaik was. The judgment found that a series of payments (totaling about \$150,000) made by Shaik on behalf of Zuma were intended to influence Zuma to benefit Shaik's business. Although Zuma did not give evidence, the judge also found Zuma had been party to a bid to solicit a bribe from French defence company Thales, one of the contractors in South Africa's 1999 defence procurement package, a mammoth deal which continues to be dogged by allegations of corruption. The judgment provided ample ammunition for Mbeki to act against his deputy. Zuma forced Mbeki's hand when he refused private entreaties to step down and began mobilising political support in open defiance of the President.

Prior to the Shaik trial, Zuma had been regarded as the front-runner to succeed Mbeki when his second term came to an end in 2009. However, it was well known inside the ANC that Mbeki was strongly opposed to a Zuma succession. While the President's recent decision to fire his deputy received approval from the country's business and political elite, Mbeki's sustained mismanagement of discontent within the ruling party over

his leadership style and policy directions have now come back to haunt him. Despite a subsequent decision by the country's prosecution authorities to charge Zuma with corruption – following the conviction of Shaik – the move has not been seen as vindicating Mbeki's axing of Zuma. Instead, Zuma has become a rallying point for a somewhat disparate but powerful set of forces ranged against Mbeki.

## Risky power consolidation

The roots of these divisions go deep, some stretching back to political camps that formed during the liberation period. Ultimately they draw their strength from Mbeki's remote and exclusive leadership style: his centralisation of power under the

**'The roots of these divisions go deep, some stretching back to political camps formed during liberation'**

presidency, his ruthless dispatch of potential political rivals and his refusal to compromise on key factors of policy.

As Anthony Butler, associate professor of politics at the University of Cape Town, has written, power under Mbeki has gravitated from society and party to state, from local and provincial spheres to national, from judiciary and legislature to executive, and from cabinet to presidency. He notes: 'These institutional and political developments make the office of state president almost the only prize worth winning. Everyone wants a piece of the next president. No one dare leave such a powerful office to rivals.' At the same time, it is a measure of Mbeki's success in undermining such rivals that

Zuma, whose personal instincts are traditional and conservative, is now seen as the candidate of the ANC's left wing. Also, the manner in which political opponents have been dealt with has laid the ground for suspicion about the motivation and bona fides for the case against Zuma. The late minister of security, Steve Tshwete, a key Mbeki ally, once went on national television and accused Mbeki's three prominent rivals – Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale, Mathews Phosa – of plotting a political coup, apparently to prevent them from contesting for party leadership.

Policy arenas where Mbeki has made foes include his support of Robert Mugabe's regime, his controversial and damaging scepticism on AIDS, and on economic policy, where he has focused on the rapid creation of a black middle class within a framework of fiscal conservatism that has triggered serious job losses among low-skilled workers.

It is indeed ironic that support for Zuma is emerging at a time when the ANC has begun to publicly acknowledge the seriousness of corruption as a threat to national interest. But this is not as counter-intuitive as it might first appear. While Mbeki has arguably been correct in emphasising a rapid building of a black bourgeoisie as a means to greater social stability, he has not been seen to be duly worried about a few bad eggs finding their way into this class-based omelette. A number of newly made millionaires appear to have sailed close to the ethical wind – mining tycoon Mzi Khumalo and former director general of communications Andile Ngcaba come to mind – but Mbeki has publicly defended such individual accumulation, asking if critics are only worried about empowerment being more 'broad based' because blacks are involved.

## COMMENT

Indeed, in 2003 Mbeki launched a scathing attack on those in the media he termed 'fishers of corrupt men' who continued to raise allegations of corruption in the defence procurement package, accusing them of trying to entrench racist stereotypes of Africans as inherently corrupt. Thus, the Black Economic Empowerment project has at times been hard to distinguish from the classically corrupt features of patronage, with cabinet members, department heads and parastatal bosses becoming the new barons of economic empire and largesse. In addition, the redistribution of economic power has in important ways followed and re-enforced political fault-lines within the ruling party – and has indeed in some cases been directed at the covert funding of both the party itself and factions within it.

The current Oilgate scandal, in which a private company appears to have been used as a front for party fundraising, is but one example. Questions also remain about a Nigerian oil-lifting allocation awarded to an opaque entity called the 'South African Oil Company' domiciled in an offshore tax-haven. Mbeki personally endorsed the allocation in a letter to his Nigerian counterpart. The beneficiaries remain unknown. While not personally implicated in any wrongdoing, the responsible minister in both cases was Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, now promoted to Deputy President. Thus there exists a degree of cynicism amongst the rank and file about the party leadership's new found anti-corruption zeal, fuelled also by the perception, sometimes well-founded, that exposure of corruption has been abused as a tool of competition between factions jostling for power in the party. The history of the Zuma investigation has tended to re-enforce these perceptions. The initial decision announced by then National Director of Public Prosecutions Bulelani Ngcuka that Shaik would be charged, but not Zuma, despite there being a *prima facie* case against him, was preceded by an

off-the-record briefing of senior black editors by Ngcuka. That was widely seen as an attempt to bury Zuma politically, rather than give him his day in court. The fact that Ngcuka's wife, Phumzile, has now succeeded Zuma has simply added to the political conspiracy theories. That is one reason why Zuma has been extraordinarily resilient politically, even though he refuses to acknowledge that his relationship with Shaik involved serious lapses of judgment. The battle around Zuma has become a battle for both the leadership and soul of the ANC – and as such carries significant risks for the country. The power struggle potentially jeopardises many features of the constitutional democracy that was such a carefully crafted and triumphant product of the transition from apartheid rule. One or other side appears to be willing

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### **'The battle around Zuma has become a battle for both the leadership and the soul of the ANC'**

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to compromise the independence of state institutions, to rip aside the important cushions against thoughtless populism, to make dubious allies and ethical choices – and generally to risk instability in pursuit of power. In addition, the personal grudges between the camps have built up to such an extent that the ability of cooler heads within the party to hold the centre must be in some doubt.

Much will depend on what happens to Zuma in court. If he is convicted, the strains within the party may well lead to the long-predicted split in the ANC's 'broad church', with the party's left wing rump opting to establish its own political presence. If Zuma escapes the guilty verdict, he seems unassailable as Mbeki's successor in 2009. The country may then come to regret the centralisation of

presidential power that Mbeki created. An early casualty, if it even survives to 2009, might be the Scorpions unit, an elite crime fighting division attached to the national prosecuting office. This is the group that pursued the Zuma investigation and, as such, has drawn heavy fire from his supporters. Its creation was one of the first acts of the Mbeki presidency in 1999 and the unit is seen by some as Mbeki's means to police the boundaries of the Black Economic Empowerment project. However, as the one state agency with the capacity to investigate and prosecute complex financial cases and go after organised crime, its demise would be a blow to the state's anti-corruption effort.

On the broader policy front, a Zuma presidency is hard to read. He has almost no articulated policy positions of his own, except an apparently genuine commitment to maintain the ANC's inclusive character and traditions of collective leadership. Under Zuma, the party's trade union and communist allies are likely to have a greater voice in policy debates. Zuma's own track record as an administrator is poor and, like Mbeki, he has tended to surround himself with those whose primary virtue is loyalty rather than competence. But the main concern will be his ability to withstand pressures to use state power to repay the enormous political and financial debts his battle with Mbeki has generated.

On the other hand, the grass-roots revolt against Mbeki has included a healthy dose of concern about the abuse of political positions for personal gain. At the ANC's recent national general council, delegates called for guidelines for party members' involvement in business as well as restrictions on government officials moving into the private sector. Calls were also made to revisit the presidential prerogative to appoint ANC provincial premiers. If the party can institutionalise such checks, a Zuma presidency may yet be insulated from the more predatory instincts of some of his backers. – Sam Sole

## COMMENT

# Saga Down South: What Political Culture Are We Building?

IN JUNE, a court found that South Africa's deputy president, Jacob Zuma, had engaged in a "generally corrupt relationship" with his financial advisor, a briefcase entrepreneur found guilty of corruption and fraud who had given millions of rands to Zuma and won a slice of a controversial arms deal without any technical capacity.

Although Zuma himself was not on trial, he was fired as deputy president within days of the court decision, sparking a bitter battle for the soul of the ruling African National Congress. Many delegates to the party's national general council meeting cheered Zuma, derided President Thabo Mbeki and overturned his decision to withdraw Zuma from party activities until charges against him are settled in court.

He remains the deputy president of the party and head of its powerful appointments committee. Should he be found not guilty, he seems the overwhelming favourite to assume the presidency of the ANC in 2007 and of the country in 2009.

Although portrayed as a simple struggle between pro- and anti-corruption factions, the Zuma affair is a complex tale at many levels, offering important lessons for Africa about the importance of the unwritten systems and culture of politics.

Zuma and many of his supporters argue that he is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law and political leaders should not be held to a higher standard than ordinary citizens. Unions and the South African Communist Party – that have long called for Mbeki to focus less on corporate interests and emphasise state spending and job

creation – rallied strongly to Zuma's banner as a way to project their fight against Mbeki.

For others, supporting Zuma is a fight about leadership style. Mbeki, who fired Zuma, is seen as distant and unsympathetic to the concerns of the poor and beholden to the interests of the powerful. This is, of course, self-serving on Zuma's part, but it is a theme that resonates with the grassroots members who feel abandoned by the ANC leadership.

## Damaging denialism

Under Mbeki, the ANC has developed a culture of centralised unilateralism in which the presidential power is unencumbered. The role of the party as the link between society and governmental authority has been severely diminished. Lacking any feedback from civil society, the government has instead closed itself behind a wall of denial over many crucial questions.

Confronted with a disastrous spread of HIV/AIDS and calls for treatment, government argued that the risk was exaggerated, that causes of the disease

were unclear, that its critics sought to portray blacks in a bad light. When riots erupted over corruption and lack of housing, Mbeki's government suggested the conflict was the work of a 'third force' of political agitators rather than a

legitimate complaint.

Faced with this denialism, the ANC's own constituencies have taken to the

streets and sometimes the courts to demand inclusion. HIV/AIDS activists at the Treatment Action Campaign incurred the wrath of government for taking the government to court over its refusal to provide AIDS drugs. Unions and civil society organisations have staged mass protests over economic development.

But the Zuma saga is the most tragic illustration of the consequences of denialism. It began when Mbeki decided to purchase some \$5 billion in weapons, despite growing cries for delivery of housing, education and services. Evidence suggested that corruption played a part in the choice of contractors. Instead of transparently investigating the charges, the ANC sought to deny them and stifle criticism. Mbeki dismissed critics as 'fishers of corrupt men,' who seemed determined to find corruption. If the organisation had indeed listened to the critics of the arms deal it would probably not find itself where it is right now.

My professor at MIT, the late Donald A. Schon, once made a useful distinction between what he called single-loop learning and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning consists of easy solutions such as, in this case, calls for Zuma to be charged and prosecuted. Of course, he must be charged if there is enough evidence of corruption.

However, double-loop learning would urge us to look beyond the person of Zuma to the structuring of opportunities in our society, and how individuals in search of instant treasures align themselves to powerful politicians. This is not a problem limited to government but pervades the whole

Zuma is a

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**'The Zuma saga is the most tragic illustration of the consequences of denialism'**

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**'If the organisation had listened to the critics of the arms deal it would not find itself where it is now'**

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political culture of our society. Indeed, it is a global problem that Africa ignores at its peril.

In his report to the ANC, Secretary-General Kgalema Motlanthe noted that corruption problems, factional fighting, lack of service delivery and 'moral degeneration linked to the accumulation of and control over resources' affected the party at all levels. 'Whether it be councillors, mayors, municipal managers, [provincial level] ministers, directors-general or cabinet ministers, none of us can avoid the severe challenge posed to the movement. Both new and seasoned members are equally prone and vulnerable to the tempting prospects that come with public office.'

Merit means nothing in such a culture. The children of so-and-so will eternally be at an advantage over the children of so-and-so. That is how the elective oligarchy transmutes and extends itself into a social oligarchy. The masses, on the other hand, will in their desperation rally behind any demagogue that comes around. That is how a baser form of nationalism develops.

The African continent has seen too many ethnic wars fired by the structuring of opportunities according to ethnic allegiances. Ethnic groups will kill and maim to capture the state, and will kill and maim to keep themselves in power to promote the interests of their own.

Ethnic politics do not seem to be a major factor in South African politics as yet. The people benefiting from patronage and other forms of rent-seeking such as black economic empowerment come from all of South Africa's ethnic groups. However, even if ethnicity does not pose an immediate threat, there are rumblings that the Xhosa group dominates the political leadership of the country and the

ANC. This is what is often referred to as the Xhosa-nostra.

Even if this does not bear itself out in the facts – Mbeki is the only Xhosa among the national office bearers of the ANC – perceptions matter a great deal in politics. It is vitally important that a non-Nguni person or a non-Xhosa person is elected to lead the ANC.

That notwithstanding, the dominant explanation of the current debacle is political culture. The appointment of a new deputy president is tinkering at the edges of a much larger problem – the existence of an elective and social oligarchy that is increasingly seen as distant from the masses, with President Thabo Mbeki at its apex.

**'The continent has seen too many ethnic wars fired by the structuring of opportunities according to ethnic allegiances'**

The ANC needs a new life breathed into it by a unifying leader who is likely to bring a psychological revolution within the organisation, rebuild the connection between the oligarchy and the masses, open up the political decision-making processes, separate

the link between political connections and life chances, and thus prevent the current travesty from happening again.

In making such a decision the ANC could do well to take to heart the words of Harvard University leadership guru, Abe Zaleznick: 'The task of a leader is identification. The job of a leader is to get people to identify with him or her so that the leader becomes a presence in their minds and in their thinking. Leaders need to be so aware of themselves and so comfortable with the power they possess that they're willing to let people use them as objects of identification – as totems, almost. This creates enormous cohesion in the organisation.' I cannot imagine anything more important for the ANC, and by extension the South African society. – **Dr Xolela Mangcu**

**Briefly**

**Results, at last:** In its first two reports, the African Peer Review Mechanism has assessed governance and economic development in Ghana and Rwanda. Ghana's report said it had consolidated democracy, but criticised the lack of separation between the legislature and executive. It found poor service delivery and corruption in Ghana's civil service but a good standard of corporate governance. The Rwanda report noted restrictions on political freedoms and said that voting at the local level compromised the principle of secret ballots, but applauded its record in education and gender equality.

**AIDS false start:** The UN's '3x5 initiative' is falling well short of its aim to get 3 million people in developing countries on HIV/AIDS treatment by the end of 2005. Only one million patients were receiving anti-retroviral drugs by this June, up from 400,000 when the campaign started in 2003. UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation said success depended on political will in developing countries, donor funding and improving health infrastructure and systems. South Africa has about 6 million HIV-positive people, the most in Africa, but is among the countries making slow progress in treating the virus.

**G8 deal:** The Group of Eight leading industrial countries agreed at their summit to boost aid for developing countries by \$50bn. The debt of the 18 poorest nations, 14 of them in Africa, is also being cancelled. Nine more African countries could get debt cancellation in 18 months. On trade, there was a commitment to work towards cutting subsidies and tariffs. The G8 also agreed to boost African peacekeeping resources. There was less progress on climate change, although the US accepted global warming was an issue. Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo said the summit was a success and that African countries must also improve governance. In a separate deal, Nigeria got debt relief amounting to \$18 billion from the Paris Club, after arguing that most of its debts came from loans to corrupt military dictators.