

Africa

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The Aid Industry Needs Reform

THE New Partnership for Africa's Development is built on one crucial but unexamined assumption: that more aid will lead to more development.

So far, nearly \$1 trillion has been spent on aid to Africa, but most of the continent is poorer today than at independence. The Cold War played a big part, keeping aid flowing to loyal but corrupt regimes that should have been cut off from external assistance. War is also a culprit. Only 10 countries on the continent have not had a conflict or coup d'etat. Poor governance and venal political struggles – such as those tearing apart Togo and Côte d'Ivoire today – have destroyed economies and negated the positive effects of aid.

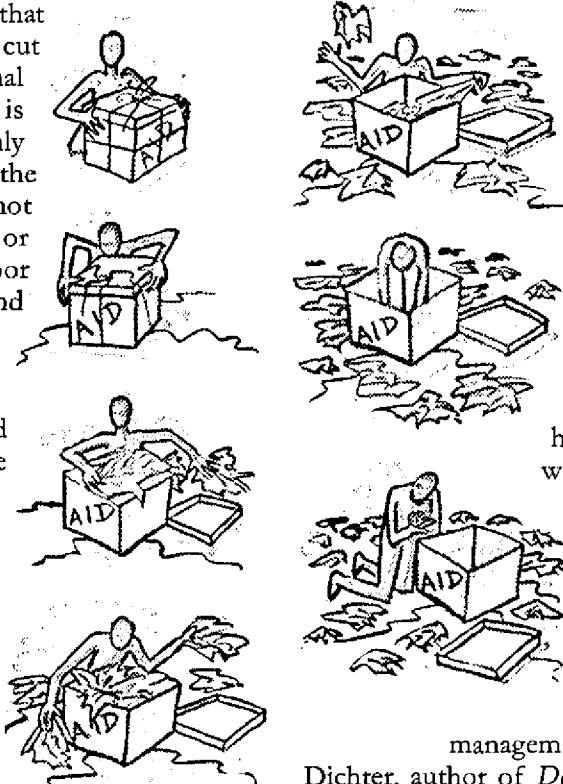
But what of aid agencies themselves?

Quite apart from problems created by Africa, a great deal of evidence suggests that the way that aid is administered has a lot to do with why that \$1 trillion has not produced more visible success. At the simplest level, aid goes to the wrong places. As the World Bank noted in a 2001 study of reforms,

'countries with good policies receive less assistance than countries with poor or mediocre policies.'

Even in counties with good policies, aid is often badly conceived, poorly executed and rarely measured in ways that permit evaluation of what works and what fails. Questions about improving aid effectiveness are answered by mantras: it should be consultative, follow an African agenda, build capacity, use appropriate technology, etc. But these talk around the problem without getting at the heart of the matter: why do so many aid efforts fail to have enduring impact?

This issue examines the inner workings of aid management. Thomas Dichter, author of *Despite Good Intentions – Why Development Assistance to the Third World Has Failed*, argues that aid donors should restructure the way they manage aid and measure its success. They ought to look honestly at the organisational and individual incentives that lead aid managers to avoid meaningful scrutiny of development programmes.



Verbatim

“We have turned East, where the sun rises, and given our back to the West, where the sun sets.” – Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, at the country’s 25th anniversary celebrations, referring to efforts to seek new economic partners among the ‘Asian tigers’.

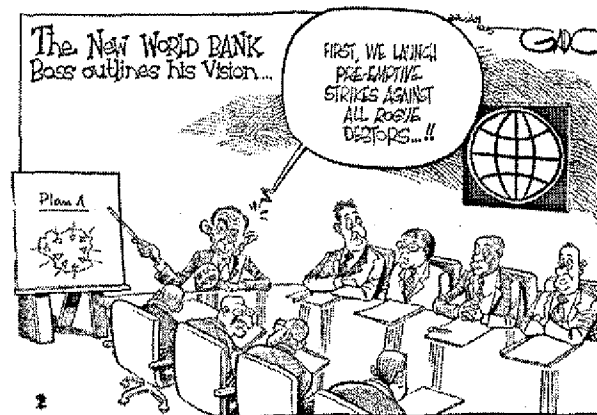
“It seems that when religious faith and the law run into each other on a narrow bridge, it is the law that has the right of way.” – Kwaku Sakyi-Addo, BBC online writer, on the case of a 14-year-old Ghanaian girl with a life-threatening tumour and parents who believe in divine healing, not medicine. The state took her away from her parents to get her medical treatment.

“It was horrifying. I never thought she would go that far. I never thought I would witness history being made.” – Clifford Derrick, KTN cameraman, after being slapped by First Lady Lucy Kibaki, who stormed into the television station’s offices demanding a retraction of a story about her.

“The so-called donors cannot continue to show us how we should manage the country.” – Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, after the UK cancelled some of its aid to the country because Uganda had not done enough to promote fair multi-party politics.

“They say that I want power through the Prime Minister’s position. Who told them I will not vie for the presidency?” – Raila Odinga, Kenya’s cabinet minister, on a constitutional draft that could introduce the position of an executive prime minister, elected by the president.

“Fraud has nothing to do with the country or ethnicity. It is the individuals who defraud banks and international businesses. Of recent, Uganda has recorded more fraud attempts than Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa.” – Johan Hartman, Citigroup fraud manager for Europe, Middle East and Africa, on how



Uganda has overtaken Nigeria as the leading source of bank cheque fraud.

“The blue helmets are too thinly spread and lightly equipped to deal with multiple attacks accompanied by civil unrest or communal violence.” – Peter Takirambudde, Human Rights Watch’s Africa director, calling for the UN to reinforce troops in Cote d’Ivoire in order to maintain the Pretoria peace agreement.

“There is an inbuilt discrimination in the sense that ... if we all agree that a human life has the same value wherever he or she is born, there should be the same attention to northern Uganda as to northern Iraq, the same attention to the Congo as there was to Kosovo.” – Jan Egeland, UN Humanitarian Chief, claiming that wealthy nations are biased against Africa when it comes to donating aid.

“Zimbabwe was not compliant with any African election standards, no matter what anyone says. Even if God said it, they did not comply.” – Elinor Sisulu, a member of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition.

“We must respect the sovereignty of Zimbabwe. We can advise but not dictate to them on what they do. We can’t change the laws they have made... Many things we saw there, we’d like to see them here in South Africa. I was so impressed.” – Nthabiseng Khunou, ANC member of Parliament, and member of the South African Parliamentary Observer Mission to Zimbabwe.

“South Africa is not and cannot be part of the solution of the Zimbabwe crisis because it is part of the problem.... They cannot be supporters of Zanu-PF one day and mediators in the conflict the next.” – Welshman Ncube, secretary general of the opposition MDC, after the general election.

“I clearly attended a different political event in a different country ... I saw nothing that convinced me – apart from holding a political event every five years – in any way, shape or form that Zimbabwe lived up to the SADC election guidelines.” – Diane Kohler-Barnard, Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament, and a member of the SADC Observer Mission in Zimbabwe.

“Our company exists only in name. If it were a bakery, it would have already collapsed.” – Jean Joseph Imangue, manager of Congo-Brazzaville’s state-owned power company.

Is Nigeria's Anti-Corruption Crusade for Real?

AFTER years of inaction on graft, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has recently sacked or charged six top officials with corruption, including two ministers, the senate president and the inspector-general of the police.

Supporters argue it's a sign of tougher things to come as Obasanjo, belatedly, starts to fulfil his 1999 inaugural pledge: 'Corruption will be tackled head on at all levels.... Beneficiaries of corruption will fight back, but we shall be firm with them. There will not be any sacred cows in our crusade against corruption.'

However, critics argue that in a land where politics and corruption feed each other, there is more to the arrests than meets the eye.

Though Obasanjo has called for good governance across Africa through the African Union and Nepad, he has little to show for it in Nigeria, despite six years in office. Until now, no senior official has been charged with corruption. Election promises to improve health, education, transport and electricity shortages have gone unfulfilled.

After the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), set up in Obasanjo's first term, proved ineffective he created the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2003 with wider powers. In its most significant case, the Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun, was recently charged with extortion and embezzling \$100 million in public funds.

In the last two months, two ministers have been fired. The education minister, Fabian Osuji, was sacked for allegedly bribing Senate president Adolphus Wabara and others in the National Assembly to pass an inflated education budget. Wabara, Osuji, four senators and a member of the House of Representatives were charged with 15 counts of corruption over the affair.

This follows a standoff over the draft 2005 budget. The National Assembly added \$800 million to the national budget proposed by Obasanjo, threatening reformist finance minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's drive to curb the budget deficit, a pre-condition for debt relief. A pending fiscal responsibility bill might help by imposing legal restraints on deficit spending by Nigeria's profligate officials in local, state and federal government. However, soon after the budget bribery scandal broke, Obasanjo signed the Assembly's enlarged budget into law, worrying creditors that Okonjo-Iweala's modest success in stabilising the economy would be undone by a free-spending legislature.

In another recent scandal, Housing Minister Mobolaji Osomo was sacked for selling government properties in a wealthy Lagos area without due process to government officials and prominent citizens, including close relatives of Obasanjo's wife, a fact that caused the president to express personal embarrassment. Critics allege that the presidency had been aware of the deals and, unlike the other disgraced officials, Osomo faces no charges.

One factor in the anti-corruption fight is foreign debt. Nigeria's government owes some \$36 billion, but earns too much from oil to qualify under the International Monetary Fund's debt forgiveness system. Official creditors say that Nigeria must first make better use of its oil wealth by curbing graft and repairing its shattered infrastructure and collapsed social services.

For Obasanjo, the get-tough policy has clear political advantages. It enables him to weaken or silence a hostile legislature and boost his efforts to persuade the Paris Club of official creditors that Nigeria deserves debt relief.

The arrest of top officials has great symbolic value. But civil society remains

sceptical because of growing speculation that Obasanjo is planning to extend his presidency beyond its mandatory two-term limit, which ends in 2007.

Obasanjo has maintained a studious silence, but he has sponsored a constitutional conference, now underway, which could be a vehicle for permitting a third term.

'[The corruption crackdown] is merely being used by Obasanjo to boost his waning popularity ratings among Nigerians and please international creditors,' said the Civil Liberties Organisation's Awosokare Oladapo.

'The fight against corruption can only be won if and only when all leaders, both present and past, who are living off the proceeds of corruption are investigated and brought to book,' Oladapo said.

Lawyer and human rights activist Femi Falana says the scandal over the education budget is the tip of an iceberg. He alleges that it has become common practice for cabinet ministers to pay bribes to legislators to pass budgets. 'The name for such bribes is lobbying'

Time is running out for Obasanjo's reform programme. In a country with a history of corrupt military rulers, there is little appetite for extending Obasanjo's term. But the two candidates seen as most likely to succeed Obasanjo inspire little confidence: Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, a former customs chief, is seen as tainted by his past and former military president Ibrahim Babangida's eight-year rule took corruption to unprecedented levels.

That presents Nigeria with an awkward choice: accept candidates who may return to the corrupt politics of old or extend a third-term, with all the attendant temptations it brings, in hopes Obasanjo will permanently entrench his fight against corruption. — **Toye Olori and Paul Adams**

\$50 Oil – Better Governance and the Crisis That Wasn't

High oil prices look set to stay, but Africa is coping far better than during the 1970s oil shocks

THE oil price surge of the past year-and-a-half has failed to derail economic recovery in Africa, even in poor landlocked countries that rely on imported energy. That is the message from research by the International Monetary Fund, which has been assessing prospects for sub-Saharan economies.

For the better managed countries in Africa, this oil price shock is now one of a range of factors affecting economic performance, but it does not have the devastating impact that would have been likely a decade ago.

The continent's oil exporters have benefited from a revenue boom, allowing them to consolidate their finances and reduce debt arrears. At the same time, strong overall economic growth has helped most African oil importers withstand the increased cost of oil, as the continent appears to reap the benefits of the more rigorous monetary policies and budget controls they have introduced over the past decade.

Over the two years from January 2003, world crude prices rose by about 50%. The rise was sharpest last year when prices averaged \$38 a barrel, compared with \$29 the year before.

Yet the damage to Africa has been much less than feared. The IMF puts the extra cost of oil imports at less than 2% of GDP for most countries (see table).

The World Bank estimates the average cost at 1.6% of GDP for sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa. But prices for many of their non-oil commodity exports also rose, partly offsetting the damage, easing the net

negative impact on trade balances to just 1% of GDP.

'Whilst we estimate that the impact of high oil prices could cost sub-Saharan oil importing countries as much as a percentage point of GDP, their growth remains strong, averaging 4.1% in 2004 in real terms – which translates into 1.9% growth in average per capita income in real terms. And that

in the French-speaking CFA franc zone was further diluted because their currencies are directly linked to the euro. International oil prices are set in dollars, but the value of the euro and thus the CFA currencies rose 30% against the dollar from 2003 to 2004. For the CFA zone, a strong exchange rate also had disadvantages, undermining export competitiveness.

While \$50 a barrel oil has not caused hyperinflation or crumbling currencies, it has affected some individual sectors, with knock-on effects on growth, income and competitiveness, especially in small industries and the informal sector. More expensive fuel has pushed up the cost of electricity generation, but the most significant impact has been on transport costs. For micro-business, increased transport fares have been especially significant. And both exports and imports rely heavily on road transport and, for some industries, airfreight, which is affected by fuel prices. (see box).

Sound policies pay off

Another factor that has helped Africa cope with the oil price rise is the increased rigour many governments now apply in managing national finances, according to the IMF.

These disciplines have made fragile low-income economies more stable and resilient. Most countries contained the inflationary impact of higher oil costs and, in many, inflation actually declined in 2004.

'As a general rule, African oil-importing countries have reacted sensibly to the rise in oil prices. Most governments have passed on the cost to consumers, by allowing the price of fuel in the domestic

Sub-Saharan Africa Economic Performance in 2003 and 2004 Compared								
	Real GDP growth		Inflation		Trade balance		Reserves	
	%		%		% of GDP		months of import cover	
	2003	'04	03	'04	03	'04	03	'04
OIL EXPORTERS								
Angola	3.4	11.2	88.3	43.6	29.1	35.4	0.9	2.0
Congo Rep.	0.8	4.0	1.5	2.0	48.5	56.2	0.2	0.1
Gabon	2.6	1.9	2.1	1.0	35.6	39.9	1.1	1.8
Nigeria	10.7	3.5	14.0	15.1	16.9	26.0	3.6	8.0
OIL IMPORTERS								
Ethiopia	-3.9	11.6	15.1	9.0	-20.6	-24.2	4.9	5.0
Ghana	5.2	5.5	26.7	12.6	-10.3	-18.2	4.1	4.2
Mali	7.4	2.2	-1.3	-3.1	-0.3	-0.1	7.7	7.7
Madagascar	9.8	5.3	-1.1	13.8	-3.5	-9.0	2.8	2.6
Mozambique	7.1	7.8	13.4	12.6	-16.7	-9.4	5.7	5.3
Senegal	6.5	6.0	0.0	0.5	-12.6	-12.0	3.6	3.5
South Africa	2.8	3.7	5.8	1.5	2.2	0.1	1.9	2.5
Tanzania	7.1	6.3	4.5	4.6	-6.3	-9.1	10.1	8.8

Source: Regional Economic Outlook, Sub-Saharan Africa, April 2005 – IMF

represents a substantial improvement in their performance over the 1980s and 1990s,' says Andrew Burns, senior economist in the World Bank's global trends team.

'Indeed, only 12% of 49 sub-Saharan African countries are seeing total national GDP growing by less than 3% a year – and some 15 are seeing growth at more than 5% in real terms.'

The oil-price impact on the 15 countries

economy to rise in line with international trends, and in many cases pressures were also alleviated by the on-going fiscal consolidation efforts and exchange rate flexibility. Moreover, many sub-Saharan economies have managed to sustain a solid rate of real economic growth, helped by increases in the prices their own commodities fetched in world markets,' says Robert Powell, an economist in the African Department at the IMF.

'We expect that Africa will continue to cope with the further oil price rise forecast for 2005, although the policy response required may be greater because we are not projecting a further strong rise in international prices for Africa's own non-oil exports.'

Despite the broadly positive picture, the rise in oil prices has imposed an uneven burden on Africa. Its effect has been harder on landlocked economies, which already had high transport costs. Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali have all seen growth decline. But this is mainly the result of the crisis in the cotton market, and – for Mali and Burkina Faso – the disruption to transport routes caused by the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

Who's benefitting from oil exports?

For Africa's oil exporters, the price surge since 2004 has been a boon, allowing them to improve their fiscal positions and to reduce domestic and external payment arrears. Angola and Gabon were able to repay or refinance costly foreign loans. However, Africa's main oil producers have traditionally failed to account fully for export revenues and have a poor record of distributing the proceeds widely or fairly to the population. Africa's newest exporter, Chad, is under pressure from the World Bank to bolster transparency and set aside resources for the future. Chad deposited its extra oil revenue in a special stabilisation fund while Nigeria's federal and state governments

OIL-RELATED INFLATION	
June 2005 contract (International Petroleum Exchange, London)	January 2004 contract
Crude oil \$50.97 a barrel	\$28.25/bi
Gasoil (diesel) \$465 a tonne	\$247/tonne
Petrol/bus prices price in Africa:	
May 05	Dec 03
Lagos, Nigeria	
Petrol price N51/litre (US37c)	N38/litre
Short bus fare N80	N50
Kigali, Rwanda	
Petrol price 550 Rw francs/litre (US97c)	450 Rw francs/litre
Short bus fare 100 Rw francs	50 Rw francs

now operate a fiscal rule designed to ensure windfall revenues are set aside. Under new management at the finance ministry, Nigeria in 2003-4 avoided the surge in public spending and inflation which accompanied the oil price boom in the early 1990s.

However, fiscal prudence when the oil price is high is controversial in exporting countries where the public expect to see the benefits immediately.

Congo Republic's former finance minister, Rigobert Roger Andely, ran into opposition from parliament when he sought to concentrate 2004's windfall oil revenue mainly on paying off debts rather than domestic expenditure. He was recently moved to vice-governor of the regional central bank.

Having adjusted relatively well to \$50-a-barrel oil prices, African countries should expect expensive energy to stay over the medium- to long-term because fossil fuel supplies are running low, say some pundits. The world extracts five times as much oil as is discovered each year, mature giant oil fields are being exhausted and Saudi Arabia's vast reserves have been overstated, according to some estimates.

'Oil is a sunset commodity on which we are overwhelmingly dependent. We cannot count on more cheap oil,' said Richard Heinberg, author of *The Party's Over: Energy Resources and the Fate of Industrial Societies*, on a recent visit to South Africa. He predicts big oil price spikes in the next five years and says Africa will have to get used to more expensive fuel. – Paul Melly

Briefly

A push: In a renewed attempt to unseat Malawian President Bingu wa Mutharika, his former party, the United Democratic Front, started soliciting signatures in April from party members who voted for him in the last elections. The UDF wants to petition the electoral commission to nullify the polls, claiming that voters felt cheated by the president's defection from the party that put him in power. But its mandate only deals with matters challenging electoral processes. The UDF previously failed to impeach him on 10 alleged violations.

Levelling Levy: Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa will face a popular challenger in the 2006 elections, former finance minister Edith Nawakwi. She has been elected to head the country's third largest opposition party. She was an influential figure during former President Frederick Chiluba's reign. The first woman to head a Zambian political party, Nawakwi is said to have popular support in four of the country's five provinces.

Trouble: Confidential European Union reports alleged massive fraud in last month's presidential polls in Togo and estimate almost a million phantom voters swelled the electoral roll by a third. Violence in the capital Lome and other cities drove thousands of Togolese to seek refuge in Ghana and Benin after the announcement that Faure Gnassingbe had won the election and would succeed his father as president. The Economic Community of West African States observers said they were satisfied the vote was fair, but one EU report said they had failed to observe revision of the electoral rolls and the vote count; both of which were marred by irregularities.

Reason to believe: Côte d'Ivoire seems to be on the road to peace, with elections set for 30 October. President Laurent Gbagbo finally bowed to pressure and allowed Alassane Ouattara to run as a presidential candidate. He will repeal an article in the constitution, passed by former president Henri Konan Bedie which made Ouattara ineligible because one of his parents was not Ivorian-born, and upheld by Gbagbo. That exclusion is believed to be behind the 2002 failed coup attempt that resulted in the civil war that has since kept the country divided.

Zimbabwe Elections: 13 Dimensions of Unfairness

The largest independent observer group during the controversial parliamentary polls, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, summarises its findings in a recently completed report

THE Harare government promised that parliamentary polls this March would be free and fair, following widespread condemnation of the 2000 and 2002 parliamentary and presidential elections, which the opposition is still challenging in the high court.

After Zimbabwe signed up to SADC's principles governing democratic elections last August, there were some improvements in the electoral process, including the formation of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and the Electoral Court; a decrease in overt state-controlled election violence; some opening of the state broadcasting media a month before the election; accreditation of more domestic observers; and some administrative changes, such as voting on a single day.

However, flaws remained which are unacceptable in any country that wishes to be seen as democratic. The electoral commission was set up too late and had too little power to carry out its role; Zimbabweans living abroad were denied the right to vote (except government officials); intimidation persisted; voter education was inadequate; laws suppressing freedom of movement, association and information were firmly enforced; the voters' roll was inaccurate; the counting of votes was not transparent; and the ZEC has not yet made public its tabulation of results at polling stations or the numbers and distribution of postal votes.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), which observed the election at about 75% of the country's voting stations, has concluded that the March 2005 elections were not free and fair, and failed to comply with the SADC election principles.

SADC principles versus Zimbabwean practice

All member states agreed on the SADC Principles Governing Democratic Elections at the summit in Mauritius in August 2004, which demanded that they should:

- 'Establish impartial, all-inclusive, competent and accountable national electoral bodies staffed by qualified personnel, as well as competent legal entities including effective constitutional courts to arbitrate in the event of disputes arising from the conduct of elections;
- Safeguard the human and civil liberties of all citizens including the

'The ZEC has not yet made public its tabulation of results at polling stations or the numbers and distribution of postal votes'

freedom of movement, assembly, association, expression and campaigning as well as access to the media on the part of all stakeholders, during electoral processes;

- Take all necessary measures and precautions to prevent the perpetration of fraud, rigging or any other illegal practices throughout the whole electoral process, in order to maintain peace and security; and,
- Ensure the transparency and integrity of the entire electoral process by facilitating the deployment of representatives of political parties and individual candidates at polling stations.'

Zimbabwe violated all these and other provisions of the SADC guidelines. After the Mauritius summit, the Zimbabwe government unilaterally imposed piecemeal changes to the electoral legislation without attempting to make the necessary amendments to the constitution. The opposition in parliament and broader civil society outside parliament were largely ignored. There were 13 serious failings in the run-up to and during the elections in March:

1) Weakness of ZEC. The principal functions of ZEC include conducting voter education, compiling the voters' roll and administering the elections. However, ZEC was only appointed two months before the elections, with little time and inadequate resources to conduct voter education. ZEC was also appointed when inspection of the voters' roll was closing. Hence, the highly contentious voters' roll was compiled by the Registrar General's Office, as in previous elections. Other electoral bodies with powers derived from the constitution, including the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Delimitation Commission, have more authority than ZEC.

2) Repressive legislation. The Public Order and Security Act remained intact, severely restricting the work of both the opposition and civil society, by effectively denying them the ability to hold planning meetings or campaign rallies without police permission. The new Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Act gives ZEC the sole authority to conduct voter education. Civil society organisations wishing to conduct voter education have to seek authority from ZEC. All foreign funding for civic organisations for voter education must

be channelled through the ZEC.

3) Coercion of voters. While overt state-sponsored and state-sanctioned violence was significantly reduced, credible reports of intimidation remained, in particular through the politically biased distribution of food.

4) State control of media. The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) was used to close nearly all privately-owned media. The electronic media are wholly state-run and highly partisan. Although a statute was introduced to allow slightly *fairer coverage in the electronic media* a month before the election, records show that the media remained biased towards the ruling party.

5) Gerrymandering of constituencies. The Delimitation Commission completed its task long before the inspection of the voters roll and did not appear to take into consideration the population census, natural geography or community interests. In an apparent case of gerrymandering, three constituencies from opposition strongholds were deleted and three new constituencies were created in ruling party strongholds. The new constituency of Harare South, for example, absorbed a small light industrial and low density residential area (pro-MDC) into a much larger farm resettlement area (pro-government).

6) Restrictions on foreign observers. The SADC election principles require observers to be invited at least three months in advance, but the SADC team was invited only a month before the election. Regional observer teams who criticised previous Zimbabwean polls, including the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, were not invited. However, local observers fared better: over 6,000 ZESN observers were accredited and in good time, up from 400 local observers in 2002.

7) Rejection of poll workers. The conduct of the election on voting day itself also fell below internationally

accepted standards. On the eve of the election, officials of the ruling Zanu-PF party rejected more than 800 civil servants, mainly teachers, who had been seconded to conduct the elections on the allegation that they were supporters of the opposition.

What the MDC Had to Say

THE distorted nature of the pre-election playing field and the failure to address core democratic deficits, in the context of both the legal and administrative framework, and the political environment, precluded a free and fair election from the very beginning.

Observer missions have been provided with evidence of numerous allegations of malpractice yet do not appear to have carried out full investigations. The new Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) failed to demonstrate its independence...the ZEC was established too late in the day to have any meaningful role.

The voters' roll used for the elections was ...inaccurate and grossly inflated. Data extrapolated from an audit of 10% of the roll indicated that there were over one million dead people on the roll.

MDC rallies and meetings continued to be banned under the Public Order and Security Act. Not a single Zanu-PF rally was banned. For this election, Zanu-PF did not really have much need to encourage its supporters to go out and beat the electorate into submission. Five years of terror and violence has had a severe psychological impact on the electorate, especially in rural areas.

In 30 constituencies ...there are serious and unaccountable gaps between the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's (ZEC) official pronouncements on the number of votes cast and the final totals accorded to each candidate. This indicates massive fraud in which the ZEC appears complicit.

Final Report by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main opposition party, 12 April 2005

8) Rejection of independent observers. On election day, several accredited ZESN observers were prevented from entering polling stations by local presiding officers during the first three hours, when most ballots were cast. Reasons given included that the presiding officers had not been authorised by their superiors to allow ZESN observers access.

9) Rejection of voters. A nationwide average of 10% of voters were prevented from voting. Officials gave various reasons for denying people their vote, saying their names were not on the voters' roll, they were in the wrong constituency or they had inadequate identity documents. At the start of counting, accredited ZESN observers were chased away from several polling stations until we intervened. The counting revealed numerous spoilt ballots. In several constituencies the difference between the winner and the loser was less than the number of people turned away.

10) Failure to post results. To date, ZEC has not made public official copies of tabulation of results at polling stations and constituency level as well as the numbers and distribution of postal votes, which is both required by Zimbabwe law and is internationally recognised as a key method to prevent fraud.

11) Polling stations not on neutral ground. ZESN also noted with concern that a number of polling stations were adjacent to police or military camps or the homes of traditional leaders, which is a violation of agreed standards.

12) Flawed constitution favours incumbent. The Zimbabwe constitution entrenches unfairness by enabling the president to appoint to parliament 20 non-constituency MPs and 10 chiefs. These extra 30 pro-government MPs will enable the ruling party to amend the national constitution at will.

13) Discrepancies between government and observer counts. Of

greater concern, in many constituencies the figures provided by ZEC at the end of polling did not tally with the final figures announced. ZESN compared the results announced at each polling station with figures announced on national television. Two academics, a population scientist and a statistician, were consulted to go through all ZESN results and compare them with those from ZEC. The academics also went through all the original forms submitted by ZESN observers to check for quality. Their analysis was then sent to an independent consultant in South Africa to review the quality of the work. In 53% of constituencies, there were moderate or large variances between our data and the announced results. Large variances occurred in 25.2% of constituencies. This could be due to lack of data on postal votes, limited access and transparency in tabulating results at constituency and national level, or electoral fraud.

In many constituencies these variances may not have affected the overall outcome, but we concluded that the opposition may have been deprived victory in several constituencies. In five constituencies, where ZESN had a lot of observers and its data showed victory should have gone to the opposition, the ZEC declared Zanu-PF the winner: Chipinge South, Buhera South, Makoni East, Mutasa South and Gwanda. In three other constituencies, where ZESN had fewer observers, there also were significant discrepancies: Gweru Rural, Harare South and Zhombe.

Reforms needed

Flawed elections are the source of roughly half the conflicts in Africa, as genuine election grievances are frequently ignored and provoke violence. It happened in Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea-Bissau and now Togo. The cost of the wars in those

countries far exceeded what it would have cost for Africa to assure that elections were genuinely free and fair.

In Zimbabwe there is an urgent need for a new constitution that will take into account the election concerns of all sections of the population and strengthen fundamental freedoms and rights, such as freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

The new constitution should also include previously agreed electoral reforms, including the creation of a single constitutionally-derived, well-resourced, independent electoral commission as in most of the SADC region; a mixed Westminster and proportional representation system; limits on the role of the military in the electoral process; simultaneous parliamentary and presidential elections; and the abolition of appointed parliamentarians. – **Dr Reginald Matchaba-Hove, ZESN chairperson**

What Official Missions Observed

'THE 2005 parliamentary elections were conducted in line with the laws of the country which by and large conform to the SADC guidelines governing elections: the political climate in Zimbabwe, under which the 2005 parliamentary elections were held, was conducive for elections to take place; in all provinces, parties and candidates had the political space to campaign; the conduct of political parties showed much tolerance and maturity throughout the process; and electoral institutions conducted elections smoothly and efficiently. It is the view of the mission that the 2005 parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe reflect the will of the people.' – **Minister of Labour Membathisi Mdladlana, leader of the South African Observer Mission.**

'Let me [extend] congratulations to the people of Zimbabwe following the holding of a peaceful, credible, well managed and transparent elections (sic). The people of the Zimbabwe have

expressed their will in an impressively instructive manner.

'The Mission received 10 complaints from the opposition party alleging covert intimidations, use of food as a political tool, delays in authorising rallies, access to state media, lack of compliance with the SADC Guidelines, inflated voters roll and unlawful arrests ... However, these complaints and allegations do not compromise the will of the people of Zimbabwe.' – **South African Minister of Minerals and Energy Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, leader of the SADC Election Observer Mission**

'The elections were held in a peaceful and orderly manner and the polling arrangements made it possible for the voters to freely choose their preferred candidates by casting a secret ballot.'

(The team noted few civic voter education initiatives, an inaccessible voters' roll, overly strict registration criteria, the repressive media climate, and police

involvement in election management.) – **Report of the African Union Observer Team.**

'The mission satisfied itself that the poll complied with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections, and concluded that the elections were free and fair.' – **Botswana National Observer Mission**

The report of the South African Parliamentary Observer Mission will only be tabled after 20 May.

'It is quite clear that the upcoming Zimbabwean elections are not going to be free and fair, and that the Parliamentary Observer Mission is being used as a vehicle to rubberstamp the ruling party's, the ANC's as well as the various statements already made by government that the elections will be free and fair.' – **Vincent Gore, Independent Democrat MP, on withdrawing from the South African Parliamentary Observer Mission in March.**

SPECIAL FEATURE

Give Less Aid a Chance

A massive increase in aid will harm rather than help Africa, an aid industry veteran says. Donors and recipients should manage on smaller aid budgets until they know how to get it right.

FOR years, the subject of development aid occupied an occasional back page in the developed nations' media. This has changed. Stories about aid and calls for more of it are now ubiquitous. Recently, reports from the UN and Britain's Commission for Africa added to the chorus with calls to double aid, particularly to Africa.

In fact, from a rational standpoint doubling aid money is a bad idea. Development aid, including that which is directly targeted to the poor, has not reduced poverty in any lasting way, and more money will not make it work any better in the future. So I have a modest counter-proposal to offer: Cut aid in half, send more than half of the 'experts' home, close down or shrink most of the hundreds of organisations in the business, and use the money that's left strategically and intelligently.

The more-aid movement not only ignores rational thought, it ignores the history of aid itself. American economist Jeffrey Sachs (who was the lead author of the recently released 3,000-page UN report on meeting the Millennium Development Goals, see *eAfrica*, April 2005) uses terms like 'shock therapy' when referring to what needs to be done in Africa. The UN report specifies more investment in universal primary education, gender equality, hunger reduction and slashing preventable deaths among children and mothers. The report, acknowledging scepticism about the mediocre results of past aid, calls for a series of investments in 'fast-track' countries as well as a number of 'quick wins' that the report says will have dramatic results, for example mass distribution of insecticide-impregnated bed nets



*Crippling: Thomas Dichter is the author of **Despite Good Intentions: Why Development Assistance to the Third World Has Failed***

to prevent malaria, distribution of deworming medicines, the elimination of school fees for primary education, and giving soil nutrients to poor farmers.

The subtext is that the time has come to stop fooling around – it is time to tackle poverty with a big push. And if this push is backed by a steady increase in aid, the number of poor people in the world (currently about 1 billion who live on less than \$1 a day) will be cut in half by 2015, and world poverty eliminated altogether by 2025.

No easy road

A big push? We had that in the 1950s when we first began talking about hunger, illiteracy and disease. The UN itself declared freedom from hunger a major theme from 1960 to 1965 and made the 1960s The Decade of Development. We had the landmark 1978 Alma Ata Conference on Primary Health Care, which called for slashing preventable deaths among children and mothers and 'health for all by the year 2000'. We had the 1980 resolution: 'Clean water for

all by the year 1990'. The development community has been working on malaria, guinea worm eradication, illiteracy, women's rights and equality, and primary education for decades. And this is in addition to its work in soil improvement, road and bridge building, governance, institutional change, legal reform, environmental protection, consciousness-raising, small enterprise development and a host of other interventions. There is almost nothing we don't do or haven't tried.

A World Bank consultant database from the early 1990s contains 52 development-related job classifications and over 1,000 skill sub-categories. The World Bank alone employs about 9,300 people, and has become so adept at making sure no sensitivity goes unattended that around 500 of them are anthropologists. Over the years, the world's development agencies have also distributed literally billions of *things*, from shovels and seeds to wheelbarrows, ploughs, tractors, to food itself. We have given away road construction equipment, pens and paper, typewriters, computers, bandages, syringes, medicines, condoms and, yes, insecticide-impregnated bed nets. Not once has there been a 'quick win', not to mention any serious reduction in world poverty, or at least that can be attributed to our work. Most of us who have worked in development in the field, 'on the ground' as we say, know this.

'We don't yet have the full answer to how to 'do' development or how to make aid effective'

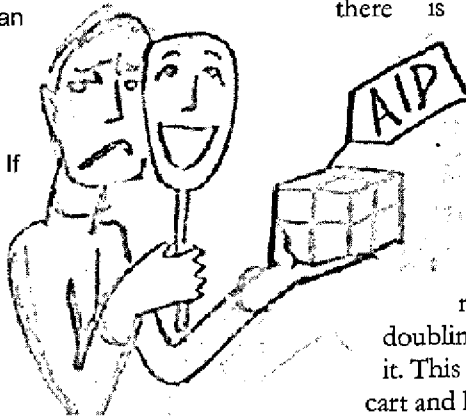
Why is it that the close-to-two trillion dollars officially spent on development in the past 60 years have accomplished so little – something almost no one denies? Is it because the push was never big enough?

SPECIAL FEATURE

Development Diary: Morocco

MOROCCO, 1960s. The four-year-old US Agency for International Development is aggressively promoting a chicken improvement project in central Morocco. It has determined that Moroccan chickens (like Moroccan cows, goats, and sheep) are scrawny, under-nourished, and under-productive. If Moroccan chickens were to be improved, more chicken meat and more eggs would be available for less money; people would eat more healthily and producers would make more money. All of this makes sense, and everyone, including the Moroccan government approves of the project. Thousands of baby chicks (Rhode Island Reds, I recall), along with a number of poultry experts are brought from the US. Money is invested in setting up incubation, feeding and breeding systems, and in training Moroccans to run them. The chickens do well. Soon it is time to put them on the market. The price is initially subsidized in order to gain market share. People buy them.

Months go by and soon it becomes apparent that there is a problem. People have stopped buying the chickens. Consultants are called in to find out why. It turns out that no one likes the taste of these chickens, and equally important no one likes the "feel" of the cooked chicken in their mouths. A deeper investigation reveals that Moroccans continued to cook these fat birds in their traditional way, which involves 3 to 4 hours of stewing over a low flame. If you do that to a Rhode Island Red you get mush. Do that to a tough scrawny no-name Moroccan chicken and you get something delicious, like the classic stewed chicken with preserved lemon and olives. The project failed.



Is it because the shock therapy didn't carry enough voltage?

The debate on aid effectiveness goes back decades. The truth is, we don't yet have the full answer to how to 'do' development or how to make aid effective. If we did have the answer, aid would be effective. Given that fact, there is a disconnect between, on the one hand, a lingering debate about why aid has not worked, and, on the other hand, a mounting call for doubling the money for it. This transposition of cart and horse, this desire

to throw money at a set of problems whose solution remains as elusive as ever, mirrors deep structural problems in the aid business itself, which helps explain its lack of success.

Those who do venture to think about the business of providing aid for development have produced a literature filled with titles containing the words 'reinventing', 'reconsidering', and 'rethinking'. The aid industry wants to get it right, but it never does.

Ignoring the lessons of history

Why, then, a doubling of aid money now? Why entertain proposals we have heard and tried before? Have we finally learned something? Is there a new synthesis, a new paradigm? Are there new conditions in the developing world that would make aid more promising?

To answer these questions, let's look at the three arms of the aid effectiveness debate.

■ **Recipient countries.** They've wasted aid and haven't been accountable; they've been corrupt, had inappropriate laws and policies, poor governance and leadership.

■ **The nature of the problem of development itself.** Development is complex and its multifaceted problems cannot be solved with simple or short-term solutions. We need more integrated approaches, more comprehensive approaches (the World Bank's 1999 Comprehensive Development Framework consists of 14 main thrusts and scores of sub-items).

■ **The institutions that provide aid.** The bilateral and multilateral agencies and the thousands of NGOs that have become their handmaidens have become bureaucratic, cumbersome and awkward. They lack strategic clarity and consistency; they get bogged down in process and procedure; and they are prone to what a World Bank staffer has called 'reverse alchemy' – turning gold into lead.

As for the first arm of the debate, studies do show that many countries that have fared poorly have indeed mismanaged their affairs. The literature shows how laws, social institutions, government structure, human resources, monetary policy and other factors interact to produce poor results. It is also true that all the fault cannot be laid on the poorest countries alone – many of them used to get caught up in the Cold-War priorities of the donor nations. And, yes, some things have changed.

There is greater awareness of corruption, more countries are acting to address it, and the concepts of good governance, transparency, accountability and other elements of an enabling environment for growth have become widely accepted. One of the arguments for more aid is the positive correlation between development aid and countries with 'good' policies: the capacity and will to control inflation and budget deficits and an openness to trade, among other things. One can argue that when countries get their acts together, they don't need much aid; they are already on their way. And when they don't have their acts together they cannot make effective use of aid. Either way doubling aid money is not the answer.

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On the second arm of the debate: development *is* a complex challenge. It took the most advanced industrial nations hundreds of years to develop; and even though we now live in a faster world, it is not reasonable to expect that the aid business can finish the job by 2025 with any amount of money. To think so is to ignore everything we have learned, not to mention the work of reputable scholars of the world's development, such as David Landes and the late PT Bauer. For the challenge is not just about matching bricks and

mortar projects – schools, airports, hospitals, or farms – with political and societal institutions capable of maintaining and managing them. It is about the necessarily slow evolution of habits, mentalities and ways of being that surround these institutions. Identities, religion, family, concepts of work, leisure, mutual obligation – you name it – everything is involved in the development process. Clearly, money does not and cannot address these issues, and doubling the money won't change that. The complexities

of development, which vary from place to place, are too many to control and the notion that one can engineer sustainable development directly in poor communities is mere hubris.

It is in the third of these arms of the debate where the core of our failure lies – the development industry itself.

Please let me help

While the industry talks about 'buy-in' and 'ownership' by the recipients and following an African-led agenda, aid is a surprisingly supply-driven business. Development agencies go around to the recipient countries and suggest possible projects to do. But since development is so complex and cannot be so easily parsed, we end up necessarily making damaging compromises. We put money into something before it's ready, before doing our homework, before understanding local culture. We get local NGOs with little real management capacity to act as partners, getting them hooked on our money in the process. We assume community groups can manage things (like savings and credit societies or water systems) that community groups in the US, Germany or France could not manage. And we regularly accept mediocrity in the implementation of projects because we need to get the money spent, otherwise we cannot ask for more the next time.

To understand why, one must examine how aid defines success. To act as if we are doing something responsible we put convenient timeframes and likely-sounding proxies for impact in a 'matrix' and call it a project. The matrix is otherwise known in the industry as a log-frame, short for logical framework, which lays out objectives, actions and outcomes in neat rows, ostensibly to ensure that aid workers think through their actions and work toward tangible outcomes. A company or an NGO that wins a contract to train agricultural extension workers in Mali fills in the log frame and at the end of 12 months sends its report to

Development Diary: Ghana

GHANA, 1980s. An American NGO, with money from private donors and USAID, has got involved in assisting a group of local farmers in a rabbit production project. This NGO has worked in Ghana for many years and its staff of Ghanaian agronomists had previously studied rabbit production at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture in the 1970s, when USAID had supported the National Rabbit Project (NRP). Now, with this past knowledge under its belt, the NGO considers the market, the challenges of production, and the risks in helping the farmers' group. Careful calculations are made about the availability of feed and breeding stock; likely disease rates and means of prevention.

Some of the money in the NGO's USAID grant was earmarked to construct a model Family Backyard Rabbit Hutch, so that people could see the best way to raise their own rabbits. The design of this state-of-the-art hutch is in sharp contrast to the wattle and daub structures in which the people lived. As the design enables the breeding of rabbits under controlled conditions, production will increase significantly and the farmers who raise them should make money. More important, in a time of food scarcity, Ghanaians will have access to affordable meat protein.

In mid-1983 the NGO places a full-time manager on the project site and construction begins. Fifty rabbit hutches are completed, and a hammer mill (to be

used to process feed) is ordered from an agricultural machinery importer. In the next few months the project staff immerses itself in the details of rabbitry; procuring supplies, feed, pumps, tattoo boxes (used to brand the rabbits), freezers, generators, etc. The economy is not in good shape in the early 80s and most materials needed are hard to obtain in Ghana. The options for import are all expensive (where to get chicken wire – from the US, from Europe?), but for now there is no choice if the project is to move forward. Telexes fly back and forth to the NGO's home office back in the US, asking it to help deal with procurement.

After three years of problems (disease, continued feed and equipment procurement difficulties, vehicle breakdown), very few rabbits have been sold. A consultant is brought in to review the whole project. Among other things, he finds that some of the project's model rabbit hutches are now occupied not by rabbits but by the farmers themselves. The staff has kept excellent records, and it doesn't take long for the consultant to do a tally of the full cost of the rabbits sold (in the best two months of sales, only 104 had been sold). Taking into account the administrative overhead of the NGO's home office that went into helping the project, each rabbit sold appears to have cost \$1,440. The project is closed.

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the responsible officer in the donor agency, noting that 'we have trained 7,468 extension workers, as specified in the log-frame.' The officer checks a box, stamps 'approved,' and sends a copy to the disbursement department, which releases the next tranche of money. Everyone is happy. Objectives achieved. No problems, project successful.

But this is a shell game. The individual project can always be contrived so that it has some seemingly concrete results that appear to support a logical development theory. The objective of agricultural extension worker training may fit the project framework like a glove, but if there is no sustainable system to deploy and sustain the workers, then they hang on the shoulders of the

Malian government like an ill-fitting suit. Because agricultural productivity depends on many things beyond extension workers, it is possible, indeed probable, that money spent on extension workers won't have any effect on farm output. Despite such problems, aid donors press ahead on the assumption that more training must be better than less. In reality, it can be a waste of funds and time that would be better spent elsewhere. And misguided projects that fail have the effect of initially raising expectations then dashing them, which leads to growing cynicism at the grass-roots level.

One of the gravest weaknesses of the present aid industry is that funding is only poorly linked to actual outcomes,

if it is linked at all. The false precision of the log-frame is part of the problem. But there are other faults.

Agencies and development managers are rewarded for spending and being active, but almost never punished when that spending comes to nothing or entails unwelcome side effects. The agencies can simply keep moving. Staff can escape into the future through an ever-changing succession of short-term, photogenic projects. Sustainability becomes someone else's problem.

There used to be a saying among Africans who dealt with aid experts: 'The white man has a big watch, but never any time.' This mad-hatter aspect of development is just one of

Development Diary: Uganda

MUBENDE, Uganda, 1990s. The Twesigane Savings & Credit Society, with assistance from a British NGO, registered as a Savings & Credit Society with the District Cooperative Association on 7 August 1996. It began with 25 members and now has 45, of which 33% are women. While some members can read and do arithmetic, by and large the group is weak in literacy and numeracy skills. They are poor, and mostly cultivate land in the area, which while boasting fertile soil, lacks sufficient ground water. The idea proposed to the local people was that if they set up and ran their own savings and credit society as a small micro-credit bank, they would be able to borrow money, make money on their savings, and keep growing their fund so that over time they would be able to take out larger and larger loans, enabling them to begin other income earning activities.

The idea of rotating credit was familiar to some members as some had already belonged to a traditional credit circle, in which a small group contributes to a kitty each week, at the end of each cycle one person gets the whole lot, revolving until everyone has benefited from the lump sum. The new S&C group

began building its fund equity through mandatory initial share purchases of 5,000 Uganda Shillings (about \$3.60 at 1999 exchange rates) each, plus 2,000 USh in membership fees, and a 450 USh registration fee in order to pay for books and stationery. Members were required to save monthly at the minimum rate of 1,000 USh per meeting. These savings were to earn 2% per month calculated at a flat rate.

Savings were not regularly contributed, nor was attendance at meetings ever close to 100% and after a few months about 15% of the membership began to shift and drop out, partly due to migration from the area. Still, members did begin lending from their revolving fund in small amounts at an interest rate of 10% per month for a four-month loan term. The record books were not kept well enough to accurately determine arrears or repayments.

In November 1997, the group said that members' requests for loan amounts could never be met and requested a "topping up" grant from the British NGO of 250,000 USh, taking the Society's funds to 1.6 million shillings (\$1,153). But after the topping up, there was still no change in the gap between the amount members

requested and funds available. The savings ledger shows that as from May 1998, all savings activity stopped. It was explained that because of poor economic conditions and many pressures on their lives, members decided that regular savings had become too difficult.

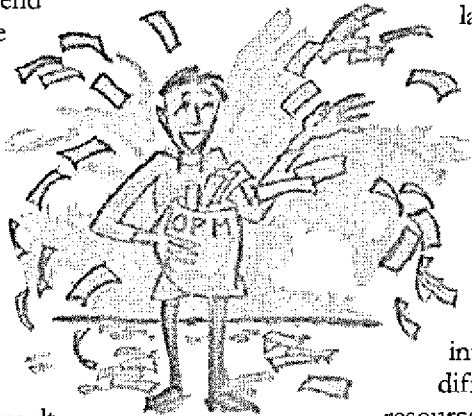
In March 1999, apparently by member vote, the group decided to pay out, monthly, to three different members each month, an amount of 100,000 Ush (\$72) each. In theory, by the end of the 15th month, all 45 members would have received this amount. But my calculations showed that the total available would cover only the first 25 members, and then the money would run out. In effect, the group had voted to distribute whatever equity it had accumulated, effectively dissolving the society and the rotating fund.

These details seemed to come as a surprise when I brought them up to the British NGO's field development officer in charge of the society, though he had been working with the group for more than nine months. Senior staff at the country office explained this by reminding me that field development officers have a great deal to do and many specialties to cover.

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its problems. The aid industry always wants to act, to do and to spend, and all with urgency. Thus, a \$100 million 'phase II follow-on project' is approved before the results of Phase I are in. Mistakes are repeated.

We want to spend more because we unquestioningly accept the idea that doing something is better than doing nothing. Indeed, we believe deeply in doing things, direct 'targeting' of problems, in delivering aid 'packages' as if development was a result



that can be engineered. Moreover, we believe in action, whether we have evidence of its effectiveness or not. We don't much bother trying to determine with any rigour whether positive changes can be attributed to what we do or not.

Other people's money

Developing the poor is inherently something done with OPM, other people's money, which imposes an entirely different dynamic from spending one's own money. OPM lies at the root of aid's ineffectiveness; it is OPM that makes us lose sight of what we have learned. It is OPM and the ways in which our bureaucratic agencies account for it that prevent us from doing things carefully, slowly and, therefore, open-endedly; it is money that ties us forever to the aid 'project'.

Money in development has become an organism with a desire of its own – to be spent, preferably 'in this fiscal year.' In many instances it would rather be spent wastefully than not at all.

The World Bank could not hold up its head as the premier development organisation or justify its members' contributions if it did not lend its annual billions. It gets zero points for holding onto its money. Everything in the

development industry conspires to have money spent annually, from the moral imperatives to 'help' to accountability laws that make the short-term project necessary to the performance appraisals of key staff who need to make the right steps up the career ladder.

But actual development does not respond well to this kind of spending. It results from an intricate build-up of and interaction between different types of resources: cultural and social capital (mentalities, beliefs, values, social institutions); physical capital and infrastructure; and public capital (the political, legal and economic institutions of society). We cannot engineer development, if only because the number of variables is beyond control. We should instead undertake more subtle and indirect interventions, stimulating, encouraging and cajoling.

Even if we had infinite money to spend on development, it would not work because the mechanisms for getting OPM and accounting for it, inevitably force development actors to sacrifice rigorous thought and integrity in the quest to offer the appearance of progress.

The development industry now must compete intensely for attention, voice, prominence, roles and even venues for grassroots project work. More and more, private development assistance agencies assess their organisational health by checking with their fund-raisers first. The key question for many now is not 'Are we doing a good job?' but 'Are we continuing to grow

our donor base?' The harder questions about performance and whether aid is making a long-term difference are being put on a shelf. Instead, we measure performance by spending.

Image over substance

The nature of OPM obliges development agencies of all types to be continuously in the process of seeking new or renewed funding. They must therefore sell their accomplishments: number of individuals trained in x, y or z; number of institutions supported; number of farmers whose incomes rose; number of bags of wheat produced from newly introduced seeds. Intangible 'products' are also sold, and these often are geared to appeal to current trends.

As with all advertising, the image is what counts, and the tendency to embellish the image is strong. In the past, an organisation in development was not afraid to admit failure. Nor was an organisation uncomfortable using the words 'experiment' or 'pilot effort'. Today those two concepts are out. Experimentation rarely happens in development anymore. No one questions the inherent value in experimentation, but no one wants to pay for it. Donors do not want to hear that an organisation is experimenting or developing a pilot. They want their money to 'count' for something that

can be measured: an outcome, an output. To sell a small experiment as a pilot would be like selling a relatively small egg in a grocery by calling it 'tiny' instead of 'extra large.'

'We cannot engineer development, if only because the number of variables is beyond control'

The way organisations sell varies, but one thing is clear – more energy and money is increasingly going into selling. The annual reports of development assistance organisations have become increasingly slick, expensive, and similar. No one can risk not saying the right things and not using the appropriate buzzwords.

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How less could be more

It is, unfortunately, politically very easy to brush all of the above aside. Both the Commission for Africa and the UN Millennium Project reports have effectively done so by saying 'Yes, there are problems, but this time we really have learned how to do it right.'

The problem is that we have not learned the lessons because the institutional imperatives and the incentives facing staff in the industry actively seek to hide failure and thus prevent real learning. Pumping twice as much money through the present broken system will feed the worst of these bureaucratic tendencies and exacerbate corruption. To achieve real change, Africa needs to break the present cycle of dysfunctional aid. To do that I offer the following recommendations:

■ **The world's development agencies should go on a diet.** Counter-intuitive as it may seem, Africa would be far better off if we cut aid funding in half. Let us slow down and think. Forget, at least for a while, new-ideas programmes and emphases – we know them all. I recommend an immediate moratorium on aid-industry staff recruitment and replacement, with a commitment to reduce worldwide development staff by 30% in three years.

■ **Aid agencies need to re-evaluate and streamline procedures.** All should sign a pledge to find the 10 most senseless procedures in each agency and get rid of them in 12 months.

■ **There is a gross lack of transparency throughout the aid industry.** Aid agencies, development banks and recipient countries should begin posting all aid project descriptions, budgets, working papers and reviews of success on the internet so that the public knows where funds are going and researchers can document what works and what fails and why.

■ **Pay should be performance-related.** If some things still need to be done in project form, how about

making staff really accountable for results? To do that, long-term measurements of success should be designed into all projects. Staff should be given a decent salary, not at private sector levels. Fifty percent of that salary could be put into an escrow account and released in six or 10 years only if those long-term goals were met. If the goals are not met, that bonus would revert to the institution. This would be the aid-industry equivalent of executive stock options.

■ **Aid must be tied to reform.** What if we said to aid recipient countries: 'we will give you X amount of money, but only when you prove to us that you have made certain mutually agreed changes. We will lend you some advice if you feel you really need it, but basically you figure out how best to get from A to B?'

■ **Donors must stop forcing annual spending.** Aid agencies should remove their institutional need to spend in a given fiscal year by judging their effectiveness not by funds spent but by results achieved. All agencies should be encouraged to bank authorised but unspent funds in escrow.

■ **Marketing money should be re-directed.** What about shifting the money we now use for public relations – most of which goes to produce glossy, smiling-peasants-on-the-cover annual reports – to a campaign to convince the world about the wisdom of a level playing field for trade? And how about putting some real effort into bringing the media and the public along on what development is, instead of continuing to pander to emotions and telling half-truths about what will solve hunger, illiteracy and disease?

Do such ideas have much of a chance? Sadly, they do not. It is far more likely that we will have (and waste) double the present money for development aid, and in 2015 new calls for more will arise. – **Thomas Dichter, US development specialist and author of *Despite Good Intentions***

Briefly

Rights and wrongs: Despite its poor human rights record, Zimbabwe was re-elected to the UN's Human Rights Commission with support from African countries and objections from the US, Canada and Australia. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for the commission to be replaced, saying its diminishing credibility was casting a shadow on the UN as a whole.

Time's up for Taylor? Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell said Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo should not be asked to break his promise to provide asylum to former Liberian President Charles Taylor in 2003 as part of a US-backed deal end the civil war. But Taylor will face justice eventually, Powell said. Obasanjo is under pressure from the US Congress and critics in Nigeria to hand Taylor over to the Special Court in Sierra Leone, which wants to try him for war crimes there in the 1990s. Obasanjo has pledged that he would send Taylor back to Liberia if requested to do so by an elected government there after elections that are scheduled for October.

Long arm of the law: A new Belgian law allowing the country to hold trials for alleged war crimes, even if committed by foreigners in another country, has resulted in two Rwandan brothers appearing before a tribunal probing the 1994 Rwanda genocide. The accused need only to have resided in Belgium for a period of time to be subject to Belgian law. The two, Etienne Nzabonimana and Samuel Ndashikirwa, were prominent businessmen in Rwanda and are accused of helping extremist Hutu militia during the massacres.

Safety matters: In early May, a bomb at a Mogadishu stadium killed one person and injured others as Somalian Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi began a speech on plans to move his government in exile in Kenya back to Somalia. The country has had no central government and has been divided between rival warlords since 1991 when Mohamed Said Barre was overthrown.

OPINION

Africa's Parliamentarians Must Add Beef to the PAP

THE mixed results from the Pan African Parliament's (PAP) third sitting last month provide food for thought. While they commendably resolved to send peace missions to Cote d'Ivoire and Congo, and made cogent recommendations on the Darfur conflict, they missed opportunities to exercise a crucial function of parliaments: that of oversight.

The PAP was launched in an era where leaders have vowed to improve governance and alleviate poverty in Africa. Its members can use their platform to demand that governments deliver on this promise by investigating and publicizing poor management at both continental and national levels. Oversight can make the vital difference between an effective parliament and an assembly of talking heads who do little more than endorse executive decisions. Although the fledgling parliament has no legislative power during its early years, it *can* debate issues of continental import and make recommendations to the African Union Commission and the Heads of State.

Among the key issues on the agenda for this session of the PAP was the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a voluntary appraisal of national governments' economic and political management performance by their fellow Africans. Ghana's country visit, the first out of 24 countries that will be rated by the APRM, coincided with the PAP sitting. The assembly did debate the issue, passing a resolution to use national parliaments 'to urge their governments to accede to APRM as a demonstration of their commitment to democracy and good governance in Africa'.

But the PAP did not go as far as it could. The APRM requires that each country's review report and recommended plan of action be publicly tabled in the PAP. At

'Oversight can make the vital difference between an effective parliament and an assembly of talking heads'

every successive sitting, the PAP should compel MPs from APRM countries to report on their government's progress in implementing the national action plan in the five-year period between reviews.

Courageous national legislatures have illustrated the authority that parliaments who choose to exercise their oversight role can wield. Even in instances where leaders refuse to follow through on investigations initiated by parliaments, the publicity generated by such investigations has led to civic pressure on the executive and ultimately contributes to more accountable governance. The PAP should scrutinize the budgets of AU organs such as the AU Commission and the Peace and Security Council, and make recommendations to streamline bureaucracies, reduce wastage and improve efficiency.

Of course, this presupposes that PAP members will have the 'temerity' and bravery to engage with issues that may discomfit executives and potentially embarrass presidents who misuse their country's resources. The PAP passed resolutions commending the AU's prevention of an unconstitutional takeover of power in Togo, but was conspicuously silent on widely-reported abuses of election guidelines in

'The mechanism by which MPs are selected to represent their countries in the PAP merits scrutiny'

Zimbabwe's March election, failing to challenge transgressions that are backed by many African governments.

The mechanism by which MPs are selected to represent their countries in the PAP merits scrutiny. If PAP parliamentarians are intended to represent their nation's citizens, MPs from countries such as Uganda, to all intents a one-party state, surely lack credibility. Libyan MPs are even less representative of their population, as Libya has no national assembly. Yet the PAP elected a Libyan as its vice president for North Africa, symbolically endorsing an undemocratic government. Even South Africa, with a relatively robust multi-party democracy, has been criticized for failing to include a member of the official opposition in its PAP delegation.

The PAP has had over a year in which to set up structures, nominate office bearers and organize itself. It's time to focus on pertinent issues that can improve governance in Africa.

If the PAP is to evolve into more than a talk-shop, the elected representatives of states with better records of democracy must dare to raise the level of debate. The PAP courageously risked the Sudanese government's displeasure by recommending disarmament of the Janjaweed militia in Darfur, and must now muster the nerve to challenge other transgressions of Africa's governance and human rights standards. MPs at both national and continental levels can use the APRM to transform their role from 'rubber-stamping' of executive decisions to steering the governance agenda in the interests of citizens. Unless they rise to this challenge, the continental parliament will be lumbered with comparisons with South Africa's staple food - the soft and malleable *pap*.
- Ayesha Kajee

Uganda War Crimes: Road to Hell Paved With Good Intentions?

WALKING in the eerie darkness engulfing Noah's Ark, a centre that children in northern Uganda escape to for fear of being kidnapped by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army, it is easy to see why so many in the region are eager for peace.

Although a handful of the several hundred children who gather here every night are now singing sweetly for a group of visitors, the 19-year battle between government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has scarred their lives.

About 20,000 children have been abducted by the LRA, which has forced them to become soldiers in the rebellion – and sex slaves to LRA commanders. As a result, fearful parents in rural communities send their children to towns in the evening, where they are thought to be less vulnerable to abduction.

Rebel attacks are on the rise again, which some blame on an announcement by the International Criminal Court (ICC) that it is on the verge of issuing arrest warrants for rebels responsible for human rights abuses, rape, murder and mutilation of civilians.

The ICC's targets include the group's leader – Joseph Kony – who reportedly wishes to form a government based on the Ten Commandments, his second-in-command, Vincent Otti, and four others. The ICC, inaugurated in 2003, is responsible for trying people accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

But, while some might view the court's actions as an overdue attempt to bring the LRA to book for its atrocities, others believe the ICC initiative will simply prolong the agony in northern Uganda.

Amnesty for war crimes

Five years ago, the government of President Yoweri Museveni passed the Amnesty Act to pardon the members of a variety of groups which had rebelled against Ugandan authorities since 1986 (when the LRA took up arms): 22 organisations in all.

Under the amnesty, former rebels are required to turn in their weapons. They receive a certificate indicating that they have renounced conflict and are given assistance to resettle in their communities. So far the government has awarded amnesty to about 10,000 LRA soldiers.

The idea of amnesty complements the traditions of the Acholi people, the main ethnic group in northern Uganda. Talks are also underway to end conflict in northern Uganda, although the peace process has appeared shaky since efforts to reach an agreement on 31 December failed.

Some fear that if the ICC is allowed to press ahead with its prosecution of LRA leaders, these negotiations would unravel completely as Ugandan forces went in pursuit of senior rebels to bring them before the court. The LRA appears to have responded with increased violence.

A delegation of Acholi elders and religious leaders visited the ICC's chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, at his office in the Dutch city of The Hague in March, hoping to persuade him to delay

action against LRA members until peace could take root in northern Uganda. The prosecutor responded that

he was 'sensitive to the leaders' efforts to promote dialogue between different actors in order to achieve peace.' But the ICC points out that Kampala's decision to refer matters in northern Uganda to the court gives it 'full jurisdiction over grave crimes under the Rome statute for the ICC that have been committed by any party to the conflict in northern Uganda.'

The Ugandan government referred its longstanding conflict with the LRA to the international court two years ago in a bid

to 'use every means to end the war,' says Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda. He adds that the 'amnesty law is a blanket law for all,' including Kony.

Other authorities appear less accommodating. The ministry responsible for northern Uganda recently said that it supported the ICC's wish to arrest Kony and his inner circle. A further complication is that Ugandan forces are themselves accused of committing abuses such as rape, torture and mass killing in northern Uganda.

While the New York-based Human Rights Watch has called on the ICC to ensure that all parties responsible for abuses in northern Uganda are brought to book, it remains to be seen whether the Museveni government will allow its troops to be tried alongside LRA leaders.

Some northern Ugandans want to see the LRA also account for its crimes. Okello Laouries, a 15-year-old regular night visitor to Noah's Ark, believes children forced into the bush by the LRA should be forgiven.

"But Kony and other rebel leaders who formed the group should be thrown into jail. He's done a bad thing." – IPS

'Fearful parents in rural communities send their children to towns in the evening, where they are thought to be less vulnerable to abduction'

'A further complication is that Ugandan forces are themselves accused of committing abuses'