

eAfrica

The electronic journal of governance and innovation

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To subscribe:
eafrica-subscribe@saiia.wits.ac.za
Send comments and suggestions to
editor@saiia.wits.ac.za
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The Peas and Potatoes Of Economic Stability

IN 1980, 133 million people living south of the Sahara faced constant malnutrition. Apparently, that wasn't enough to motivate Africa's leadership to promote reforms that would provide lasting food security on the continent. The succeeding years were punctuated by a series of heart-wrenching famines: Ethiopia in 1984; Somalia and southern Africa in 1992; Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi for the past three years running. The amount of food available per capita in Africa today is 3% lower than levels 15 years ago. Some 200 million Africans live with persistent hunger; 33 million of them are children.

Those numbers coincide with equally dramatic economic figures. Since 1974, sub-Saharan Africa's average GDP has declined by 11%. The humanitarian consequences hardly need spelling out: The proportion of Africans south of the Sahara living on less than \$1 a day rose from 48% in 1970 to 60% in 1995.

These are the starker findings of two

equally important studies that we examine in this issue of *eAfrica*: a scientific assessment of Africa's agricultural sector conducted by the InterAcademy Council on behalf of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; and the World Economic Forum's annual survey of Africa's economic competitiveness.

As grim as the indicators are, there is reason for optimism. Both studies innumerate a range of solutions that coincide with the vision African reformers have themselves promoted through the New Partnership for Africa's Development. There's no 'silver bullet' fix to the continent's problems. Africa's leaders, working with business and donors, need to adopt a coherent strategy for growth and development. The IAC and WEF reports map the way forward.

Because agriculture is central to economic stability in Africa, food security is a reflection of the state of governance. Africa has abundant human and natural resources. As far as we can tell, the only thing missing is political resolve.



A few stalks short of a bushel: Africa needs a 'rainbow evolution' in agriculture.

Photo: Southphoto

Verbatim

"They took the men and slit their throats with swords. The women they took as concubines." – Refugee from Darfur region of Sudan to BBC, on attacks by Sudanese soldiers against her village.

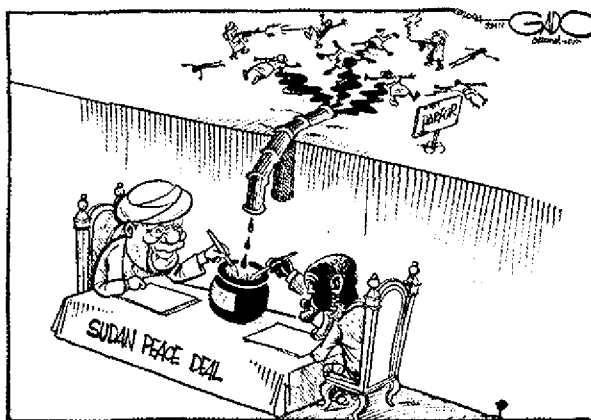
"They killed my husband, they killed my children, they burnt my house." – Refugee from Darfur region.

"We see indicators and elements that would start to move you toward a genocide conclusion, but we're not there yet. We can find the right label for it later; we have got to deal with it now." – Colin Powell, US secretary of state, during a tour of Darfur.

"This is ethnic cleansing, this is the world's greatest humanitarian crisis, and I don't know why the world isn't doing more about it." – Mukesh Kapila, UN co-ordinator for Sudan, on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

"We should avoid the situations where we allow [UN] member states to hide behind their Secretary-General and use him as an alibi for their own inactions." – Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, on Darfur.

"A few men with automatic rifles can displace enormous defenceless civilian populations in no time.... The Kalashnikov is the atomic bomb of our time." – Jan Egeland, UN emergency relief co-ordinator, on the humanitarian impact of new fighting in Bukavu, a city in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where an estimated 3.3 million people have been displaced.



"Freak incidents like the failed coup attempt [in Kinshasa] and the recent violence in the east of the DRC will remain freak incidents." – Sydney Mufamadi, South African minister of provincial and local government, after returning from a fact-finding mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Billions [of dollars] have been invested in various ways in Africa. And still Africa is the one continent that will ... probably not meet the millennium development goals in 2015.... The developed world has not had the answers to solving the problems on the continent." – A senior official at the annual summit of G-8 heads of state in Sea Island, Georgia, in the US.

"These kids are bewildered, angry, confused, often anti-social, craving love and nurturing. And understand this: They have become orphans, not after their parents die, but while their parents are dying.... They clean up after their mothers. Then they stand in their hut and watch their mothers die. How are they to function as normal human beings after that?" – Stephen Lewis, UN special envoy for AIDS in Africa, where millions of children are losing

their parents to the epidemic.

"Dialogue among religious groups, sharing a cup of tea and taking a group photograph is not enough for us to fight violence." – Sheikh Saliou Mbacke, African Co-ordinator of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, at an Inter-Faith peace summit held in Ghana in June 2004 to promote peace efforts and conflict resolution in Africa.

"Yes, I can confirm that there were 28 mothers who had not paid anything and we could not let them go when they owed us some money." – Chris Tapfumaneyi, superintendent of Harare Central Hospital, on the facility's refusal to discharge women and their newborn babies.

"Human trafficking is as big as the drug- and arms-smuggling industries, but it does not get nearly as much attention. It is extremely profitable for crime syndicates because of the lack of legislation." – Jonathan Martens of the International Organisation of Migration, speaking at a conference on the sex-slave trade in South Africa in June 2004.

Correction

THE article, 'Visa Scams Proliferate as Zimbabweans Seek to Flee', in the June issue of eAfrica contained a number of inaccuracies. The British Embassy in Harare, in fact, handles more than 115 visa requests each business day and dealt with 11,495 such applications in the period from January to the end of May this year. The arrest of Zimbabwean police personnel for allegedly taking bribes outside the embassy occurred in December 2003, not January 2004. In a letter to the editor, Deputy Head of Mission Alison Blackburne emphasised that British Embassy staff are not complicit in corrupt practices and are committed to 'fair and equitable treatment of those who wish to apply for visas for the UK.'

Africa's Failure To Grow Deemed A Global 'Tragedy'

But study highlights constructive ways to break continent's stubborn economic malaise

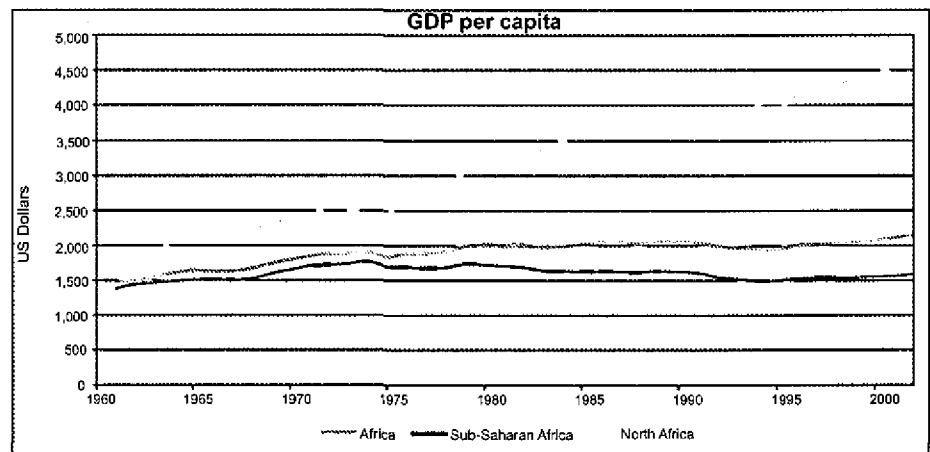
POOR growth by African governments during the past 40 years resulted in the worst aggregated economic disaster of the 20th century, according to a new study by the World Economic Forum (WEF). More Africans are trapped in poverty today than when the continent first began shedding the yoke of colonialism in the late 1950s.

'The economic growth performance of the African continent has been tragically disappointing,' write economists Elsa Artadi and Xavier Sala-i-Martin in the opening chapter of *The African Competitiveness Report 2004*, released at the WEF Africa summit in Maputo, Mozambique, in early June. 'We use the word "tragic" because it has had enormous consequences for human welfare: hundreds of millions of citizens have become poor as a direct consequence of this dismal economic performance.'

From 1960 to 2002, the report shows, per capita gross domestic product across sub-Saharan Africa rose from an average of \$1,500 to just \$2,000. Since the peak in 1974, aggregated GDP across that region has declined 11%. As a result, the proportion of people from sub-Saharan countries living on less than \$1 per day has risen from 48% in 1970 to 60% in 1995. North African states have fared only slightly better.

But the same factors that explain Africa's poor economic growth, the report concludes, also suggest ways to move the continent forward. These include minimal investment in physical capital; failure to attract foreign direct investment (FDI); neglect of human capital; low degrees of openness to international forces; excessive public spending; and perpetual conflict.

For example, between 1989 and 1994 Africa received only about 2% of global FDI inflows; by 2000 that share



Source: WEF calculations from Penn World Tables data

had shrunk to 0.7%. Now it is 1.7%. In the same period, FDI inflows to Latin America and Asia stood at 8.7% and 23.3%, respectively.

Creating larger and wealthier markets in Africa is critical to capturing a greater share of global foreign investment, writes Augusto Lopez-Carlos, a chief economist, on growth competitiveness and development in Africa.

Artadi and Sala-i-Martin add: 'Other important factors which, if changed, will contribute to African growth, include institutions that can guarantee the rule of law and property rights, investment in education, reduction of policy distortions that make investment excessively expensive, and reduction of wasteful consumption expenditures.'

Also inhibiting growth in Africa are the HIV/AIDS epidemic, inadequate infrastructure and poor governance. 'HIV/AIDS is a hidden tax on trade and investment,' writes Alan Whiteside, an AIDS economist, in a chapter on Health, Economic Growth, and Competitiveness in Africa.

On infrastructure, Peter Watson, a former World Bank director, suggests a regional

approach that could see more countries pulling their resources together: 'The concept of regional infrastructure is important because African economies are typically too small to generate the economies of scale that can be found in larger markets.' (See story on page 10)

Pooling resources can increase economic efficiency, the report authors note. In West Africa, for example, the gas pipeline for cheaper gas from Nigeria could save Benin, Togo and Ghana almost \$500 million in energy costs over a period of 20 years, according to World Bank estimates. 'Why, when the evidence of the potential benefits of integration and co-operation seem so strong, can nations not come together to take advantage of them?' Watson asks.

The report notes that African governments lack four critical elements that could promote organised socio-political-economic change: vision, consensus, concerted action and continuity.

'Africa's growth performance was the largest economic disaster of the 20th century. We can prevent it from being the largest disaster of the 21st,' Artadi and Sala-i-Martin conclude. — **Luleka Manguku**

Troubling Signs Mark Kagame's Path to Lasting Unity in Rwanda

IN THE 10 years that Rwanda's ruling party, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), has been in power, it has done much to portray itself as the party for all the country's people. It is an illusion that no one believes, but that everyone – Rwandans and observing foreigners alike – seems willing to accept.

The RPF's stated ideology is reconciliation between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi, whose relationship since independence 42 years ago has been punctuated by a series of state-sponsored ethnic massacres culminating in the 1994 genocide that killed an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and their sympathisers.



Paul Kagame

Government messages on radio, in schools and at re-education camps promote national unity: Hutu and Tutsi are one people, sharing the same language, culture and destiny. Ethnic classification on national identity cards, once mandatory, is now forbidden. Forgiveness is the keynote.

'Our nation was never an aggregate of brute savages,' said Charles Murigande, Rwandan foreign minister, addressing a conference of the South African Institute of International Affairs in late April. 'Until the colonial adventure in Rwanda, all Rwandans were the same people.... We are trying to rebuild a stable, peaceful, prosperous society.'

A Pivotal Question

But beneath the RPF's veil of inclusivity and cohesion lies a worrying pattern of political coercion and intolerance, causing observers and human rights organisations to quietly question whether the Tutsi-led ruling party and its charismatic president, Paul Kagame, is leading this fragile society out of its blood-soaked past or

deeper into repressive minority rule and, ultimately, more ethnic violence. Critics are labelled 'divisive' and jailed. Independent newspapers are harassed. Few risk speaking out against the government.

'The RPF don't care one way or the other what the people's real opinions or wishes on issues are because the party will get what it wants by any means,' said Florian Ukizemwabo, a human rights activist with the Kigali-based organisation Liprodhor. 'It is only for political expedience that they make people go through the make-believe that they too are involved in important national processes.'

Granted independence from Belgium in 1962, Rwanda was ruled by two long-serving Hutu regimes prior to 1994. Its first three decades of self-rule were punctuated by episodes of ethnic violence as well as successful and attempted coups d'état. Tutsis lived under constant discrimination and threat of violence. Tens of thousands were driven into exile in neighbouring Uganda.

The RPF came to power at the peak of anti-Tutsi violence, ousting a genocidal 'Hutu Power' government after three months of slaughtering unrivalled in efficiency by even the Nazis. The military wing of the party, the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA), was led by Kagame, a Tutsi who had spent most of his life in exile.

Rwanda's new ruling class faced a mammoth challenge in a very unfriendly neighbourhood. In its first decade in power, the RPF repatriated thousands of Rwandan Hutus who had fled across the border into eastern

Zaire after the genocide; integrated rival armed forces; released thousands of elderly prisoners as well as those who were too young to appreciate the magnitude of crimes they allegedly committed during the genocide; and banned ethnic discrimination in hiring practices.

The government also established a National Unity and Reconciliation Commission to facilitate a dialogue on the worst aspects of Rwanda's violent past as well as traditional tribunals to try the genocide suspects crowding the country's penal system. These courts, the *gacacas*, place an emphasis on lenience for those who confess to their participation in the massacres and other crimes against humanity and who then beg forgiveness.

Some Tutsis bitterly complain that Hutus are 'having it much too easy in this government.'

'It is amazing, given the enormity of what has to be overcome, how much [the RPF] have achieved in instituting the rule of law and how much the country has advanced to democratisation and inclusiveness in government,' said Lynda Chalker, former British Overseas Development Minister, during a recent visit to Kigali.

Rebuilding a Nation

The RPF maintains that building a different Rwanda hinges on democracy, accountability and good governance. Although the RPF is Rwanda's first predominantly Tutsi government, Hutus hold several key ministries and other prominent positions. In 1999 the country held its first local elections. A new constitution followed. Last August, at the end of the nine-year transition period, voters overwhelming returned Kagame to power in Rwanda's first multiparty presidential elections.

Foreign observers have praised the way the RPF is transforming Rwanda, even though the European Union observer team concluded the elections were neither free nor fair. But there is plenty of reason for concern. The Independent Electoral Commission and the Supreme Court are stacked with prominent RPF members or those who are openly loyal to it. Two years ago, the government refused to allow the international tribunal hearing the most serious Rwandan genocide cases in Arusha, Tanzania, to prosecute RPA members the court suspected of war crimes.

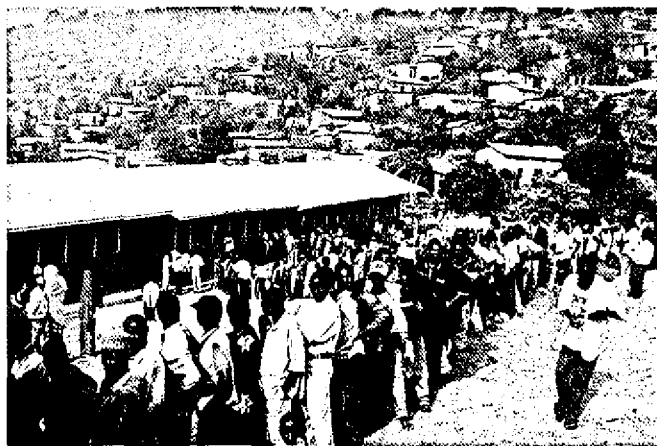
In 2002, the Washington-based International Crisis Group urged the RPF to establish an ombudsman's office made up of 'wise men' from across Rwandan society to determine rules of conduct for politicians and define distinctions between 'legitimate criticism and genocide-denying or hatred-inciting behaviour.' The government took the advice, but put the RPF's most influential ideologue in charge of the office.

A Loaded Label

Critics of the RPF – including opposition leaders – are called 'divisive,' which in Rwanda today is tantamount to accusing someone of genocide. Faustin Twagiramungu, a prominent Hutu and Kagame's main opponent in the elections, saw his campaign schedule derailed often and viciously. Many of his campaign staff were locked up – and released only after the election was over – and there were many reported incidents of intimidation and violence.

'The government has created an impression that there is freedom, but in this country you are only as free as they wish you to be,' said one Rwandan politician, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The plight of several prominent political figures illustrates the RPF's intolerance for dissent. In 2000, then



Voters queue outside a polling station in Kigali during Rwanda's first democratic presidential election in 2003. Photo: Southphoto

Speaker of Parliament Sebarenzi Kabuye, a member of the opposition Liberal Party, resisted an attempt by the RPF to lump all parties together into a single entity. He was quickly impeached, and fled to the US through Uganda to avoid the risk of imprisonment.

There were others. Pierre Celestin Rwigema served in the RPF as prime minister of Rwanda for three years. Rumours of a fallout with Kagame surfaced, and shortly thereafter the state newspaper *Imvaho* alleged Rwigema was a genocide suspect.

'That is the way this government works,' said Charles Kabonero, editor of *Umuseso*, an independent weekly newspaper. 'As long as they can use you, then you will be alright. If you outlive your usefulness, or if you develop a tendency to be independent-minded, then every charge will be dredged up to get rid of you or ruin your career.'

Kabonero speaks with experience. He and other *Umuseso* journalists have had numerous run-ins with the authorities for publishing materials deemed 'dangerous for state security.' On one occasion, a whole issue of the paper was seized for publishing a critical story about an RPF general. Another time, he recalled, 'we happened to be witnessing a disturbance outside a bar late one evening and taking notes, and when the police arrived and discovered that we were from *Umuseso* they immediately took us to jail.'

Earlier this year, former President Pasteur Bizimungu was found guilty by the Supreme Court on three charges: associating with militia groups, conspiring to cause civil disobedience and embezzling state funds. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison. His incarceration marks the end of a saga that began four years ago.

In 2000, Bizimungu resigned from the presidency citing personal reasons, but it was widely known within political circles that irreconcilable differences had grown between him and Kagame, then the all-powerful vice president. Bizimungu subsequently resigned from the RPF. When he announced intentions to form an opposition party, he was immediately placed under house arrest.

Fear and Rule

To a large degree, Hutus have chosen not to be openly critical about the direction the RPF is taking the country.

'It is this fear that the RPF exploits to keep the majority down and oppressed,' said Celestin Kabanda, another prominent Hutu politician. Kabanda lost his job as State Minister for Finance and Economic Planning in 2002 shortly after declaring his presidential ambitions. 'Naturally, even the Tutsis won't speak out against the RPF because their fear of Hutus has also been well-exploited by Kagame's party.'

Many political observers agree that it is still too early to expect full democratic rule in Rwanda, but many also worry about the potential for more tragedy in a volatile country ruled by an edgy minority government.

But no one has a definitive manual for how to build a stable future in a fragile society still emerging from a horrible past. 'There is no greater crime than genocide,' Foreign Minister Murigande said. 'It is absolute terror. This was not a chapter in our history that can easily be forgotten.' – Nzamu Mnengomasha

SPECIAL FEATURE

Ag Needs Coherent Fix

Study sketches broad-based approach to achieving food security on world's hungriest continent

SINCE 1990, the availability of food per person has risen 30% across Asia and 20% in Latin America. Food production has risen in Africa, too, but the population has grown faster. On the world's poorest continent, the supply of things to eat per person has dropped by 3% in the past 15 years. Millions scrape by on the cusp of starvation.

The problem is not lack of potential. Despite a general condition of relatively low soil fertility, Africa is rich in resources. No one disputes that. But unlike other regions of the world that experienced 'green revolutions' decades ago, Africa has unique characteristics that, according to a new scientific study, require a multi-faceted solution.

Conducted by the InterAcademy Council (IAC) at the request of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the report, *Realizing the Promise and Potential of African Agriculture*, which was released in late June 2004, spells out the need for a coherent strategy that includes a wide range of farming systems specific to Africa's diverse environments; reduces the environmental impact of agricultural activity; takes better advantage of existing technologies and promotes innovation; and aligns farm production more closely with market demands.

Solution Salad

Unlike other regions of the world where food production and food security are based primarily on a limited number of farming systems, in Africa these depend on multiple farming systems in a wide array of different agro-ecological zones, the report states. 'The correct and diligent application of the range of technology options can increase crop and animal production, while making more effective and efficient use of land, labour and capital.'

Africa faces a perpetual hunger crisis.

More than half of the populations of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique endure constant malnutrition. In Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia 40% to 50% do not get enough to eat.

In March 2002, at the height of a regional famine in southern Africa, Annan requested the IAC to identify strategies for using science and technology to improve agriculture and food security on the continent. The council brought together scientists and economists from around the world to examine the problem. The study took two years. 'The good news,' it concludes, 'shows that, with concerted effort, movement away from hunger and inadequate diet is possible.'

The report asks: 'How, precisely, can we produce higher crop yields and more nutritious foods from thinning soils, making food both affordable and accessible to increasing numbers of people? What are the larger socio-economic and political conditions necessary for the effective use of science and technology in both the public and private sectors?'

To answer those questions, the panel began by identifying characteristics that distinguish Africa from other regions of the world that achieved a renaissance in agriculture decades ago. Several factors emerged, including:

- Lack of a single dominant farming system on which food security depends; predominance of rain-fed agriculture as opposed to irrigation; and dominance of inherently poor soil fertility.
- Importance of women in ensuring household food security; growing impact of human health on agriculture; and low and stagnant labour productivity.
- Absence of functioning competitive

markets; under investment in infrastructure and agricultural research and development; and predominance of customary land tenure.

'The diverse African situation implies that no single magic "technological bullet" is available for radically improving African agriculture,' the report concluded. 'African agriculture will require numerous "rainbow evolutions" that differ in both nature and extent among the many different types of farming systems and institutions throughout Africa – rather than a single Green Revolution.'

The Motivations

The report identifies solutions based on two factors: malnutrition and the potential economic value of production. Its recommendations traverse the range of sectors involved both directly and indirectly in agriculture, mapping, in effect, comprehensive national and regional responses to Africa's problem of food security.

The distinct environmental features (climate, water availability, soil fertility, plant and livestock diseases) and socio-economic factors (labour, marketplace, infrastructure), the report concludes, are key determinants of both crop diversity and policy planning. Each sub-region on the continent, the report therefore concludes, requires a different approach. Some areas may require the development of salt-tolerant crops, for example, while others may need more pest-resistant varieties.

But the report identifies several common deficiencies as well. Irrigation and fertilisers need to be made more widely available. Farmers should make better use of information technology to tap global expertise, gain information about markets, and develop more sophisticated models for seasonal production.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Higher-yield crop strains suitable for Africa's diverse agro-environments must be developed. Despite widespread political resistance to imported genetically modified foods, the report stresses the need for Africa to take greater advantage of both conventional breeding techniques and biotechnology.

Post-harvest losses are a huge problem. Africa loses anywhere from 10% to 100% of certain crops before they reach the market due to a lack of infrastructure, adequate storage facilities and local processing plants.

The most conspicuous deficiency, however, is in research capacity. Governments should establish 'African centres of agricultural research excellence to undertake basic research leading to the development and use of ... technologies for improving African agriculture,' the report states. Such institutions, which could provide advanced training and enable greater innovation, must include the private sector. Research, the report suggests, must be 'more client oriented and client driven through the participation of farmers and other stakeholders.'

Two other areas that need critical attention are development of markets and retention of a new generation of agricultural scientists. 'Universities throughout the continent are facing severe financial problems, coupled with a decline in the quality of the educational experience,' the report states. 'Meanwhile, out in the field, the first generation of African agriculturalists has retired and their successors are becoming demoralised by the poor conditions of service.'

'African governments, with support from development partners, must pursue strategies that create incentives and opportunities for scientists to stay and work in their countries,' the report concludes. 'The private sector must contribute to agricultural research and support higher education.' — Kurt Shillinger

Seeding the Harvest

FOR two years 18 international experts in agricultural sciences and economics considered how to apply science and technology more effectively to respond to the central challenges of farming in Africa, which include: predominance of customary land tenure; lack of functioning competitive markets and politically enabling environments; and inherently poor soil fertility. The panel's recommendations follow:

Science and technology options that can make a difference

1. Adopt a market-led productivity improvement strategy to balance supply and demand and enable farmers to respond better to price fluctuations.
2. Adopt a production ecological approach with a primary focus on identified continental priority farming systems. This involves mixed and multiple cropping coincident with environmental conditions.
3. Pursue a strategy of integrated sustainable intensification of production, 'encompassing a simultaneous increase in the productivity of land, labour and other inputs, while minimising adverse environmental effects.'
4. Bridge the divide between classical plant breeding and genetic modification.
5. Recognise the potential of rain-fed agriculture and accord it priority.
6. Reduce land degradation and replenish soil fertility.
7. Explore integrated catchment strategies for natural resource management.
8. Promote the conservation, sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity.
9. Enhance use of mechanical power.
10. Embrace information and communication technology at all levels.
11. Improve the coping strategies of farmers in response to environmental variability and climate change.

Building research, knowledge and development institutions

1. Design and invest in national agricultural

science systems that involve farmers in education, research and extension.

2. Encourage institutions and mechanisms to articulate science and technology strategies and policies.
3. Cultivate African centres of agricultural research excellence.
4. Increase support for agricultural research and development.
5. Strengthen international agricultural research centres.

Creating and retaining a new generation of agricultural scientists

1. Focus on current and future generations of scientists in Africa.
2. Broaden and deepen political support for agricultural science.
3. Reform university curricula to incorporate ecological and multidisciplinary approaches to agricultural study at the undergraduate level.
4. Mobilise increased and sustainable funding for higher education in science and technology, minimising dependence on external donor support.
5. Strengthen science education at primary and secondary school levels.

Markets and policies to boost income and food security

1. Invest more in rural infrastructure.
2. Expand market opportunities.
3. Institute effective intellectual property rights regimes to encourage the private sector and facilitate public-private partnerships.
4. Reduce barriers to increased African trade with OECD countries.
5. Improve data generation and analysis related to agriculture, food and nutrition security, and vulnerability.

Engaging science and technology for the benefit of African agriculture

Implement Participatory S&T Pilot Programmes to encourage innovation in farming practices.

SPECIAL FEATURE

In Poor Urban Schools: Reading, Writing and a Celery Stick

FIVE years ago, Banareng Primary School in Atteridgeville, a township near Pretoria, was losing its battle against the typical consequences of poverty. Attendance and grades were poor and illnesses among students frequent.

Until one day, when someone suggested a surprisingly simple solution: Turn part of the playground into a cabbage patch. Now, the school produces enough vegetables to feed all 670 students every day for free, and the pupils are at their desks and eager to learn.

'We realised that the pains the children experienced were pangs of hunger, and now when we give them something to eat, this makes them better,' said Paulina Sethole, the principal. 'For some, the lunch they get at school is the only meal they eat.'

Hunger is a prevalent and persistent enemy of education in Africa. A child with a gnawing stomach struggles harder to learn. The problem is increasingly compounded by HIV/AIDS, which is stifling agriculture, killing the most productive members of families and creating millions of orphans across sub-Saharan Africa, according to the UN Children's Fund (Unicef). Malawi, for example, has seen a 150% increase in the number of street children due to food shortages and the epidemic.

But as Banareng and a growing number of schools throughout Africa show, the remedy can be vastly less complicated than the malady. For example:

■ A school nutrition programme organised by Unicef and the World Food Programme in Swaziland showed that enrolment and attendance rates increased when children were given meals. Pilots started in five schools in



Cultivating pride in learning: South African students tend vegetable gardens at some 12,000 schools.

Source: Food and Trees for Africa

2002 have now been replicated at 460 sites serving 36,000 children.

■ School canteens in Burkina Faso have been credited with increased enrolment, regular attendance, lower repetition and drop-out rates and higher success rates on exams, especially among girls.

■ Studies in Malawi marked a 5% increase in enrolment and up to 36% improvement in attendance among schools that run nutrition schemes.

'Children who had disappeared from classrooms because they were too weak to walk to school and stay awake during lessons have returned to find two guaranteed meals a day,' the Unicef study in Swaziland stated.

School nutrition programmes encourage poor parents to keep their children in school rather than sending them out to beg or find menial jobs to help the family make ends meet, according to Joy Miller Del Rosso, a consultant for the Partnership for Child Development, an international collaboration among UN and donor agencies.

Projects like the one at Banareng Primary School do more than just feed the students. They serve as teaching tools, too. In the heart of Soweto, the

vast township south of Johannesburg, children rise early to tend the plots at Ikaneng Primary School. Many carry water from home in plastic bottles to nourish tidy rows of spinach, beetroot and tomatoes on what once was an empty lot strewn with rocks and weeds.

'We don't need fancy equipment to teach subjects like science, mathematics, technology and commerce anymore,' said Betty Memela, a teacher. 'We just use our gardens. The students have to measure up a plot – that's mathematics. When the seeds germinate and grow, that's science. When the pupils have to price and sell the goods, that is commerce.'

The originating force behind the gardens in Banareng, Ikaneng and some 12,000 other schools across South Africa is an organisation called Food and Trees for Africa, which initiated the Woolworths Trust EduPlant in association with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, LandCare SA and Tikkun more than a decade ago.

The gardening approach is based on permaculture – which enables crops to be grown in the same place in perpetuity, produces more energy than it uses and relies strictly on organic practices. Schools make their own fertilisers through mulching, and strong emphasis is placed on water conservation.

Flora Lesele, the principal of Ikaneng, is unambiguous about the broader benefits of the gardens. 'The apartheid regime taught us as blacks that we can do nothing,' she said. 'If you say, "We are poor, we can do nothing," you are telling your mind to be lazy. My learners know that we don't say, "We can't." Being black does not limit you. You must believe that you "can".' – Peroshni Govender and Nick Kotch

SPECIAL FEATURE: OPINION

Aid That Just Makes Sense

School feeding schemes provide incentives for destitute families to keep their children in class

THE air-conditioned UN Land Cruiser deposited me next to a line of barefoot children that cut across a bone-dry schoolyard. A group of women scooped steaming cups of maize meal into the children's red plastic dishes as ribbons of steam curled up into their faces from the battered pots. Boys and girls gathered in clutches outside their classroom, laughing and eating with relish, as a group of colourfully dressed Masai stood forlornly with their emaciated Brahmin cattle in the background.

It was 2000 and this was my first trip into 'the field' from the cushy confines of the World Food Programme (WFP) offices in Nairobi. Although a searing drought had left millions in Kenya dependent on donated food that year, things seemed to be going pretty well that day at that school in Kajiado, a town a few hours drive south from Nairobi.

In the course of my work at WFP throughout the Horn of Africa and also in South Africa and Afghanistan, I would come to see this kind of project as one of the international development community's most successful forms of intervention. While the long-term value of multi-billion dollar, protracted relief operations have rightly been questioned in the wake of such disasters as the one that unfolded in Somalia in 1993, where rival factions turned donated food into the capital of war, school feeding schemes simply make sense.

Some 300 million children across the globe are classified as chronically hungry and 130 million of those don't attend school. At a relatively minimal cost, a daily school meal keeps kids in the classroom, lending to intellectual and physical development. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the meals keep kids in school, leading to an educated and economically sound workforce in the long-run. According

to a UNESCO survey, per capita GNP in countries with an adult literacy rate of about 40% averaged \$210 annually. Conversely, in countries which boast at least 80% literacy rates, per capital GNP exceeded \$1,000.

School meals are crucial in Africa, where dropout rates are appallingly high. Repeated natural disasters such as drought and floods, civil conflict, government corruption and the lasting inequities of colonial rule have left the majority of Africa's residents caught in the grip of back-breaking poverty. Most parents rely on their children to help plough their fields or find work in order to support the family. They yank

'Girls who go to school marry later and on average have 50% fewer children'

their kids out of school and into the continued cycle of destitution.

Not only do school meals provide necessary nutritional support to often under-nourished African children, but they also give parents the economic incentive to send their children to the classroom. Enrolment and attendance rates have been proved to increase when school meals are offered. In Kajiado, many of the kids I met had walked several kilometres to school. The meals kept them coming.

In times of particular hardship, such as the 2002/2003 humanitarian crisis in southern Africa that was caused by a confluence of drought, HIV/AIDS and – in some cases – government mismanagement, school feeding is particularly important. Children and their education are quick casualties during such harsh times; a bowl of nourishing food between classes can

ensure that their education is not interrupted.

School meals are especially important for girls. According to UN studies, illiterate girls marry very young and may have up to seven children before they are 18. Girls who go to school, however, marry later and on average have 50% fewer children. In many cases, school meals are the only reason parents choose to keep their daughters in school. WFP has in many cases provided girls with take-home food rations to add extra incentives to attend school by offsetting the loss of the contribution their families might otherwise require them to make.

In many African cultures, girls tend to stay home and work instead of attending class. During natural disasters and other emergencies, this tendency multiplies and can prove extremely detrimental to their well-being. In order to help support the family, girls may engage in high-risk activities such as prostitution, which is especially dangerous in southern Africa where HIV infection rates are the highest in the world.

International humanitarian organisations like WFP can play a key role in promoting education and alleviating the effects of crises caused by famine, floods and wars. But their efforts alone are hardly adequate or sustainable. In the long run, African governments must invest in their children to move their societies beyond perpetual dependence on aid and encourage families to keep sons and daughters in the classroom. Lesotho has begun taking steps to take over the school-feeding programme that WFP launched in the tiny mountain kingdom during the recent drought. That's an encouraging step forward that other fragile nations would do well to follow.

– Jennifer Abrahamson

Business Grows Impatient As Leaders Drag Heels on Nepad

African politicians urge investment, but corporate captains want stability, accountability first

IT WAS only a matter of time. For two years business has rallied behind Nepad, forming corporate councils and pledging to support Africa's blue-ribbon initiative for development. But progress on implementing the key components of Nepad has been slow, and patience among the private sector is wearing thin.

When the continent's best thinkers gathered at the capital of Mozambique in early June for the World Economic Forum's (WEF's) annual Africa conference, the disconnect between business and political leaders was more apparent than it had ever been. African reformists like South African President Thabo Mbeki bemoaned the lack of foreign investment in Africa. Corporate captains, in response, said if governments couldn't deliver on Nepad provisions such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), they would, in effect, apply their own shadow criteria for engagement.

'Business has expressed an opinion on the peer review mechanism ... and would like to see built-in sanctions for peers' who fail to meet set standards of performance, said Reuel Khoza, chairman of South Africa's electricity utility Eskom, addressing a pre-summit media conference.

A new study released at the WEF gathering entitled *The Africa Competitiveness Report 2004* underscored the need for urgent and sustained development: Sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in the world to experience consistent flat

or negative growth over the past 50 years, resulting in a significantly larger proportion of Africans living below the poverty line than at the outset of the post-independence period.

The statistics paint a stark picture. In

performance of Africa, has turned poverty into an essentially African problem.'

Nepad is supposed to provide an answer to this. As Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano declared at a pre-summit press conference in Maputo: 'We need pan-African solutions to African problems and Nepad has all those possible solutions.'

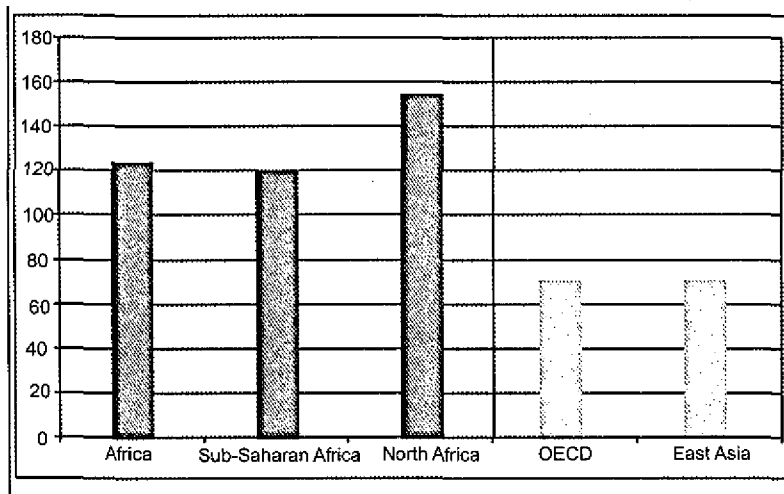
Two years ago big business might have been more inclined to believe him. When the WEF gathered in Durban, South Africa, in 2002, Khoza rallied the leaders of more than 100 corporate giants and parastatals to form the Nepad Business Group.

Earlier this year, they rededicated themselves to supporting the goals of Nepad at the Davos meeting of the WEF. But the private sector is finding it increasingly difficult to mask its frustration at the slow pace of Nepad-oriented reforms aimed at creating more stable environments for growth and development.

'Business is the net creator of jobs,' said Vassi Naidoo, chief executive at Deloitte & Touche Tohmatsu in South Africa. 'Government has a significant role to play to make business competitive. Sadly, there is not much action from Nepad.'

One of the priority areas for Nepad is infrastructure, which is a major building block for sustainable growth. The initiative has identified 20 priority

Relative Price of Investment



Source: WEF calculations

1970, the report notes, Ghana and Korea had 'broadly similar per capita income levels,' but 'by 2003, Korea's GDP per capita was some 30 times higher than that of Ghana.' Similarly, 'Hungary's GDP per capita is projected to be about 28 times higher than that of oil-rich Nigeria, whereas it was only 5 times higher in 1970.' The impact of these figures is nothing short of a humanitarian disaster: Six in 10 people living south of the Sahara now exist below the poverty line, unable to access healthcare, education and even basic nutrition.

Africa's share of global foreign direct investment is 1.7%.

'Poverty used to be an essentially Asian phenomenon,' the report states. 'The excellent economic performance of Asia, paired with the disastrous growth

programmes for development under infrastructure and they include energy, transport, airways, water and sanitation as well as railroads, but so far business has been slow to invest in these projects.

One problem with Nepad is that it is hard to pinpoint programmes that have come about as a result of the new partnership between countries. Most projects that are underway and broadly defined as being 'in the spirit of Nepad' have been in operation long before Nepad was launched. Some of those singled out as Nepad-related are broadly defined and the challenge is putting them into operation.

'For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo the Nepad documents will talk about sharing water resources from the Congo River with other states. That's a Nepad project, but then you have to unpack it and work out how you make it real and that's the challenge,' said one official.

Infrastructure points a lens on the costs of mismanagement and poor macroeconomic planning common among African countries. As the WEF competitiveness study indicates, greater investment alone is not the solution: 'Improved physical infrastructure will not have the desired effect on competitiveness if African countries do not recognise and address explicitly the constraints which have stunted previous initiatives.'

Inefficiency, over-regulation, corruption, and lack of adequate cost-recovery mechanisms to ensure debt repayment and maintenance are some of the key factors preventing Africa from realising the economic potential of infrastructure.

These problems point to the core grievance that business has with regard to Nepad: the slow pace of implementation on the African Peer

Review Mechanism. For the private sector to prosper, business leaders argue, it needs a conducive political environment. The APRM was designed to help create more enabling conditions by giving political leaders a tool to help each other improve their performance in critical areas such as economic governance, rule of law and corruption.

'The APRM is the most tangible manifestation out of Nepad,' said

'We would like to believe that political leadership has provided a start [to the APRM process], but delivery will come from more partners,' said Khoza. The Nepad Business Group has suggested running a parallel review system that would be similar to what international credit rating agencies do.

If the consensus from the WEF summit was that African leadership has failed to provide governance and economic management that will enable the peoples of Africa to break the seemingly intractable cycle of conflict, disease and poverty, the gathering also provided a platform for sharing solutions.

Huddled in true African style beneath a stand of trees outside the Maputo conference centre, Mbeki and Mozambican presidential candidate Armando Guebuza gathered with business leaders to discuss how to nurture a new generation of African leaders equipped with the skills to promote steady development on the

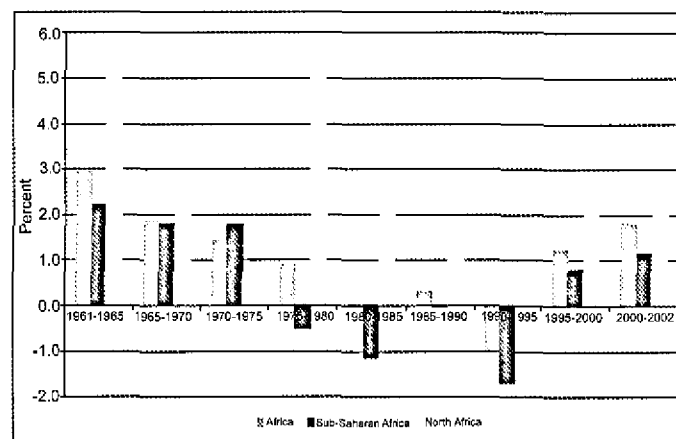
continent.

Ndidi Nwuneli, founder and managing partner of LEAP Africa, a Nigerian non-profit organisation devoted to developing the next generation of African business and political leaders, identified four essential qualities of leadership: integrity, investment in successors, incentives to inspire people through vision and a willingness to make sacrifices for the good of the group.

That last point echoed earlier comments by President Chissano. 'The challenge,' he said, 'is to make everyone understand that each has a responsibility to make government do well – not by shouting, but by acting and not waiting.'

Government looks to business, business looks to government. Nepad's vision for Africa's development hangs in the balance. – Luleka Mangquku

Per Capita Growth Rates



Source: WEF calculations from Penn World Tables data

Stanley Subramoney, a member of the Nepad Business Group. Echoing his concern, Naidoo said: 'If we're going to be successful, we need an enlightened leadership.'

But peer review is voluntary and, so far, just more than 20 countries have signed up. The process has begun in countries such as Ghana and Malawi, but critical questions about transparency and participation from civil society and business remain cloudy.

The APRM gets directly to issues that are crucial to establishing the conditions that will attract investment. Political instability, price volatility, the tendency of government to engage in sweeping policy reversals and an uncertain macroeconomic environment contribute to the risk of doing business on the continent. So, too, does confusion around such fundamental concerns as property rights.

Heed Not the Cynics, Africa

AFRICA, Henry Kissinger writes in his book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, is destined to become 'the festering disaster of our age.' In his view, only the 'moral commitment of the American people and the international community' can save us from that fate.

Many of those whose 'moral commitment' Kissinger summons would reflexively accept his underlying premise regardless of whether they were interested in heeding his call. The premise is that Africans lack the capacity to save themselves and must rely upon the kindness of strangers. Conscious or unconscious, this assumption pervades discourse on Africa.

Thus, as six African leaders participated in the recent G-8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia, US, the fifth such consecutive summit to which we were invited, we expected to be portrayed by some as mendicants. This was not the intent, or fault, of our hosts. To the contrary, by making our attendance routine, the leaders of the G-8 have indicated a very real and welcome desire to mainstream Africa into the global agenda.

Nonetheless, in the public imagination of the North, we were still poor relations crashing the party. We can argue about who is to blame for that perception – and we Africans are far from blameless – but on this all surely can agree: Africans will be objects of compassion and contempt until such time as we have become demonstrable masters of our own destiny.

From Miraculous to Commonplace

There will be a time when the democratic transition South Africans achieved 10 years ago will no longer be considered a miracle but instead will be regarded as typical of the inclusive way in which the people of our continent are capable of resolving their deepest differences.

There will be a time when a highly

respected columnist for one of America's best newspapers will not casually dismiss South Africa's achievements of the past decade as the result of luck, but will point instead to the character of our continent's people and the substance of the policies of the governments they elect.

There will be a time when the donor-recipient paradigm dies and South Africa will be just one of dozens of countries south of the Sahara able to raise reasonably priced capital on international debt markets.

It is up to Africans to create the conditions for that to occur. No one can do it for us. But this we can confidently say: The whole world will be better off when the market is as hungry for low-cost debt issued by, say, the Democratic Republic of Congo, as it was for South Africa's latest 10-year \$1 billion global bond, which was oversubscribed at a 1.95% spread over US Treasury Bills and a 6.5% coupon.

An Africa with the capacity to secure the welfare of an economically active population through policies that promote human dignity and economic sustainability will be an Africa in which South Africa is merely typical, not confined – as we still are by some – to the status of historical curio: the so-called miracle. South Africa today, in its undeniable successes, is the product not of magic but of an old-fashioned hard slog and the collective efforts of a serious and productive citizenry.

We ask that the West abandon its hoarding and protectionism. We ask for equitable access to the world's markets for a highly diversified range of exported goods and services. In such a world there would be space for an Africa with the infrastructure to enable its companies to be fully competitive and to move up the global value chain, an Africa that unlocks and retains the talents and skills of its people.

It will be a continent of nations at peace, within and between themselves, where the scourges of poverty and disease are being effectively and sustainably tamed, where human rights are sacrosanct. It will be a continent that neither breeds nor harbours – but in fact helps to suppress – the terrorism conducted by lawless states and lawless non-state groups, a terrorism that threatens us all.

Brick by Brick

There are no quick fixes or magic panaceas to get us to that point. We have to build brick by carefully sequenced brick, conscious that mistakes we make in haste now can damage the project for decades, deferring the dream for yet another generation.

So we must be able to set our own priorities based on our own realities, experience and needs, rather than those of foreign donors and the organisations through which they channel their funds. The foundations are being laid. With the African Union, a new generation of African leaders has created a vehicle for continent-wide transformation.

The AU Constitutive Act, which has statutory effect in each member state and will soon be enforceable by the African Court of Justice, commits members to democratic principles and respect for human rights and rule of law.

In the New Partnership for African Development, we have created, and the international community has accepted, a detailed and unified blueprint for meeting our social and economic goals. To promote good political, economic and corporate governance we have instituted the African Peer Review Mechanism.

In combination, these should be tools that will enable us to make the best possible use of donor funding as an instrument of policy and not a way of life. – **Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa**