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Expanding access to water requires more funds, greater efficiency and strengthened capacity.

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OCTOBER 2007

Broadcasting peace: radio a tool for recovery

Unbiased information empowers communities after conflicts

By Mary Kimani

Mega FM’s broadcasts may not reach far outside northern Uganda. But in an area that has been brutalized by decades of insurgency by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), it is having an impact. Oryema, a former LRA child soldier who later returned home, explains why. “I did not feel anything bad about killing,” he says. “Not until I started listening to Radio Mega…. I actually heard how we burnt homes…. And I started to think, ‘Are we really fighting a normal war?’ That is when I started realizing that maybe there is something better than being here in the bush.”

According to Mr. Boniface Ojok of the non-profit project Justice and Reconciliation, located in Gulu, northern Uganda, Mega FM’s programme “Dwog cen paco” (come back home) “succeeded in encouraging rebels to come out of the bush.” The programme brought former soldiers like Oryema on the air to talk about their experiences.

Funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), Mega FM is one of several such stations that have been set up in Africa by the United Nations, donor agencies, churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help communities overcome the challenges of rebuilding peace after wars have ended.

Rights and law

Southwest of Uganda is Ituri, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where thousands were killed during the country’s civil war. There another project, called the Interactive Radio for Justice (IRFJ), seeks to raise public awareness of human rights and the options for dealing with crimes during and after the war.

Set up in June 2005 with funding from the US philanthropic MacArthur Foundation, the IRFJ produces programmes in which members of the public pose questions and get answers from local and international officials. The goal is not just to inform the public, says producer Wanda Hall. “The project allows us to push authorities to do their job. Local leaders know what their job is. They know the law and their role. Our job is to get them to say these things on the radio so that the population knows what their rights are.”

According to Congolese journalist and IRFJ co-producer Richard Pituwa, the project’s programmes are intended to help people understand local and international law. Comparing the current situation to the period before the project came to Ituri, he told Africa Renewal that he saw a marked change in the “police’s approach to people and people being more observant of the law.”

According to one participant in an October 2006 listeners’ poll, “We are starting to understand our rights, and even the police have stopped arresting us arbitrarily.” Said another: “These programmes are very important for justice and peace to return…. It would have been better to have programmes like this on the air before the war.”

Not a luxury

In West Africa, the NGO Search for Common Ground (SFCG) produces and airs programmes on peace, disarmament and reconciliation in Liberia, using 22 partner radio stations — 10 in the capital, Monrovia, and 12 in rural communities. In 2004, when the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees needed to repatriate 340,000 Liberians from neighbouring countries, the SFCG developed a programme with UN updates, news on the peace process and information on safe areas.

Similar programmes produced by SFCG’s Talking Drum Studio are still being aired in neighbouring Sierra Leone, which has also been recovering from war. Mr. Christopher John, then regional commissioner for the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), told independent evaluators in 2004 that the SFCG’s programming “has helped the SLP become even critical of itself…. It helped the police draw closer to the people and build confidence and trust.” Such efforts, he added, “need to be sustained if we are to be successful in consolidating peace.”

Similar stations seeking to promote peace include UNAMSIL Radio, set up by the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra

see page 20
Adult HIV rates in Africa*

* These figures for 2005, the most recent available, reflect the midpoint between high and low estimates. Changes in HIV infection rates may reflect statistical anomalies instead of progress in fighting the disease.

Source: UN Africa Renewal from UNAIDS data.

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**Adult HIV in Africa**

(\% population, ages 15-49)

- 0 - 5.9 \%
- 6 - 11.9\%
- 12 - 19.9\%
- 20\% and higher
- n.a. = not available

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These figures for 2005, the most recent available, reflect the midpoint between high and low estimates. Changes in HIV infection rates may reflect statistical anomalies instead of progress in fighting the disease.
Empowering women to fight AIDS
Women’s leadership is key, argues UN envoy for AIDS in Africa

By Michael Fleshman

Out of nearly 25 million Africans today living with HIV/AIDS, almost 60 per cent are women, reports the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). In some African countries, more than two-thirds of people with the virus are women.

It was therefore appropriate that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed an African woman, Ms. Elizabeth Mataka, as his new special envoy for AIDS in Africa. A citizen of Botswana, Ms. Mataka has lived and worked in neighbouring Zambia for many years, and since 1990 has been on the frontline of Africa’s struggle against the disease, as a community activist, programme director and international advocate. At the time of her UN appointment on 21 May, she was serving as executive director of the Zambia National AIDS Network and as vice-chairperson of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The struggle against HIV/AIDS requires a far greater focus on women, says Ms. Mataka. “Unless we empower women not just economically, but with technology that they can initiate and control to protect themselves against infection, we will remain with very limited success,” she told Africa Renewal from her office in Lusaka.

The reasons for women’s particular vulnerability to HIV, which is transmitted by sexual intercourse and exposure to infected blood, are complex and varied. Sexual assault and other forms of violence against women is one important factor (see Africa Renewal, July 2007). Biology can also make women more susceptible to infection.

But the factors that leave women most at risk, says Ms. Mataka, and the ones that must be tackled if the epidemic is to be defeated, are economic, social and political. “Look at the economic position of women,” she says. “Most women find themselves totally dependent on their male partner. That tends to limit their negotiating power in terms of safer sex.”

February 2004 to raise awareness of the mounting crisis among women and to develop prevention and treatment programmes tailored to their needs (see Africa Renewal, October 2004).

In July 2007 the World Young Women’s Christian Association organized a women’s conference on AIDS in Nairobi, Kenya. It drew more than 1,800 people from throughout the world and focused on expanding women’s leadership in anti-AIDS initiatives. The conference’s call to action declared that women had a human right to equal access to HIV/AIDS services and demanded an end to economic and social discrimination (see box, page 6).

Dr. Peter Piot, the head of UNAIDS, told delegates that “this is the time to connect the dots between AIDS and gender equality.” He declared that the “feminization” of AIDS is the most significant development in the evolution of the global epidemic. “The first question we need to ask for every AIDS activity is, of course: ‘Does it pass the test for women?’ There is no such thing as a gender-neutral programme.”

HIV-positive mother and child in Tanzania: Low economic and social status, along with other factors, leave women more vulnerable than men to infection.
ship can find themselves isolated and trapped. “Women are under real pressure to remain in a marriage,” Ms. Mataka explains. “Mostly, society will not support a woman in her decision to divorce if she thinks that marriage is risky. People just say: ‘That’s how it is. That’s how men are.’ They need support to get away from risky situations.”

Yet changing the economic and social factors that put women at risk is “a huge job,” she admits. The starting point, she adds, “would be for us to build very strong solidarity movements to support each other…. Before you can do anything else you must have somewhere to sleep, something to eat. You must feel comforted by other women, supported by them. Women must come together irrespective of status, education and wealth.”

Many early anti-AIDS programmes for women, she argues, failed to focus specifically on women’s real needs and lacked concrete targets. Simply “mainstreaming” gender into AIDS programmes did not work. It is vital to set numerical targets and specific timeframes. She cites the successful effort to increase by eight times the number of Africans on lifesaving anti-AIDS drugs in just three years. “We must have the same thing with women’s empowerment,” she asserts. “We must have definite programmes so that women are supported.”

Progress amid setbacks
For both men and women, the battle against AIDS remains daunting. Despite a thirtyfold increase in funding for global anti-AIDS programmes since 1996, the number of new infections and deaths continues to rise. Spending on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment is expected to reach $10 bn in 2007, but that is less than half the amount needed.

Access to lifesaving anti-retroviral drugs has soared since 2003. They now reach 2 million people in developing countries, including over 1 million in Africa. Yet that is less than a quarter of those who need the medicines, and the rate of new infections is six times the number of new patients entering treatment annually. “This is not acceptable and it is not sustainable,” Dr. Piot cautions, noting that such trends could doom efforts to reach the UN target of universal treatment access by 2010.

As grim as such numbers may seem, they are worse for women. Just 11 per cent of pregnant women receive treatment to prevent passing the virus to their newborns, and in some of the worst-affected African countries, just one in 10 women has access to HIV testing.

But to Ms. Mataka, there are signs of progress. “The fatalism that I sensed maybe five or six years ago is certainly on the decline,” she says. “People think the response is in their hands and they can do something about it.”

The availability of treatment, in particular, has begun to fundamentally change public attitudes, she notes. “People know that if they are ready for treatment, there will be treatment. Increasingly, people are no longer seeing the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS positivity as a death sentence. People are going back to work. Children are growing up with their parents.”

There are other modest signs of progress. Although infection rates are static or increasing in most African countries, the rate of increase has begun to slow among

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**Women’s call to action**

Declaring that “women’s leadership is essential” in the fight against HIV/AIDS, over 1,800 delegates to the World YWCA International Women’s Summit adopted a global Call to Action in Nairobi, Kenya, on 7 July.* The manifesto called on women to advocate with their governments and civil society organizations to:

- Strengthen HIV/AIDS education and awareness programmes for women and girls
- Involve women living with HIV/AIDS in decision-making
- Combat stigma and stereotypes, including among women and girls
- Promote gender equality and women’s human and reproductive rights
- Expand efforts to end violence against women
- Provide women and girls equal access to education and economic opportunities
- Ensure women’s access to HIV/AIDS care and treatment services
- Revise anti-AIDS programmes to make them responsive to women
- Invest in leadership development for women and girls
- Guarantee the full participation of women at all levels of society.

*For the full text, see: <http://www.worldywca.info/>
Bringing water to Africa’s poor
Expanded access requires more funds, efficiency and capacity

By Efam Dovi

Until six years ago, Eugenia Uwamahoro and several of her eight children had to trek 2 kilometres each day to a river to get about 140 litres of water for drinking, cooking, washing and feeding her four cows. There was a water pump in her village, Nyakabingo, in Rwanda’s Gicumbi district, but it hardly functioned. Then the Rwandan government, with financial support from the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), repaired the pump, and the community contracted a private manager to maintain it.

“It has improved my life,” Ms. Uwamahoro told African Renewal. “Now we can rest.” Not only has the pump saved her considerable time and effort, but she also gets her household’s daily water supply at lower cost than she would have from the private village water carriers who cart it up from the river.

Many villagers “are happy to pay for the improved service,” says Kamaru Tstoneste, who operates the pump. But some villagers cannot afford the cost. So community leaders compiled a list of the neediest households, and review it from time to time. “This group gets an agreed quantity of free supply,” Mr. Tstoneste told Africa Renewal. Still, he adds, “Old habits die hard. There are those who refuse to pay for water and still go to the river.”

Ms. Uwamahoro and her neighbours are fortunate. Not only do they have access to water, but they also have some choice as to its source and cost. Most Africans are not so lucky. Across the continent, half of all rural households do not have access to clean drinking water; they must rely on water sources that may be unhealthy. The situation is better in urban areas, where 80 per cent of the population is covered. Yet more than half of city and town dwellers do not have access to clean drinking water; they must rely on water sources that may be unhealthy. The situation is better in urban areas, where 80 per cent of the population is covered. Yet more than half of city and town dwellers do not have a tap in their house or yard, report the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.

The irony is that Africa has abundant fresh water: large lakes, big rivers, vast wetlands and limited but widespread groundwater. Only 4 per cent of the continent’s available fresh water is currently being used.

Distant goal
African leaders have declared their commitment to achieving universal access to clean water, through their development blueprint, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and through their support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted by world leaders in 2000.

The seventh MDG is to cut in half, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. In sub-Saharan Africa, that proportion was reduced from 52 per cent to 44 per cent between 1990 and 2004. But the target, 26 per cent, still remains very distant.

Some countries, such as Senegal, Gabon and South Africa, are significantly increasing the number of new water connections and expanding delivery in urban areas, through both public and private investment. Senegal, reported the UN in a June 2007 assessment of progress towards the MDGs, “is on track to achieving the water and sanitation goals through a national investment programme financed with donor money.”

Africa faces a number of constraints in achieving expanded access to clean water. These include an insufficient number of skilled personnel and effective institutions. In some countries, water scarcity or pollution also pose particular challenges. The most common hindrance is the limited resources available to most countries. “Inadequate financing is the single most important factor affecting the continent’s fresh water delivery abilities,” Peter Akari, chief water policy officer of the African Water Facility at the African Development Bank (ADB), told Africa Renewal.

No single solution
From where will the money come? Donor assistance, as in Senegal, is one source. But donors are likely to provide only a portion of the estimated $5 bn needed annually to achieve the MDG target.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that total budgetary spending in the water and sanitation sectors in sub-Saharan Africa is currently around $800 mn a year. This amount could likely be increased to $2.5 bn through “cost recovery” measures by service providers.
providers (charging users for water) and financial mobilization by local communities. Governments should also be able to increase their own budgetary allocations somewhat. In addition, a number of countries, at the urging of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have sought to enlist private investment in expanding water facilities.

“There is not one single solution to ensuring everyone gains access to water,” says the UK charity WaterAid. “So it is impossible to say in general terms whether it is a good idea for private, public or community organizations to be involved in the delivery and management of services. Each circumstance should be looked at individually and a suitable pro-poor, affordable and sustainable solution found to fit each community.”

The UNDP, in its Human Development Report 2006, agrees. In seeking to expand access to clean water, the report comments: “Decisions about the appropriate public-private mix have to be taken case by case on [the basis of] local values and conditions.”

Government responsibility
Ultimately, argues Henry Ndede, a water coordinator for the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi, Kenya, African governments have the responsibility to reach the over 300 million people who are currently deprived of improved drinking water. Governments, he told Africa Renewal, “must put in place the right water policies to embrace the participation of the private sector in water provision. With the absence of policies, it becomes difficult.”

He cites the example of Kenya, where a water policy developed in 1999 has led to improvements in the quality of water from the country’s public system, raised revenue collection and brought more boreholes to rural communities. A 2002 water act decentralized the management of water resources and delivery. Local public companies were formed to manage water in municipalities. They largely achieved their goal of increasing the number of customers served with improved water by 50 per cent and reducing water wastage by over 40 per cent, without raising tariffs.

Some publicly owned water utilities in Africa “are efficiently run using local management structures,” notes Stephen Donkor, a senior adviser on water issues for the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Their achievements, he says, counter the negative image held by some that African public utilities are inherently inefficient and can only be improved by the introduction of private owners or contractors. What these successful public utilities “do right should be shared with their sister institutions,” in other countries, Mr. Donkor told Africa Renewal.

Yet even in Kenya, equitable access remains a challenge. “In the urban areas, the infrastructure caters for the planned, but not the unplanned, settlements,” reports the Washington-based consumer advocacy group Public Citizen. “For those in planned settlements, there is access to piped water. [But the] reliable flow of water varies from area to area.”

Cutbacks and privatization
Into the 1980s, water provision was mainly a state activity, carried out by governments through public utilities. These were financed through government budgets, relying mainly on donor support and taxes. Since they were not run on a for-profit basis, tariffs were minimal for piped connections. Some of those without house connections in towns and in some rural communities got water from public standpipes, mostly for free. But these publicly run systems left out millions of people.

Economic crisis and the austerity policies promoted by the World Bank and IMF obliged African governments to cut back spending on public utilities, including water, and in a number of cases to privatize existing facilities.

“The expectation was that the private sector, mainly multinational water companies, will come in and take over public water companies, running them as profit-making entities while investing and expanding the network,” Mr. Donkor explains. “But this wasn’t the case. Private investors did not find the water sector in Africa financially attractive. The returns were not enough to justify their investments.”

In the 1990s, foreign companies were offered greater incentives, such as tax holidays and the full repatriation of profits, in an effort to draw them into the sector. But even then, private investors generally preferred Asia and Latin America to sub-Saharan Africa.

Africa thus suffered from decades of under-investment in water facilities. Given this, and the poor management that afflicted utilities in many African countries, the largely publicly run sector could not maintain existing levels of service, let alone make new connections.
Pitfalls of ‘cost recovery’

As part of the push to promote private participation in the water sector in Africa and other developing regions, “cost recovery” became an increasingly common practice. For the private companies themselves, the application of higher water tariffs and user fees was central to turning a profit. But for the public utilities as well, increasing tariffs was also seen as a way to stem financial losses or increase resources for further investment.

For many people who never had access to piped water or had previously gotten water from private carters who charged exorbitant prices, the new tariffs may have seemed worth it. But for many of Africa’s poorest, the costs were prohibitive.

Overall, South Africa has achieved remarkable progress in expanding access to clean water. Under the old apartheid system, about one-third of the population, overwhelmingly in the country’s then-segregated black communities, did not have access to safe water. When the African National Congress came to power in 1994, the new constitution proclaimed access to water as a basic human right. By 2004 about 88 per cent of the population had access to clean water.

As a matter of policy, all those with access to piped water are entitled to receive 25 litres per day at no charge. But beyond that threshold, users must pay, at a steeply graduated rate. Both private companies and local public water utilities have strictly enforced the cost-recovery practice, affecting poor households most severely. In 2002, the Johannesburg-based Rural Development Services Network, a non-governmental organization, estimated that some 10 million people had their water supply cut off at one point or another over the previous eight years for failing to pay their bills.

Two years earlier a major cholera outbreak swept the province of KwaZulu-Natal, killing some 300 people. Health officials found that many people in the most affected areas had resorted to using water from polluted rivers and lakes nearby, because they had been cut off from their water taps for non-payment of bills. The government responded by installing public standpipes in many low-income communities and by introducing flat low rates.

New management in Ghana

Ghana, in West Africa, attempted to solve its difficulties by bringing in new, outside managers for its water utility. The hope was that they would operate it more efficiently and along commercial lines.

The public water utility, the Ghana Water Company, Ltd. (GWCL), had previously been able to provide water to about half of the country’s population of 20 million. But it started losing money for a variety of reasons, including unpaid bills and illegal connections. As a result, it could not make any significant repairs or further extend the system. In 2005, officials in Accra estimated that the company lost half of its daily delivery of 450 mn litres through leakages from old pipes.

Ruby Amable of Ashongman, a middle-income residential area in Accra, was one of the utility’s many customers to lose service. The supply from her private connection worsened to three times a year, until it ran completely dry. She tried to fetch water from a neighbouring area. But that area also “hasn’t had working pipes for the past two years,” Ms. Amable told Africa Renewal. Yet she and her neighbours continue to receive regular monthly bills from the water company for simply having a connection in their homes.

To get water for her family of four, Ms. Amable had little option but to buy it from private water tanker operators. She has to spend the equivalent of $50 each month to fill her overhead tank.

At the urging of the World Bank, the government restructured the GWCL. In 2001 it increased water tariffs by more than 90 per cent. To make the GWCL more financially viable and to attract potential investors, the government also wrote off $100 mn in debts that the company owed.

In 2005, the government managed to secure a $103 mn grant from the World Bank, and bilateral donors provided an additional $17 mn. The government hoped that the fresh money would enable the GWCL to replace obsolete equipment and repair leaking pipes. It also set a goal of installing some 50,000 new household connections and 350 public standpipes by 2011 in Ghana’s main towns.

As a condition for the World Bank grant, the government had to agree to bring in a private water company to manage the GWCL. Through an international tender, Aqua Vitens Rand, Ltd. (AVRL), a joint subsidiary of two multinational water companies, Vitens of the Netherlands and Rand Water of South Africa, won a five-year management contract, and began running the GWCL’s delivery system in January 2006. Maintenance of the system and investments in new equipment and extensions continued to be the responsibility of the public company.

Nearly two years later, many customers are still looking at dry pipes. GWCL officials blame Ghana’s energy crisis, the result of low water levels in the reservoir of the Akosombo hydroelectric dam. AVRL’s managers emphasize investment problems. “The target of 50,000 new service connections is in progress, but it is slow because extension services in the target areas have not been done,” Stanley Martey, communications manager for AVRL, told Africa Renewal.

Domestic critics of the AVRL contract agree that investment is important, but go further to question the wisdom of bringing in outside managers. “The problem with Ghana’s water distribution system is not
Africa aims for a scientific revolution
More funding needed for research institutes and universities

By Gumisai Mutume

African leaders have pledged to devote more resources to the development of science and technology, an area deemed vital for economic development, yet long neglected and poorly funded in many countries. At a January 2007 summit of the continent’s political body, the African Union, heads of state “strongly urged” all AU countries to allocate at least 1 per cent of their gross domestic product to research and development by 2020. They also pledged to revitalize African universities — many of which have declined due to dwindling support over the last few decades — and to promote the study of science and technology by young people.

Declaring 2007 the year of science and technology, the leaders, who met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, agreed to a series of other initiatives. These included establishing a pan-African intellectual property organization to help protect indigenous innovations and starting on a 20-year strategy to promote cooperation among states on research in biotechnology. The programmes would be run by the continent’s various regional economic organizations.

The decisions build on and enhance Africa’s Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. The plan was launched in 2005 by the AU and the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the continent’s overall blueprint for economic and political advancement. The science plan is intended to develop an African system of research and technological innovation to support AU and NEPAD programmes in areas such as agriculture, the environment, infrastructure, industry and education. It envisions a science and technology sector that is inclusive — drawing on knowledge and ideas from rural dwellers (custodians of indigenous knowledge), students, academic researchers and representatives of industry and government.

The plan includes research projects in 12 “clusters,” each of which has a specific purpose: these include conserving and sustainably using biodiversity, developing biotechnology, securing and using Africa’s indigenous knowledge, building sustainable water and energy resources, combating drought and desertification, building engineering capacity for manufacturing and adopting new information technologies. However, the African leaders meeting in Addis Ababa did not reach a consensus on how to finance the plan, which the AU initially estimated would cost $158 mn over five years.

The plan “visualizes the possibility of an Africa that is free of poverty and well integrated into the global economy,” says South African Science and Technology Minister Mosibudi Mangena. “Aspirations for the plan include, among others, addressing Africa’s local needs, building strong African institutions geared towards knowledge production and application, cultivating Africa’s skills pool, developing an enabling policy environment and embracing, nurturing and harvesting regional diversity.”

The plan reflects a growing sense of urgency in Africa about using science and technology to help spur industrial and agricultural productivity, ensure food security, control diseases, provide clean water and preserve the environment.

Science-led development

However, most African countries have yet to transform their political pledges into feasible programmes for science-led development. Sub-Saharan Africa contributes about 2.3 per cent of world gross domestic product but is responsible for only 0.4 per cent of global expenditure in research and development (R&D). With 13.4 per cent of the world’s population, the continent is home to only 1.1 per cent of the world’s scientific researchers. It has about one scientist or engineer per 10,000 people, compared with 20–50 in industrial nations.

Over the years, the science and technology gap between Africa and the rest of the world has grown. While other regions constantly upgrade their technologies, Africa
is failing to keep up. Some economists feel that this widening gap is partly responsible for the continent’s underdevelopment.

The most serious challenges hindering the development of science and technology in Africa include a steady decline in funding, brain drain (flight of skilled personnel to other areas), inadequate infrastructure, insufficient levels of literacy and a shortage of women in science. Also, links between industry and science and technology institutions are weak. As a result, research findings are often not used by local industries, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises.

“Declaring the year for science innovations is an important beginning, but will require strong backing so that good showcases and practical scientific work is brought to the people’s attention,” says Mr. Stephen Agong, director of the Nairobi-based African Academy of Sciences. And, he adds, it will take time “for governments to plan, commit and allocate funds to support this cause.”

In the meantime, people in communities across Africa continue to innovate and to adapt technologies to meet their own local needs. For example, in Mali, villagers developed a hand-operated device to shell groundnuts. Made out of concrete, wood and scrap metal, it costs the equivalent of US$10. Unlike more expensive shellers that require more than one person to operate, it can be run by a single person and has a life expectancy of about 25 years. One machine can meet the needs of a village of 2,000 people.

**Challenges**

In many countries, national policies to promote science and technology are outdated, notes Mr. Abdoulaye Janneh, executive secretary of the Addis Ababa-based UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The quality of science and engineering education is also declining, in part due to a lack of money and of infrastructure such as state-of-the-art labs and technology centres. Nearly 30 years ago, in 1980, African leaders’ Lagos Plan of Action called for countries to allocate at least 1 per cent of gross domestic product to R&D, to help to spur the continent’s development. But after all this time, “many of our countries devote considerably lower funding” to that end, notes Mr. Janneh.

The AU acknowledges that the lag is not primarily the result of limited funding, but of a lack of appreciation for the value of such investments. The “return on the investment in science and technology is not appreciated by policy makers and even African industry,” the AU reports.

When African leaders met in Addis Ababa in January, many still did not have a full grasp of the issues, admitted Mozambican President Armando Guebuza. “Even during this summit, we had to call upon the experts to point out the importance of science and technology, so that even those among us who have not yet understood very well how imperative it is to develop science on our continent can now also accept this task,” he said. “It must be made clear that without the commitment of the leadership, there can be no scientific and technological development on our continent.”

**New impetus**

Over the last few years, there have been signs of a shift towards exploring the potential of science and technology for development, both globally and in the region. In 2003, the final document of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, highlighted the importance of science and technology in attaining the development goals of poor nations. Science, the report stressed, can help poor countries resolve problems such as energy deficiency, food insecurity, environmental degradation, diseases and water scarcity. Science and technology can also boost industrial productivity. In East Asia, the report observed, a transfer of technology from industrial nations, inflow of foreign investment and sizeable spending on education were at least partly responsible for the industrialization of several countries.

According to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a relatively small additional investment in countries such as South Africa, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe, which already have a relatively sophisticated science and technology base, could establish world-class facilities to advance the region as a whole. In Taiwan and South Korea, investment in local research institutes enabled those countries to develop infrastructure, helped local firms develop their own technologies and generated a large number of experienced researchers, who later played key roles in R&D activities.
While the challenges may appear daunting, the continent cannot afford to waste any more time. It should begin a major drive to train and deploy large numbers of scientists, engineers and technicians, says ECA Executive Secretary Janneh. African states also need to establish strong links between technology-based industry, academia and government to ensure that the sector’s contribution is reflected in national policies.

Surmountable challenges
At the moment, the picture varies widely across the continent, with some countries far ahead of others in their science and technology programmes. Nigeria is one of these leaders. Since returning to civilian rule in 1999, the country has invested heavily in the sector. In 2003 it launched a micro-satellite to monitor the environment and provide information for infrastructure development. The following year the government asked UNESCO to help it develop a national science and technology plan. The project involved analyses of government policies and spending in the sector and a review of the curricula content and capacity in the country’s 75 research institutes, 55 universities and 44 polytechnics. In 2006 the country approved a $5 bn endowment fund for science and technology development, drawn from oil export revenues and supplemented by funds from donors and private companies.

Egypt and South Africa have also attained significant success, notes UNESCO’s Science Report 2005. South Africa, which in 2002 spent $3.1 bn on research and development (equivalent to 0.7 per cent of its GDP), has advanced science research capabilities in aeronautics, nuclear engineering, chemistry, metallurgy, agriculture and medicine. Egypt leads North Africa in chemistry and engineering. In 2000 it spent $400 mn on research and development.

Across Africa, the need is great for scientific answers to the continent’s many problems. UNESCO reports that in sub-Saharan Africa, almost 92 per cent of the rural population and 48 per cent of those in urban areas do not have modern energy services. Connecting them to the national grid is prohibitively expensive for many countries. For years now, development planners have touted the advantages of solar technology as an alternative energy source, but progress in adopting it remains slow in many countries. Over the next 20 years the continent is expected to lose half of its water reservoir capacity due to silting and poor land management. As a result, many countries will need to invest in cost-effective ways of tapping and distributing groundwater. A June 2006 conference of African scientists and decision-makers in Tunisia recommended that the region focus its research attention on this critical area.

To assist Africa’s less industrialized countries, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs is currently running a project to promote emerging technologies, such as information and communication technologies, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies and fuel technologies. In 2003, as part of the programme, the UN and a number of African governments, private companies and academics recommended setting up science and technology parks. Out of an initial group of eight countries, Ghana and Senegal were selected to begin work on such parks — state-of-the-art premises for technology companies offering production, assembly, research, technical development and office facilities.

Once complete, the park in Senegal will house computer software and hardware companies, data processing centres and multimedia industries such as music and video production houses. It will also have pharmaceutical and biotechnology labs. It will bring together enterprises that use advanced technologies intensively, says Mr. Abdou Salam Sall of Chiekh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal. The government aims to create 20,000 jobs within the first five years of operation of the park, he says.

“Many emerging economies currently lack the capacity to meet their needs for technology transfers in support of sustainable development,” notes Mr. Sall. But India shows that things can change: the country has succeeded in developing science and technology sectors through such parks, which bring together researchers, technology experts, inventors and entrepreneurs.

A case for higher education
While it may appear obvious that countries that neglect higher education cannot do well in science and technology, many African countries have been doing just that. In
the 1980s most African countries adopted structural adjustment programmes that emphasized cuts in public spending. Under the programmes, they reduced education budgets, eliminated subsidies for students and devalued currencies, which raised the cost of imported educational materials.

When donor agencies later recognized the need to renew funding for education, they shifted their earlier emphasis on tertiary education, which they now saw as catering to the elite few, towards primary education. The World Bank and other donors argued that investment in primary education yielded higher returns to society as a whole, while tertiary education produced returns only for their individual graduates. “Because of a belief that primary and secondary schooling are more important than tertiary education for poverty reduction, the international development community encouraged African governments’ relative neglect of higher education,” the World Bank later acknowledged in a 2006 study.

From 1985 to 1989, only 17 per cent of the Bank’s worldwide education spending went towards higher education. It declined to 7 per cent from 1995 to 1999, noted the study, Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa. Initially, after most African countries achieved their independence in the 1960s, the number of tertiary institutions and students in Africa surged in response to the demand for skilled personnel to run the new states. While there were only 13 universities in sub-Saharan Africa in 1960, by 2002 there were about 300. However, funding failed to keep up with that expansion. Today, many of Africa’s universities and colleges are inadequately staffed and ill equipped. Their quality of education has declined. Many countries struggle to maintain even low enrolment levels, and the academic research output in the region is among the lowest in the world.

Only recently have African countries and their donor partners begun to reconsider the role of tertiary education. “Knowledge-based competition within a globalizing economy is prompting a fresh consideration of the role of higher education in development and growth,” notes the World Bank’s education advisor for the Africa region, Jee-Peng Tan. “Previously it was often viewed as an expensive and inefficient public service that largely benefited the wealthy and privileged.”

One possible channel through which higher education can enhance economic development is through “technological leapfrogging.” This phenomenon occurs when countries skip intermediary stages in technological development to higher levels that have already been developed elsewhere. “In a knowledge economy, tertiary education can help economies gain ground on more technologically advanced societies, as graduates are likely to be more aware of and better able to use new technologies,” notes the World Bank study on higher education in Africa.

Forging ahead

Rwandan President Paul Kagame poses the question now facing many African countries: “Where are we headed, and what needs to be done to give science and technology their due weight in our development processes?”

In a 2005 report, the Commission for Africa, a 17-member panel of experts convened by the UK’s then Prime Minister Tony Blair, recommended that Africa promote science and technology through partnerships with other developing countries such as Brazil and India, international organizations such as the World Bank and donor nations. The commission called for the development of centres and networks of excellence, in collaboration with institutions of higher learning in other countries. The Blair Commission recommended that the international community provide $3 bn over 10 years for the development of such African centres of excellence. Sub-Saharan Africa already has 10 academies of science — in Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

“There are certain scientific fields for which we will have to create new institutes, and others for which we can nurture existing ones,” says Mr. John Mugabe, advisor on science and technology to NEPAD. “In the area of biotechnology, for example, African leaders have decided to use existing national, regional and international institutes. In these cases, nodes and hubs of networks have been designated, and research and training activities are being undertaken in these institutes.” He cites two examples: North Africa, with its relative strength in pharmaceutical biotechnology, would be responsible for that area. East Africa, where the International Institute for Livestock Research is based, would take on the responsibility for biotechnology research on breeding and livestock feed.

The New York-based UN Millennium Project recommended that the international community either support under-funded research areas in Africa directly or fund international teams to conduct world-class research in relevant fields. International donors could also support international research networks that work closely with developing countries, such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. Established in 1972, the group is best known for the contributions of its affiliated institutes to developing new crop varieties in developing countries, in collaboration with local researchers.

“Agricultural production is an area in which global research efforts make eminent sense,” the Millennium Project reports. “Research on food crops for domestic consumption was long neglected in developing countries, where the emphasis of colonial powers was on exports.” In this area, research in one country can often benefit other countries, especially if promoted by a multinational research group, such as the West Africa Rice Development Association, an 11-country intergovernmental rice research centre.

African governments themselves need to come up with effective policies. The ECA says that policies will work if they are developed in consultation with all economic operators and stakeholders. They should also be incorporated into national legislation and provide incentives for investors. In contrast, if governments are passive or promote technologies that have little relevance to private partners, the result will most likely be failure.

While many good intentions have been expressed in Africa, says President Kagame, “intentions are not enough to enable science and technology to become a developmental resource. It is action on the ground that will make the difference.”
Linking disarmament with justice

Achieving peace should not mean ignoring past atrocities

By Ernest Harsch

Kinshasa

After years of war, hundreds of former militia fighters are coming out of the forests of Ituri, in the far northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). “The time of war is over,” declared Col. Mathieu Ngujolo, a militia commander, as members of his group disarmed in the village of Kobu. “Now is the time to rebuild our country.”

In this latest phase of the DRC’s disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme, a total of 4,500 members of three Ituri militia groups that signed an accord with the government in late 2006 are set to demobilize. They will join more than 100,000 combatants from other factions who, under earlier peace agreements, either returned to civilian life or joined the new national army.

Meanwhile, about a dozen trials are under way nationally of accused Congolese war criminals. One prominent militia commander from Ituri, Thomas Lubanga, is currently facing trial before the UN-backed International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. But so far the total number of accused is relatively low, in a country where 3–4 million people, the vast majority of them civilians, are estimated to have perished during the decade-long conflict. And like their demobilized predecessors, very few of the Ituri fighters will likely appear in court for crimes they may have committed during the war.

For many residents of Ituri, peace is enough, for now. “We lived through the war. We lost our parents, our brothers and sisters. We suffered the worst atrocities,” commented John Tibamwenda, a district chief in Bunia, the provincial capital, during a demobilization and arms-destruction ceremony. “It’s now time to turn the page.”

Yet in the DRC, as in other African countries emerging from war, many people are also wondering whether peace must come at the expense of justice. Do disarmament and demobilization necessarily mean impunity for those who pillaged, raped, killed and terrorized? Are communities that were victimized expected to welcome back those who victimized them?

In contrast, might prosecuting the worst perpetrators more vigorously jeopardize peace efforts, as some mediators and analysts fear? Would combatants hesitate to hand in their arms?

Different aims and constituencies

Seeking ways to resolve such dilemmas was one of the challenges facing participants in the Second International Conference on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Stability in Africa, held in Kinshasa, the DRC’s capital, 12–14 June (see box, page 15). Organized by the Congolese government and the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Reintegration and Stability in Africa, the meeting drew DDR experts and practitioners from across Africa and from various UN and other international agencies.

Hoping to improve the effectiveness of DDR in the continent, the participants focused on several shortcomings in existing programmes, including the relationship of DDR with post-war justice initiatives.

While many peace processes in Africa now include some form of DDR operation, efforts to bring perpetrators of war crimes and human rights violations to justice have tended to lag, reports Alpha Fall, a senior associate of the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), a non-governmental organization based in New York.

In part, Mr. Fall notes, this lag has come about because disarmament and demobilization are considered immediate security priorities — and peacekeeping missions thus seek to quickly implement them — while mechanisms for “transitional justice” take some time to get off the ground, especially in war-ravaged countries with weak court systems and many other pressing needs. (The term “transitional justice,” as used by many human rights advocates, refers to efforts to address the legacies of massive human rights abuses, most often in the transitional period after a war has ended or a dictatorship has been ousted.)

The gap also results from the different aims of DDR and transitional justice undertakings. “DDR programmes benefit ex-combatants,” observes Mr. Fall, “while transitional justice initiatives focus on victims. In addition, these constituencies themselves have different objectives: Victims seek accountability. Ex-combatants for the most part seek to minimize or reduce accountability.”

Nevertheless, Mr. Fall adds, DDR and transitional justice efforts have common long-term goals: reestablishing the rule of law, rebuilding trust, preventing renewed violence and reconciling communities. Greater coordination between the two processes should help to advance those goals, while also minimizing possible trade-offs and tensions that may arise.

Amnesty or prosecution?

The greatest controversy has revolved around the granting of amnesty. Amnesties
have been common in peace pacts in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere, often intended as inducements to warring factions to join a peace process. In South Africa, following the end of apartheid in 1994, amnesties were offered to those who publicly confessed their crimes, as a means of uncovering the truth and fostering national reconciliation.

During the latter years of Algeria’s civil war, the government’s offer of amnesty to individual rebels succeeded in getting thousands to lay down their arms. Similarly, some form of amnesty featured in peace talks in Sierra Leone, Liberia, the DRC and other countries.

In 2000, Uganda adopted an Amnesty Act, guaranteeing those who renounced violence a resettlement package and a promise to not bring charges against them. By December 2006, about 21,000 members of a half dozen rebel groups had agreed to accept the offer, including some 15,000 from the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), which for years has caused widespread destruction and displacement in northern Uganda. In communities where violence has subsided, many people have regarded the amnesty as an important tool for peace and for recovering children who had been kidnapped by the rebels.

Human rights activists, however, argue that failing to prosecute those who committed the worst atrocities ignores the suffering of their victims, hinders long-term reconciliation and perpetuates a culture of impunity that can contribute to future abuses. They also point out that under international law there can be no amnesty for war crimes or crimes against humanity.

During an initial peace accord in Sierra Leone in 1999, the negotiators agreed to a sweeping, general amnesty for all factions and combatants. But citing international law, the UN specifically disavowed the amnesty provision. A later — and more successful — peace agreement included an amnesty provision. A later — and more successful — peace agreement included a limited amnesty, but also established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to gather information about atrocities, and a Special Court for Sierra Leone to try a number of those most responsible.

There is some evidence that the threat of prosecutions may complicate demobilization efforts, however. A study of Sierra Leone by the ICTJ cited an instance in which representatives of the Special Court were barred from a demobilization camp because peacekeepers feared that ex-combatants would abandon DDR. In neighbouring Liberia, some fighters hesitated to join the DDR process there because they thought the Sierra Leone court’s jurisdiction might extend to them. (Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is in fact currently facing trial before the Special Court for his role in the Sierra Leone war.)

Striking a balance

In practice, peace negotiators and DDR practitioners have sought to strike a balance. In the DRC, explained Daniel Kawata, national coordinator of the DDR commission, any commanders suspected

'African ways and voices' on DDR

Returning former combatants to civilian life is one of the most complex and important factors in consolidating peace in countries just emerging from war, and requires greater commitment and collaboration by African stakeholders and their international partners, declared participants in a 12–14 June conference in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Organized by the government of the DRC and the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Second International Conference on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Stability in Africa drew nearly 200 participants from some 20 African nations and a number of donor countries, international and regional organizations and non-governmental groups to share ideas about how to better implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes.

Africans must be at the forefront of DDR efforts in their continent, the participants agreed. The conference provided an occasion for “African ways and African voices” to be better incorporated, observed Mr. William Lacy Swing, special representative of the UN Secretary-General in the DRC. Mr. Swing, who co-chaired the event, stressed that the process of networking stimulated by the conference would help build the capacity of African DDR experts and partners, following the first such conference held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in June 2005.

Despite wide differences in national experiences, virtually all participants agreed that the greatest challenges revolve around the final “R” — reintegration. By their nature, DDR programmes generally focus on ex-combatants’ disarmament and demobilization and provide them with some short-term assistance. Sustainable reintegration, however, requires much more, including support for community recovery initiatives. Reviving national economies was the focus of a special plenary session that highlighted ways in which national businesses, both large and small, can help create jobs for former combatants and other citizens.

In addition, the conference participants concentrated their discussion on several “critical issues” confronting DDR programmes in Africa. Four thematic topics were highlighted: children and women associated with fighting forces; combatants operating on foreign soil; DDR and security sector reform; and transitional justice.

The participants emphasized a number of broad recommendations, including:

• The national ownership of DDR programmes should be enhanced by supporting the efforts of all national stakeholders, including governments, civil societies, warring factions and others.

• Africa’s international partners should assist community rehabilitation, poverty reduction and other development priorities so that society as a whole benefits and ex-combatants are successfully reintegrated.

• Regional perspectives should be included in the design and implementation of DDR programmes, with particular attention to disarming and repatriating combatants from other countries and combating illicit flows of small arms.

• The special needs of children, women, the disabled and other groups associated with warring factions should be adequately included in the planning and implementation stages of any DDR effort.

• DDR programmes should take greater account of community interests and concerns, to help create a more welcoming environment for returning fighters.

— Ernest Harsch, Kinshasa
of “heavy criminal business” were subject to arrest. But such arrests were limited in number, he told Africa Renewal in 2005, so as not to “lose the possibility of demobilizing a whole bunch.”

When the ICC first announced several years ago that it was opening investigations into war crimes by the LRA in northern Uganda, a sharp public debate erupted. Some local communities sent a delegation to The Hague to warn that indictments could hamper peace efforts. Justice Peter Onega, chairman of the Amnesty Commission, says he told the ICC “that those warrants, once issued, may not help in the amnesty process.” Indictments, he explained to Africa Renewal during the DDR conference in Kinshasa, could lead LRA combatants to “fear that if they came out [of the forests], they would be tried.”

For a time, the ICC delayed publicly issuing warrants, so as to give the talks a bit more of a chance. But in October 2005 the ICC unveiled international warrants for the arrest of Mr. Kony and several other LRA commanders. Despite initial fears, peace talks between the LRA and Ugandan intermediaries in the southern Sudanese city of Juba did not collapse.

One option now under consideration is to empower the Ugandan courts to try Mr. Kony and his colleagues on charges similar to those they face before the ICC, to avoid an international trial, Mr. Onega explains. “It is the duty of the government of Uganda to put in place the necessary laws that would enable a trial along the lines that the ICC would find acceptable.” Whether the LRA leaders would agree to face a Ugandan court remains to be seen, but for the moment the idea remains on the negotiating table in Juba.

Communities at the centre
Aiming to reconcile Africans’ desires both for peace and for some measure of justice, a “break out” session on transitional justice during the Kinshasa DDR conference proposed that peace negotiators avoid blanket amnesties. It also recommended carrying out trials and other judicial proceedings in a balanced fashion, so as not to give an impression that justice is being dispensed solely in the interests of “victors.”

Formal trials in national or international courts are not the only means of ensuring accountability, conference participants noted. They recommended that in countries with truth and reconciliation commissions, ex-combatants be encouraged to participate.

They also cited the example of Rwanda, which is in the midst of hearing several hundred thousand cases stemming from the 1994 genocide in that country. Modeled on traditional village assemblies, Rwanda’s local gacaca courts enable villagers to directly confront those accused of atrocities. Sometimes suspects confess and apologize for their actions. They may be forgiven or sentenced, including to community service. The most serious cases are referred to the regular courts. So far, notes Mr. Fall of the ICTJ, the Rwandan government’s commitment to prosecution does not seem to have hampered its efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants, some 54,000 of whom have given up arms since 1995.

In Uganda, many of those who were granted amnesty have also participated in traditional rituals known as timo-kica or nato oput (forgiving, reconciling), in which they publicly acknowledge some responsibility for their past actions. “Once this is done,” Mr. Onega explains, “it is understood that this person is once again accepted back into the community and all animosity toward this person must stop.”

Overall, participants in the Kinshasa conference proposed, DDR programmes should pay more attention to the needs of the communities that are receiving ex-combatants, in order to facilitate their reintegration. In Ituri, the former militia fighters will each receive $100 plus a kit with saucepans, shoes, a radio, fabric and other supplies. If poor villagers do not also get some support for rebuilding, then the imbalance in assistance can breed resentment and convey an impression that the ex-fighters are being “rewarded” for their past violent behavior.

Providing reparations for the victims of past atrocities can also help improve attitudes towards ex-combatants, argues Mr. Fall. Unfortunately, he notes, while 22 countries have had some form of DDR programme, with benefits to demobilized soldiers, none has implemented a reparations programme for victims.

Ultimately, prosecutions can also aid long-term community reconciliation, Mr. Fall adds. “Even in situations of massive human rights crimes, prosecution of militia leaders can help draw a distinction between those who have most responsibility for crimes, and lower-level offenders.” This in turn may “increase the prospects for trust between ex-combatants and the communities where they choose to reintegrate.”
New cable to connect eastern Africa

NEPAD pushes for cheaper, faster telecommunications

By Itai Madamombe

Late one night, Jean Leonard Karuranga heard a commotion outside his house in Kigali, Rwanda. There was a stampede, loud voices and then a sharp cry. Too scared to venture outside alone, Mr. Karuranga used his mobile phone to call a local security group that protects the neighbourhood from marauding gangsters looking to rob people.

“The defence force found my cousin, who was coming from another city to visit me, bleeding right outside my gate. Thugs had stabbed and robbed him,” he said. “We rushed him to the hospital just in time. If I didn’t have a cell phone, we would be talking of something else. He was saved by the mobile phone.”

Mr. Karuranga is one of an estimated 120 million Africans using phones, up from 2 million in 1998. Mobile phones, says a report by the London Business School, account for most of this increase. The report, *Africa: The Impact of Mobile Phones*, notes that over the last five years Africa has seen a faster growth in cell phone subscriptions than any other region in the world.

That growth in telecommunications use is set to accelerate further. Twenty-three coastal and landlocked countries in East and Southern Africa are seeking to finalize plans to lay an undersea cable that could make phone and Internet use more affordable. The project falls within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), said Edmund Katiti, an expert with the e-Africa Commission. The commission oversees telecommunications activities for NEPAD and seeks to promote development of a continental communications network.

Integrating Africa

“The submarine cable will achieve NEPAD’s goal to integrate African countries by lowering communications costs through a network owned and operated predominantly by African entities,” Mr. Katiti told *Africa Renewal*. “Africa is wasting over a billion dollars a year in transfer fees.” If someone in Mozambique makes a call to Angola, he noted, the connection may need to pass through the UK and France before returning to Africa, adding greatly to the cost.

From Kenya, it is cheaper to call someone in the UK than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, observes Kai Wulff, the managing director of Kenya Data Network, a private company. A comprehensive cable network, he adds, would cut the cost of communicating across Africa by about 50 per cent.

The western coast of Africa, from Morocco to South Africa, already has a cable that was built five years ago. Similarly, a cable connects the entire North African coast with the Red Sea. This new system on the eastern coast of Africa, Mr. Katiti said, would provide the last link to encircle Africa with cable networks.

Countries on Africa’s eastern coast must now rely on expensive satellite services to transmit voices or data. Putting up a satellite costs about $5,000 per megabyte of capacity, compared to only $500 per megabyte for laying a fibre-optic cable. Made of glass fibres and using light pulses to carry messages, such cables have a higher bandwidth than satellite transmissions and can carry more calls at once and deliver faster connections.

Currently, Mr. Katiti explained, “People go to an Internet cafe with a newspaper. They read one article while the page is loading, waiting for the next page to open. But with this new technology, they click and the page is there.”

The cable is being laid underwater for security reasons, since it will be less vulnerable to theft or damage than if it were laid aboveground. Known as the East African Submarine Cable System, or EASSy, it will run for 9,900 kilometres, between Durban in South Africa and Port Sudan in Sudan. Its estimated cost is $300 mn.
Pipeline benefits Mozambique, South Africa
A joint partnership to transport natural gas

By Itai Madamombe

There are some 3,000 bn cubic feet of natural gas in two Mozambican fields, but the country has no market for it. South Africa, across the western border, has a staggering annual demand for 120 mn gigajoules (gj) of electricity, but no gas to generate it.

In 2003, a partnership between the two countries and some $1.2 bn investment by Sasol, a South African synthetic fuel manufacturing company, brought the construction of an 865-kilometre pipeline. Since then, it has ferried gas from the Temane and Pande fields in Mozambique to a distribution network in Secunda, South Africa. It is a deal that benefits both countries.

Most African countries are small, both in population and in per capita income. Many cannot, by themselves, afford the exorbitant costs of setting up infrastructure for small domestic markets. Pooling resources, says the African Development Bank (ADB), enables countries to share costs for the benefit of all involved. African leaders in July 2001 adopted the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) to provide a framework for countries to build strong ties with each other and accelerate economic growth.

“This pipeline is welcome,” says Arsenio Mabote, chairman of the Instituto Nacional de Petróleo, Mozambique’s petroleum and gas regulatory authority. “It will boost Mozambique’s efforts to fight poverty.” The partnership, he adds, allows both countries to generate revenue that can improve citizens’ lives.

The gas partnership is forecast to boost Mozambique’s gross domestic product significantly. The Mozambican government will receive some $2 bn in royalties and taxes over the project’s 25-year lifespan. The collaboration will provide South Africa with a steady stream of gas for a quarter of a century, based on projected production and consumption rates. Clean natural gas from Mozambique will not only help stimulate the South African economy, but will also help reduce pollution as the country seeks to clean up its dirty industries.

‘Charting a new path’
South African President Thabo Mbeki, one of NEPAD’s architects, emphasizes that the two countries, despite resource constraints, face a common challenge to attain development and prosperity for their citizens. “Through NEPAD,” Mr. Mbeki asserts, “we are charting a new path for the regeneration of our continent, to ensure that we harness our skills, expertise, talents, resources and natural riches to bring a better life to all Africans.”

The partnership comes at an important phase in Mozambique’s history. A 16-year civil war turned the beautiful country into one of the poorest nations in the world. But since the war ended in 1992, Mozambique has had one of the world’s most rapidly growing economies, reports the African Economic Outlook 2005, an annual publication of the ADB and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Reconstruction aid and foreign investment in natural resource-based projects are driving the growth.

Overall, South Africa has invested about $4 bn in Mozambique, according to official South African government estimates. Fifty-seven per cent of Mozambique’s imports emanate from South Africa (and account for 18 per cent of South Africa’s total exports to Africa). About 26 per cent of Mozambique’s exports are destined for South Africa. South Africa is thus Mozambique’s largest foreign direct investor and trade partner.

Sasol is the sole investor in the pipeline. The two governments have an option to acquire a combined 50 per cent ownership, Johann van Rheede, Sasol’s media manager, told Africa Renewal. Initially, all the gas will be exported to South Africa. The Mozambican government is entitled to 1 mn gj of natural gas per year, but this will likely be provided in cash while the government develops uses for the gas.

Mozambique’s plans, says Mr. Mabote, focus on “projects
that will improve the lives of people, so that they understand why gas is important in their lives.” Among other uses, the gas will be tapped to generate power for communities along the pipeline’s route. The country is also exploring opportunities to boost small rural businesses by providing them with gas for heating or lighting, or for processing their products. Gas will be used to feed smelting plants for aluminum and other minerals.

Some have expressed concern that the deal favours South Africa. Dismissing such criticisms, former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano has argued, “The two leaderships are committed to African integration, so we are not afraid of hegemony and we take this to be the policy of the private sector in both countries. There is no spirit of hegemony, but one of partnership.”

Other concerns centre on the pattern and sustainability of Mozambique’s economic growth. Capital-intensive mega-projects, notes the African Economic Outlook, generate few spillover benefits for much of the rest of the economy. Despite the impressive growth rate, unemployment and poverty remain critical problems in Mozambique.

Benefits to people

“The venture, at peak, spawned 2,400 job opportunities in Mozambique,” says Mr. van Rheede. Mozambicans fill the bulk of the 238 current permanent jobs created by the project. Sasol, he adds, injected $5 mn towards community welfare along the pipeline route in Mozambique — drilling boreholes for clean water and refurbishing schools and clinics. The Industrial and Commercial School in Beira, Mozambique, was reopened in 2002 after $700,000 in renovations sponsored by Sasol.

Zefanias Tovela, who benefited from a programme to spray his cashew nut trees against insects, says contributions by Sasol will improve his family’s wellbeing and help him produce bigger crops. “I will have income to educate my children,” says the farmer, who has 15 children. “We have surplus maize and peanuts because it has rained well, and with the added support of Sasol, hunger is far away.”

The project is expected to boost Sasol’s annual sales as its customer base grows in both Mozambique and South Africa. Natural gas helps diversify the sources of energy the company uses in the production of synthetic fuels, at a time when South African industries are struggling to meet tighter global demands for a cleaner environment. Sasol is replacing about 5 mn tonnes of coal per year at its Sasolburg plant. But profit and support for “green” energy are not the only factors driving the company’s enthusiasm, says Mr. van Rheede. “Sasol is proud to contribute to the NEPAD vision.”

New cable to connect Africa

Countries on the coastline will tap directly into the cable and also serve as transmission points for landlocked countries. Most countries already have telecommunications networks, but they may need to expand their capacities, notes Issa Semtawa, the communications manager for the Tanzania Telecommunications Company. “The cable will provide large capacity to our countries,” Mr. Semtawa stressed. “It is up to us to get ready to make full use of this capacity.”

‘Things have to change’

Construction of the cable was stalled for almost four years. But at a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 2006, 29 private and state-run entities agreed to a plan to build the $300 mn cable and prepare it for commercial service by early 2008. Officials say they needed time to build consensus on the best way of financing the project, to ensure that the technology will be delivered at the cheapest cost to consumers.

“We are trying to avert a situation where the project becomes an entity registered and owned elsewhere,” commented Sammy Kiriu, chairman of the EASSy secretariat. The stakeholders in the project will jointly fund it, but all licenced telecommunications operators will be able to buy its services at the same price as investors, thereby fostering competition.

Experts agree that if not used correctly, the new cable could become a missed opportunity. Anriette Esterhuysen, executive director of the Association for Progressive Communications, notes that the cable in West Africa has not provided the expected reduction in user costs because the system is largely controlled by state-owned monopolies that do not allow free competition, which would bring prices down.

According to NEPAD’s Mr. Katiti, the EASSy project offers hope that the “digital divide” currently afflicting Africa may one day be bridged. The current situation, he said, reflects a “paradox where the poorest continent pays the highest fees for communicating, so people keep getting poorer. With the East African submarine cable and a great policy framework for the region, we are saying: ‘We can’t tolerate this anymore. Things have to change.’”
Leone, and Radio Okapi in the DRC, jointly run by the UN peacekeeping mission there and the Swiss foundation Hirondelle.

UN peace missions have been setting up such radio programmes in post-conflict countries since the 1980s. In areas where ethnic and political factions have incited hate or spread propaganda, UN-run stations have sought to counteract the messages of such broadcasts, especially after extremist leaders used radio in the early 1990s to fan ethnic hatred and incite genocide in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

Radio Okapi has been credited by regional analysts with easing tensions, counteracting propaganda, and helping people in eastern Congo rebuild their lives after war.

Mr. William Orme, a policy advisor on independent media development for the UN Development Programme (UNDP), argues that such stations are critical. “Unless you have a neutral place where accurate information and grievances can be aired, there can be a renewal of conflict. Such media is not a luxury, it is a necessity,” he says.

Liberia. “Governments are not very good at communicating to their people,” she explained to Africa Renewal. “Yet often there is so much going on during and after conflict that people need to know and understand. The role that media can play in supporting peace is immense. You can change the way a government engages. Even prevention of conflict is possible if you provide people with alternative ideas early enough.”

The UN Security Council recognized the significant impact of such media in Sierra Leone. When it decided in 2005 to wind up the UN peacekeeping mission there, it simultaneously called for the retention of “an independent and capable public radio capacity” to continue “promoting a culture of peace, dialogue and participation.” UNDP and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are currently working together with the Hirondelle foundation and the SFCG to find a way to keep UNAMSIL Radio going. For the time being, the station is still being funded by the UN and managed by the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.

Such media are important long after war, says Ms. Fortune. After conflicts, “people have huge expectations,” she argues. “There is need to manage such expectations so as to avoid a return to conflict. Many people would argue that just providing information, strictly news is adequate. That is not so. Media has to be utilized to support peace.”

Mr. Pituwa acknowledges that not everyone who listens takes advantage of the legal options available to them, but at least the programmes help the public “make informed decisions on exercising their rights.” Radio Canal Revelation works with local stations Radio Colombe and Radio Ocean to distribute IRFJ programmes in Swahili, Lingala, French, Kikongo and Kiluba in the DRC’s Bunia region, as well as in southern Sudan and western Uganda.

Such stations can also raise awareness of financial accountability and good governance. In Sierra Leone, local councils are required by law to post their income and expenditure statements on a public notice board. But many people are illiterate and do not understand or question how resources are used. To address that problem, the SFCG developed a programme called “Accountability Now.” Mr. James Ambrose, the head of SFCG in Sierra Leone, explained the programme to Africa Renewal: “We go with a microphone and ask the council or treasury clerk to read the account and expenditure statement, explaining what is being done and why. This allows the community to demand accountability.”

In nearby Côte d’Ivoire, a soap opera series about football players from differ-
ent ethnic backgrounds is being used to enhance a sense of national identity, following that country’s civil war. Funded by the European Commission and the Skoll Foundation, a private US philanthropic organization, the series airs on 14 local radio stations, including ONUCI FM, the station of the UN peacekeeping mission. The UN also supports 10 community radio stations with similar programming, to counter the impact of negative media by the warring factions.

Risks and objections
In northern Uganda, some LRA commanders, recognizing the role of radio programmes in persuading their soldiers to give up arms, attempted to limit access to radios. They also retaliated violently, including by massacring people in the home village of an LRA commander who left the movement and spoke about his decision over the airwaves.

Such negative responses explain a common objection against such projects by mainstream media practitioners and conflict resolution experts, who argue that peace building requires specialized skills that journalists do not have.

Ms. Hall of the IRFJ agrees that many journalists may not necessarily have the appropriate skills. However, she notes that the media have been used effectively by humanitarian groups, civil society organizations, the UN and governments to “promote everything from condoms [and] mosquito nets to registering to vote.” And since warring factions have used radio “to promote hatred and violence, as in the case of Rwanda,” she adds, it is also important to “find ways to use it to support peace building and development.”

Journalists can improve their skills with relevant training and a supportive environment, argue Mark Frohardt and Jonathan Temin of Internews, an international non-profit that trains media practitioners worldwide. In a 2003 report on the use and abuse of media in vulnerable societies, they argued for providing journalists with resources (computers, salaries and vehicles) and training.

Gordon Adam of the Scotland-based NGO Media Support and Lina Holguin of Oxfam in Quebec, Canada, add that the success of such initiatives “depends on the partnerships developed between members of the media and conflict resolution specialists, NGOs, funding organizations and communities.” Such partnerships provide journalists with the knowledge they may lack and facilitate their ability “to meet the needs of the audience.”

Letting people make up their minds
Mr. Yves Laplume, the former programme director of Radio Okapi in the DRC, argues that in his experience, the most important partnership is with the public. “People need information, but do not want to be told what to think,” he told Africa Renewal. “We gave people real facts, verified facts, well sourced. We don’t add any comments. We saw in different surveys that they like it… They want you to give them the information and let them make up their minds. It is basic, but it has a great impact.”

The experience in Sierra Leone is similar. “People think that because the audience are rural people they are not sophisticated, but they are,” explains Mr. Ambrose of SFCG. “They know what is important to them. In our approach we do not have any editorials. What we have are people speaking on their own behalf. We avoid prescribing solutions. The community gets to decide. When people hear their concerns being expressed and officials reacting to their problem — that is what gives our work credibility.”

Mr. Pituwa agrees. “People believe propaganda if they do not have the proper information. But if you bring them the right information, it changes everything.”

Some analysts believe that the example of such stations has also improved the professionalism of the mainstream media. A recent UNDP assessment in Sierra Leone found that stations like UNAMSIL radio “contribute greatly to the development of local media by serving as national standard-setters for reliable, non-partisan news and public information programming.” They thus serve as an “indispensable tool for promoting reconciliation and peaceful democratization.”

But such projects face challenges, including that of ensuring the physical security of staff. The villages surrounding Bunia, where the IRFJ is based, are still partly controlled by an ethnic militia, whose former leader, Joseph Lubanga, is facing trial for war crimes before the International Criminal Court (ICC). “We are working in this faction’s space, talking about post-conflict justice,” notes Mr. Pituwa. “Sometimes we are considered the enemy. We have to constantly explain that we do not represent the ICC and we are not affiliated in any way. But even then there are threats against us.”

The dilemma of sustainability
The biggest long-term problem facing these projects is that most of them are funded by NGOs, the UN or aid agencies such as DfID. Once an immediate conflict is over, it becomes harder to secure the money to continue operations.

Maintaining such stations exclusively with donor support is impractical. They can cost between US$200,000 and $500,000 a year. But if they are left with local resources only, there is often a high risk that the best-trained journalists will leave for higher paying jobs or that the government or political groups may take over the equipment or exert editorial pressure. A UNDP evaluation of UNAMSIL argued that for such stations to succeed after UN or NGO oversight ends, there must be a regulatory system to keep them independent and mechanisms for funding and training.

The IRFJ is looking at ways to make its stations self-sustaining, says Ms. Hall. “The initial costs were high, but now all that is needed are salaries, constant guard for the antenna and maintenance. We are looking at public service announcements to generate revenue.”

Unfortunately, commercial financing can be limited. Hirondelle’s Star Radio in Liberia tried to achieve sustainability by selling advertising. But it managed to raise only a third of its costs. The economy is not yet vibrant and few companies could afford to advertise.

Bigger installations such as UNAMSIL Radio in Sierra Leone and Radio Okapi in the DRC need more resources. UNDP suggests that donors and African countries consider turning such stations into public
service broadcasters similar to PBS in the US and BBC in the UK. Relying on local resources alone, note the UNDP evaluators, “is an unfortunately unrealistic scenario in Sierra Leone.” Even in countries not recovering from conflict, they argue, “editorially independent and professional news gathering/public interest broadcasting services on a national scale require substantial state or private subsidy.”

Argues Mr. Orme, the UNDP adviser, “There is a need for people to realize that this kind of work doesn’t pay for itself. However, if we agree that this work is important for democracy and peace building, then donors have to think of media in a different way. They have to think of all the goals — human rights, MDGs, HIV/AIDS — and [see] media as essential in achieving them. It’s critical to have these stations, and potentially there is enough funding available to sustain them.”

Women and AIDS
from page 6

15-to-24-year-olds in eight East African countries. UNAIDS reports that young people in Kenya and Malawi are having fewer sexual partners, a sign that years of HIV prevention programmes are beginning to have an impact on personal behaviour.

Ms. Mataka also cites advances in technologies that women can control, such as microbicides and female condoms, and wider use of male circumcision, which appears to reduce infection rates among men. She cautions, however: “We can’t lead people to believe that it [technology] is a panacea to everything. People still have to practice other safer sex strategies like minimum sexual partners and condoms.”

African solutions

Despite the challenges, special envoy Mataka is optimistic about the future. “There is new hope in Africa.” More needs to be done to recognize “the positive developments that Africa is making, that communities are making…. People are mounting prevention and treatment programmes in the workplace, addressing issues of stigma and defending the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.”

At the end of the day, she asserts, “there must be an African solution to this problem…. This is not to say that Africa does not need international resources. Africa needs massive international support.” African ownership and political will in the fight against AIDS is indispensable, “but until that political will translates into resources, it will have a questionable impact on the epidemic.”

Africa itself must do more. “It’s a critical emergency,” she concludes, and women are the key. “We need to build capacity and women’s leadership so that they take control of programmes that are designed for the needs of women. Africa needs to realize that without dealing with the issue of women, there will be no progress in turning HIV/AIDS around.”

Water for Africa’s poor
from page 9

exactly that of management, but rather investment,” Steve Manteaw, an executive member of the Ghana National Coalition Against Water Privatization, told Africa Renewal. “The pipelines are old and there is a need to inject massive capital investment.”

The World Bank insists that improved management and investment are essential. “Turning around GWCL so it becomes a viable utility requires both investments and efficiency gains,” says the bank’s senior water specialist, Ventura Bengoechea. “The latter are expected as a result of the management contract, provided that the investments are made. Massive investments per se would not change the situation of the GWCL.”

Building capacity

For many African governments, the challenge is not only finding more money for vital investments. It is also acquiring the technical know-how to use the resources most effectively and the institutions capable of managing them properly.

In countries such as Uganda or Mozambique, each with a population of close to 20 million, explains Mr. Akari of the ADB, achieving the MDG goal will require installing “some 1,000 new point sources of hand-dug wells and drilled boreholes fitted with hand pumps, plus 30 piped systems every year, as well as establishing utility operators in five major cities and 15 secondary cities.”

To do that, says Mr. Akari, such countries will need professionals with the skills to plan, budget, design, supervise and construct the facilities, as well as engineering, drilling and construction equipment. In some African countries, especially those emerging from conflict, such capacity is simply not available. About a third of African countries have the capacity to implement investments, if direct financing can be secured. But in the rest, such capacity needs to be built, perhaps as a component of project financing.

Currently, explains Mr. Donkor of the ECA, “Most grants come with informal conditions attached which force African governments to hire experts — consultants, technical management and designers — from donor countries to implement the projects.” This in turn makes it hard for countries to retain national water professionals, he adds. “Leaving out local expertise in the implementation of such projects makes the water sector unattractive, compelling many of the professionals to leave.”

To address this problem, the UN-Water/Africa network — which comprises various UN agencies, the NEPAD Secretariat and the ADB — is setting up a directory of African water experts. By making it easier for such experts to serve in other African countries, the initiative will not only help foster regional integration, but also enhance the long-term maintenance of water projects in the continent.

The way forward towards achieving wider access to clean water, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated on 22 March, World Water Day, includes “strengthening institutional capacity and governance at all levels, promoting more technology transfer, mobilizing more financial resources and scaling up good practices and lessons learned.”
AFRICA AGENDA

1–2 October 2007, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) — Mobilizing Aid for Trade: Focus on Africa. Hosted by the African Development Bank, UN Economic Commission for Africa and World Trade Organization, in cooperation with the World Bank. Contact Stephen N. Kariungi, tel (251) 11-5445 443, fax (251) 11-5513 038, e-mail <skariungi@unece.org>, website <www.uneca.org/aidfortrade/>

4–5 October 2007, Lagos (Nigeria) — Africa Small Business Summit. Focusing on issues facing women entrepreneurs and enterprises attempting to progress from the informal to the formal sector. Website <www.businessactionforafrica.org>


8–10 October 2007, Madrid (Spain) — Migration: Towards a Comprehensive Approach. Contact Nandini Mackay, tel (44) 1903 817695, fax (44) 1903 814217, e-mail <Nandini.Mackay@wiltonpark.org.uk>, website <www.wiltonpark.org.uk/documents/conferences/WP890/pdfs/WP890prog.pdf>

17–19 October 2007, Accra (Ghana) — 5th African Business Leaders Forum. Contact Moses Mahlangu, tel (27) 11 807 0948, e-mail <moses@businessinafrica.co.za>, website <www.africanforum.biz>

17–19 October 2007, Nairobi (Kenya) — Humanitarian Development Summit. Will bring together key players within the humanitarian relief and sustainable development communities. Website <www.businessactionforafrica.org>

17–19 October 2007, Maastricht (The Netherlands) — African Leadership Convention. Tel (31) 6 2052 5660, e-mail <info@uavm.nl>, website <www.uavm-africa.com/Events/African-Leadership-Convention.html>


WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE


28–29 September 2007, Johannesburg (South Africa) — Southern Africa Regional Table on Improving Engineering Sciences in Universities, Organized by the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology. Tel (27) 12 841-3688/3653, fax (27) 12 841-4414, website <www.nepadst.org>

AFRICA BOOKS

Untapped: The Scramble for Africa’s Oil by John Gharumn (Harcourt, New York, USA, 2007; 336 pp; hb $25)


Democratic et vie politique au Congo-Brazzaville: Enjeux et recompositions politiques by Albert M’Paka (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 372 pp; pb €20)

The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair by Martin Meredith (Pesech Publishing, Cambridge, MA, USA, 2006; 768 pp; $21.95)

La chaîne du livre en Afrique: Le français francophone: Qui est éditeur, aujourd’hui? by Marie-Madeleine Mwifi Bodi (Nomos Publishers, Kraków, Poland, 2007; 282 pp; €25.50, FF167)

Démocratie et vie politique au Congo-Brazzaville: Enjeux et recompositions politiques by Albert M’Paka (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 372 pp; pb €19.50, FF128)

Making Finance Work for Africa by Patrick Honohan and Thorecht Beck (World Bank, Washington, DC, USA, 2007; 260 pp; pb $28)

The Long March to the West: Twenty-First Century Migration in Europe and the Greater Mediterranean Area, eds. Michel Korinman and John Laughland (Valentine Mitchell, Middlesex, UK, 2007; 425 pp; $35; hb $95)

Paix et châtiment by Florence Hartmann (Editions Flammarion, France, 2007; 319 pp; €19.90)

L’avènement du leader constructeur du Congo Démocratique by Marie-Madeleine Mwifi Bodi (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 106 pp; pb $11.50, FF75)

Aid for Peace: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation for Conflict Zones by Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reychler (Nomos Publishers, Kraków, Poland, 2007; 159 pp; pb $22.50)

Le droit des collectivités locales au Sénégal by Ibrahima Diallo (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 380 pp; €31, FF203)

The Role of Parliaments in Curbing Corruption, eds. Rick Stapenhurst, Niall Johnston, Ricardo Pelizzo (World Bank, Washington, DC, USA, 2006; 280 pp; pb $30)

Global Development and Human Security by Robert Picciotto, Funmi Olorunisakin and Michael Clarke (Transaction Publishers, Piscataway, NJ, USA, 2007; 332 pp; hb $49.95)

Gouverner les villes d’Afrique: Etat, gouvernement local et acteurs privés, eds. Laurent Warnery and Jean-Dominique Hébrard (Economica, Paris, France, 2007; 435 pp; €23.50, FF154)

Atlas alternatif: Le monde à l’heure de la globalisation impériale by Frédéric Delorca et al (Les Temps des Cerises, Pantin, France, 2006; 372 pp; eb $20)

Rebels and Robbers: Violence in Post-Colonial Angola by Assis Malaquias (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2006; 260 pp; pb SEK320, £39.95)

L’entrepreneuriat et l’innovation au Congo-Brazzaville, ed. Jean-Christophe Bourougou Bazika (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 266 pp; €23.50, FF154)


Women Miners in Developing Countries: Pit and Benefits by Ibrahima Diale (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 435 pp; €23.50, FF154)

The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair by Martin Meredith (Perseus Publishing, Cambridge, MA, USA, 2006; 768 pp; $21.95)

Le la chaîne du livre en Afrique: Le français francophone: Qui est éditeur, aujourd’hui? by Eddie Tambwe Kitenge Bin Kitoko (L’Harmattan, Paris, France, 2006; 178 pp; pb €16, FF105)


Making Finance Work for Africa by Patrick Honohan and Thorsten Beck (World Bank, Washington, DC, USA, 2007; 260 pp; pb $28)

Global Development and Human Security by Bob Picciotto, Funmi Olorunisakin and Michael Clarke (Transaction Publishers, Piscataway, NJ, USA, 2007; 332 pp; hb $49.95)

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AFRICA WATCH

MILLENNIUM GOALS
UN to galvanize action on African poverty

At the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, leaders of the United Nations and other key international institutions have vowed to work together more closely to boost Africa’s efforts to reduce poverty and improve human well-being. Halfway to 2015, not one country in sub-Saharan Africa is on course towards meeting all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approved by world leaders in 2000. Mr. Ban noted at the first meeting of the new MDG Africa Steering Group, held at UN headquarters in New York on 14 September. “We must help those countries so that they can join and get on track,” he affirmed.

The Secretary-General called the gathering an “unprecedented meeting,” given the range of participants. In addition to Mr. Ban, they included World Bank President Robert Zoellick, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel, International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Murilo Portugal and Mr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, representing the Commission of the African Union, the continent’s political body. Also taking part were UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro and UN Development Programme Director Kemal Dervis. African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka and Islamic Development Bank President Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani participated by video link. (A representative of the industrialized countries’ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development subsequently joined a working group meeting in New York on 20 September.)

Although Africa as a whole is not on track to meet the MDGs, the participants observed, some individual countries will be able to achieve at least some of the goals. “Success stories throughout the continent show that the goals remain achievable if governments and the international community urgently implement existing commitments to strengthen domestic policies and scale up investments.”

The Steering Group members vowed that their institutions would better coordinate their efforts and focus on “practical steps” towards achieving five of the eight MDGs by 2015: cutting by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day, ensuring that all children complete a full course of primary schooling, slashing the child mortality rate by two thirds, reducing maternal mortality by three quarters and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

To help Africa’s efforts, the international institutions pledged to work together within African countries, as well as to increase their assistance and make such aid more predictable, to facilitate African planning. But the main responsibility rests with Africa, emphasized Mr. Mkwezalamba of the African Union, by taking the initiative to mobilize its own resources, within African countries and from Africans living abroad.

APPOINTMENTS

The UN Secretary-General has appointed Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra of Mali as high representative for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. Over more than 25 years in international relations, law and development, Mr. Diarra has been involved in the national reconciliation efforts in Mali. Prior to his UN appointment, he served as permanent representative of Mali to the UN in New York, and in that capacity was chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. Mr. Diarra replaces Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh.

Mr. Sha Zukang of China has been appointed Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra of Mali as high representative for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. Over more than 25 years in international relations, law and development, Mr. Diarra has been involved in the national reconciliation efforts in Mali. Prior to his UN appointment, he served as permanent representative of Mali to the UN in New York, and in that capacity was chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. Mr. Diarra replaces Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh.

Mr. Sha Zukang of China has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as under-secretary-general for economic and social affairs. A former permanent representative of China to the UN office in Geneva, Mr. Sha also served in key leadership capacities in the International Labour Organization, UN Trade and Development Board, UN Conference on Trade and Development and the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was elected president of the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly on 24 May. He has served as his country’s foreign minister and minister for foreign economic relations, as well as an ambassador to several countries in Europe and as permanent representative to the UN.

The UN Secretary-General has appointed Mr. Luc Gnacadja of Benin as the new executive secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In his former capacity as minister of environment, housing and urban development in Benin, Mr. Gnacadja participated in UNCCD meetings and served as chairman of the African Ministers Conference on the Environment. He succeeds Mr. Hama Arba Diallo of Burkina Faso.

The Board of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has appointed Dr. Michel Kazatchkine of France as executive director. He has been active in combating HIV/AIDS for 20 years, as a leading physician, researcher, administrator, advocate, policymaker and diplomat. In February 2005, Mr. Kazatchkine was named France’s global HIV/AIDS and communicable diseases ambassador. From 1998 to 2005, he was director for the French National Agency for AIDS Research, while also serving as head of the Department of Immunology and the Clinical Immunology Unit at the Hôpital Européen Georges Pompidou.

Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte of Brazil has been appointed high representative for disarmament by the UN Secretary-General. In that capacity he will head the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs, the successor to the Department of Disarmament Affairs. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Duarte served as his country’s ambassador to numerous countries, including Nicaragua, Canada, China and the US and played leadership roles in international nuclear non-proliferation activities.