

CITIZENS' AGENDA FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

Africa is far from exhausting
its incredible potential

A report on African
Citizens' Consultations



african monitor
African voices for Africa's development



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Design and layout: CDC Design & Willmore Studios

Copy editing: Nadja Martinussen

Printed on Triple Green Matt paper

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African Monitor Trust

Registration: Trust Deed no IT3633/2006

Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) no 067-760-NPO

Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) no 930023184

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2010 is an important year for Africa for various reasons. Of these, perhaps the most important is that firstly, this year marks the beginning of the decade in which most of its countries will celebrate 50 years of independence, and secondly, it is the starting point for the new AU/NEPAD African Action Plan (AAP) 2010–2015. This official statement of Africa's priority programmes and projects aims to consolidate the global partnerships and relationships necessary to drive the continent's development in a sustainable manner.

2010 also leaves five years before the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) are due to be met, and perhaps most importantly, this is also the year that will forever be remembered for South Africa's hosting of the FIFA World Cup™, an event that focused the world's attention on Africa.

"While Africa has made significant progress it has not yet achieved the necessary transformation ... the job is not yet done."

Lastly, a number of commitments for Africa's development expire in 2010, including the Gleneagles Agreement to double aid by 2010, the EU-Africa partnership (in which the former committed itself to increase aid to developing regions, including Africa), and the 2010 targets for aid effectiveness as contained in the Paris Declaration, to mention a few.



Celebrating the FIFA World Cup in Africa

There is widespread consensus that Africa has made significant progress in its bid to right the socio-economic burdens that have crippled it for so long, but it has not yet achieved the transformation that is necessary in terms of governance, economic and social development. To complete the job, many more resources are required, the source of which may unfortunately dwindle due to the current financial crisis in the North – most prominently in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and Spain – which not only suggests a potential decrease in the flow of development finance but has a mixed impact on the willingness of donors to fully meet their commitments, including those due to expire this year.

On the one hand, this impediment provides the impetus for fresh demands on development partners to provide additional support, while on the other, this is an important signal for the continent to focus on better utilising its external resources and seeking more

indigenous solutions to its development challenges. It is important that these in turn are informed and owned by Africa's wider population and the public in the West.

During 2010, African Monitor and its partners organised a number of what it terms 'Citizens' Consultations' throughout the continent. The goal of the forums, which focused on gathering the input and opinion of the grassroots population, was to thereby create an agenda that truly reflects African views, captures its voices and aspirations and ultimately shapes the continent's policy agenda for the forthcoming decade. Bishop Denis Singulane of Mozambique echoed it thus: "There are many who want to talk about poverty in the absence of the poor," which suggests that Africa's leaders have something to hide. The continent cannot afford to continue with development strategies and programmes that have suffered relevance, legitimacy and ownership challenges.



2. CITIZENS' CONSULTATIONS

2.1 Aims

The consultations had the following five main aims:

- To complement official efforts and garner a broader base of support for the AU's Africa Agenda Action Plan 2010–2015, so that it is wholly owned, driven and promoted collectively by Africans, their governments, business and civil society
- To identify high impact sector and sub-sector priorities for implementation between 2010 and 2015
- To identify key evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of partnerships (among Africans and between their countries and the international community) and ensures that projects and programmes are propelled on an even more successful trajectory than has so far been the case
- To galvanize shared expectations and excitement about prospects for Africa despite the current global financial crisis and the aspersions that this has cast on aid
- To generate commitment and renew the energy needed to drive local and international support for development in Africa, as defined by Africans

2.2 Participation

The consultations drew participants from African civil society formations, including faith based organisations, organized labour, professional associations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), the media, youth and female representatives, government officials and the private sector; the informal sector and ordinary citizens. At least 30 people participated in each of the face to face consultations, which were held in Abuja for Nigeria and Ghana; Dakar- Senegal for French-speaking West Africa; Nairobi, Kenya for East Africa; and Johannesburg for Southern Africa. In addition, an e-consultation process ran for four weeks which garnered the opinions of 479 people, including business heads, government officials and returnees from the African Diaspora.

Additionally, African Monitor facilitated a number of **Poverty Hearings** in South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique and Liberia. Over 2 000 people participated in these open forums, which were held to enable grassroots communities to share their perspectives and experiences publicly in the hope that the issues identified will reach those with the power to take action, either willingly or by compulsion of public pressure and opinion.

'People's economist' Mama Sibongile at the Johannesburg consultations

2.3 Key questions

During the consultations, the following questions were posed to participants:

- What gives you hope and excitement about Africa's future?
- What are Africa's key challenges – how can these be addressed?
- What are the key priorities for Africa today?
- What intervention is capable of making a real difference to the millions living in poverty and insecurity?
- Who are the key actors necessary for such an intervention to occur?



3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 What gives people hope and generates excitement about Africa?

New discourse on Africa's options and opportunities

The Citizens' Consultations revealed that the most exciting prospect was the emergence of a progressive discourse on Africa's development path – people of Africa, including the youth, are regaining the conviction that they are the instruments of their own sustainable upliftment and are taking the initiative towards realising the African dream. The continent's governments and citizens are beginning to ask important questions about the appropriateness of the development paths that have been adopted in light of the oil and food crises of 2008 and the financial crisis of 2009/10. The current economic crisis in the North (Canada, Italy, the UK and the USA) and the success of mixed economies such as China, Brazil and India has created doubt about the orthodoxy that has traditionally been held as the ultimate answer.

The emergence of a progressive discourse on Africa's development path is the main cause of excitement.

Already NEPAD and the AU have come to the realisation that to implement Africa's Priority Action Plan successfully, the continent's endogenous resources need to be leveraged to finance the projects identified

in the AAP. NEPAD itself was founded on 'a mutually beneficial partnership among Africans and between Africa and the rest of the world!'

As one e-consultation respondent put it,

"Africa is rich in resources – natural and human. Development of these is in the best interest of the Africa's development and world security. Even immigration patterns will be addressed."

Africa's endogenous resources can be broken down into the following components:

- Mineral, oil and gas deposits; flora and fauna, and a wide unspoiled natural habitat (which provides the resources for mining, agriculture, tourism and industrial development)
- The ecological lung provided by the continent's rainforests, and the minimal presence of emissions and effluents that are harmful to the environment. This is a global public good that benefits all humankind
- The paleontological and archaeological sites containing the origins of life and the human race
- The richness of Africa's culture and its contribution to the variety of global community cultures. This represents Africa's creativity, which in many ways remains underdeveloped and under-utilised



Senegalese youth in an informal market

The world is most familiar with and has exploited the first component – African natural resources – the most. The second has only come to the fore in recent times as the world has come to understand the critical importance of the environment.

*"Do not pull out of Africa the resources she needs to uplift herself."
(E-consultation)*

Participants and respondents in the Citizens' Consultations were optimistic about the value of optimising Africa's natural resources, especially since the continent possesses 22% of the world's arable land, 7% of its proven oil and gas reserves, 6% of its recoverable coal deposits and ample solar radiation (from the Sahel to the Kalahari deserts).

In addition to the afore mentioned four components, Africa has a significant number of qualified professionals working abroad who contribute to the socio-economic development of their host countries. In 2000, some 25% of skilled Africans resided in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. An estimated 25–50% of West African nationals living abroad are university graduates.

Africa is thus of strategic importance to the world and shall remain so for years to come.

Africa is thus of strategic importance to the world and will remain so for years to come. This is something the continent needs to capitalise on. So far, the migration of its doctors, engineers, educationists, musicians and other artistes and writers into other countries has, by and large, been viewed negatively as a 'brain drain'. As one e-consultation respondent put it:

"Stop mining our people! On the one hand, aid trains our people at home and on the other, they are poached by the West for their own internal economies. Our diaspora is building the West – fair enough – but we need to retain some skills in the economy at home so that we have the human resources to build our way out of our problems." (E-consultations).

And while the focus so far has been on the remittances sent back to the continent in significant quantities (estimated at US\$40 billion in 2008) and about which some African countries have taken initiatives to streamline so that they are able to play a more strategic role in economic growth, particularly in building infrastructure, the African Diaspora contributes far more than the money they send back to their home countries in form of remittances. At the Abuja Citizens' Consultations, the return of some of these professionals was regarded as the single most important development in facilitating a breakthrough in socio-economic development and good governance. Participants called for an African mechanism to tap into their skills and technological know-how in order to bridge the skills/technological gap and contribute towards building democratic institutions, as the following quotation demonstrates:

"Just like it happened in India and China, Africa's Diaspora is beginning to play a leading role in transforming Africa. Significant numbers of highly skilled professionals from the diaspora are taking advantage of economic growth and infrastructural upgrade to start businesses in some high-growth African economies. For example, there are many start-ups in Lagos, Accra and Nairobi owned by the 'returnees'. These entrepreneurs are promoting a new culture of entrepreneurship and private sector innovation that is reinvigorating African economies and entrenching positive social capital conducive to democracy and civility." (Abuja Consultation Background Paper).

The negative effect of the 'brain-drain' is being reversed as diaspora returnees raise their voice to demand accountable governance and work hard to build institutions that support economic development.

Returnees from the diaspora are boosting Africa's middle class and creating a constituency that demands good governance and human development. The negative effect of the 'brain-drain' is being reversed as these individuals raise their voices to demand accountable governance and work hard to build institutions that support economic development.

Africa has also been a key player in the production and consumption of knowledge. The increased number of universities and research centres, despite often being operated with shrinking resources, has produced great African producers of knowledge – in all fields – scattered throughout the world. However, increasingly, this intelligentsia has become a 'conveyor belt' of knowledge developed by others, which does not fit the realities of the poor on the continent. As one participant put it:

"The teachers have the capacity, but our education curriculum does not fit our reality. The government should rectify the curriculum." (Inhambane Province, Mozambique)

In the Dakar consultation, it was argued that 21st century African education has become "anti-production", a disabling trend which is attributed to the assumption that the educated 'dot.com generation' does not want to dirty its hands, so to speak.

Citizen-driven regional integration

Citizens of this continent are far ahead in terms of cross-border interaction and have driven regional integration by means of cross border trade and mixing socially over the years. This citizens' driven process provides significant lessons to our political and technocratic leaders and a basis for designing integration policies.

"Cross-border trade should be high on the political agenda of African neighbouring countries." "Commercial relations between African countries should be prioritised by African governments." (E-consultations)

The AU/NEPAD-Africa Action Plan (AAP) 2010-2015 represents African governments' statement of intent and priorities for the development of the continent. Participants in all of the consultations reviewed the AAP and agreed that it provided a comprehensive listing of sectoral priorities, namely infrastructure (energy, transport, water and sanitation and information and communications technology (ICT)); agriculture and food security; human resource

development (health, education, youth and training and social affairs); science and technology; trade, industry, market access and private sector development; the environment, climate change and tourism; governance and public administration, peace and security; capacity development and gender development.

Where people can claim some ownership of the development process, there will be a return to traditional ethics and values e.g. honesty and hard work (Report of African Monitor/ONE citizen consultations, Nigeria)

The participants felt that a major challenge inherent in the plan was the low level of broad citizen ownership associated with the lack of a clear vertical link to 'downstream' activities. Their view is best captured in the following quote:

"NEPAD is too far...we can't feel it on the ground... what is NEPAD and where are the programmes? Not everyone is educated or IT savvy. We don't have access to email, the Internet, and we don't know what Facebook is – I can't even send an SMS from my phone. People do not have access to these sources of information. What is NEPAD doing to reach out to people like us? During the liberation struggle we had no access to the Internet, yet we liberated the country. The AU and NEPAD are moving ahead with plans for Africa's

development but are leaving many people behind. We need a strategy to make sure that relevant people are filling this communication gap." (Mama Sibongile, SADC (Johannesburg) consultations)

There is an urgent need for a publicity strategy that is effective enough to popularise the plan amongst Africans as well as clear mechanisms to link the 'upstream plan' to 'downstream' activities that 'touch' the lives of ordinary people. Furthermore, unless it is fully implemented, the NEPAD Action Plan cannot be 'felt and touched'. Clearly, the failure of Africa's development partners to meet the commitments necessary to fully implement NEPAD's programmes undermines trust in and credibility of critical institutions such as these. As one e-consultation respondent put it, "The AU needs to be a loud and proud institution for promoting democracy; until we have seen this, nothing will change..."

Africa works and is full of hope and optimism

Africa is full of hope and optimism. Its people celebrate life. For example, all of the Poverty Hearings were characterised by song and dance. The continent offers tremendous hope of revival and rejuvenation. With growth becoming exhausted in Europe and the high-performing Asian economies slowing down, analysts are looking to Africa for the next surge in economic growth. The continent is far from exhausting its incredible, multifaceted potential.

In the Abuja consultations, participants were shown how their hope is not baseless: in the last six years many African economies such as Nigeria, Rwanda, Angola

and South Africa have recorded more GDP growth than most countries in the developed world. This year, while the European and American economies shrank to negative growth, Africa recorded a 2% growth rate. The continent's return on investment (ROI) remains high, with annual returns on capital of 65% more than its Asian counterparts. It has also recorded a 16% increase of capital in-flows.

More than 30 countries have ratified the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; 19 are candidates for the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and 30 have voluntarily joined the African Peer Review Mechanism.

In Africa, the 'glass is no longer half empty,' it is 'more than half full!'

One of Africa's greatest assets is its resilience. In every African country that we visited as part of our work, we beheld unbowed heads and rejoiced in the can-do spirit of the people, who still dream of a Golden Age. Despite a high rate of emigration by well-educated professionals, the continent still has an increasing pool of skilled human capital, with many countries contributing a large proportion to an educated population that is of working age. This is helping Africa's service sector to develop, contributing upwards of 40% to the GDP of Africa's 10 largest economies (Abuja consultation background paper). In Africa, the 'glass is no longer half empty', it is 'more than half full!'

The continent also has a hidden strength which is hidden from the world. Its so-called informal and endogenous sectors account for nearly 80% of the livelihoods of its population. At the Poverty Hearings in Kenya, commissioners reported that:

"... Kenyans are very hard-working people, taking personal initiative under extreme conditions and circumstances to earn a living and escape poverty. The informal sector comprising small-scale farming, hawking, and small and medium size businesses are the most common occupations for the majority of the Kenyan poor. They engage in these activities to meet the basic needs of their households such as food, water, education and health, as well as honouring their responsibilities as citizens by paying taxes."

As much as they highlighted challenges that grassroots communities grapple with on a daily basis, the Citizen Consultations and Poverty Hearings also revealed creativity, wisdom and ingenuity among and by African communities in the fight against poverty. While a third of the continent goes to bed hungry, two thirds feed themselves largely through sheer hard work, creativity and ingenuity. They store their wealth in assets such as cows, goats, sheep and chickens which are often not recognized as collateral for bank loans. Funds set up by many governments to assist these people are often inaccessible due to bureaucratic red-tape and political patronage. Joseph Muita, a youth who participated in

the Poverty Hearings in Kenya, recommend that the processes that are currently in place to access Youth and Women Funds be 'informalised' so as to make them more accessible. He put it thus:

"I have heard about the Youth Fund and the Women's Fund. However, these things are in towns. There is nothing here at the grassroots level. The processes of applying for the funds are too many. You cannot expect me to move from here to go to Kiisi (nearest town) all those times and make meaningful use of the money (if I get it). Actually, all of it will be spent in transport costs. Government should bring the funds down to the people and also make the processes of obtaining them very informal."

"Citizen consultations and poverty hearings also revealed creativity, wisdom and ingenuity among African communities in the fight against poverty"

Africa has values on which to base a sustainable development ideal

"For centuries Africa has been organised according to principles that are completely alien to its people – principles of profit and advantage. The greatest African values are principles of justice, balance, reciprocity (which the ancient Egyptians called Maat) and are encapsulated in the philosophy of Ubuntu. You will not

find these principles at work in the great institutions of the modern world..." (Ayi Kwei Armah)

"Great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face." (Steve Biko)

Faith communities are critical entry points for development and accountability. They proliferate Africa and are highly trusted and valued by the poor. The African State will become more effective if it understands what builds loyalty and creates infrastructure in faith.

Proliferation of Information and Communications Technology

The proliferation of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) currently taking the continent by storm should be taken advantage of for its ability to support near-instant citizen interaction, and its capacity to effectively mobilize groups of such individuals. Now, more than ever before, the need to build societal capacity where individuals and communities engage the State and provide independent feedback is critical. The private sector and civil society should promote increased access to ICT for young people and communities at local level in the interests of making it work for them.

3.2 Challenges facing Africa

The wrong development ideal

Participants at the Citizens' Consultations and Poverty Hearings realise that the bulk of what is now known as development, to which we all aspire, is not only exclusionary and unjust but is also unsustainable given that it is characterised by over-consumption, waste/effluent, concrete jungles and the like. As one academic put it,

"While 2.5 billion people globally still live on less than US\$2 a day, we have reached a stage where it has to be officially acknowledged that Mother Earth cannot sustain 7 billion people 'living like Americans.'" (Professor Harald Winkler, Energy Research Centre, University of Cape Town)

It has to be officially acknowledged that Mother Earth cannot sustain seven billion people 'living like Americans.'

The unfortunate consequence of the prevailing paradigm is that it has set affluence as the ideal to be aspired to. A 'business as usual' development trajectory is unacceptable and unsustainable, and agreement needs to be reached on a new ideal. Africa is contributing towards this, but cannot do it alone.

Africans still lack access to basic services

The majority of Africans still lack access to basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation. Most education systems in Africa are bent on producing job-seekers who are not entrepreneurs/ job creators. They thereby fail to empower children, women and other marginalised peoples. In some cases Western education models are deployed, all of which overlook good practices on the continent. Although there are islands of success, maternal and child mortality rates are either not improving or are on the increase in many African countries. The continued imbalance between rural and urban areas, where the latter are characterised by lack of basic services and opportunities, has resulted in continued rural-urban migration and trained urban services.

A key attitude held by grassroots sectors of the population is a negative perception about Africa's elite. Sixty percent of the respondents interviewed believe that Africa's new rulers do not see themselves as public servants but as business people with no sense of service to their people. Over 50% of respondents strongly agree that the youth have become apathetic due to these attitudes. (E-consultation report)

The reasons for this have long confounded many. Often the presenting problem has been that of the

inadequacy of funding and the weak implementation of otherwise good policies and programmes. Broken promises made by politicians and donors and incorrectly designed development strategies have also been blamed.

During the Citizens' Consultations, one of the root causes of incorrectly designed development strategies identified, was a shared interest in the maintenance of a development paradigm that does not serve all by those who stand to benefit, both within and outside Africa.

"The elite in general, whether inside or outside Africa, has a shared interest in a development paradigm that serves the rich and advantaged better than the poor and disadvantaged. There is an overwhelming orthodoxy that is adopted by and serves the interests of the powerful based on the values of profit and advantage. This orthodoxy defines 'rational' or 'productive' and the indicators that measure 'progress', and focuses these around variants of growth." (E-consultation respondent).

Skepticism by those responsible for making things work and the phenomenon of non-organic institutions

In what was described as an 'Incompatibility of incentives', participants in the Abuja consultations argued that African leaders and many of their followers exhibit pessimism about the future of the continent and skepticism regarding whether things will work. In addition, African institutions are regarded as mere legal transplants of those in the West, and are seen as lacking in social consciousness and norms.



Poverty hearings were punctuated by song and dance.

The failure of these institutions to impact on social behaviour in a meaningful way has ingrained a belief in many Africans that the continent may not turn the corner. As a result, those who can afford to vote with their feet and those with the opportunity to appropriate available resources do so 'recklessly and needlessly' (Abuja consultation). This disturbing trend is accompanied by a growing mass of youth and youth movements that feel disenfranchised and have lost confidence in their ability to change things.

Public resources and contracts are often awarded based on political influence, affiliation and maximum payback, leading to anger, apathy and a loss of a sense of nationalism among many Africans. The result is that the professionals who can build the State either turn their back on the country or join in sacrificing their values to join their compatriots.

Technical solutions that disregard the political

The consultations revealed that a key problem with development interventions in Africa is the tendency for Donors and government technical officials to see development merely as a series of technical solutions laid out in the form of technical frameworks of efficiency, market-friendly laws and market-supporting institutions supported by technical expertise flown in from the West. This approach overlooks the interplay with political forces in the context of the interventions. When political forces 'avenge' themselves against the technical, we see democratic reversals through coup d'états, rigged elections, altered constitutions and the like unfolding before our very eyes, causing some to conclude that there is indeed a strong relationship between failure to meet development targets and the democratization

Broken promises and reverse flow UN-honored commitments have led to a loss of credibility

In 2005, the year in which aid was at its highest, the OECD projected gross Official Development Assistance (ODA) to rise steadily from US\$80 billion in 2004 to US\$130 billion in 2010, calling it "the largest expansion of ODA [aid] ... since the committee was formed in 1960" (OECD 2005). The Group of Eight (G8) countries committed to ensuring that by 2010, gross ODA would increase year on year by US\$50 billion. Perhaps even more significantly, for the first time, many developed countries established timetables and road maps to reach their targets of 0.7% of GNI (Gross National Income) allocated to ODA.

A mere two years later (2007), the situation was

much less upbeat. Although gross ODA did increase, the change was a modest US\$24.5 billion cumulatively, which is a poor achievement seen against the annual US\$50 billion target. In 2010, with only one fiscal year left for the collective donor community to meet its target of doubling aid to Africa by the end of 2010 (from 2004 levels), or reach their 0.7% of Gross National Income target, it is becoming increasingly unlikely that it will be able to do so. The 2010 ONE report estimates that only 61% of the commitments made in 2005 will be achieved. This means that programmes designed against commitments that appeared to be *bona fide* will have suffered credibility and non-implementation issues.

In Abuja, participants heard how the focus of the AU, with the knowledge of and encouragement by development partners, has shifted from the attainment of all of the eight Millennium Development Goals to the attainment of selected targets among the 21 MDG targets. The MDGs no longer feature as a priority for donor countries, the result of which is seen in their aid policies. Donors, in particular the G8 countries, have failed to fully meet their commitment to finance the implementation of all the MDGs. At the recently concluded G8 summit held in Muskoka, Canada, emphasis was placed on Goals 4 and 5 (maternal and child health) rather than on all of the MDGs. In a departure from previous practice, no mention was made of the landmark Monterrey or Gleneagles' commitments. African governments are also reneging on their commitments to finance the MDGs. In March 2010, African Finance ministers deleted any reference to budgetary targets for education, health, agriculture and

water in the Common Position on MDGs despite the targets having been set by their Heads of State and Government. We are living in the era of broken promises.

... developing countries are net capital providers to rich countries. In the spirit of true partnership and the African principles of justice and reciprocity, rich countries must find ways to compensate for what is taken from the poor.

Taking from the poor to develop the rich

Even as rich countries renege on their ODA promises, more resources continue to leave the continent in the form of illicit flows as well as the exportation of value through trade, predominantly in primary commodities. After centuries of plunder and blunder, the global trade regime still makes it very difficult for Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, to move to higher value and value-added exports. Furthermore, Africa continues to consume imported items that it could produce locally. As one of the participants in the consultations puts it:

"If one walks into a government office or African hotel you notice that everything is imported from multi national companies. It is impossible to create jobs when you export jobs through imports." (Charles Abugre, Nairobi citizens' consultations).

In addition, there are many African pension and sovereign wealth funds invested in the stock exchanges of developed countries, thereby helping to develop their economies. Aid cannot compensate for this loss of capital. As Abugre put it: "Developing countries are net-capital providers to rich countries." In the spirit of true partnership and the African principles of justice and reciprocity, rich countries must find ways to fully compensate the poor.

The MDGs are not well-known among the public

Participants in the consultations felt strongly that the lack of attainment of the MDGs was, to a large extent, due to the fact that they – and the rationale behind them – are not fully understood by the African and European public – the citizens whose taxes are supposed to finance them. This makes it difficult for the general public to put pressure on their political leaders to fully fund them and for politicians to justify the allocation of the resources needed for their realisation.

"Il y aussi un déficit de communication car les OMD sont complètement ignorés par beaucoup de pays à travers le monde, notamment les pays occidentaux, et implique ainsi un impact sur les ressources et en Afrique ç'a n'a jamais fait l'objet d'une réunion qui lui est consacrée exclusivement et finalement" (Dr Sall, Dakar consultation)

English translation: "There is also a communication gap, because the MDGs are

completely ignored by many countries around the world, including Western countries which implies an impact on resources. In Africa there has never been a meeting exclusively devoted to it." (Dr Sall, Dakar consultation)

Competing contradictions

Africa continues to experience competing contradictions and ambiguities such as social privilege alongside suffering, and urban affluence and rural neglect, including neglect of urban areas inhabited by the poor. The poor and the working class in general are not rewarded for their hard work yet reproduce the labour used by their wealthier counterparts and support disadvantaged communities. Other contradictions include militancy alongside moderation, and conflict in the company of peace.

Services are concentrated in urban areas where people are more vocal. Ultimately, the rural to urban migration starts to create a strain on urban services (Report on Citizen Consultations held in Abuja, Nigeria, March 2010).

Marginalisation of women

Despite the existence of legal frameworks and standards at global, regional and national levels for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, African women continue to be marginalised. They lack access



to basic social services and economic opportunities, and do not have property rights. Women make up the larger portion of the continent's illiterate adults and are more likely to drop out of school before completing the primary cycle. Female farmers cultivate more than 80% of Africa's food production but lack land titles and security of tenure. "We are the roads where there are none to carry the sick to clinics or produce to markets", said a Mozambican woman at Poverty Hearings. "Kusema kweli, mimi na wazee pia wanchangia kuleta umasikini... wazee wamekuwa walevu," said Esther Shapara, a Kenyan woman at the Kenya Poverty Hearings. (English translation: "Our men are lazy; they contribute to our poverty...").

African governments continuously fail to meet the AU gender parity requirements for decision making positions. Added to this is the tendency for women to be less politically active than men. Moreover, paid employment for women continues to expand very slowly. Among other solutions, good practices such as Gender Budgeting (which is used as a tool for poverty reduction by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)) and Social Budgeting (which aims to ensure the

equitable distribution of national resources, as recently implemented in Kenya in partnership with UNICEF) can make significant improvements if widely adopted.

3.3 High impact sectors

*"Citizens are defining poverty as a lack of access to basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation, lack of decent housing and employment, lack of access to justice, and lack of food in sufficient quantity and quality."
(Reported at the Mozambique Poverty Hearings)*

*The best of mankind is a farmer...
(Ethiopian proverb)*

In Africa, 70-80% of the population is dependent on smallholder agriculture and the informal sector. The continent has a growing number of unemployed youth, who are globally regarded as either a catalyst for boosting economic growth or as a time bomb waiting to spark conflict and political instability. At the consultations, the agricultural and informal sectors were cited as the most suitable for sustaining livelihoods and providing employment for the youth. It is therefore inconceivable that the two sectors supporting 70% to 80% of the population can continue to be disregarded.

Agriculture and food security

While structural transformation is crucial in the long term, in the short to medium term, immediate gains in the welfare of the poor can be achieved by increasing



Farmer sharing his realities

support to smallholder farmers and informal sector traders. According to the commissioners at the Poverty Hearings in Kenya, people who operate in these sectors are "very hard-working people, taking personal initiative under extreme conditions and circumstances to earn a living and escape poverty." They furthermore engage in these activities "to meet the basic needs of their households such as food, water, education and health, as well as undertake their national obligations as responsible citizens – paying taxes."

Africa's agricultural sector needs to be developed, with particular focus on achieving food security and sovereignty for the continent – as already identified in Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme. Intra-African trade in agricultural products should be promoted to reduce over-dependence on international food aid, and issues of security of tenure and access to input and output markets must also be addressed, with special attention given to the needs of small-scale farmers and women. Investment in

smallholder agriculture will help reduce poverty in rural areas as these farmers know exactly what to do to generate livelihoods. As one respondent noted:

"Smallholder agriculture is the cornerstone of livelihoods of most of the continent's poor (and poor women. It must be the key to development. The smallholder growth path must be one that combines the best of what people already know and do (i.e. low-input farming, not dependent on (terminator) GMO seed, not part of large corporate agribusiness) with the best of what the more developed urban sector has to offer (including technology such as cell-phone based extension and market information, and effective entry into value chains)."

The most crucial priority is mainstreaming youth in development... as the formal sector cannot absorb school graduates, the informal sector's capacity should be expanded and market barriers urgently addressed so the youth can create meaningful livelihoods for themselves. (E-consultations)

This sentiment is echoed by African scientists, who strongly argue that priority needs to be given to smallholder farming and access to affordable credit for inputs and improved intra-African trade. (African

Monitor Policy Forum on Food Security).

It is encouraging to note that at least 10 or so African countries are investing 10% or more of their budgets in agriculture as agreed in the 2003 Maputo Protocol. This should show the remaining 17 that are allocating less than 5% that it is possible to do so.

Investment in the informal sector

Africa's informal sector has no equivalent in the world's developed economies, whose small businesses are formally recognized and officially provided for. The failure to create a methodology to support this sector is the greatest of all the mistakes committed by the African intelligentsia – especially economists – and policy-makers. It demonstrates how inefficient the current procedure of importing policy and frameworks is without adequate assimilation, interrogation and sufficient contextualization. Without proper handling of this sector, there will never be prosperity in Africa, nor will poverty be eradicated.

In the short term, investment is urgently needed in resources that can make possible activities that use capacities that are already available in Africa's communities. To reiterate one of the participants in the consultations in Kenya, "processes to access Youth and Women Funds must 'informalised'." At the Johannesburg consultations, we heard of the remarkable achievements made by a determined woman in mobilizing retrenched females to set up small businesses that draw on the skills they already have. Examples such as these, devised by ordinary people who deserve to be recognised as 'people's economists',

should be used to learn from and the concepts behind them integrated into mainstream planning.

Government and donor procurement policies should be created to promote local industry and the informal sector by using and promoting locally manufactured goods and services wherever possible. This, participants pointed out, is the way to enhance a localized growth path.

Priority actions

Going forward, Africa and its partners must design development strategies and programmes that take its values, capacities, endogenous resources and the day to day reality of the majority of its citizens into account. These must focus on:

- Analysis by African experts of the African reality and global context within which the continent exists and pursues its objectives
- The policies relevant to transforming African reality discovered through the analysis
- The politics needed to translate these policies into the required transformative programmes and institutions to drive the process

One particularly urgent task is the need to understand the meaning of the global economic crisis for the African continent and what it needs to do to overcome the development traps that keep it confined to the vicious cycle of poverty, conflict and untold human suffering.

"IL ne peut pas y avoir de développement sans la paix et on doit promouvoir la culture de la paix pour améliorer la croissance économique soutenue et durable permettant de développer l'Afrique qui n'est pas pauvre, mais qui s'est appauvrit." (Dr Sall, Dakar consultation)

English translation: 'There is no development without peace. We should develop the culture of peace to enhance economic growth for the durable and sustainable development of Africa, which is not poor, but has been made poor.'" (Dr Sall, Dakar consultation)

The MDGs and access to basic services

Meeting the MDG targets remains a priority given that the majority of Africa's citizens remain crippled by poverty and lack of access to basic services, which in turn causes infant and maternal mortality rates to increase. Priority for assistance to the continent should not shift away from the MDGs and the provision of basic services. Donors should simply honour their commitments.

Greater priority than has been the case hitherto needs to be given to educating the public in Europe, Asia and the Americas about the MDGs and other human development agendas and how it is in their interest to ensure their full realisation. Aid is not all charity.

Investment in relevant and quality education must similarly be increased with the emphasis on skills development and entrepreneurship. Education should be based on the realities found in African economies and societies.



Youth representative speaking at Citizens Consultation in Kenya

Basic service provision is a core function of the State, which also has a duty to invest in services for the poor. Leaders should derive legitimacy from their ability to provide basic services/public goods such as education,

health and water and rural infrastructure. Citizens have to hold governments accountable for their core service delivery functions.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

African governments and civil society institutions should build capacity for local level responses to climate change impacts. This includes information and awareness raising, targeting local communities on impending impacts, ways of adapting to and mitigating them. Investment in the capacity of civil society to engage with climate change issues and upscale the concerns and needs of local communities to inform national and global policy processes should become a priority.

MDGs are already the floor, not the ceiling. It is impossible to target any lower without seriously undermining people's rights (Report on African Monitor/ONE Citizen Consultations, Abuja, Nigeria, March 2010).

New partnerships that enable citizens' voices to inform policy

A Significant Impact Alliance (SIA) that is arrow-headed by the interplay between civil society, professional associations, social movements, youth, elected representatives and local councillors, business entrepreneurs (including returnees from the Diaspora) and public servants driven by democratic values can

and must be created. Such a SIA should be rooted in the community and understand the various hierarchies that repress the voice and votes of the people.

Greater priority than has previously been the case should be given to educating the public in Europe, Asia and America about the MDGs and other human development agendas, and how it is in their interest to ensure their full realisation. Aid is not just about charity.

Citizens should be engaged to find ways to more effectively support local development and to make governments focus on delivery of basic services to the poor and expand basic social infrastructures. The consultations show that there are effective people at the local level who wield a great deal of influence on political leaders, but often don't fully understand how the entire system works. If the knowledge and analysis of the system can be merged with the influence and clout of these local champions, new possibilities will emerge.

Towards a development paradigm that is people-centered and based on African values

There is increasing reference by leading African thinkers and activists to the fact that long-term solutions to some of Africa's problems can be found by drawing

on its culture and traditions as well as indigenous knowledge, and for a development paradigm that is driven by African values.

"Africans need to take more proactive stance towards addressing their development needs reflecting on the reality of their lives. (The) development agenda needs to be built from the bottom up considering the grassroots communities views with less imposition." (citizens' consultations)

The real issue behind this seems to be the values that drive the dominant development paradigm: materialism, profit and advantage instead of the greatest African values and principles, which are justice, balance and reciprocity.

All arguments for rechanneling resources, including aid through the private sector, like the argument by Bernstein seem to be driven by the values of profit and advantage

"... the MDGs embody a laundry list approach to development.. Why perpetuate the free education (notion), which leads to dependency and a culture of entitlement? In the MDG approach, the role of private enterprise is totally undermined... companies should not unthinkingly sign on (for) the MDGs and the approach to development inherent in the programme and nor should developing country governments.... the MDGs

are a naive faith in collective action."
(Bernstein 2010)

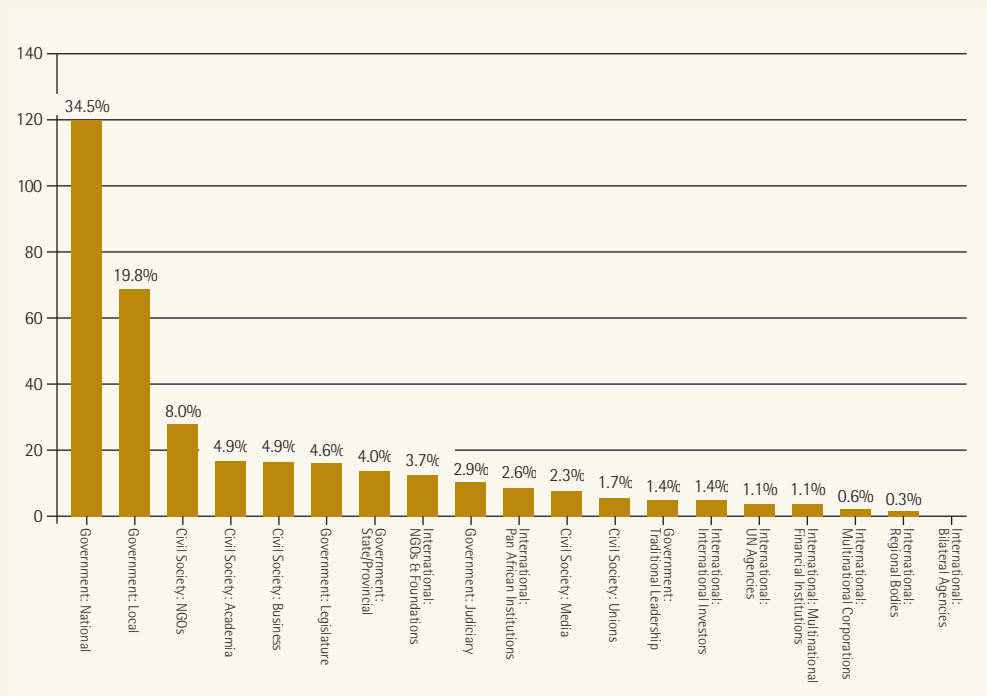
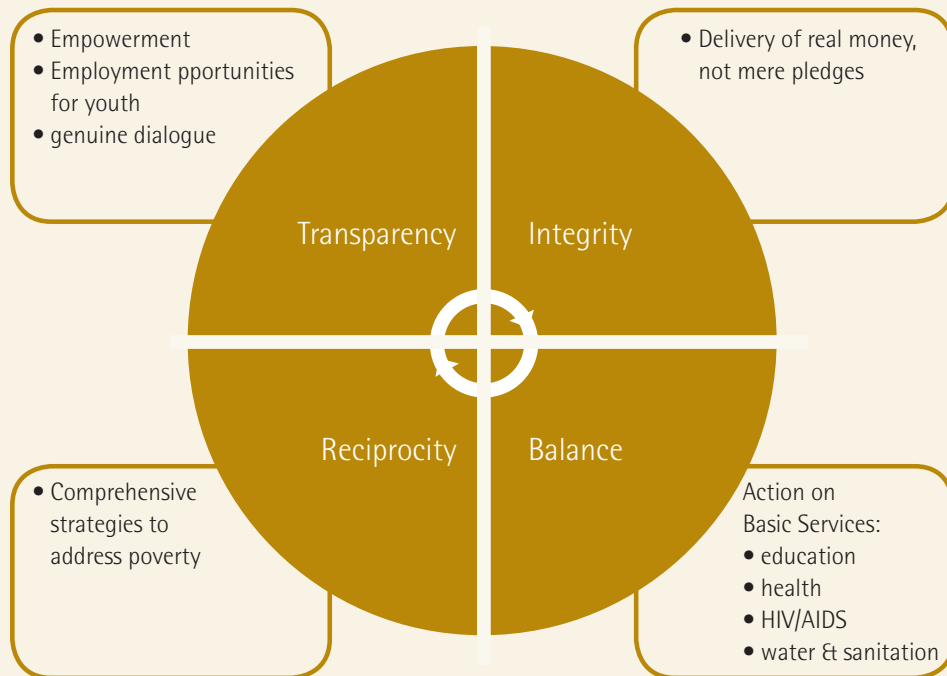
Notwithstanding the fact that there are many people and governments in Africa who aspire to the affluence and excesses that are currently defining development

and whose rapaciousness is drawing resources away from the continent and the poor, a new global ideal based on values espoused in the African philosophies of Ubuntu and Maat is urgently needed to inform a more sustainable development framework.

When asked for the most important issues to pose

to leaders, participants in the consultations listed the following values and the actions required. These are shown in the figure below left.

In terms of where responsibility for the required actions lies, the following ranking was revealed:



4. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

'Africa works.' The continent has hope that is founded on the reality of the progress that has been made along multiple fronts. The glass is more than half full. However, the reports on the consultations (face to face and electronic) show that the issue most Africans are concerned with is the lack of provision of basic services including education, health, water and sanitation, and basic infrastructure in rural areas. An overwhelming number of the e-consultation respondents (80.4%) delegated this responsibility to government, which is also seen as the most important agent in Africa's development.

Reverse flows remove substantial resources from the continent and its poor to serve the rich, making it difficult for Africa to meet its development obligations. The amounts in question exceed ODA, making the continent as much of a donor – albeit unacknowledged – as it is a recipient.

Key recommendations

- A development ideal – one which is values-based and sustainable, and to which people should aspire – needs to replace the current one which is driven by advantage and the survival of the strongest/advantaged
- Tangible commitments with clear actions are needed. The MDGs need to be explained to the African and Western public with the emphasis on what's in it for them. Failure to honour the MDG commitments has greatly undermined the credibility of donors and trust in African governments
- We call for complete financial transparency by African governments, their development partners and the business sector – particularly those involved in extractive industries – and for OECD countries to stop offering tax havens to illicit out-flows and the means for illicit capital to leave Africa. We further call for reverse flows to be mainstreamed in development finance discourse
- A Significant Impact Alliance that is rooted in the community and comprised of representatives from civil society, professional associations, social movements and business entrepreneurs should become the catalyst for engendering accountability from governments, NGOs, donors and big businesses. Such an alliance should constitute a real constituency for good governance and human development
- Agriculture, food security and the informal sector should be prioritised by African governments and those who support Africa's development. Assets in the informal sector – cows, goats, sheep and chickens – can and must be recognised. Similarly, funds meant to help the poor should be made accessible and processes must be established for members of this sector of the population to acquire them 'informally' in a manner that is relevant to the way they do business
- The multiple contributions of people returning from the African Diaspora must be promoted and facilitated.

Remittances, skills and technological bridges must be built so as to ensure accountable governance

Listen to what the people are saying.

Let there be less talk and more action!

Action! Action! Action!

Deliver the basic services!

Give us a relevant education curriculum!

Allocate resources more equitably!



5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

African Monitor was requested to initiate and lead a process of citizen consultations ahead of the expiry of donor commitments in 2010 by a group of African civil society and international organisations that focus on Africa. We wish to express our gratitude to the following organisations for their support and collaboration in this initiative:

- The Development Bank of Southern Africa
- ENDA Tiers Monde
- ONE International
- Sangonet
- Southern Africa Trust

At African Monitor, the process was led by Ms Barbara Kalima-Phiri and Mr Warren Nyamugasira, assisted by Ms Jill Kronenberg.

Archbishop Njongo Ndungane, the President and Founder of African Monitor, provided guidance, wise counsel and inspiration to the team, sharing his contagious passion and belief that Africa's day is here and now.

Our sincere thanks go to those individuals who presented papers at the various consultations: Mr Charles Abugre, Dr Sam Amadi, Dr Bankole Adeoye, Mr Neville Gabriel, Cheikh Gueye, Dr Bheki Moyo, Ms Hajiya Amina Az Zubair, Ms Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso and Dr Alioune Sall.

Special mention must go to Edith Jibunoh of ONE for her role in setting up a successful consultation in Abuja, Nigeria, which kick-started the remainder of them.

In addition, our gratitude is extended to those who

assisted in synthesising the reports: Ms Rudo Chitiga, Mr Patrick Mpedzisi and Ms Masego Madzwamuse; and to the African Monitor team who assisted in compiling and editing this report: Yared Teka Tsegay, Bernard Likalimba and Onesimo Mazerura.

Above all, we wish to thank the citizens of Africa who shared their realities, opinions, analyses, hopes and aspirations at the face to face meetings and via the e-consultations.



African Monitor Trust

Registration: Trust Deed no IT3633/2006
Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) no 067-760-NPO
Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) no 930023184

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