



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY  
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT  
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE



# Africa Capacity

No 16 | 2021

[www.acbf-pact.org](http://www.acbf-pact.org)



**ACBF continues  
to build capacity  
in women's  
groups through  
practical  
interventions  
and technical  
skills support.**

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# In this issue

When the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), was designated as the African Union's specialized agency for capacity development in 2017, it was a new era demonstrating and acknowledging the important and long-lasting capacity building work the Foundation had done since inception in 1991.

That designation placed ACBF at the centre of Africa's development architecture, better positioning it to build African institutions that can implement the strategies needed under Agenda 2063. The Foundation's central position in this task brings it in contact with

many partners, from global and continental institutions to civil society organizations, governments and the private sector.

In this issue, we show what ACBF continues to accomplish as the go-to institution for capacity building and how it is facilitating the timely implementation of continental and national development agendas.

Our Executive Secretary writes on the ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation. He postulates that forging strategic partnerships for developing home-grown

solutions is what Africa needs to build institutions and skills that can propel development.

Practical examples of how ACBF is working to build skills are reflected in this issue's coverage of the programmes that are supporting women-led businesses across the continent. This is an increasingly important priority for ACBF.

This issue also covers how ACBF is working to support post-COVID-19 recovery and the major strides it is making in this area.



## Message from the Executive Secretary

### ACBF assisting African economies bridge the gap between ideas and implementation

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, six of the fastest growing economies in the world were in Africa.

Then the pandemic hit, bringing with it all its attendant measures. Governments everywhere took steps to protect their populations, this meant travel restrictions and lockdowns that hurt sectors such as tourism, one of Africa's biggest earners.

Commodity prices also fell as global demand for many of the exports from Africa dropped.

Suddenly, we had moved from optimism and hope about

Africa's rising narrative, to a position of anxiety and worry.

Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) losses are estimated at up to US\$190 billion. The lowest-income sub-Saharan African countries may need about US\$245 billion by 2030. In total, some estimates show that all sub-Saharan Africa will need an estimated US\$425 billion by 2030 just to recover.

**However, the continent's recovery will not only be about throwing money around. It will, for us, be about generating and utilizing knowledge and building capacity to effectively utilize**

**financial resources available to transform the continent.**

Earlier this year, we met with our Board of Governors at a time the Foundation was marking 30 years of existence. While the mood was perhaps not as festive as one would imagine for a 30th birthday, it was one of definite determination to ensure that we use this opportunity to press forward in our role as the Capacitator for Africa.

The one big lesson the past year has taught us is that, when it comes down to it, Africa must stand on its own feet. Whether in developing

vaccines, providing relief to the African people or ensuring that African economies are resilient, the job falls on the laps of Africans everywhere. Economies that are thriving in this pandemic are those that are self-reliant, with capacity to withstand shocks, applying innovative measures to manage the new challenges.

So, this may be the worst of times for African economies, but it is the best of times to play our role in building capacity across Africa.

As Hon. Goodall Gondwe, the former Chair of the ACBF Board of Governors has said before: “Africa needs ACBF as much, probably more now, than at the time it was created in 1991.”

To make this happen, our focus at ACBF is increasingly about assisting African economies leap from generation of good ideas to implementation of good ideas.

### **How are we doing this?**

Across Africa, we have been working to support the sort of institutional reforms needed to ensure that good policy formulation turns into

measurable success on the ground. The Foundation has been creating platforms for governments, private sector, academia and civil society organizations to collaborate closely in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Through our policy dialogues, e-seminars and the 2020 Africa Think Tank Summit we have facilitated knowledge-sharing and promoted peer-learning.

ACBF developed a strategy for post-COVID-19 recovery to assist African economies recover sustainably from the effects of the pandemic. The strategy was designed as implementable programmes and projects that we could jointly work on with member states and partners.

We deliberately target projects that build capacity right from the ground up. Where policies speak of implementing projects that leave no one behind, we work with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that these policies are implemented.

The Foundation is especially proud of the work done to provide start-up grants

to women’s agricultural cooperatives in Liberia, Malawi, and Rwanda. Start-up grants of up to US\$5,000 gives them the access to capital that they need to start rebuilding businesses and to build ventures that are resilient in the face of future shocks.

Programmes in Chad, Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, and Rwanda trained entrepreneurs and enabled them to put their new skills into practice, thereby enhancing their participation in the economic mainstream. These were done in partnership with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).

One of the factors behind Japan’s rapid rise from the ashes of World War II was the ability of its people to apply new knowledge.

**Similarly, in Africa, this is what ACBF is doing to not only aid economic recovery, but to build fit-for-purpose knowledge products and services that will help in building more sustainable and resilient post-pandemic economies.**



# Our work: Producing strong institutions and skilled people to transform Africa

Our vision is that of an Africa capable of achieving its own development. To work towards achieving this goal, the Foundation builds capacity on the continent through interventions such as strategic partnerships, investments in capacity development, technical support and providing access to knowledge relevant to building capacity in Africa.

The Foundation's current strategic plan is designed to cultivate relevant skills and build strong institutions. This

is what will transform Africa. The plan is built on four pillars, namely: enabling effective delivery of continental development priorities; supporting countries to achieve tangible development results; enhancing private sector and civil society to contribute to sustainable development; and leveraging knowledge and learning to increase development effectiveness.

Since the beginning of 2020, our work has taken on a new urgency, due to the need to

respond to COVID-19 and the impact on Africa's economies. This meant renewed focus on several key areas of the ACBF mandate.

Building capacity in the health sector is a central pillar in making sure that recovery is sustainable, and that African economies become more resilient, able to stand alone to withstand future crises. Research conducted by ACBF with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in 2021 shows the urgency to invest in critical technical skills and



the right institutions. There is a need for each country to fund and increase the numbers of committed and dedicated public healthcare and socio-economic workers, epidemiologists, laboratory analytics, researchers, infectious disease experts as well as national institutes for disease control and socio-economic development. Furthermore, there is a need for strengthened vector control and disease departments, and improvements in research and training portfolios to combat future outbreaks.

Together with partners, the

Foundation is working to strengthen human capacity including transformative leadership to drive a significant increase in the government and donor investment required to provide health workers with surveillance and data analytics capabilities, state-of-the-art laboratories, and intensive care units.

There is expanded capacity building to ensure institutions are better equipped to contain future pandemics. This includes boosting industrial capacity to enhance access to treatments and vaccines and to massively expand access

to new rapid diagnostics and treatments.

ACBF is cooperating with partners to enhance the social protection programmes that are needed to reduce the severity of the economic impact of pandemics on businesses, individuals, vulnerable communities and small and medium-sized enterprises.

In all this, ACBF extends the reach of its network of partners to ensure that its mandate and vision are fulfilled.



# Empowering women:

## Turning ideas into growing businesses

In Rwanda's Nyanza district, cooperatives run by women are pillars of the local economy. The women gather, exchange ideas, and discuss how to grow their small businesses.

In areas such as Nyanza, Musazane and Gisagara, the women band together to run businesses involved in mushroom, garlic, and red onion farming as well as maize production. The scene in Rwanda is not uncommon for towns all across Africa, where women's cooperatives are supporting the livelihoods

of many families.

Yet, for many cooperatives, they have limited or no access to agricultural inputs and markets.

To bridge this gap, ACBF is working on programmes to turn the innovative ideas that arise from these groups into sustainable businesses.

In Rwanda, six women's cooperatives have benefited from an ACBF grant supported by BADEA.

By using such start-up grants, the cooperatives

can purchase farm inputs such as seed, pesticides and fertilizers. It is a model that is bringing solutions to the challenges many cooperatives face around Africa.

In 2020, the Foundation provided start-up grants to women's agricultural cooperatives in Liberia, Malawi, and Rwanda. In each of the countries, women groups were awarded start-up grants of up to US\$5,000. With this capital, cooperatives can expand their collective agriculture ventures.



In Liberia, ACBF awarded seed grants to five women's cooperatives: the African Women Entrepreneurship Programme, the Kukatornor Women Association, the Vakala Women Empowerment and Livelihoods Support Programme, the Women Empowerment for Self-Employment, and the Yapugeanma Women Inc. There has also been support to the women of Malawi, where five women's cooperatives have used ACBF's support to start and grow businesses in rice milling, livestock farming, peanut butter production and crop farming.

However, it's not just capital that these groups need. ACBF has also heavily invested in training these women entrepreneurs to manage

businesses prior to them receiving the start-up grants.

In Malawi, it was found that one of the biggest challenges for small businesses is human and institutional capacity. For these businesses to grow, there is need for support in meeting local registration regulations and complying with production standards. Many find the process of dealing with regulations difficult, and it can dampen their passion for business.

This is why ACBF continues to build capacity in women's groups through practical interventions and technical skills support.

Entrepreneurship is not enough for these groups. They need to be involved in

making policies that affect their livelihoods.

Through its work in Liberia, Malawi and Rwanda, the Foundation sees an increasing importance of leadership and entrepreneurship development programmes for women in agriculture and business. There is scope for further engagement in key focus areas such as skills development in planning, organizing, marketing, and financial management.

In working with various inspirational women's groups, ACBF finds that there is no shortage of ideas among these cooperatives. However, what they need more than ever is support in the form of capital and skills, to turn those ideas into sustainable businesses.



## ACBF and Afreximbank partnering to build capacity for the AfCFTA and economic development

The longstanding partnership between the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) continues to grow from strength to strength, transforming African institutions and building a strong human resource base in support of the continent's transformation agenda.

Over a period of five years, ending 2025, Afreximbank and ACBF will once again collaborate in knowledge-sharing, advocacy and promotion of trade and economic development in the African Union's Member States.

The two pan-African institutions will work together on capacity development programmes that will lay a solid foundation not only for the efficient implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) but in contributing to the post-COVID-19 recovery of African economies through supporting and addressing

their capacity needs as well.

The Afreximbank financial contribution follows the just ended joint program running from 2019 to 2021, focused on strengthening human and institutional capacity to support intra-African trade, in contribution to the sustainable development of African countries.

**This collaboration has yielded some important results. For instance, ACBF published a paper and policy brief on the capacity imperatives for the development and use of factoring as an innovative trade financing tool to advance the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The publication was widely disseminated and it is influencing many policy makers in the promotion of factoring to advance their national trade policies.**

ACBF, Afreximbank and the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI) also

developed a Trade Finance Capacity Building Program. The program includes a post graduate trade finance program and short professional development courses targeting senior staff and executives from financial institutions including Central Banks, Ministries of Finance and Justice, Trade Support Institutions, Competition Policy Authorities, Export Credit Agencies, Revenue Authorities, to mention just a few.

The program also targets officials from umbrella private sector bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, Bankers and Insurance Associations, Business Councils, Manufacturers and Exporters Associations as well as research institutions and civil society organizations working in the area of trade.

Overall, the program aims to ensure that a mass of trade finance experts is trained and groomed for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

# Bridging the policy implementation gap....no easy feat

Africa is not short of innovative ideas and policy. Every year, across the continent, governments, pan-African agencies and businesses launch blueprints that reflect visions for growth.

However, what has lacked is the bridge between these policies and effective implementation.

**The African Capacity Building Foundation, in extending its role as the continent's think tank and engine for capacity building, is the bridge that links ideas and implementation.**

One way the Foundation is doing this, is by building the skills needed to turn ideas into reality. In its work, ACBF has found that building skills is not done at the point of implementation; it has to start right at the grassroots, going up.

To this end, the Foundation has invested millions of dollars of financial support to higher education institutions and non-degree training programmes.

The programmes under this support are not randomly

selected. They are carefully targeted at the skills that are needed most in the fields of public policy, public sector management, and financial management and accountability. These are the skills needed by Member States in their institutions to help them put ideas in motion on the ground.

Among one of ACBF's most successful bottom-up skills building programmes has been the Economic Policy Management (EPM) programme.

Under this programme, the Foundation worked with universities in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia to offer the EPM. The results were visible. Of the auditors that took part, 40% were promoted immediately after their training.

Over 600 public and private sector executives, from 12 African countries, benefited from the human capacity development activities of the program.

The skills produced are in demand.

Over 90 percent of the program's graduates work in the public sector. Almost all ministries in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) employ EPM graduates, as do international institutions, business intelligence practices, and the Presidency and Prime Ministry.

At country level, the Foundation cooperates with Member States to assess their specific skills needs. As States work towards their long-term economic goals, they are looking for skills to get the wheels turning on their National Development Plans and Strategies.

To assist, ACBF conducts capacity needs assessments and develops workable implementation strategies that are specific to the unique needs of each Member State.

**Building the skills that Africa requires to bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation, is an ongoing exercise that ACBF is happy to take on.**

# Resources



**ACBF 2020 annual Report**

[https://www.acbf-pact.org/sites/default/files/ACBF%20FS%20FY2020%20Final%20Annual%20Report%20English%20copy-min\\_0.pdf](https://www.acbf-pact.org/sites/default/files/ACBF%20FS%20FY2020%20Final%20Annual%20Report%20English%20copy-min_0.pdf)

## 1st Africa Conference on Tobacco and Development



**A TOBACCO FREE  
AFRICA**

**Communique: 1st Africa conference on tobacco control And development held virtually, October 26–28, 2021**

<https://elibrary.acbfpact.org/acbf/collect/acbf/index/assoc/HASH57ad/8b7e5774/f176f67a/6b.dir/COMMUNIQUE%20FINAL%20Tobacco.pdf>



**Technical Paper: Capacity Imperatives of Pandemic Responses: Building a resilient health systems and ensuring socio-economic transformation in Africa.**

<https://elibrary.acbfpact.org/acbf/collect/acbf/index/assoc/HASH0ae5/733fe99c/4628f357/f6.dir/ACBF%20IsDB%20COVID19%20Technical%20Report%20English.pdf>



**Policy Brief: Building Capacity for Development of Factoring in Africa to accelerate trade development and support AfCFTA**

<https://www.acbf-pact.org/sites/default/files/acbf%20policy%20brief%20doc%202%20english.pdf>



Link to ACBF e-library: <https://elibrary.acbfpact.org/>



# Upcoming Events



## 8th Africa Think Tank Summit

The 8th Africa Think Tank Summit shall be held on **9-10 December 2021** under the theme **“Digital Transformation in post-COVID-19 Africa: Opportunities, challenges and options to build back better”**. Key stakeholders, among them think tanks, partners, private sector and the academia are expected to attend the Summit



## 4th Meeting of the Consortium to Stem Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) from Africa

The meeting will be held on **Monday 13 December 2021** in a hybrid format in Johannesburg- South Africa. ACBF, a member of the Consortium will participate in the meeting.



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Securing Africa's future through capacity development

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