

Knowledge: a global public good?

Development is knowledge-intensive. We have known that for decades. At first, some development thinkers assumed it was knowledge from the industrialised North that was needed by the developing countries of the South. Others came to recognise the importance of understanding and building upon local knowledge. Eventually, we learned that the potential for sustainable development lies in an astute, context-specific combination of the two. Our efforts are now directed towards enabling the creation of value by local and national actors, and integrating their own capacities, knowledge and resources with useful external ones. We also understand that international partnerships such as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement between the EU and the ACP countries may result in capacity-building and the much needed links with external sources of knowledge. That is, provided that these same partnerships respect local and national ownership of the development agenda. Finally, we prefer knowledge that is potentially relevant to development to be a global public good, freely accessible to all.

So far, this spells out the challenge to development policy-makers and practitioners in general terms: if we can only make sure that development actors have access to all relevant knowledge and information and benefit from international partnerships and resources providing relevant capacities and links, the 'networking society' should be able to promote development. Unfortunately, the story is different in practice: international partnerships provide at most selec-

tive support for local and national capacity development and at the very best biased access to globally available knowledge and technologies. And, despite the Internet revolution, global access to knowledge is very much skewed in favour of the industrialised economies. Besides, the protection of local knowledge resources, or as Stiglitz called it, the 'global knowledge commons', has not been decisively regulated. Most developing countries, therefore, make very little use of knowledge as a motor for local and national development.

To take just one example, a recent study on capacity-building for the global management of intellectual property rights (IPR)¹ showed that the distribution of global capacity initiatives over continents and countries is skewed and, with few exceptions, seems to reflect short-term donor interests rather than those of developing countries. Besides, most technical assistance focuses on creating the necessary conditions for complying with international IPR rules, supporting national IPR administrations and putting in place the legal and policy requirements for enforcement. Much less attention is paid to building and strengthening developing countries' negotiating and policy-making capacities; to strengthening national research and innovation systems; to protecting indigenous knowledge and to helping local innovators and entrepreneurs generate adequate capacities for benefiting from the international IPR regime. Besides, the total global financial effort is far too modest to secure the autonomous, timely, well-docu-

mented and effective participation of the least developed countries in particular in international negotiations. Many developing countries, therefore, experience the IPR regime basically as an increase in cost, rather than an opportunity, notwithstanding the growing efforts of a number of UN and non-governmental organisations to address these 'forgotten' issues.

During this year of stock-taking with respect to the Millennium Development Goals, the above raises pertinent questions about our ability to achieve MDG 8, a global partnership for development. MDG 8 refers to an open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory system for trade and finance, and not to the generation, global distribution and effective utilisation of knowledge. Perhaps it should. Such a system definitely shouldn't stop at providing new information and communication technologies, already covered by target 18, but should encompass fair and practical rules on the valorisation and protection of indigenous resources, the strengthening of national and regional research and innovation and scientific communication systems, in particular in the least developed countries, the land-locked countries and small island states, as already referred to in targets 13 and 14.

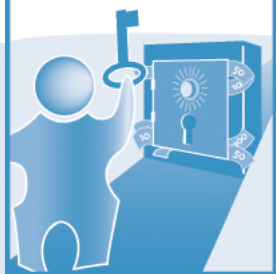
¹ Engel, Paul & Houée, Sophie. *Capacities for a global management of Intellectual Property: mapping out global initiatives and opportunities for improvement*. Contribution to the International Task Force on Global Public Goods; ECDPM: April 2005.

ACP-EC cooperation in practice

Facts and stories

Hard facts and stories on four aspects of ACP-EC cooperation: money, politics, policies and the EU.

Where does ACP-EC money go?



The financial envelope of the 9th EDF contains a conditional fund worth €1 billion. Last year, the EU Member States agreed to release €250 million for the EU Water Initiative. Discussions have been ongoing on whether and how to allocate the remaining €750 million.

The European Commission proposes to use the money for a variety of purposes, including an additional €250 million for the EU Water Initiative; €250 million for the EU Energy Initiative; €64 million for the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA); €63 million for the 'Education for All' Fast-Track Initiative and €50 million for the African Union.

The 2004 Mid-Term Review processes have achieved global financial equilibrium. This means that no additional funding is needed to reward 'good performers'. The overall review led to a reallocation between ACP countries based on their respective performance. The end-of-term review will focus even more on the absorption capacity of ACP countries. It is expected that no new funding of National and Regional Indicative Programmes (NIPs and RIPs) will be required on top of the funds liberated from the B envelope (reserved for unforeseen needs) or from the programmable envelopes of poorly performing countries.

What policy debates are taking place?

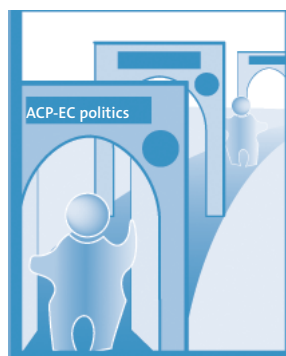
The European Commission adopted three communications on the subject of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The package makes proposals in the areas of Finance for Development, Coherence for Development and Focus on Africa. The Commission also suggested measures for increasing development aid and making it more efficient.

The current framework for the Community's development policy is provided by the EU Treaty and the Declaration adopted by the Council and the Commission in November 2000. Due to changes within the Union and on the international scene, it was decided to review this Development Policy Statement (DPS). Much progress has since been achieved. The existing DPS was assessed and a wide range of consultations were organised, both internal and external. The novelty of the proposed new Statement is the fact that it is divided into two parts. The first part will apply to the Union as a whole (i.e. the Member States and the Commission) and will define the political framework for development cooperation at a European level. The second part will provide guidelines for the implementation of development policy at Community level.

Where is Europe going?

The French and Dutch 'No's to the European Constitution will have a profound impact on European integration. They will also affect the EU's external actions, as they put on hold a wide range of (interlinked) institutional and financial innovations that were in the pipeline (such as the creation of a European Foreign Minister, new financial instruments and the budgetisation of the EDF).

A Eurobarometer survey, entitled 'Attitudes towards Development Aid', shows that Europeans expect the EU to act as a driving force for development, especially in Africa. However, public awareness of the Commission's activities in the field as well as of the Millennium Goals is limited.



What's new in the political arena?

The EU Council adopted a Joint Action on the European Union's mission to provide advice and assistance for security reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The aim of the mission is to contribute to the successful integration of the Congolese army.

Governance is an increasingly vital component of partnership relations. In 2005, a thematic review is to be carried out of EU support for good governance in the various regions of the world. Its aim is to take stock of policy developments in this relatively young and complex area; to draw lessons from the first generation of support programmes; and to look at ways and means of improving the EU's future involvement.

A new Euro-Africa pact in the making

“The European Council recalls the importance it attaches to relations between the European Union and Africa. It invites the Council to draw up a long-term global strategy for Africa in the light of the UN Summit with a view to the European Council in December 2005.”

Since these conclusions were formulated by the European Council of 16-17 June, much debate has taken place on how to develop a new strategic partnership between the European Union, i.e. the 25 Member States plus the European Commission, and Africa. There is no shortage of thorny questions that need to be answered if the process is to breed something really new. What kind of partnership do the two parties have in mind? What should change fundamentally compared with past approaches? What principles of engagement should prevail to ensure reciprocity in commitments and mutual accountability? Can a shared agenda be defined around common priorities? Who should be the actors of the new partnership? How much political support is there within the EU Member States for a coordinated and coherent approach to the whole of Africa?

Windows of opportunity

The overall climate, at least, seems ripe for a bold initiative. First of all, few will disagree that achieving the Millennium Goals in Africa will be a supremely tough nut to crack. Second, there have been promising changes in many parts of Africa. While conflict and bad governance remain a scourge, there have also been many encouraging developments on the political front. The creation of the African Union (AU) holds great development potential, provided that it is allowed to operate properly. With its extended mandate, the AU can have a direct and real impact on the major challenges facing Africa, in realms including peace and security, governance and regional and continental integration. It has formulated a Strategic Plan (2004-2007) which provides a solid basis for cooperation with the interna-

tional donor community. The new African vision on governance is reflected by the NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism. A new generation of local governments, born out the decentralisation processes, is playing an important role in promoting local (economic) development. Across Africa, civil-society actors are increasingly pushing for further democratisation and better governance.

There are also windows of opportunity in Europe. Political awareness has grown of the need to invest in Africa's stability and development with a view to safeguarding major geopolitical and security interests. The EU has given firm financial commitments to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. However, there is a widespread consensus that 'more money' alone will not suffice to make progress. There is also a pressing need to change the ways in which the EU cooperates with Africa so as to ensure greater effectiveness. Furthermore, Europe's special interest in Africa is reflected in recent initiatives, both bilateral (e.g. the UK-supported Commission on Africa) and at Community level (e.g. the increasingly strong political and institutional ties between the European Commission and the African Union Commission).

Critical test

The European Commission has almost completed formulating a vision to be set out in a communication entitled 'EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa's development'. The objective of the communication is to present a long-term EU strategy for achieving the MDGs in Africa; the idea is for the communication to be released in October with a view to be adopted by the European Council in December 2005. This strategy should, in turn, form the basis of a new Euro-Africa Pact, ideally to be endorsed at the forthcoming EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon.

The communication and the subsequent EU decision-making process will be a critical test of the credibility of the exercise. Several criteria may help to assess the newly proposed 'pact'. First, how useful and effective were the extensive consultations that took place with the African Union (AU) and Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs)? Second, does the communication reflect shared agendas and priorities? Third, will the Pact put an end to the current 'fragmentation' of the EU's approach to Africa, as reflected by the existence of three separate cooperation instruments (i.e. the MEDA, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the cooperation agreement)? Fourth, if a continental approach is adopted, will the political leadership of the African Union be fully respected? Fifth, will the partnership create more space for African actors, in all their diversity, to define their own development agenda, including on key issues such as governance? Sixth, will EU Member States make real moves towards a more coordinated complementary and coherent approach to Africa? This would imply, in many cases, major changes in the prevailing policy and institutional frameworks at bilateral level. Last but not least, will the EU also ensure that the right processes and procedures are in place to deliver the expected benefits of the new partnership.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Strategic Plan of the Commission of the African Union. Volume 2: 2004-2007 Strategic Framework. Prepared by the Commission of the African Union. May 2004.

<http://www.africa-union.org/AU%20summit%202004/volume%202%20final%20-%20English%20-%20June%202004.pdf>

Our Common Interest. Report of the Commission for Africa. 2005
http://213.225.140.43/english/report/thereport/english/11-03-05_cr_report.pdf

www.ecdpm.org

EVENTS

A major conference on **awareness-raising and development education for North-South** solidarity took place in Brussels on 19-20 May 2005. The meeting was jointly organised by the Belgian Development Cooperation Directorate-General and the European Commission. It brought together some 200 participants from 27 European countries. The conference recommendations stress that effective development education and awareness-raising are 'essential conditions' for mobilising support for higher levels of ODA and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. National and European authorities should ensure that there is adequate funding for innovative and high-quality awareness-raising and development education. Access to EU funding should be facilitated for the new Member States.

<http://www.euforic.org/awareness-sensibilisation>

Ousmane Sy won the **King Baudouin Prize for International Development** this year for his efforts to promote governance (particularly decentralisation) in Africa in general and in Mali in particular. Together with other African actors, Ousmane Sy created the 'Governance in Africa' Network, currently covering 14 countries in western and central Africa. The network is now seeking to collaborate with the African Union on governance and to build a pan-African alliance for improved governance.

A **EU-Africa Cotton Forum** took place in Paris on 5-6 July. Both parties committed themselves to a Partnership and an Action Plan that aims to overcome the difficulties of the African cotton commodity chains and thus help reduce poverty.

<http://www.cotton-forum.org>

The **ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly** will be held in the UK (venue still to be decided) from 21-24 November.

READINGS

The **revised Cotonou Partnership Agreement** has been posted at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/cotonou/index_en.htm

A new EC website, entitled '**The European Commission at Work**', explains how the Commission is organised, and sets out its role in the legislative process, in decision-making and in other areas of its competence.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/atwork/index_en.htm

The EU's **Directorate-General for Development** has launched a **weekly newsletter**. It will be published every Friday and contain news on the EU's development cooperation efforts. The following e-mail address may be used for subscriptions and comments: development@media-consulta.com

The **ACP-EU Centre for the Development of Enterprise** has published its **2004 Annual Report**.

<http://www.cde.int>

Monitoring and evaluation of support to decentralisation and local governance: Kenya Case Study. Maina, B. 2005. ECDPM Discussion Paper 61. This paper contributes to the ongoing debate on M&E methods and the current M&E practice in support of complex political and institutional reform processes such as decentralisation.

<http://www.ecdpm.org/dp61>

The good governance agenda of civil society: implications for ACP-EU cooperation. Herrero

Cangas, A. 2004. ECDPM InBrief 12

<http://www.ecdpm.org/inbrief12>

Governance Indicators: A User's Guide. This UNDP Guide, produced in collaboration with the EC, provides concise and easily accessible information on a wide range of indicators currently available on-line for measuring governance and on how to use them. UNDP, Oslo. <http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docso4/UserGuide.pdf>

EC Budget Support: thumbs up or down?

Volker Hauck, Oliver Hasse and Martin Koppensteiner. 2005. ECDPM Discussion Paper 63. <http://www.ecdpm.org/dp63>

When Agreement Breaks Down, What Next? The Cotonou Agreements Article 96

Consultation Procedure. James Mackie and Julia Zinke. 2005. ECDPM Discussion Paper 64A. <http://www.ecdpm.org/article96>

Suspension of Development Cooperation: An Instrument to Promote Human Rights and Democracy? Hadewych Hazelzet. 2005. ECDPM Discussion paper 64B.

<http://www.ecdpm.org/article96>

Recent Cases of Article 96 Consultations.

Lydie Mbangu. 2005. ECDPM Discussion Paper 64C. <http://www.ecdpm.org/article96>

An ACP Perspective and Overview of Article 96 Cases. Andrew Bradley. 2005. ECDPM

Discussion Paper 64D.

<http://www.ecdpm.org/article96>

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'InfoCotonou' highlights key debates, activities and events related to the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, an agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries on the one hand, and the European Union (EU) on the other. ACP-EC actors are encouraged to share their opinions, reports and other resources on ACP-EC cooperation. The ECDPM is a non-partisan organisation that seeks to facilitate international cooperation between the ACP and the EC. Information may be reproduced as long as the source is quoted.

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