CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN FRAGILE ENVIRONMENTS:INSIGHTS FROM PARLIAMENTS IN AFRICA

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Abstract: Capacity development in fragile environments in Africa has often proven to be a complex undertaking. This has largely been because of existing knowledge gaps on what exactly causes fragility of states, the economy and society. The liberal peace development model that generally informs post-conflict reconstruction and capacity development has a limited conception of fragility by narrowly focusing on the national dimensions of the problem, promoting donor-driven solutions, emphasizing minimal participation of beneficiary actors in the identification and prioritization of capacity development needs, and by subcontracting the design and management of projects and programs. The resulting capacity development impact has generally been disappointing. In the absence of homegrown strategic plans, stakeholder participation and ownership, international development partners have all too often addressed capacity gaps by financing training, supply of equipment and professional exchanges of parliamentarians and parliamentary staffers. These efforts usually achieved their presumed number targets but tended to ignore addressing the larger issues of political economy within which capacity development take place. However, the recent re-conceptualization of parliamentary capacity development as a development of nationally owned, coordinated, harmonized, and aligned development activities seems to be gaining growing attention in Africa. As the experience of Rwanda eloquently demonstrates, capacity development is essentially about politics, economics and power, institutions and incentives, habits and attitudes - factors that are only partly susceptible to technical fixes and quantitative specifications. These structural factors have to be negotiated carefully and tactfully.

Keywords: *Fragile States, Conflicts, Capacity Development, Parliamentary Strengthening, Coordination, Harmonization And Governance*

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INTRODUCTION

"Fragile", "failing" and "failed states" became part of international relations and in the development lexicons from the early 1990s. In particular, the concept of the "fragile state" entered into development discourse when, in the early 1990s, the Somalia state and society disintegrated. Millions of its citizens experienced massive insecurity and violence at the hands of armed groups that partly resulted from the fragmentation of the state into different regional entities vying with each other for power. Million of other Somali citizens faced starvation and even death because of the ensuing economic dislocation. However, the concept was neither given adequate attention by academia nor by development policy specialists. Until 9/11, it was only the humanitarian organizations that worried about fragile and collapsed states in developing countries. The dominant discourse on the root causes of fragility and conflict in Africa, for example, tended to emphasize the weak institutions, poor implementation of economic policies and bad governance. Little attention was given to the role of the larger global economy within which these weak states,

economies and societies were located. Accordingly, in order to escape from the fragility trap, conventional policy recommended the opening up of Africa's economy to foreign capital as a means of improving growth and thus eliminating poverty as a cause of conflict, as well as the adoption of a more democratic system of governance as a means of encouraging more inclusive kinds of politics. The strategy presented itself as encapsulating a comprehensive answer to all society's problems, from poverty and illiteracy to violence and despotic rule. This view has been broadly held by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and most multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

All too often, the notion of an 'effective state' was equated with a liberal democratic state and largely focused on the extent to which civil society successfully set up mechanisms for effecting checks and balances on the exercise of state power. The role of other institutions of democratic governance in the national governance processes was either given peripheral attention or downrightly bashed by multilateral agencies in the design and implementation of the Structural

Adjustment Programs and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. However, beginning in the late 1980s onwards, a new wave of political liberalization and democratization has swept across the entire African continent. In country after country, autocratic civilian governments and military regimes were replaced with periodically and popularly elected governments. Moreover, citizens began to demand that their leaders be accountable and transparent, and that they serve with integrity, honesty and commitment. The re-activated institutional structures and arrangements for democratic governance - multi-partism, independent legislatures and judiciaries, civil society groups and unhindered media - gradually became part, the very least, of the dominant constitutional discourse. Related to this trend, donor support policies and programs started strategically tying development assistance resources to progress toward "good governance" by recipient governments. More significantly, the growth of civil society organizations both in number and sophistication began to push the role of parliament and the practice of popular participation to the political centre stage. Slowly but inexorably, a democratic political

culture began taking root, where all the main political players seem to be accepting democracy as 'the only game in town', à la Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, p.1). It is now little surprising that many donors who previously either ignored or undermined the role of formal democratic institutions have come forward in droves in order to strength their respective capacities, particularly in politically fragile environments.

Does the recent upsurge in enthusiasm for developing state capacity in Africa effectively address the fundamental conditions that generate fragility? Are the new capacity delivery modalities going far enough to respond to the critical needs of societies in fragile environments? How can the strong commitments of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness be effectively, efficiently and sustainably exploited in identifying and linking all the three points of capacity development, namely the individual, organizational and the enabling environment? This paper seeks to interrogate the theoretical and empirical foundations for capacity development in the Africa's fragile environment with particular reference to parliaments in fragile environments. Some insights of best practices

are gleaned from the fast changing environments of fragility of the post-genocide Rwanda.

The paper is divided into seven substantive sections. Following the introduction, sections two and three discuss and critique the concept of fragility and state building drawn from the dominant liberal peace paradigm. This is followed, in section four, by a detailed exposition of the theoretical, analytical and ideological limitations of the framework. Section five discusses conventional patterns of parliamentary capacity development delivery in fragile environments in Africa. Sections six and seven discuss capacity development in gradually changing environments of fragility in Rwanda from donor- to recipient-driven capacity development. Section eight, the conclusion, distils emerging best practices in parliamentary capacity development fragile democracies in Africa.

UNBUNDLING THE CONCEPT OF FRAGILITY

It is estimated by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC, 2007b, 2008) that around one billion of the world's six billion people live in countries affected by fragility and conflict, and about one-third of all people surviving on less than US$ 1 per day live in these countries. Poverty rates average 54 percent compared with 22 percent for low-income countries as a whole. Over the past decade, there has been increasing evidence to support the claim that sustained growth, poverty reduction and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cannot be achieved without addressing the underlying causes of fragility and violent conflict in these countries. Of the 34 countries found to be further from reaching the MDGs, 22 are in or emerging from conflict. Around one-third of all child and maternal deaths in developing countries occur in fragile states. These countries are further characterized by a huge backlog of investment needs and limited government resources to meet them. Above all, it is claimed that most of the past international engagements with these countries virtually failed to yield any significant developmental improvements.

Some well-placed research findings increasingly demonstrated that there was a link between

successful socio-economic development and the existence of an enabling environment for good governance and government capacity coupled with political will. These findings made donors to begin to channel grants and loans to countries with demonstrable state performance records and gradually abandoned regimes that were performing poorly in both socio-economic development and good governance terms. Not surprisingly, the performance-based assistance model gradually created two opposing categories of developing countries: "donor darlings" and "aid orphans" (Levin and Dollar, 2005; McGillivray and Feeny, 2008). It is this latter group of countries that has been re-discovered by the bilateral and multilateral development agencies as 'fragile states' and, by extension, as security threats to their own citizens, neighboring countries and the broader international community. As will be argued below, this recognition equally generated an urgent demand for engaging fragile states differently, coherently and sustainably (OECD-DAC, 2007a).

Functioning statehood has come to be seen as the necessary core element for development, security and stability. It is has also become an essential precondition for global governance. For international development agencies, attention has been refocused to Marx Weber's (1968) classic work on the state. His conception of the state has come again to be adopted as a benchmark for most contemporary analysis of state performance. For Weber, the defining properties of the state include (i) its unchallenged control of the territory within the defined boundaries under its control, (ii) its monopolization of the legitimate use of force within its borders, (iii) its reliance upon impersonal rules in the governance of its citizens and subjects and (iv) its regulatory function of economic growth and development. However, over time, this otherwise neat definition of the state has been broadened. Charles Tilly (1985), for example, includes membership in a system of states and a capacity to extract resources for its own support as part of the definition of the state. For operational and analytical purposes, the idealized and properly functioning state would fulfill, in essence, six operational functions: it would guarantee collective an individual security; legitimate political decision-making processes subject to horizontal and vertical checks and balances;

institutionalized conflict mediation and enforcement of law; law-bound implementation of legislative decisions and effective taxation; distributive justice and the provision of basic social services; and basic infrastructural and legal conditions needed for the development of economic activities. First, it would guarantee collective and individual security. Second, legitimate political decision-making processes subject to horizontal and vertical checks and balances would characterize it. Third, institutionalized conflict mediation and enforcement of law would be central to its main mission and vision. Fourth, it would be so constituted as to optimize law-bound implementation of legislative decisions and effective taxation. Fifth, it would guarantee distributive justice and the provision of basic social services. Sixth and finally, it would ensure the existence of basic infrastructural and legal conditions needed for the development of economic activities (Jones et al., 2008).

On the other hand, state fragility is said to exist where the society is fractured, the economy is mismanaged and social service delivery is so weak that the social contract between the state and the people has been undermined or has broken down altogether. In such circumstances, society lacks cohesion; the state is prone to disintegration when threatened by a hostile and disciplined force. When states become fragile, so the argument goes, they retreat from basic public functions and sometimes from some parts of the country. In turn, local chiefs, mafia leaders or warlords fill the political vacuum, sometimes in collusion with corrupt officials. Failing effective domestic leadership, systemic terror, rape, property destruction, large scale population displacement and forced conscription of young people do in such circumstances tend to gradually become engrained in society. Similarly, with state fragility, legitimate enterprises lose space to operate, and the illegal pursuit of wealth becomes not only occasional grudging utilization of significant profit making opportunities but may also gradually become the culturally acceptable way of doing business. Given the incapacity of the state to deliver services and ensure security, loyalty to the regime withers and the locus of authority shifts to minority groups, indigenous movements, ethnic and religious leaders or even criminal syndicates that are able to deliver

security services to those who can pay, as has been the case in the North and South Kivu of the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the state becomes fragmented, institutions of democratic governance – like those of parliaments, judiciaries and political parties-crumble, and low-intensity or large-scale violence eventually ensures (Rackley, 2006).

Moreover, state fragility tends to have far-reaching negative implications far beyond the country's borders. It is estimated that once a country become fragile, the country that happens to be in its neighborhood, suffers from a 2 percent decline in its annual rate of growth. At the same time, two-thirds of the economic damage caused by a fragile state will invariably be borne by its neighbors rather than by itself (Chauvet and Collier, 2005). Above all, due to state fragility, a wide range of unlawful organizations and corrupt international business take advantage of modern communications technology and management methods to engage in illicit trade in agricultural, forestry and wildlife products as well as drugs, arms and weapons, diamonds, antiquities, stolen cars, toxic waste and counterfeit goods. Such fragile states have

arguably, become the weakest link of the international security system (Goodhand, 2004).

The performance-based aid allocation practice to poor countries changed rapidly after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001. From then onwards, fragile and failed states like those of Afghanistan, Liberia and Somalia were seen as the prime example of the intersection of state collapse and the incubation of international terrorism as well as the security issue of global narco-trafficking. Suddenly, the issue of fragile states rose to the national security centre stage of Western governments and military planning. Quickly too, it appeared as a priority security issue in the development agenda.[1] Concerns for state fragility have come to cover a broad spectrum of issues, embracing claims that fragile states present direct threats to Western national security on the assumption that terrorist networks can take advantage of the lack of government control in failed states. Other related "ills" include mass migration, organized crime, violent conflict, communicable diseases and environmental depletion. As would be expected, the 2002 Bush Administration

National Security Strategy fully acknowledged the threats emanating from fragile and failing states by noting that "...enemies in the past needed great armies. Now, shadow networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank" (Bush, 2002).[2] Similarly, in the European Security Strategy of 2003, fragile states are perceived as the principle constituents of international instability: state failure is one of the five strategic threats mentioned in that Strategy, and is considered partly responsible for two others, terrorism an organized crime.

As noted earlier, after many years of neo-liberal attempts to 'roll back' the state in developing countries, 'strong', 'responsive' and 'democratic' states are now seen as a prerequisite for both human and international security. Subsequently, two influential publications on **Human Security** (UNDP, 1994) and the **Responsibility to Protect** (Evans, 2008) linked the fulfillment of human rights, human security and human development directly to the capacity of the state. The second publication went even further. It proposed that if states do not live up to their responsibilities,

it was the task of the more responsible members of he international community to intervene, not only for the sake of protecting the beleaguered citizens, but also in order to serve wider international peace and security interests. From here onwards, it became almost a truism to view security and development as two sides of the same coin. The first reflects the view that in order to achieve sustainable security in the West, the pursuit of development in the developing world is now vital as a tool of foreign policy. The second appears to express the linkage from the opposite perspective: that economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries are themselves dependent on security. This new development paradigm marked the re-emergence of the development-security nexus in the post-Cold War period. Multilateral organizations and bilateral donors quickly released statements emphasizing a shift of priorities for development, with the need to combat international terrorism taking a centre stage (Duffield, 2001; 2003; Beall et al., 2006).[3]

The above euphoria with the concept notwithstanding, there are no authoritative definitions of what constitutes a fragile state,

nor is there an analytical distinction between different types and distinguishable processes of state fragility. In more recent years, 'fragile states' has become the catch-all phase for all underperforming state systems including 'failing', 'failed' 'quasi-states' or 'collapsed states'. Analytical confusion is further compounded by competing lists of fragile states, categories, measurements and indicators of fragile states that only add to a growing lack of real reconstruction direction among donors and policy makers alike. Equally confusing are interpretations of "failure" and "state functions". Which category of the state and state functions should be included or excluded in determining institutional strength and effectiveness? Ordinarily, the policy debate is framed by two assumptions: first, the idea that all states can be placed on a continuum of strength, based on their fulfillment of basic state functions; and second, the notion that there is a need to rethink engagement with the underperforming state category and identify new approaches to its appraisal. The idea of a continuum of state strength is reflected in the growing number of think tanks that have emerged to measure and rate states according to their respective performance

record. The resulting classifications and analyses have tended to reflect a belief that to achieve maximum stability, a regime in question must both carry out the tasks expected of a competent government, and must maintain legitimacy by being perceived as just, democratic and fair in the manner it carries those tasks. The second assumption is based on the claim that 'it is no longer possible to ignore distant and misgoverned parts of a world without borders, where chaos is a potential neighbor anywhere from Africa to Afghanistan' (Marshall and Goldstone, 2007, pp.13-14). It is considered important to engage such countries differently, in a new manner. In April, 2005 OECD/DAC put forward its **10 Principles of Good International Engagement in Fragile States.**[4] Strangely enough, those ten principles of engagement implicitly focus almost exclusively on the executive branch of government!

For the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), for its part, has adopted a concept of fragile state that does not restrict itself to conflict or immediate post-conflict countries. Non-conflict countries that are failing to ensure service entitlements

constitute fragile states too. Similar countries in conflict, like that of Uganda, but which are nonetheless providing an acceptable level of service entitlements to the majority of the population would not constitute fragile states under the DFID definition (DFID, 2008). The OECD definition is similar to that of the DFID, but tends to emphasize the lack of political commitment and insufficient capacity to develop and implement pro-poor policies. Finally, Canada's Country Indicators for Foreign Policy Project (CIFP) definition of fragile states extends beyond service entitlements to include those states that lack the functional authority to provide basic security within their borders, the institutional capacity to provide social needs for their population and/or the political legitimacy to effectively represent their citizens at home and abroad. The USAID approach somehow differentiates between "states in crisis" and "states that are vulnerable". Vulnerable states are defined as "unable or unwilling to adequately assure the provision of security and basic services to significant portions of their population and where the legitimacy of the government is in question". States in crisis, however, are defined as the "ones where the central government does not exert significant control over its own territory or is unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of its territory or is unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of the territory. It is in addition a state where the legitimacy of the government is weak or non-existent, and where violent conflict is a reality or a great risk (USAID, 2006).

On its part, the World Bank's (2004) list of Low Income Countries under Stress (LICUS) is based on a vast range of indicators captured by its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment instrument (CPIA).[5] The CPIA provides an economic approach in defining and understanding fragile states. It classifies and distinguishes different fragile situations in order to inform its policy and support interventions. Countries characterized as LICUS countries represent serious challenges in terms of poor capacity for service delivery, accountability and control of corruption; and these countries face the risks of political instability and conflict. On average, LICUS post poor results on key socio-economic indicators. The per capita incomes of these countries are only about half as high as

they are in other low-income countries. Child mortality is twice, and maternal mortality is three times as high. Roughly, one-third of the population is undernourished; and large segments of the population are plagued with malaria. *De facto,* the MDGs are beyond the reach of these fragile countries. As Table 1 below demonstrates, LICUS include countries experiencing (i) prolonged political crisis; (ii) post-conflict fast transitions; (iii) as well as countries that are gradual improvers; and (iv) countries that suffering from deteriorating governance. The appropriate interventions often prescribed for these countries by the World Bank are concerned with capacity, policy and conflict, and they emphasize in particular, the various phases of change, from deterioration and impasse to turn around and amelioration. In each of them, the Bank suggests a number of good practices which may be relevant in specific countries. In circumstances of deterioration and crisis, for example, these comprise support for the non-state actors,

Table 1: An Illustrative Fragile States Typology

	Deterioration	Post-conflict transition	Arrested development	Early recovery
Fragile state scenarios description	Capacity and/or willingness to perform core state functions in decline (economic and social indicators falling)	Accord, election opens window of opportunity for stakeholders to work with government on reform	Lack of willingness, failure to use authority for equitable or pro-poor outcomes	Willingness, efforts to improve performance, but uneven results
	High levels of corruption, self-enriching elites, and erosion of government legitimacy	High risk of return to conflict	May be anarchic or authoritarian; may have moderate or high capacity	May be post-conflict or not
	May have chronic low capacity, weak rule of law, territory beyond control, conflict/risk of conflict	High levels of unresolved grievance	Entrenched elites resist reforms; may have recurring cycles of instability	May lack strong leadership for reform, an capacity to implement, in government
		Capacity low, willingness may be high or low	Economic stagnation	Windows of opportunity for positive change
Civil society	Decreased cooperation, fragmentation, localized conflict	Polarized, initial peace-building. Limited social capital	Suppressed, little cooperation or resilience	Recovering, cooperation increasing
Examples	-Zimbabwe -Papua New Guinea	- Liberia - DR Congo	- Guinea - Fiji	- Timor-Leste - Sierra Leone

Source: Brinkerhoff (2007: Table 1: p.5).

focusing on their activities at the local level relating to service delivery and other related practices. Policies and reforms are the primary concern when circumstances gradually improve (World Bank, 2005).

However, almost invariably, most international development actors, including the OECD-DAC, have tended to focus on the combination of state building and peacebuilding activities. As will be pointed out later, most support for capacity development in country programs, for example, remained fragmented, designed and managed project by project. "This approach" according to one World Bank report, "makes it difficult to capture cross-sectoral issues and opportunities and to have the broad view needed to learn lessons across operations (World Bank, 2005: xiv). One would have advisedly expected that the complicated shades and variations of institutional weakness and strength suffered by fragile and post-conflict countries, combined with very different historical trajectories, counsel against the creation of a single package of aid and reform for one and every fragile state.

Analytically, however, the notion of "fragility" has won

prominence within the international development community for its more neutral connotation as well as its political relevance: implying a condition between a 'stable state' and a 'no state at all'. Moreover, different complexities of fragility conveniently provide different modalities of capacity development interventions. Nonetheless, all the above discussed fragility classifications and measurements have been criticized for a variety of reasons. Stepputat and Engberg-Pedersen (2008, p.25) have concluded that "even though they do not claim to measure exactly the same dimensions of state fragility and failure, a comparison between different instruments expose a troubling lack of convergence. Countries that rank high in one index may be absent from another, and even in regard to the same dimension". Moreover, the instruments tend to be general. Krause and Jutersonke (2007) observe that these instruments are not very precise when it comes to deciding on key intervention points and designing specific interventions. Jones and colleagues (2008) refer to fragility as "dimensions of fragility or facets of fragility rather than a classification of states as being fragile" because..."the nature of the state is dynamic and

bargains and relationships that affect comparative weakness, fragility, or failure are continually shifting and renewing". They reject the notion of states being fragile, but rather that they are in various phases of experiencing fragility.

Similarly, the discourse on fragile states has also become a veritable academic industry. The debate has come to involve a number of analytical frameworks, instruments and indexes that claim to measure different dimensions and indicators of state fragility and failure (Cammack, D. et al., 2006). Mainstream narratives tend to concentrate on endogenous explanations of the phenomenon, underlying internal causes of failure – failure because the state and society allegedly do not have the required capacities to exercise positive sovereignty; and because they are allegedly not capable of adopting the necessary reform either in the economic or institutional realm. They have conjured various definitions and typologies of fragile or failed states. Fragile states are arguably those that "cannot and will not safeguard minimum civil conditions for their population: domestic peace, law and order and good governance" (Jackson, 2000, p.296). They are those

where "the basic functions of the state are no longer performed" (Zartman, 1995, p.5); and "a state is failing when its government is losing physical control of its territory or lacks a monopoly of the legitimate use of force". Other symptoms of state failure include the erosion of authority to make collective decisions, an inability to provide reasonable public services, and the loss of capacity to interact in formal relations with other states as a full member of the international community" (Fund for Peace, 2005). By distinguishing between capacity and will, Patrick (2006) distinguishes sever typologies: (i) endemically weak states; (ii) resource-rich poor performers; (iii) deteriorating situations; (iv) prolonged political crisis; (v) post-conflict situations; (vi) brittle dictatorship; (vii) reform-minded governments struggling with unfavorable legacies. While much closer to the realities on the ground, it is difficult to recognize the specific criteria underlying this kind of typology.

To further underscore the endogenous explanation for fragility and failure, most mainstream discourses emphasize the inner characteristics of the local political and social elites as the main source of state failure. The

resulting governance failings are manifested by state repression, corruption and neo-patrimonial institutions and practices. Kofi Annan, (1998), former Secretary General of the United Nations, singles out the character of the African state and politics as "… a key source of conflict across the continent" He notes that power in Africa gets personalized in the "winner-takes-all" kind of politics... He notes "there is insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means to change or replace leadership, or lack of respect for human rights, political control becomes excessively important and stakes become dangerously high". Although he appreciates the role of history, the colonial legacy and the manner in which the continent is integrated in the global capitalist system, he nonetheless, concludes that after over three decades of independence "… the continent must look beyond its colonial past for the causes of current conflict. Today, more than ever, Africa must look at itself" (ibid. p. 4). Robert Rotberg (2003, p. 93) agrees with Kofi Annan's conclusion by observing that…"state failure is man-made,

not merely accidental nor – fundamentally – caused geographically, environmentally, or externally. Leadership decisions and leadership failures have destroyed states and continue to weaken fragile polities that operate on the cusp of failure". This lack of capacity, "is a result of internal bad governance" adds Doornbos (2006, p.2). In other words, there is no use blaming outsiders for Africa's misfortunes and troubles!

As would be expected, donor interventions to "restore", "rebuild", "create" or simply strengthen African institutions and societies assume away the role and consequences of its history and the nature of its unequal integration in the global capitalist system (Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1974). In fact, the main challenges of building democracy in Africa must be understood in the context of the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism, which have contributed to the entrenchment of administrative and institutional structures that are not conducive to the promotion of sustainable development and democracy building. The colonial boundaries of African nations produced complex nation-states that were multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural and multi-religious. In

addition, the colonial powers left many African states with a system of authoritarian values and norms that weaken public administration and the education systems – both essential for effective democracy building. Nonetheless, as some countries have shown, this past is not an insurmountable impediment to democracy building, but the structural and historical roots of Africa's weakness and fragility should be highlighted in every discussion that seeks to fully appreciate the complexities of state building, stability and development particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

As some critical observers have concluded, much of the conclusions generated by post-Cold War peacebuilding and capacity development theory and practice are single-mindedly driven by the liberal internationalist paradigm. Its underlying ideology, policy and institutional designs are broadly informed by faith in the peace-producing power of the "neo-liberal paradigm". The thesis is firmly premised on the assumption that the surest foundation of peace, both within and between states, is a functioning market democracy, that is, a liberal democratic polity and market-oriented economic institutions. Regardless of local social practices, political

traditions and cultural expectations, it is assumed that the institutionalization of liberal modes of governance should be promoted as the only policy strategy to ensure the protection of human rights and the promotion of the rule of law. The liberal modes of governance are also assumed the ones to be relied on in managing conflicts over power, resources and identity in divided societies such as those in the sub-Saharan Africa. This paradigm is further underpinned by claims that democracies having similar values and institutions are more reliable trading partners and are less inclined to start war or to threaten each other's security as well as being probable allies in the case of conflict. As democracy spreads, so the argument goes, democratic states form a separate "zone of peace" with each other, and the zones of peace will also spread until one day, they will cover the globe (Doyle, 1986).

Since the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the demise of global communism, a new-liberal-democratic world view has become virtually hegemonic. It encapsulates a pre-packaged development solution that is taken as a given, no longer a subject for debate, rethinking or

resolution. Differently stated, it is an ideology. It engenders the parameters of domestic development policy. Such development theory, policy discourse and institutional designs have been largely derived from a single and virtually unchallenged source of intellectual inspiration. The liberal peace framework provides a set of broad ideas that define, elaborate and justify the contemporary capitalist order and the ways in which changes can "legitimately" take place within that order. The theory and resulting policy praxes have continually been paraded as a panacea for a broad range of social ills, from fragility to poverty, famine, corruption, and even environmental destruction. For this purpose, we quote Larry Diamond, one of the leading ideologues on the subject *in extenso:*

The experience of this century offers important lessons. Countries that govern themselves in a truly democratic fashion do not go to war with each other. They do not aggress against their neighbors to aggrandize themselves or glorify their leaders. Democratic governments do not ethnically "cleanse" their own populations, and they are much less likely to face ethnic insurgency. Democracies do not sponsor terrorism against one another. They do not build weapons of mass destruction to use or to threaten one another. Democratic countries form more reliable, open and enduring trading partnerships. In the long run, they offer better and more stable climates for investment. They are more environmentally responsible because they must answer to their citizens, who organize to protest the destruction of their environments. They are better bets to honor international treaties since they value legal obligations and because their openness makes it much more difficult to secretly breach agreements. Precisely because they respect competition, civil liberties, property rights, and the rule of law, within their borders, democracies are the only reliable foundation on which a new world order of international security and prosperity can be built (Diamond, 1995, pp.6-7).

As noted above, while still perceived as the dominant reconstruction development model, successful development stories of liberal peace experiments in Africa are virtually rare. There

is still little consensus on the adequate state, the structure of the state and economy to be built. This only proves that the whole approach is fatally flawed; and as Bjorn Hettne and Fredrik Soderbaum (2005) have concluded "it is too much focused on short-sighted 'fire brigade' programs". Other leading scholarly critics and practitioners maintain that the standard package proscribing liberal peace is unrealistic, internally contradictory and it is more likely to exacerbate fragility and generate new conflicts than sustain peace. The political and economic competition that it unleashes in highly fragile environments, for example, tends to exacerbate social exclusion, inequality, criminality and weak governance, and abundantly risks the renewal of violence (Collier et al. 2003; Paris and Sisk, 2009; Pugh, 2005; Guttal, 2005; and Suhrke, 2007). Not surprisingly, most of those failed social engineering experiments in Africa have come to rigidly involve transplanting Western models of social, political and economic organizations into war-shattered states in order, presumably, to manage conflicts (Richmond, 2004). Similarly, Vivinne Jabril has succinctly observed that, "the aim is not less than to reconstitute polities through the transformation of political cultures into modern, self-disciplining, and ultimately, self-governing entities that inevitably transcend ethnic or religious fragmentation and violence. The trajectory is punishment, pacification, discipline and ultimately liberal democratic self-mastering" (Jabril, 2007, p.124). Mark Duffield (2001, p.11) goes even further to contend that the liberal peace paradigm "seeks to transform the dysfunctional and war-affected societies that it encounters on its borders into cooperative, representative and especially, stable societies". Arguably, the clarion call for a paradigm shift increasingly became louder and even more irresistible.

DEMYSTIFYING STATE FRAGILITY

Critical analysts tend to agree that a full resolution of fragility and war-related crises in Africa would neither be effective nor lasting unless all factors and all forces standing as impediments to the realization of peace, security and development were fully and comprehensively addressed. This 'political economy' framework of fragility includes: an understanding of the uniqueness of each fragility context, in terms of its own

particular socio-economic and political history, the root causes and immediate consequences of the fragility or conflict, and the specific configuration of the actors and their interests, the capacity of the key change agents, and, equally vitally, addressing the nature of the regional and international environments within which the envisaged transformation from fragility or war to peace is expected to take place (Sen, 2008; Woodward, 2002; Rugumamu, 2009). Such a comprehensive understanding informs what kinds of policy and institutional reforms to undertake, actors to be engaged, and the relative time for engagement. Predictably, the processes of capacity development for state building and reconstruction are not simply a list of activities to be undertaken, with matrices of actors, methods and impacts. What kind of a state to be built, nature of public goods to be delivered, and, above all, what state-society relations need to be nurtured should inform the types of capacity development intervention activities to be supported, in what sequence and for how long? Unlike the seemingly ideological neutrality of relief operations, the tasks of capacity development are as openly political as development is, carrying with

them certain assumptions about the primacy of particular norms, values and institutions.

As pointed out above, the liberal peace model has become the blueprint for policy and institutional design of how to move from conflict societies to peace and from shattered economies to dynamic self-sustaining national economies. Such a narrative raises a number of theoretical, policy and practical questions. Foremost among these is the fact that most fragile and post-conflict countries particularly those in Africa, are expected to undertake several transitions at the same time: from war to peace; from authoritarianism to liberal democracy; from quasi-command economies to free markets and from relief to development. The liberal peace perspective does not explicitly articulate a comprehensive and integrated policy approach that links conflict resolution to sustainable peace and development. Nor does this "all-size-fit-all" construct provide a practical and relevant guide on how to address the root causes of fragility and conflict, war consequences, and competing actor interests in different sets of environments. Not surprisingly again, most fragile and post-conflict environments in Africa

continue to be defined by weak institutions, inter-group tensions and systematic discrimination against the outer-groups, widespread insecurity arising from the presence of armed groups, grinding poverty for the majority, poor provision of public goods and a profound disconnect between the government and its people. The peace that prevails and endures is often prefixed with terms attesting to its compromised quality: 'brittle', 'fragile' 'turbulent' 'nervous' and so on. Such less than impressive performance has contributed to various arguments favouring major scaling back of international capacity development efforts in order to give war-torn and fragile societies the necessary political space to pursue their autonomous recovery strategies (Weinstein, 2005; Kaplan, 2008; Englebert and Tull, 2008). The Somalia experience deserves a special attention.

Somalia and the secessionist territory of Somaliland offer one of the best contrasts between state building using imported institutional pillars and state building using indigenous ones. The international community has tried no fewer than fifteen times since the dissolution of the Somali state in 1991 to rebuild it in a top-down fashion and fifteen times it has failed. Isolated from political realities within the country, aid agencies and multilateral organizations have repeatedly misread the country's political dynamics and forced upon it what Ken Menkhaus describes as "...unimaginative, non-strategic, template-driven policy responses with little relevance to the Somali context and little input from Somali voices" (Menkhaus, 2008, p.9). As a result, "Somali seeking to extricate their country from this deadly and protracted crisis have to do so in spite of, not because of, involvement by the international community". In contrast, Somaliland, which declared independence from Somalia in 1991, has built its state institutions by adapting a bottom-up approach that takes advantage of long-standing and widely accepted clan structures. It has established basic law and order, a bicameral parliament consisting of a House of Elders and a House of Representatives and has held timely and regular elections since 1993. Given the fact that it has been offered little external help, Somaliland has been forced to develop on the basis of its own resources, capacity and institutions. Curiously enough, it remains diplomatically unrecognized. This

does not suggest that conventional, Western political models may be considered irrelevant in the African contexts. It does mean, however, that those models need to be carefully studied, distilled and adapted to accommodate indigenous governance models, patterns of behaviour, needs, realities and capacities (Menkhaus, 2006; Ottaway, 2002; Coyne, 2006; Hagmann and Hoehne, 2009).

The World Bank's more recent evaluations have admitted that the neo-liberal model of development and governance recommended for fragile states has turned out to be more problematic than earlier anticipated. In its 2005, the Bank study concluded that even with "good" policy reforms, debt relief, continued high levels of official development assistance, promising developments in governance, and a relatively supportive external climate, no widespread and definitive take-off has so far been witnessed in Africa. The Bank aptly suggests that "reforms need to go beyond the generation of efficiency gains to promote growth" since economic growth also "entails structural transformation, diversification of production, change, risk-taking by producers, correction of both government

and market failures and changes in policies and institutions". The Bank further recognized that "no country (in Africa) has achieved sustained growth to transform its economy and pull its neighbors along" (World Bank, 2005, pp.8, 10, 11). What might have gone terribly wrong? Is it a flawed theory, poor policy implementation or even both? In the following section, a review is made of the theory and policy and capacity development interventions in Africa.

FLAWS OF THE LIBERAL PEACE MODEL

First and foremost, the mainstream discourse of the root causes of Africa's fragility and conflict is partial at best and misleading at worst. The larger global environment within which fragile states are historically located remains virtually unproblematized. It ignores the role of colonial history, unequal integration in the global capitalist system and past and current donor-supported policies and practices that have immensely contributed to contemporary situations of state fragility in the first place. Yash Tandon (2000, p.18) observes that "...this is so because of its stake in the preservation of the existing system, which leads the analysis to

become ideological". Other critics have even suggested that the whole concept of fragility/ failed states is fundamentally flawed, premised on false understanding of the past as well a having strong ideological basis. The precise ways in which the internal and external determinants of fragility interact and coalesce in prompting the processes leading to state fragility and collapse should inform any serious analysis. Worse still, the conventional narrative ignores the various types of empirical statehood that exist on the group, it conflates the absence of a central government with anarchy, it creates an unhelpful distinction between 'accomplished' and 'failed' states, and it is guided by a teleological belief in the convergence of all nation-states (Fayyad, 2008; Hagmann and Hoehne, 2009). It is to these critical questions that the discussion now turns.

The notion of the state assumed by the 'failed/fragile state' discourse is abstracted from the historical development of particular forms of state, and isolated from the economy and the social relations which constitute society. This reifies the surface appearances of formal political institutions and functions, and falsely assumes the universality of distinct political forms specific to capitalist society. Despite its relative brevity, colonial rule had a long-lasting impact on Africa's independent state as it launched radical new ideas of territoriality and control. Yet, the transfer of modern state institutions proved extremely shallow. The British indirect rule system, for example, was a common feature of all colonial administrations, relying on intermediary local elites to compensate for the thinly spread colonial apparatus. Although colonialism and decolonization represented early initiatives of state-building, they reflect a transfer of modern state institutions in all but theory. In short, the colonial legacy is one of weak, inappropriate institutions and a profoundly fragmented political identity. Together these two structural problems preclude the formation of a cohesive population and prevent the incorporation of indigenous institutions and capacities into formal state structures. These countries were obliged to use alien state systems that could work only if every member of their heterogeneous societies learned and embraced the same alien culture, complete with its foreign language, religion, symbols of identity, laws and ways of working together. Yet, as noted

above, the formal mechanisms of these state systems were and remain far too weak to compel such cultural re-orientation. Lisa Anderson (2004) insightfully concluded that most of the contemporary fragile/failed states failed before they were even formed. The DRC, for example, has never possessed a monopoly on coercion, nor has it ever enjoyed a rule of law or an effective bureaucracy. In such situations, as Englebert and Tull (2008, p.112) have argued, "rebuilding", resuscitating" or "reestablishing" state institutions are misleading as they imply the prior existence of effective public institutions waiting to re-emerge". The tail seems to be wagging the dog!

The post-colonial state building in Africa has also witnessed repeated unsuccessful donor attempts to mould the continent's institutions to Western templates. State building and capacity development are often seen as technocratic exercises in which fragile countries import and institutionalize inflexible formulae developed in distant capitals. Donors and Western scholars seem to agree that fragile and collapsed states will not emerge from weak policies, weak institutions and weak governance on their own.

They also accept the proposition that intervention, in the form of mediation, peacebuilding and statebuilding is necessary, if not the key, instrument in reversing the political and economic decline of poorly governed states. Finally, donors assume that local institutions are either inappropriate for development, or they have been badly weakened by violent conflict and disorder. Against this formulation Pureza (2006), Kaplan (2008) as well as Fayyad (2008) have all suggested that fragile state institutions in Africa might entirely be a product of the neo-liberal doctrine that has dominated the development process over the past four decades. They contend that states have become fragile or failed due to the minimalization of their role as part of the neo-liberal policies and cite structural adjustment polices and marginalization of democratic institutions as the root cause. The "rolling back of the state", in the economy has been manifested in severely downsizing the public service, cutting state budgets, privatizing public enterprises, and scaling down public services. It has also caused a sea change in the role of the state relative to both local and national governance on the one hand, and multilateral institutions and international

development agencies on the other. African states were virtually under siege, with little leeway to devise policies that could consolidate their political power base, promote national unity or simply protect the economic interests of the poor and disadvantaged.

The implementation of the structural adjustment policies and programs in Africa tended to erode and undermine the sovereignty and moral authority of the African state, however broadly defined. These policies were so heavily packaged that they tended to foreclose any options for modification either to preserve national interests or provide critical goods and services that private actors were unwilling or unable to provide. Deep cuts in the state provision of employment and social services, for example, further eroded the social base and legitimacy of most African states and exposed them to violent political contestation. Further and deeper cuts in defense expenditures eroded the limited state capacity to provide basic security to citizens and free them from fear (Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996; Mkandawire and Saludo, 1999). To the above-noted agenda, Doornbos (2006, p.6) adds other forms of capacity and legitimacy erosion of the

African state that were directly provoked by the donor community. These include significant diversion of aid funds via non-governmental organizations, the formation of donor coordination consortia and a donor specialization in selected sectors involving a devaluation of the policy roles of ministries, and a preference for working with autonomous non-bureaucratic corporate bodies. A combination of this neo-liberal standard reduction of the social and economic capacities of states and the increased set of requirements by the donor community to aid-recipient governments should be considered as one of the major explanations of state failure in Africa.

Moreover, the premises of the liberal peace model tend to be influenced by the rich counties' concerns about the consequences of political disorder in poor developing countries on their own security and stability rather than by the altruistic desire to promote genuine peace and development for poor countries. The threats of catastrophic terrorism using weapons of mass destruction, the flood of refugees, the growth of drug smuggling networks and the spread of deadly disease fit into this category. What this analysis

tends to completely suppress, and indeed out of sheer self-interest rather than intellectual incuriosity, is to address the other side of the equation: their collective security is equally threatened by the obscene structural inequality in power and wealth between the rich and poor countries of the world that silently kills and maims the poor people by millions The rich and powerful continue getting richer and more powerful while the weak and the poor get continuously weaker, poorer and more alienated (Galtung, 1969). The 2006 Helsinki-based World Institute of Development Economics Research of the United Nations University reports that the richest one percent of adults alone owned 40 percent of the global assets in the year 2000, and that the richest 10 percent of adults alone accounted for 85 percent of the world's total. It also notes that 90 percent of the world's wealth is concentrated in North America, Europe and high-income Asian Pacific countries (WIDER, 2006). Structural inequalities tend to exacerbate fragility by accentuating exploitation, mass hunger, desperate poverty and unjust social, political and economic systems that endanger global peace and security. Sustainable state building

and peacebuilding in fragile environments would arguably be possible if the root causes of structural violence are placed squarely on the global development agenda.

At a practical level, the liberal peace model has a tendency of privileging a case-by-case peacebuilding and reconstruction frame, and of a very short-term scope of engagement.[6] Admittedly, most intra-state conflicts in Africa are inter-linked within regional conflict systems, for example the Great Lakes, the Nile Basin or the Mano River. Surprisingly, the bulk of traditional official development assistance to Africa remains predominantly country-specific. Only a small percentage of resources tend to be devoted to promoting regional peacebuilding, disarmament, demobilization and re-integration of ex-combatants. Due to inextricable cross-border dynamics – cross-border ethnic links, economic ties, and war economies – most pacification and reconstruction efforts for the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi post-conflict reconstruction, for example, should have had a sub-regional coverage. At the very outset, regional cooperation and confidence building measures would have been encouraged in order

to facilitate a culture of good neighborly relations to evolve and deepen. Earlier studies show that the fixation of the liberal peace model on one country denied itself the invaluable opportunity to exploit synergies with neighboring systems to ensure coherence across regional conflict systems. Besides confidence building, a multi-country approach tends to promote donor coordination and harmonization, knowledge sharing, special projects and resource allocation (World Bank and UNDP, 2001; World Bank, 2000).

There is also a considerable degree of vagueness about the length of donors' commitment to capacity development in fragile environments. The time necessary to enable a post-conflict state to do without outside support remains unsettled. Each of the actors has a different take of what kind of institutions should be built, what activities constitute state and society-building and how long it should take. The current bureaucratic organizational structures, hierarchical cultures, short-term evaluation criteria and the risk-averse financing systems of most international agencies tend to be at variance with the real needs of complex post-conflict

peacebuilding reconstruction systems in Africa. Each participating agency has clearly defined mandates, priorities, and a sequencing of activities as well as independent evaluation and reporting systems, which tend to disconnect them from a long-term post-conflict capacity building and reconstruction effort. Whereas the O.E.C.D's **Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States** mentions that capacity development in core institutions would normally require an engagement of at least ten years, bilateral donors are often vague on the subject. In fact, few donor countries are willing to sign up for more than a few years of capacity building in a given country. As has been proposed by some experts, a lengthy and well resourced engagement is critical to the creation and maturation of institutions necessary to prevent a rollback into state failure. Similarly, a greater clarity on the criteria for donor exit would open up new objective criteria for interventions to be undertaken and in what sequence. Two different degrees of engagement with fragile states have emerged, the prominent cases and the rest of other recipient group. The prominent cases that neatly coincide with strategic post-conflict

states – Iraq and Afghanistan - ; receive much more aid per capita and longer-term commitments than any other member of the recipient group. On the other hand, conditionality and possibly other obscure criteria of selection have once again created "aid orphans" among fragile/states states. These include, for example, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Chand and Coffman, 2008; Bellamy and Williams, 2004; and Weinstein, 2005).

Besides the inadequacy and irrelevance of the liberal peace model, at the core of poor capacity building performance in Africa is the lack of the necessary political will by external partners to invest a substantial amount of political and financial resources.[7] Much too often, there has been a lack of sustained political attention by the Security Council on countries perceived to be of low strategic import. The early post-Cold War peacekeeping missions in Rwanda and Sudan failed to prevent or effectively respond to genocidal mass murders. At the same time, major powers, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, have shown political willingness to commit their own troops as well as massive funds to enforcement operations even without the Security Council's authorization in Europe and the Middle East. Yet these powers have generally refused to send troops with adequate mandate to end brutal conflicts and develop requisite institutional capacities in Africa (Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2003, p.11; Rugumamu, 2005, p.23). Such double standards by the major powers in the Security Council have sometimes given rise to occasional perceptions of the marginalization and exclusion of Africa with respect to the management of international peace and security.

At noted already, the incongruent dimensions of capacity development and reconstructions are inextricably interlinked and interdependent. Multiple actors can only achieve system-wide impact when deliberately coordinated and monitored by synchronizing different mandates, roles and activities of various stakeholders and actors. As in the oft cited analogy, the intertwined strands of a piece of rope are stronger than the individual strands themselves. However, the frequent donor role duplications, parallel chains of command, and fights over allocation of funds have had a noticeable toll on the efficiency

and effectiveness of post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in war-torn African countries. The net benefits of donor and relief agency specialization are rarely balanced with the paramount need for an integrated and coherent effort. The design and implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships is definitely crucial. As will be discussed below, the Paris Principles of Aid Effectiveness demand cooperation and coordination among external actors, cooperation and coordination among internal actors and cooperation and coordination between the internal and external actors. Concerted efforts to resolve this bottleneck have remained slow and indeed hesitant.

To be sure, African leaders have had their fair share of the blame for creating and sustaining fragile environments. Inspired by rapid economic development and political stability in the former Soviet Union, the earliest African nationalist leaders embarked on a project of strengthening the state and its role in the economy and society. Competitive politics and distributive justice, it was claimed, were luxuries that poor countries could ill-afford. Rapid nation-building and economic growth called for the concentration of power, not its dissipation. The building and consolidation of nationhood required the elimination of every opportunity for fissiparous tendencies to find expression. At an operational level, state-building included the limitation of popular participation in decision-making, heavy centralization of political and economic power in the state as well as centrally controlled political party activities. As a result, the doctrine of a single party as a vanguard for African progress gradually but discernibly took root in most countries on the continent. It is not surprising, therefore, that independent civil society organizations such as trade unions and youth organizations, women's and students' organizations that had supported nationalist struggles, were either banned or turned into affiliates of state ruling parties. This misguided state-building strategy, bankrolled by donor support, went a long way toward sowing seeds of broad-based insecurity, corruption, and erosion of institutional and organizational capacity of the state and legitimacy in most of Africa (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982; and Kaplan, 2008). Parliaments in Africa, as will be demonstrated below, were one of the major victims of marginalization by the

executive branch of government and by multilateral and bilateral agencies. Military governments in Africa repeatedly dissolved parliaments. Also they served as mere rubber stamps in one-party systems, they were by-passed in the policy management by donor agencies or simply starved of the basic resources in fragile multi-party state systems.[8] The following section argues that although the role of parliament in the democratization process in Africa has begun to receive a well-deserved national and international attention, the resulting capacity development interventions have tended to be usually slow, hesitant and often, disjointed.

PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN FRAGILE ENVIRONMENTS

What parliaments can do as one of the key national governance institutions depends squarely on how much power, resources and influence they wield or can develop. Of course, all this may not be realistic in fragile environments. In such cases, a parliament may no longer exist or, if one is still in place, it may be seriously wakened and limited in its capacity to respond to the challenges of the moment. Parliaments are

generally weakened and marginalized. Firstly, parliaments in politically fragile or post-conflict environments may be in weak positions, where they are compromised by the executive and constrained by constitutions which may fail to provide for parliamentary independence. Secondly, and as pointed out above, parliaments in most of these weakened political systems are often by-passed in policymaking processes by bilateral and multilateral donors who tend to deal with the executive rather than the legislature.[9] Thirdly, due to these structural weaknesses, parliaments may be neither able to control the legislative agenda, responsibly represent the interests of their constituencies, nor hold the executive accountable. Reflecting on the role of African parliaments, the 2005 African Governance report concluded that "in terms of enacting laws, debating national issues, checking the activities of the government and in general promoting the welfare of the people, these duties and obligation are rarely performed efficiently and effectively" (UNECA, 2005, p.127).

As referred to earlier, the early parliamentary capacity development interventions tended to underestimate the precariousness of Africa's 'fragile environments'.

Some of post-independence parliaments in Africa, such as Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, had emerged from violent conflict situations, and were often allocated paltry resources from national budgets. Worse still, their respective legislative agendas were usually extensive, sometimes overwhelming, raging from contested constitutions, demobilization of former combatants to re-integrating refugees and internally displaced persons. Moreover, newly constituted parliaments often had virtually no legislative experience, trained staff, adequate information and materials to serve their members effectively. In addition, many of the elected MPs were not accustomed to working in multiparty environments, and there was often an increasing demand, particularly in post-conflict environments, for ensuring greater participation of women, not only in parliamentary processes but also in the wider political environment. Not surprisingly, the overwhelmed parliaments tended to undermine the governance project in several important ways. They poorly represented the needs of individuals and groups in society. They also permitted undue concentration of power in the executive, militaries, or other less popularly accountable groups. Ultimately, the resulting poor oversight record also tended to encourage poor performance, rampant corruption and greed, and by extension, diminished public trust in parliamentary institutions. Viewed retrospectively, one of the major challenges that confronted democratic governance in fragile African environments was how to effectively constrain the executive's power and creatively balance its discretionary authority without unduly diluting its ability to fulfil its constitutional obligations (Hudson and Wren, 2007). All these challenges called for an urgent institutional capacity development, considering the increasing recognition of the central role that parliaments are expected to play in reinforcing democratic governance.

As the promotion of democracy and human rights has become one of the new central features of the post-Cold War international aid regime, most African parliaments, regardless of the quality of their respective institutions, have begun to enjoy increased and generous financial, infrastructural and technical donor support for "good governance." Some of the major donors have included bilateral development

agencies such as the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the German GTZ, and the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), the UK's Department for International Development, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among others. African parliaments have also received enhanced capacity building support from multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the European Commission, and the World Bank. Furthermore, capacity development support for governance has come from Parliamentary Networks and Institutes from the global north. These include the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Union of African Parliaments (UAP), the Joint EU-ACP Parliament, and the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) and the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC). Other partners have included political

party foundations such as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, as well as the Netherlands' Institute for Multi-Party Democracy and the National Institute for International Affairs, among others. Above all, it is one of core roles of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) to build the capacity of Africa's national and sub-regional parliaments. Various arguments have been advanced to explain the recent donors' enthusiasm with parliamentary capacity development.

First and foremost, it is generally accepted that popularly elected parliaments particularly in fragile environments are likely to play key roles in ensuring that the values of democracy are restored, firmly rooted and preserved. In their legislative function, they are expected to contribute to developing fair and equitable laws that promote fragile peace, stability and development. Specific responsibilities in this area may vary from one fragile nation to another, but a parliament that lacks the ability to amend or assert control over the passage of relevant legislations may be extremely limited in its capacity to protect the interests of the weak and vulnerable groups from the

narrow self-interests of capricious politicians. Ordinarily, it is the role of parliament to review, deliberate, revise and approve or disapprove the bills brought before it. Strengthening the capacity of parliaments to exercise independent authority in the legislative process can arguably contribute enormously to reducing abuses of power and ensuring that the basic rights of citizens are respected and upheld.

Secondly, the growing donors' enthusiasm parliamentary capacity development is to strengthen the oversight function. Although the executive branch usually proposes annual budgets, parliament should have the capacity to evaluate and, where necessary, amend budget proposals to ensure that the funding reflects the highest priorities of post-conflict imperatives of peace building, institution building and promotes broad-based development of the country and its citizens. By developing and strengthening parliamentary capacity to approve and/or disapprove budgets and to monitor effective use of approved funds are considered worthy political causes for donor investments in strengthening the authority of parliament in fragile environments in Africa (IPU, 2006).

Thirdly and finally, as the primary representative of the citizenry, parliamentary bodies in fragile environments must have a continuous communication with the public, promote dialogue on critical national development issues, and provide an understanding of parliamentary actions. Routine and effective communication with previously fractured societies and institutions tends to build confidence and trust in parliament and can even go a long way in helping to counter the public distrust toward government, in general, and parliament, in particular. It is therefore argued that by creating an environment where citizens develop trust in their elected officials and their governing institutions, previously divided societies are likely to promote a shared commitment to democratic values and promote sustainable peace and stability (IPU, 2006; Power, 2009).

SCORING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

It is against this backdrop that one witnesses a considerable upsurge in the parliamentary capacity development activities in Africa's fragile environments. They have tended to range from projects with a narrow focus,

short time-frame and small budgets, to projects which encompass multiple aspects of political governance, over a period of several years, and with a budget of tens of millions of dollars. Some aid organizations focus on the MPs themselves, their skills, their understanding of parliament's role and parliamentary procedures, and their expertise on specific issues such as poverty reduction, human rights or gender. Other organizations and projects focus on fragile parliaments as institutions, pursuing institutional reforms, or having a more specific focus on enhancing the effectiveness of committees such as public accounts committees. Still other organizations and projects pursue their parliamentary strengthening work as part of their work on deepening democratic institution and practices. In the latter instances, capacity building projects are likely to address other aspects of the political system – parties and electoral systems – as well as parliaments themselves. Additionally, some parliamentary capacity development projects in Africa are carried out by organizations working in partnerships. The quartet of the World Bank Institute, Canadian Parliamentary Centre, the UNDP and the National Democratic

Institute for International Affairs has been at the core of the field. They work in partnerships, in part, because each organization is able to provide different skills, expertise, experience and access; and in part because such a modality tends to diffuse what might be considered 'erosion of national sovereignty' by a single donor agency (Hudson and Wren, 2007, p.27; Foster and Leavy, 2001, p.5).

The recent experiences of parliamentary support for post-genocide Rwanda provide some excellent lessons in capacity development in fragile environments. To begin with, it would difficult to overestimate the impact of war and genocide on the Rwandan state, the economy and society. About a tenth of the population was killed, millions displaced, and a total breakdown of institutions, systems and structures. The post-conflict military government led by General Paul Kagame faced with multiple challenges raging from ethnic fragmentation, regular rebel military attacks from across borders in the DRC to a virtually collapsed economy that threatened to trap the country into a permanent spiral of violent conflicts. Since then, Rwandans have gone through painful challenges of rebuilding

the whole governance infrastructure. Following the Arusha Peace Accord earlier signed in 1993, a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) was established in Rwanda in July 1994, which had a mandate until 2003 when the new Constitution was finalized and elections held. Most of the parliamentary staff members were limited in their duties to primarily administrative roles. There were no staff members, for example, who had specialized duties in research, legal drafting or budget analysis. Equally troubling, the MPs had limited access to significant independent information aside from what was presented by the Ministries. The Parliament's ability to shape an independent agenda was gravely limited by the lack of member bills passed and limited duration for consideration of the state budget. In 2002, for example, the budget deliberation period was only twenty four days (USAID, 2005: p.8). Indeed, it would be a gross understatement to claim that the post-genocide Rwanda was simply a fragile environment.

Responding to a request from the TNA for capacity building assistance, the USAID commissioned the State University of New York (SUNY) to conduct a legislative capacity needs assessment in 1999. Following the recommendations of this report, USAID contracted SUNY and ARD, a USA-based private company, to provide a long-term technical assistance to support the institutional development of the Assembly, covering the period from November 2000 to September 2003. This project laid an important foundation for the democratically elected bicameral Parliament, consisting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Both Chambers experienced an influx of many new MPs, many of whom had no legislative experience; a large increase in the number of women legislatures; a new leadership in the Chamber of Deputies; former refugees from Uganda and Tanzania who did not speak French, and the many institutional changes resulting from the new Constitution, including legislative autonomy and a shift to a bicameral Parliament (Government of Rwanda, 2008).

The USAID legislative assistance to the post-genocide Rwandan parliament had a very limited scope. The needs assessment focused on the development of institutional infrastructure, rather than on broader institutional and systemic causes

of fragility. This, however, would be partly understandable. The first stages of rebuilding a parliamentary institution in Rwanda lay in ensuring that it had rudimentary infrastructure and personnel as well as basic structures to function properly. Understandably, support resources were largely concentrated on the provision of technical assistance support, equipment and the training of MPs and parliamentary staffers. Little attention was paid to the larger political environment within which capacity development was taking place. Relatedly, the capacity delivery processes decidedly took four conventional approaches: (i) to fully utilize the technical expertise of the project staff, including the Chief of Party and the Project Director; (ii) to favour the utilization and development of local Rwandan capacity wherever it was possible (and wherever not practical, involve Rwandan counterparts working with expatriate trainers); (iii) to utilize African consultants when local capacity was inadequate; and (v) to utilize US nationals and other international technical assistance where such assistance was deemed necessary. The expatriate consultants had dual roles: direct provision of intensive training and working with, local counterpart trainees (USAID, 2005: p. 5).

It is also important to emphasize that the early American-supported capacity development project demonstrated exemplary commitment in collaborating with other donors and international partners in order to leverage USAID assistance in a fragile environment. Specific examples included two human resource activities with the Dutch non-governmental organization, SNV, and collaboration with UNDESA, which had funds to provide IT development to parliament. The project also worked with the UNDP parliament project to implement the new MPs orientation training. The Rwandan Parliament Support Project worked collaboratively with the USAID-partner, CARE on civil society issues; and with other USAID partner, Internews, which videotaped the Women's MP practice communication skills sessions and also showed its film, Trocare in promoting civil society visits to the Parliament. Indeed, these capacity development practices are commendable. Nonetheless, as the final project report succinctly concluded, "in the absence of a comprehensive parliamentary strategic plan in Rwanda, ...there continued to be *ad hoc* requests from Parliament and we tried to respond as best

we could consistent with the project goals and contract" (USAID, 2005: p. 6).

Besides the USAID capacity interventions in the post-genocide Rwanda, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) also provided early parliamentary capacity strengthening support. Based on an assessment mission facilitated by the UNDP country office in Rwanda, project assistance was developed and implemented in cooperation with the UNDP. It focussed on three main objectives: capacity development for the Committee for National Unity and Human Rights; support for the Forum of Rwandan Female Parliamentarians; and the establishment of a documentation centre containing human rights and gender information. The target beneficiaries were the members of the National Unity and Human Rights and the Forum of the Rwandan Female Parliamentarians. According to the final project evaluation report, awareness of and sensitivity to gender and human rights issues improved considerably in the parliament as well as in the Rwandan society in general. Thanks to the IPU and the parliament's gender-sensitive interventions, the government swiftly sought to address women's concerns and gender implications in its policy planning. Rwanda is now a signatory to various international instruments that uphold women's rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Platform for Action adopted at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Similarly, a number of amendments, laws and questions in plenary that reflected human rights and gender concerns are said to have increased significantly. Notably, some of the laws that were subsequently amended include the gender-sensitive Public Services Act and the Marriage Act. Above all, by prudently applying a constitutional guarantee, a quota system and innovative electoral structures, Rwanda phenomenally increased women political participation. With an 80-person Chamber of Deputies, the Rwandan women won 48.8 percent of the seats during the October 2003 elections (Powley, 2008).

As the institutional and organizational capacity of Rwandan parliament gradually deepened, it became increasingly important

to build the requisite parliamentary culture where MPs and parliamentary staffers as well as international partners begun to appreciate and nurture democratic norms of inclusiveness, ownership, and participatory development. In pure political terms, the empowered parliamentary leadership assumed the driver's seat in the subsequent capacity building initiatives. Slowly but inexorably, the Rwandan parliament reconfigured old practices of approaching capacity development. With the financial and technical support from the UNDP, it developed an ambitious Five-Year Strategic Development Plan (2006-2010). The immediate objective of the Plan was to provide a rigorous analysis of the historical, current and urgent development needs of parliament, and prioritize them for action. The longer-term objective was to embed strategic planning processes and management systems into Parliament's day-to-day planning and programming.

The Strategic Development Plan had six specific development orientations. They included improving the legislative process; strengthening oversight; effective supervision of the fundamental principles of the Constitution; improving communication with all

key national institutions of governance and actors, promoting parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue; and, developing the administrative capacity of parliament, especially in relation to the use of ICT. At a detailed operational level, under each of those six headings, there are specific objectives, activities and performance indictors. In short, the Strategic Development Plan of the Rwandan parliament set brand new norms and standards for capacity development in fragile environments. It went far and beyond the conventional capacity development tradition of narrowly focusing on individuals and organizations. Instead, the Strategic Development Plan simultaneously seeks to address all three interrelated capacity development levels: individuals, organizations and the political economy environment within which development is anchored (Rwanda Government, 2008).

To further demonstrate its entrenched capacity, in December 2008 and March 2009, the Rwanda parliament undertook a mid-term evaluation of its Five-Year Strategic Development Plan. Using the IPU's Self-Assessment Toolkit, both Chambers carried out comprehensive reviews of the implementation of its Plan. The toolkit is one of the

organizational frameworks that seek to evaluate parliaments against international criteria for democratic parliaments and helps to identify priority areas for institutional reforms and strengthening. The specific objectives of the Rwandan reviews were to indentify the parliament's strengths and weaknesses in the key strategic orientations, identify ways in which its performance might be strengthened, and suggest ways in which the Strategic Development Plan could incorporate those new insights. The exercise graphically highlighted parliament's chronic inability to retain well-trained and experienced support staff, lack of capacity to scrutinize and initiate private bills, and the lack of political will to hold the executive to account. Viewed retrospectively, this self-assessment exercise not only empowered both Chambers of the parliament to rethink innovative ways of strengthening themselves and provided objective instruments of managing the implementation of the Plan, it also cultivated a strong sense of ownership of whatever findings and conclusions that emerged from the exercise (Power, 2009).

The more recent capacity development initiatives in Rwanda have gone a long way toward consolidating the capacity of parliament. They have assisted parliament to better represent citizens and groups by establishing facilities in which MPs meet with constituents (e.g. offices both in the capital and in districts), by helping in the development of the website to inform citizens about parliamentary activities, by helping parliamentary committees conducting public hearings, facilitating representatives of civil society organizations and the private sector to testify at public hearings, by improving the quality and timeliness of legislative records, and by conducting seminars on effective representation. International development partners' support for parliament has also included activities designed to help strengthen parliamentary lawmaking capabilities and performance include conducting orientation programs for new MPs, conducting committee strengthening activities, developing expert databases and research centres to support committee information needs, upgrading legislative libraries, and by strengthening links between resource groups and parliaments. Moreover, members of the international community have helped the Rwandan parliament conduct executive oversight more effectively by

establishing anti-corruption association (such as Transparent International) and by supporting anti-corruption associations (like the African Parliamentary Network Against Corruption (APNAC). Other assistance to the oversight functions of parliament have included conducting work plan retreats and planning sessions, and support for regional public accounts committee meetings, such as the Eastern Africa Association of Public Accounts Committees (EAAPAC). Finally, they have supported various training programs for the media, civil society organizations dealing with parliamentary issues as well as the parliamentary staff and facilitated access to local and international networks (Government of Rwanda, 2008; Rugumamu, 2009).[10]

The body of evaluation and research findings regarding the impact of parliamentary support in fragile environment have slowly begun to accumulate only very recently. What is known is largely based on personal insight and anecdotes rather than firm empirical evidence (Nijzinki et al. 2006; Tsekpo and Hudson, 2009). As would be expected, most of the earliest capacity development impact results have been almost invariably negative. Traditional capacity development projects for parliaments in Africa, like those for the executive branch, tended to use dedicated parallel management structures to channel aid funds and technical assistance to specified capacity development investments. The parallel management systems took lead in the design and appraisal, decided the inputs to be provided, and used it own disbursement and accounting procedures: it was off-budget. Viewed retrospectively, and after well over two decades, the disjoined and poorly delivered capacity development initiatives have had marginal impact on most parliaments and parliamentary institutions in Africa. One prominent observer of parliamentary studies, Thomas Carothers indicated that "if asked to name the area of democracy assistance that most often fails short of its goals, I would point to legislative assistance" (Carothers, 1999, p.177). A host of factors have been advanced to account for this dismal performance. These include (i) focus on parliament as a self-contained entity rather than a component of broader political processes resulting in misplaced emphasis on symptoms rather than root causes; (ii) failure to recognize that parliament is a political institution and legislative development is

fundamentally a political, not a technical process; (iii) insufficient political will on the part of parliamentary leadership to pursue genuine institutional reforms; (iv) failure to appreciate the fact that social expectations regarding the role of the MP as being one that emphasized constituency services rather than executive accountability; (v) naivety on the part on donor organizations regarding the political incentives of members of partner parliaments; and (vi) methods of assistance delivery that were poorly matched to objectives (Barkan et al. 2007; Eberlei et al. 2003; Hudson and Wren, 2007; SIDA, 1998).

Moreover, the Reviews by SIDA (1997 and 2006) and by USAID (2006) of their respective initiatives on capacity development projects for parliaments came to almost similar scathing yet telling conclusions. The 2005 SIDA Review, for instance, notes that most of its own parliamentary capacity development initiatives have tended to focus on parliaments as self-contained entities, rather than parts of wider political and social systems. All too often, its previous parliamentary support programs concentrated on the symptoms of a dysfunctional political process,

rather than the underlying root causes. Those initiatives failed to contextualize societal structures of power, authority, interests, hierarchies, loyalties and traditions and to put such contexts into account. Both SIDA reviews further note that those early parliamentary capacity development initiatives tended to support the process and values - of accountability, transparency, openness, participation, legitimacy and pluralism - rather than seeking to offer assistance to contributing to the treatment of the underlying problems reflected in institutional symptoms of the dysfunctional processes or lack of democratic values. The USAID review, on its part, noted that most of its failed capacity building intervention efforts had consisted of fragmented, projectized resource transfers, skill-building and organizational strengthening that ignored the larger environment within which parliamentary capacity development took place. It therefore concluded that... "providing support for basic infrastructure and institutional development was no longer the best use of resources" (USAID, 2007: p.44).

Worse still, most of the strengthening interventions used a significant amount of technical

assistance to promote parliamentary functions in critical areas, but were not effective in developing capacity, because it was provided with few or no local counterpart, resulting in little transfer of knowledge, experience and skills. Local knowledge, networks and processes, which are ultimately the only sustainable foundation for organizational building and strengthening, were often given a short shrift. These are, arguably, the key dynamic factors that can provide internal, culturally appropriate guidance and eventually take over and implement capacity development within all relevant sectors of society. Worst of all, even where a recipient government did have adequate frameworks, policies and systems in place for managing capacity development assistance, as was Afghanistan, the Reviews emphasize, parliamentary capacity development support routinely used project implementation units (PIU) which were distant from parliaments and had little impact on the broader capacity development (SIDA, 2006:5; Lockhart, 2007:28).

When it became apparent that these investments failed to yield the anticipated results, attention discernibly shifted to address the larger enabling environment, and capacity development investment moved beyond the provision of resources, skills, knowledge and organization to focus on politics, power and incentives. As the experience of Rwanda has amply demonstrated, the factors that favour or block capacity development in fragile African environments are usually of a systemic nature. What conventional analysis mistakenly calls 'national governance systems' are, in fact, a broad range of multiple actors and institutions – national, regional and international - all playing different roles, articulating conflicting interests but organically linked together at once in inextricably interlocked and competing relationships. To match demand, a new mantra developed: context specificity, addressing local needs using local institutions and systems. Simply put, capacity development support should be delivered in ways that do not harm the beneficiary countries' ability to mobilize and deploy their own human, organizational and financial resources. Wherever possible, capacity assistance modalities should contribute to the beneficiary country's policy making capabilities and management systems at the same time as they help to finance

investment and services that benefit the poor and excluded (Wang, 2007; Hubli and Schmidt, 2005). Thus, these complex and highly nuanced capacity development insights and strategies have begun slowly and haltingly to evolve.

EMERGING 'BEST' CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The 1996 OECD-DAC publication, **Shaping the 21 Century** played a pivotal role in redefining the features of a new paradigm of development cooperation based on ownership and partnership in the development of capacities. There has also been more recent policy discourses including the Comprehensive Development Framework, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers initiative, the Rome and Paris Declarations on aid alignment and harmonization. These efforts have consolidated the emphasis on increasing country ownership and leadership. The various commitments contained in these resolutions are arguably, modest steps in the right direction, especially since they have ostensibly adopted far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways that capacity building aid has traditionally been delivered and managed. Amidst increased

calls for and commitment to increasing financial flows, scaling up of aid and for increased donor coordination and harmonization, major donor agencies are taking more inclusive approaches and effort to ensure that their support for broad-based development would deliver long-term sustainable results. In the governance arena, they have recommitted themselves to address the social, political, economic and organizational milieux in which capacity development activities take place. In this regard, political parties, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, the co-participants with parliaments in the democratic governance, also need to be capacitated in order to demand good governance.

   In the refocused approach, UNDP, USAID, SIDA and DFID have adopted program-based approaches (PBAs) to capacity development and focused on working with parliaments and civil society organizations in order to strengthen institutions that would help parliaments to effectively and sustainably deliver their mandate.[11] The PBAs seeks to involve more flexible assistance provided through the beneficiary country's systems to support an agreed upon program of activities.

They are further intended to support country leadership in the planning, budgeting and implementing development activities. Henceforth, the UNDP, for example, redesigned its aid strategy to comprehensively address the capacity deficits of parliaments by supporting:

➢ The reform of constitutional and institutional frameworks with the view of ensuring that parliaments have sufficient power and independence to contribute to democratic development;

➢ Administrative and institutional reforms, which includes such areas as reform of parliamentary professional service and the internal rules of parliamentary procedures, staff training, and activities to strengthen parliamentary library and research services;

➢ Policy debate with a focus on MDG advocacy, in which an important component of UNDP programming in nearly every country it is working, being that of ensuring that MDGs monitoring reports are tabled in parliaments;

➢ Parliamentary outreach that seeks to ensure public participation in parliamentary processes;

➢ Political party reforms aimed at ensuring that parties make constructive contributions during deliberation in parliament; and.

➢ Capacity building for members and staff on substantive and procedural issues as well as on skills such as public speaking, dealing with the media, debating and codes of conduct (Hubli and Schmidt, 2005).

Like the UNDP, SIDA has taken a fresh look at its parliamentary capacity development support modalities. The new strategy includes the adoption of bottom-up and issue-based approaches. The bottom-up approaches have involved working with actors outside parliaments to build incentives for, and support to parliamentary development. They include programs to train journalists on parliamentary overage support for civil society parliamentary watchdogs, conflict resolution bodies or advocacy groups to promote parliamentary reforms or support for youths or 'model' parliaments to educate the youth about the role of parliaments in

a democratic system. These nuanced and inclusive interventions involve a balancing act of at once supporting local actors while at the same time leaving them enough political space to develop their own institutional solutions for constraining state power. Secondly, SIDA has increasingly used issue-based approaches to develop parliamentary capacity in fragile environments. It includes support for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, but instead of focussing on process issues in a vacuum, they have sought to strengthen institutions in the context of providing support for sectoral or crosscutting issues (Tsekpo and Hudson, 2009).

The emerging capacity development thinking is gradually gaining a growing traction among African parliaments and development partners alike. Developing capacity, particularly in fragile environments, is no longer understood merely as a technical process of transferring and enhancing knowledge, skills and experience of individual MPs and parliamentary staffers. Nor does it mean supplying parliaments with computers and flashy office buildings. Rather, it involves strengthening capacities of institutions and reforming structures,

processes and systems of power and influence within organizations that directly affect how individual talents and skill are used to accomplish particular tasks. Moreover, the new thinking fully acknowledges the fact that the processes of capacity development are embedded in complex political environments that may facilitate or constrain the behavior of individuals and organizations, in large part, by means of incentives they creates and the nature of the governance structure. On the one hand, some of incentives may foster productivity, growth and capacity development. They may open, widen and broaden opportunities that enable individuals to use and exploit their accumulated capacities. On the other hand, other distorted incentives may foster passivity, decline or even closure. Low salaries and poor working conditions, for example, may contribute to high outflows of well-trained and experienced parliamentary staffers. In short, all the three layers of capacity development are conceived as mutually interdependent. Above all, capacity development initiatives would yield positive results if they would be re-enforced by an enlightened governance regime in a reforming and building parliament. Enlightened governance

would include significant re-
forms in governance structures
and practices that institutionalize
democratic political systems all
levels of society by respecting hu-
man rights, the rule of law and so-
cial and economic equity (Brown,
2003).

Slowly but inexorably, a num-
ber of parliamentary institutions
in Africa have begun to experi-
ment with the emerging capac-
ity development strategies. They
are striving to simultaneously ad-
dress the capacity of individuals,
organizations and the larger politi-
cal economy environment within
which capacity development is be-
ing generated and nurtured. The
African Parliamentary Knowledge
Network (APKN) is one of the
best examples of a continent-
wide capacity development initia-
tive in Africa. It is a network of
parliaments that supports capac-
ity development activities, com-
mon services, sharing of experi-
ence and best practices among
African parliaments through the
use the information and commu-
nications technology (ICT). The
project is based on the found-
ing principles of the Pan-African
Parliament (PAP) and the African
Union (AU) that underlie the
need for a better coordination
and collaboration among African

parliaments. It is supported by
the United Nations Department
of Economic and Social Affairs
(UNDESA) and funded by the
Italian Government. The initiative
builds on the success of long-es-
tablished parliamentary networks
like the National Conference of
State Legislatures in the United
States and the European Centre
for Parliamentary research and
documentation. In its first Four-
Year Action Plan (2009-2012),
the project seeks to foster the use
of ICT to promote transparency
and accountability, support demo-
cratic participation of civil society
and the private sector in order to
strengthen inter-parliamentary co-
operation in Africa. It also seeks to
build information and knowledge
management capacities, develop
information services and tools to
support inter-parliamentary collab-
oration and information systems.
Above all, despite the different
parliamentary traditions and lan-
guages, the continental network
seeks to develop common legisla-
tive drafting guidelines in order to
support the harmonization of leg-
islation throughout the continent
(OPPD, 2010; Rugumamu, 2008).

Although the adoption and
use of the ICT as a tool for par-
liamentary networking remains
modestly developed in almost all

parliaments in Africa, only the Rwandan parliament stands out as the as a sole towering exception.[12] Its parliament is reputed as one of the most modern in the use of computers on the continent. All its MPs have internet-connected laptops and the voting in parliament takes place by electronic means. Moreover, in the last parliament, all its MPs had been trained in different computer applications and, encouragingly, they were awarded an International Computer Driving License (ICDL). Equally importantly, the Parliament communicates with MPs electronically and all Cabinet Minutes are posted on the Internet. Thanks to the joint support of the Government of Rwanda, UNDP and USAID as well as the private sector, the parliament has also developed automated systems for the Finance, Human Resource and Library Departments, a database-enabled website containing parliamentary reports, Bills, Acts, MP profiles, and constituency data. It was reported to us that most of the posted pieces of information are updated and periodically uploaded. At the time of writing, its Department of ICT was implementing the UNDESA-supported modernization projects of Bungeni and Akoma Ntoso

(Architecture for knowledge-oriented Management of African Texts Using Open Standards and Ontologies) seeking to improve the management of legal knowledge and documents.[13] There is, in fact, quite a lot that all other African parliaments can learn from Rwanda's information management systems and practices. How does the Rwandan laudable experience compare with the rest of continent?

The capacity development intervention activities of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) provide yet another excellent reference point. The Foundation has two defining characteristics that give it the potential to support capacity development: unlike previous short-term, donor-driven capacity interventions, the ACBF provides funding over a long period; and it supports a diverse range of activities, not limited to traditional individual technical assistance and training. The Foundation also seeks to coordinate capacity development efforts that have too often been fragmented, donor-driven and reliant on gap filling by expatriate advisors. Established in 1991 by the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the UNDP,[14] the ACBF is based

on the principles of ownership, leadership and partnership within Africa – among governments, civil society organizations and the private sector – and with national multilateral and bilateral donors. Its current mandate is to develop and strengthen sustainable human and institutional capacity in six core competence areas of public sector management, including: economic policy analysis and management; financial management and accountability; public administration and management; strengthening and monitoring of national statistics and statistical systems; strengthening of policy analysis capacity of national parliaments and parliamentary institutions; and professionalization of the voice of the civil society and the private sector. By the end of 2003, the ACBF supported capacity development in 24 of the 29 countries classified as being fragile or post-conflict states (African Capacity Building Foundation, 2004; World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 2005).

The on-going four-year ACBF capacity development support to the Pan African Parliament (PAP) neatly qualifies it as an intervention in a politically fragile environment *par excellence.* As pointed our earlier, the

ACBF capacity delivery mode is driven by its core principles of ownership, recipient leadership, genuine partnerships and comprehensiveness in coverage. PAP, the recipient, is one of the eleven organs of the AU. It is charged with the task of facilitating the effective implementation of the policies and objectives of the African Economic Community and the AU. It is viewed as the key milestone in the development of the African political structures, as it represents a final building block in the integration process among the nations of Africa. However, PAP is a classic case of fragility aggregation – a collection of forty sixty weak African parliaments. The in-house stakeholder analysis concluded that PAP lacks the requisite capacity in all fronts: structural, institutional, organizational and human resources. As a result, various actors have come together to address all these systemic capacity deficiencies. The development partners include the African Commission itself, DFID, the EU, Institute of Strategic Studies, the governments of Italy and the Netherlands, the United Nations Population Fund (South Africa Office), and the PAP Trust Fund. Each participating partner has brought to the table specific comparative advantages. Their

combined US$ 9 million project seeks to develop the capacity of PAP committees, MPs and parliamentary staff; increase PAP's visibility and stature through effective communication and interaction with national parliaments, regional parliaments, and a wide spectrum of Africa's citizens; advance knowledge of PAP members, staff and committees through research and networking using ICT; and develop and modernize internal administrative and financial management systems (African Capacity Building Foundation, 2007). In short, the ACBF capacity delivery to PAP neatly fits the emerging best practices of leveraging the Paris Principles of Aid Effectives that were referred to earlier.

CONCLUSION: HARNESSING EMERGING INSIGHTS

Although it is too early to make informed and definitive judgements on the impact of the emerging capacity delivery strategies in fragile environments, several cautionary recommendations are in order. First, the paper has argued that despite a vast literature and a growing number of assessment tools available relating to capacity development in fragile states, donors and African stakeholders

continue to face a major knowledge gap. The lack of a common understanding on how to define fragility and what causes it as well as how to measure and track capacity development in fragile environments means that discussions on the subject are often vague and open to myriad interpretations. Equally disturbing, most of the conventional analyses and policy prescriptions fail to appreciate the reality that capacity development is about politics and power relations, nationally and internationally, institutions and incentives, habits and attitudes – factors that are only partly susceptible to technical fixes and quantitative specifications. The discussion has highlighted the need to adopt a political economy approach as an entry point for capacity development assessments and interventions in fragile environments.

Secondly, the discussion has noted that in order to have a comprehensive grasp of the capacity gaps in a fragile environment, capacity development actors would be expected to undertake a rigorous analysis of the root causes of fragility of each specific circumstance. Arguably, it has been emphasized, that each fragile state or organization is a special

case. Chronically fragile political states such as those of Malawi and Swaziland are profoundly different from the post-conflict states like those of Sierra Leone or Burundi. Such analysis would include an understanding of the uniqueness of each fragility context, in terms of its own particular socio-economic and political history, the root causes and immediate consequences of the fragility and/or conflict, and the specific configuration of the actors and their interests, the capacity of the key change agents, and, equally vitally, addressing the nature of the regional and international environments within which the envisaged transformation from fragility or war to peace is expected to take place. Such analysis would inform what kinds of policy and institutional reforms to undertake, actors to engage, and the relative time for engagement. It has repeatedly been emphasized also that parliamentary fragility in Africa, as in other similar developing regions of the world, is externally influenced by factors such as predatory direct foreign investment, the nature of aid and conditionality, disadvantageous terms of trade, debt bondage, and securitization of development weigh heavily on any holistic explanation. Sustainable capacity development in African countries, in general, and fragile states in particular, requires a fresh approach and innovative thinking.

Thirdly, in a fragile environment, where should the demand for capacity development in fragile environment come from? The discussion has demonstrated that parliamentary capacity building projects and programs that are conceived, identified, designed and implemented in response to the enthusiasm of donors or foreign implementing agencies, tend to run the risk of failing to meet realistic needs of such organizations particularly in fragile environments. They fail to fully appreciate the organizational political context and, by extension, fail to engender local ownership.[15] As pointed out earlier, ill-conceived projects like these are likely to be viewed with suspicion as foreign-imposed and alien both by the respective parliament and the executive branch. Worse still, such capacity development interventions tend to make the achievement of long-term institutional development far more difficult. By promoting this type of intervention, the international community often locks weak parliaments into an artificial and unsustainable 'democratic development

process' steered from outside and not from within, with high financial and technical demands, but without letting the assisted institution to benefit from the skills an knowledge transfer that is an essential component of technical assistance projects. It is therefore recommended that that future projects and programs are demand-led and nationally owned, taking into full account of the local context, involving harmonization and coordination of donors and which have in-built mechanisms for sustainability. As the post-genocide Rwanda's experience has eloquently demonstrated, it is usually politically prudent to work together with organizations beyond parliaments – to include the executive, local governments, the civil society organizations, the media, the private sector, and political parties in order to ensure that they have a stake in the process of parliamentary strengthening. This will, in turn, stimulate and support the demand-side of accountability of these actors by engaging more effectively with parliaments and to push for better and quality parliamentary performance.

Fourthly, the study has further highlighted the critical role of parliamentary strategic development plans. It was argued that development plans together with annual activity plans provide a robust and reliable framework within which partners can align their support and harmonize their respective activities. They provide a shared vision, mission and strategic objectives of parliament. However, the recent Rwandan experience has eloquently demonstrated that strategic plans are not cast in stone. They are living documents to be modified according to changing needs and circumstances. For any learning organizations, parliamentary development plans require routine revisiting and appraisal in order to gauge what is working, what is not and why? In this regard, the IPU self-assessment tools become strategically handy. For operational purposes, they should be carefully considered as one of the mid-term policy management review tools. It was equally emphasized that self-assessments are one of the best ways that parliament could assure itself of the ownership of whatever findings and conclusions that emerge from such exercises.

Fifthly, the unfolding donor cooperation, coordination and synergy promotion in post-genocide Rwanda needs to be closely

watched. The 'novel' capacity delivery approach whereby some donors jointly agree to focus on working with civil society and the private sector to enhance the demand-side capacity, while others work with parliaments more directly, is likely to have a profound society-wide impact on deepening democracy in fragile environments. In the Rwanda case, some partners agreed to concentrate on building capacity for the conduct of free and fair elections; others focused on promoting an autonomous and robust parliament, others on building capacity of an active citizenry, still others promoted an effective multi-party system; while others built the capacity of a free media to provide reliable information. This comprehensive strategy has had several advantages. In the first place, it tends to reduce radically the potential for effort duplication and enhances the chances for parliaments learning lessons from their own work and that of others. Moreover, it creates opportunities for the division of labor between donor actors according to their respective comparative advantage. In addition, by forming common arrangements for country-level planning, funding, and disbursement, the reporting exercise by the beneficiary organization is significantly streamlined and harmonized.

Finally, the analysis has shown that the enabling environment to foster parliamentary capacity development in fragile environments is much larger and wider than what conventional wisdom would like us to believe. It was argued that institutional development and strengthening need to be firmly anchored on a gradually growing, broad-based, dynamic national economy. However, the biggest challenge that international development cooperation faces is essentially lack of policy coherence. The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is an excellent example of text book double standards. It tends to harm the poor, compromises sustainable capacity development and thwarts global efforts to achieve MDGs. The consequences of such a self-serving public policy stance are too troubling to contemplate: The CAP reduces Africa's competitiveness, destroys the continent's potential productive capacities, deters agricultural investment and endangers the very livelihoods of war-traumatized small farmers, the very target of EU policy in fragile states. As if that was not enough damage, the EU and the United States have deliberately kept certain tariffs and

administrative hurdles prohibitively high, creating further obstacles for countries in situations of post-conflict and fragility. There is an urgent imperative for all actors in the capacity development industry to strategically link the democracy support, peace and development initiatives in order comprehensively address the structural root causes and consequences of fragility and underdevelopment in African countries. To accomplish that noble objective, it will be important to continue interrogating and searching for realist policies, practices and strategies of sustainably addressing the special capacity development needs of institutions in fragile environments.

BIOGRAPHY

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ENDNOTES

[1]It should be noted that various institutions have built centers to monitor and identify weak, failing or failed states. They include, but are not limited to, USAID (fragile states initiative); Stanford and Yale Universities (civil war models); Fund for Peace (failed states index); US Centre for Army Analysis (Analyzing Complex Threats for Operations and Readiness); the University of Maryland (Minorities at Risk) Brooking Institution (Index of State Weakness).

[2]The then World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, joined President Bush by claiming that the poverty reduction mission was more important than ever because "failed states" with territory outside the control of a recognized and reputable government offered fertile soil on which terrorism could thrive (World Bank, 2004).

[3]See for example OECD. A Development Cooperation Lens on Terrorism Prevention. Paris: OECD, 2003; Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Principles Governing Danish Development Assistance for the Fight against the New Terrorism. Copenhagen, 2004; and DFID. Fighting Poverty to build a Safer World: A Strategy for Security and Development. London, 2004.

[4]The OECD Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations include: (i) take context as the starting point; (ii) do no harm; (iii) focus on state building as a central objective; (iv) prioritize prevention; (v) recognize the link between politics, security and development objectives; (vi) promote non-discrimination as basis for inclusive and stable societies; (vii) align local priorities in different ways in different contexts; (viii) agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors; (ix) act fast but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance; and (x) avoid pockets of exclusion. For details see OECD (2007a).

[5]Using the CPIA, the World Bank assesses countries on the basis of four clusters (economic management, structural policy, policy of social inclusion/exclusion, and public sector management. The scale extends from 1 (very good results) to 5 (very poor results) (World Bank, 2003).

[6]The exception to this standard practice is the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) financed by the World Bank and other thirteen donors.

The program supports and coordinates Demobilization and reintegration efforts in the Great Lakes region of Africa. For the review of its performance sees Gilbert M. Khadiagala (2008).

[7]Resource recommitments to the reconstruction of fragile states are biased against African Fragile countries. The annual per capita aid of $39 for the DRC compares unfavorably with $129 for Afghanistan; $211 for Bosnia and Herzegovina and $278 for the East Timor. See Englebert and Tull (2008).

[8]The example of the Malawi Parliament is quite revealing. As Lia Nijzink et al. (2006:314) notes, despite the support of several international donors, the parliament in Malawi remain housed in a temporary office pace and lacks adequate research support. It employs only two researchers and two designated committee Clerks serving thirteen parliamentary committees.

[9]One of the reasons why parliaments received less attention in the development process is that unlike coherent government ministries, they are by nature a collection of political parties and individuals elected by disparate constituencies and without clear leaders or common agendas.

[10]The capacity development of parliamentary staff can hardly be overemphasized. They provide continuity between elections. Equally importantly, they are the principal source of independent and authoritative advice for MPs on the rules of procedure.

[11]The OECD-DAC definition of PBAs is aid that shares the following features (i) leadership by the country or organization; (ii) a single comprehensive program and budget framework; (iii) a formalized process for donor coordination and harmonization of donor procedures for reporting, budgeting, financial management and procurement; and (iv) efforts to increase the use of the local system for promoting design and implementation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation.

[12]In January 2007 President Paul Kagame of Rwanda informed fellow heads of state at the 8th African Union Summit that his country had set its science and technology spending at 1.6 percent of GDP. This is comparable to the OECD countries' expenditure figure. Other developments in this area include the building of tele-centres, computerization of primary and secondary schools, a $10 million in the e-Government project and continued investment in the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology.

[13]See UNDP Rwanda: **Rwanda Annual Report, 2005**. http.www.unrwanda.org/undp/Annual_Report_2005.

[14]Over time, other funders have come on board, including the IMF, ten developed country donor agencies and 22 African governments.

[15]Understanding the enabling environment

is one necessary part of appreciating the strength and weakness of a particular organization. There are several well-known tools of organizational assessment (SWOT, stakeholder analysis, performance assessment, cost-benefit analysis, management audit etc). These should be complemented by the analysis of political dynamics of that particular organization. For more details see Europe Aid (2005).