# Transformational Change:

## Strengthening African Capacity for Enhanced and Sustainable Humanitarian Action

**AHA Case Study**

**Mercy Medical Relief Society**
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Abstract

Today, Africa is in the grip of an unprecedented crisis, heightened by the inability of homegrown African organizations to engage readily in the search for solutions to the continent's problems. Across the continent, people are forcibly displaced from their homes and countries for several reasons, the most common being conflict and/or natural disaster related. Neither international aid nor international interventions on their own have significantly reduced vulnerability nor brought enduring solutions. An enhanced involvement of well-resourced and well-equipped African actors could improve both the effectiveness of interventions and the sustainability of subsequent recovery programmes

On a positive note, millions of displaced persons have been able to experience a voluntary, safe and dignified return home. However, with an estimated 22 million people remaining forcibly displaced across the continent, significant challenges remain.

African in spirit, concept and composition, AHA is a pan-African non-governmental organization providing effective humanitarian assistance to alleviate human suffering building on the strength of African people to solve African problems. Hence, the paper outlines a transformational change in indigenous humanitarian capacity development directions towards addressing the root causes of forced displacement and human migration. The directional change entails addressing issues of human security that seeks to protect people against a broad range of threats to individuals and communities and, further, to empower them to act on their own behalf and to forge a global alliance against forced displacement.

Key words: *transformational change, indigenous humanitarian capacity development*

## 1. Introduction

Today, Africa is in the grip of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, heightened by the inability of home grown African organizations to readily engage in the search for solutions to the continent's problems. Across the continent, people are forcibly displaced from their homes and countries for several reasons, the most common being conflict and natural disaster related. Whilst some countries are currently emerging from conflict, others remain in the throes of violence, causing thousands to flee and seek safety. Elsewhere, populations continue to suffer the devastating results of natural disasters, such as droughts and floods.

On a positive note, the ongoing efforts of African civil society, the African Union and determined leadership of certain individuals, along with continued international support, has contributed to new found peace in a number of countries. In this context millions of displaced persons have been able to experience a voluntary, safe and dignified return home. However, with an estimated 22 million people remaining forcibly displaced across the continent, significant challenges still remain. Due to the protracted nature of many African conflicts, a substantial proportion of those affected have been in displacement for years and in some cases decades.

Whilst the need for assistance remains paramount, donor fatigue is placing vulnerable populations at risk of dwindling support. The protection and assistance that people receive is already very basic, a drop in which would be catastrophic. Therefore it is essential that adequate funds are secured and African organizations are supported to ensure the necessary protection and assistance, and the ability to empower populations in positively contributing to achieving durable solutions. Responses to African disasters often include multiple actors with markedly different strategies and agendas. Interventions suffer from frequent delays, duplication of work and lack of legitimacy. Too often, the involvement of affected communities is on paper only and their participation in the recovery process minimal. Hence, local capacity gets undermined and dependency on external aid becomes long-term. Neither international aid nor interventions on their own have significantly reduced vulnerability nor brought enduring solutions.

An enhanced involvement of well-resourced and well-equipped African actors could improve both the effectiveness of interventions and the sustainability of subsequent recovery programmes. It will, however, require a shift of both mindset and approach to humanitarian aid delivery. Today, African organizations suffer from insufficient funding to up-grade competences and structures to a competitive level, missing out on reliable longer-term institutional development as funding allocated to them is mostly tied to short-term, earmarked service-delivery programmes; lagging behind in information technology which has transformed humanitarian relief beyond recognition in the last decade.

Faced with this situation, Africans have developed their own perception of development which can help solve their problems. The proliferation of civic organizations with links to African civil society is a good indication of Africa's ability to rely upon itself. This strengthening capacity for enhanced and sustainable humanitarian action initiative aims to strengthen competencies, skills and capacity. There is a clear consensus that we can and must do more to harness and align AHA's collective resources and experiences and reach out to more people, by consolidating and sharing AHA's experiences for the benefit of the whole network.

Hence this document outlines a transformational change in AHA's directions towards addressing the root causes of forced displacement and human migration. The directional change entails addressing issues of human security that seeks to protect people against a broad range of threats to individuals and communities and, further, to empower them to act on their own behalf and to forge a global alliance against forced displacement. Human security thus brings together the human elements of security, of rights, and of development; based on the tents of the **UN Commission on Human Security** and the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.**

## 2. Paradigm shifts necessary for transformational change

### 2.1. Analytical limitations

Current discussions and analyses of capacity development (CD) generally are marked by several limitations: a tendency to narrow CD thought and practice to the terms and categories of immediate, not very well considered, political and social action, a naïve realism, as it were; inattention to problems of articulation or production of CD systems and process within fragile state politics rather than simply as formal or abstract possibilities; ambiguity as to whether civil society is the agent or object of CD change; a nearly exclusive concern in certain institutional perspectives on CD with generic attributes and characteristics of organisations and consequent neglect of analysis in terms of their specific strategies and performances in capacitation; and inadequate treatment of the role of international agencies and the relations between global and indigenous aspects or dimensions of CD.

On the other hand, human security, an emerging CD concept, is a multi-disciplinary understanding of security involving a number of research fields, which equates security with people's wellness; ensuring freedom from want -- the basic idea that violence, poverty, inequality, diseases, and environmental degradation are inseparable concepts in addressing the root causes of human insecurity -- and freedom from fear -- that seeks to limit the practice of human security to protecting individuals from violent conflicts; for all persons is the best path to tackle the problem of global insecurity refers to an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities whose proponents challenge the notion of national security by arguing that the proper referent for security should be the individual rather. Human security is criticised for being ineffective because of its vagueness -- it has become little more than an advocacy tool since it is so fuzzy, idealistic and so broad.

### 2.2. The need for the fundamental change

The need for the fundamental change on how the global community deals with the internecine crises must change since places such as Darfur, Somalia, Northern Uganda and now Kenya, to name a few, have become a new insignia of 'bestiality'. The need for collective learning about responses, and the responsibility to those whose suffering provided the basis for that learning will never be more urgent than it is now. Unfortunately, such lessons, which may be learned through the shocks administered by an uncompromising reality, are rarely translated quickly into personal or organisational memories and the inherent will to change. The reasons for this are sometimes rooted in human inertia, weakness, and self-interest. They are equally often the products of a genuine confusion about how to act most effectively in an environment that seems to be growing more complex.

Leadership is the key in all this. Leaders have to maintain continuity whilst simultaneously promoting change; such is the nature of leadership ambiguity and contradiction that comes as part of the same deal. The allusion of the foregoing is that the leader is responsible for change management, and change in a transition implies some degree of anarchy. The nexus between the status quo ante and the new, between letting go of the status quo ante and adopting the new order, is most often a place where rules are bent, and habit and routine are replaced with periods of chaos - which are indeed pieces of good fortune and opportunities for change.

Since much of the CD initiative is driven by donors, the questions that arise form the above are: What is the overall rationality or significance of the great traffic of international programmes and projects of democratisation and development in fragile states, the proliferating activities that seem to show little regard for economy of co-ordination? How far and in what ways do various international agencies, programmes, mechanisms, forms of knowledge and technical assistance feed on one another in helping set the boundaries of CD reform in fragile states? The important issues that these questions suggest are not sufficiently addressed, or even raised, in much of the current discussion of CD. Insofar as the activities of external agencies

are not understood and engaged in CD, their developmental impact may diminish with their proliferation. This can mean little more than a weakly coordinated multiplication of projects which have immediately recognisable or measurable effects in limited areas, but which seem to suspend rather than serve the ultimate goals of capacitation of fragile state political systems. The strategic co-ordination of diverse international activities supportive of CD in fragile states can become a challenge both for the international agencies involved and for poor nations. This is in part because of limitations in the individual characteristics of the activities with narrow technocratic orientation and because of shortcomings in the relational and contextual articulation of external projects, their limited generalisability and variability.

Fragile state governments and societies undoubtedly depend on international assistance in their projects of reform; vital for the projects in many areas and at many levels. Yet, it must be recognised that external support creates problems as well as opportunities for fragile states. In confronting the imperatives of change, nothing is more challenging for AHA's polities than the strategic co-ordination of diverse global and local elements, relations and activities within themselves, nor has anything greater potential for enabling them achieve successful capacitation.

## 2.3. Capacity Development: governance implications

Where the leadership has not sufficiently assimilated the value system of the rule of law, checks and balances or power sharing - basic to democratic governance and polity - the tendency to be corrupt, undemocratic and abuse human rights is rife; and the organisational imperative of the massive bureaucratic machine is to command and control and is preoccupied with its own survival and enrichment. The pivotal question in CD is the construction of political rules and institutions (Keller E, 1997), which ensure human development and human security. (UNDP, 1994) UNDP (2006) asserts that

*some of the most dramatic gains in capacity development come about as a result of shifts in political power; effectively tapping the political space for CD and sustaining the change requires the following essential conditions: broad consensus underpinning the change, i.e., across political parties; new or revitalised institutions that embody the change; resourcing of such institutions over the long-term; partnerships that spread the benefits of change, diminish resistance, and forge a larger base of players with a stake in the change and accountability and communication on results to boost the credibility of change and build political, civil, and bureaucratic support that can outlast changes in governments … and require holistic and integrated responses supported by a culture of cooperation that focuses on support to … local systems and that is not driven by external implementation and delivery schedules and conditions."*

Hence, the legitimacy of CD processes underway will depend in important ways on it being perceived as reasonably honest, predictable, transparent, and accountable. Public sector corruption and inefficiencies undermine political, economic, and social stability by undermining citizen's faith in the democratic process. Identified elements of an effective state and an engaged society are: rule of law, anti-corruption, executive, legislative and judicial accountability; and efficiency of civil service and budget administration, development of public information and media enhance human security and cultural democracy, tourism and the rise of the arts;

## 2.4. Capacitation of fragile states:

Conflicts have destroyed economies and physical infrastructure that were developed for half a century, they have spun social infrastructure and society off their axes, and the political architecture and polity of nations has been dismantled. In short it has destabilised nations, nationalities and peoples resulting in genocidal human insecurity unparalleled in world history. They have to their culpability, a harvest of mil-

lions of refugees. New forms of vulnerabilities arise in the form of uncontrolled epidemics; the child soldier that has taken hostage whole communities of their beloved ones. Conflicts have spawned the percept of failed and fragile states that have not been able to ensure human security and human development -- both fundamentally concerned with the lives of human beings -- longevity, education, and opportunities for participation.

Compared with other low income countries, fragile states face longer term underlying reasons for insecurity that include poverty, conflict over scarce resources, vulnerability to external economic shocks, weak institutions and poor governance. However, under militarised governance and with mostly short-term thinking, these are often not seen as 'national security' issues at all and are considered a lower priority than military and security affairs. Underpinning these weaknesses is the absence of a clear strategy for promoting long-term human security to be more stable and predictable by a correct identification of their wider range of threats, many of them real and potential ones that include among others: (de Waal, A., & Mohamed, A., 2005)

- insufficiently institutionalised constitutional order and governance institutions; ethnic, religious and regional cleavages and incapacity to manage claims;
- actual and potential external threats of force projection; external threats of destabilisation and terrorism; potential sources of conflict with neighbours such as un-demarcated borders, and contested natural resource control;
- corruption; violent crime via light weapons; potential social unrest associated with economic recession; mass distress migration due to natural and man-made calamities; and
- Diseases of poverty and impact on institutional capacities including security services.

As we move down this list we shift from immediate military threats to structural problems confronting African governments. In the longer term, it is these structural problems that are most likely to cause major problems. In the long term, security is best guaranteed by democratic, accountable and stable governments presiding over sustainable development. A far-reaching agenda of security sector reform, ensuring civilian control of the military and similar measures, will help to deliver these gains. In post-conflict situation, post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) is a "multifaceted initiative with a complex web of public and private sector projects addressing human, social, physical, environmental and political capital development in a sustainable form. The synergy is designed to create sustainable communities using the livelihoods construct." (Costantinos, BT., 1997)

In this context the policy framework must be intended to facilitate coherence in the assessment, planning, coordination and monitoring of PCR systems by providing a common frame of reference and conceptual base for the broad range of multidisciplinary, multifunctional and multidimensional actors that collectively populate these systems; with a view to produce outputs such as methods and indicators identified for home-grown policy analysis for sustainable livelihoods and food security, which disaggregate policy effects on different stakeholder groups such as women, children, elderly, etc., strengthened capacity for policy dialogue and improved policy, strategy, process and structural environment for people to attain decision-making positions including affirmative action;

## 3. Africa Humanitarian Action

### 3.1. Background

African in spirit, concept and composition, AHA is a pan-African non-governmental organization (NGO) providing effective humanitarian assistance to alleviate human suffering building on the strength of African people to solve African problems. Founded on its experiences and achievements of thirteen years, AHA believes the boosting of independent African humanitarian and development organizations that have shown determination and ability to help solve the continent's di-

lemma is essential for alleviating Africa's troubles. The restriction of resources in research, development and communication has made the task of advocating solutions all the more cumbersome and time consuming. The essential funds that enable institutional capacity development, that give flexibility and sustainability and makes choices possible, seem to elude African agencies.

Founded in 1994 in response to the Rwandan genocide, we have supported more than nine million people in 16 African countries, to regain their health, dignity and well-being. At the heart of AHA's work is a firm commitment to reducing poverty through addressing crisis-related suffering and laying the foundations for recovery and sustained development. From protecting IDPs in Darfur, to repatriating refugees in the DR Congo, to raising awareness of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, we deliver a wide range of lifesaving services to suit complex and varying needs.

Currently AHA works in 18 African countries, running programmes in capacity development, health care, HIV/AIDS, public advocacy, relief and recovery, sexual & gender-based violence (albeit in a limited way).

### 3.2. Principles & Values:

AHA seeks to empower African people to find lasting solutions to the challenges facing the continent and advocate for an African renaissance. We believe that Africans have the necessary skills and abilities to be active agents of change and to positively impact their futures. We work together with local communities, listening and responding to their needs and building upon their inherent capacities, to make lasting differences to people's lives. It believes that every individual regardless of his or her race, religion or gender, has the right to health, dignity and well being. Dedication to quality, accountability and optimum transparency is central to AHA's work, at an operational and management level.

Recently we have paid special attention to the subject of accountability, working together with **SPHERE**, **People in Aid** and **ALNAP** to maximize efforts. First and foremost we are accountable to communities with whom we work. Good communication is key to achieving optimum transparency and we encourage open and honest dialogue, and listen carefully to people's needs, ideas and feedback. Donor accountability means that we maintain effective reporting mechanisms.

Committed to achieving excellence in its work, maintaining professionalism, good governance and management, based on integrity, best practice and lessons learned, it works to support and deliver training, develop institutional capacity, share information and knowledge, and monitor and evaluate programmes and achievements. We measure ourselves by what we achieve according to the assisted populations with whom we work. In order to continually improve services we listen closely to communities, responding and adapting to their needs. We adhere and contribute to international humanitarian policies and standards, and encourage learning and innovation in the field.

AHA ensures that the maximum amount of funds is directed to affected populations, providing a cost effective service, by limiting AHA's overheads and indirect costs to no more than 5%. For the 16th consecutive year we have achieved a clean bill of health for programmes from partners and auditors, attesting to AHA's high standards and abilities.[i]

### 3.3. Who we work with:

Africa has a long history and culture of assisting affected populations, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons enshrined in the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Since then African Nations have continued to protect, care and find durable solutions for vulnerable populations across the continent. People are forcibly displaced from their homes and countries for many different reasons, the most common being conflict and/or natural disaster related. Whilst some African countries are currently emerging from crisis, others remain in the throws of violence, causing thousands to flee and seek

safety. Elsewhere in the Continent populations continue to suffer the devastating results of natural disasters and disease. On a positive note, the ongoing efforts of African civil society and determined leadership of certain individuals, along with continued international support, has contributed to newfound peace in a number of countries. In this context millions of displaced persons are now able to experience a voluntary, safe and dignified return home.[ii]

### 3.4. Empowerment:

Too often people have been reduced to numbers and statistics – victims of circumstance, a description, which totally fails to acknowledge their strengths, abilities, and self esteem. In distinct contrast refugees, IDPs, returnees and affected populations can be found throughout Africa being resourceful and innovative in working to improve their circumstances and overcome the challenges they face. It is now widely accepted that a participatory approach holds the key to long-term development and to this ends much humanitarian work now focuses on capacity development. Common terms used include, 'grass roots development', 'community driven change', 'self reliance' and 'sustainable solutions'. The mission constitutes a results-oriented development plan in support of regular programmes, which chiefly benefit refugees, internally displaced persons, and disaster-stricken communities in some 18 countries. The core areas of work are: relief & recovery, health and wellbeing, and community capacity development. It will further improve competencies, skills and capacity to deliver on commitments. It is a continuation of and builds on AHA's first strategic development plan in 2000.[iii]

## 4. Goals, purpose, objective

4.1. **Goal:** ensure that vulnerable African communities face minimal risk of disasters and receive the necessary humanitarian assistance when they occur.

4.2. **Purpose:** strengthen AHA's competencies, skills and capacity, to improve its emergency response and preparedness capabilities and to develop organizational capacity throughout its programmes in order to best serve the populations we seek to assist.

4.3. **Objectives:** the main objectives are to strengthen AHA's programme delivery capability so it can implement effective disaster prevention, mitigation and response work throughout Africa; develop appropriate governance structures, mission, values, strategy and policies to consolidate AHA as a strong, focused, effective and sustainable African, humanitarian civil society organisation; develop AHA's human resource base to enable it to meet its programme, management and administration needs, led and implemented by Africans; increase AHA's ability to mobilise financial resources to carry out its work on a sustainable basis and manage finances in a transparent and accountable way and build on AHA's extensive relationships and leverage them to influence key actors on humanitarian issues, bringing a distinctive pan African perspective.

4.4. **Outputs:** enhanced structures, offices and trained staff in place to deliver more extensive programmes to reach more people at risk from and affected by disasters; quality standards set and maintained to improve AHA's humanitarian programme delivery; improved learning systems put into place and feeding back into programme design and implementation; and results and impact measurement system established and practiced meeting accountability needs and feeding lessons learned back into planning.

4.5. **Organisation**:

4.5.1. **Achievements:** Vision of AHA is widely disseminated and operationalised. Humanitarian values of AHA disseminated and featured in all AHA programmes and activities. Governance structure reviewed and revised in a way which is representative, responds to local priorities, sets out clear responsibilities and is effective. Strategy developed to identify core activities and pro-

gramme priorities. Organisational capacity assessment carried out and acted upon with workshops, training etc. when other elements in place.[iv]

4.5.2. **Inputs:** staff, technical inputs, financial resources and materials;

4.5.3. **Components:** Policy, strategy and programme development human resource development finance and resource development organisation and structures;

4.5.4. **Outcomes**

- Diversified and scaled up assistance and services are provided;
- Humanitarian values included in all programmes;
- Response preparedness and rapid delivery ability is increased;
- Complementary programme areas for future growth are identified;
- Associations/offices are harmonized through a common framework of work strategies in relief and recovery, health and wellbeing, and programme capacity development;
- Successful health promotion and disease prevention are solidified;
- Mainstreaming gender, specially focusing on SGBV – strengthening response mechanisms and increasing preventative measures.
- Application of knowledge and learning at programme level;
- Improved management information;
- Improved, comprehensive operational systems and procedures;
- Decentralised management application and responsibilities;
- Enhanced long-term financial sustainability and reliability;
- Diversified income sources at central and national levels;
- Improved results and impact measurements established and practiced;
- Rationalised and representative governance structures;
- Management independence and responsibility;
- Tighter financial controls and timelier reporting;
- Modernised and comprehensive HR policies and procedures applied.

4.5.5. **Indicators:**

Qualitative monitoring of the programme with a comprehensive set of indicators is essential to ensure the achievement of expected outcomes. They should take into account the combined effect of improving institutional effectiveness and determining a measurable increase in disaster preparedness as well as service delivery. Reducing risk and increasing community's resilience to threats requires a multi-stakeholder approach, where external institutions and local communities are supported by other complimentary institutions such as local government, schools and health institutions. Since the extent of preparedness of each of these institutions can be significantly different, the implication is that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. To get a realistic picture, measuring risk reduction would imply measuring the preparedness and management capacity of this wide array of institutions. While this level of measurement is needed, it is beyond the scope of AHA in the foreseeable future. Indicators are therefore be limited to direct programme outputs and outcomes and ensuring the best possible use of resources. A key programme outcome is to strengthen emergency response and preparedness capabilities, and the ability of its associations/offices to set forth well conceived contingency plans for reducing risk in communities they support.

4.5.6. **Sustainability:**

AHA takes special care that programs are fully integrated into existing community structures in order to promote ownership and longevity. The majority of AHA's staff has been recruited from within communities and work closely with local leaders, religious heads, administrators, organization and community groups. Issues of sustainability have to be addressed as early as

possible. Appropriateness and applicability of sustainability alternatives such as user service charge (fee), scaled budgetary subsidy from public health sector, yearly budgetary appropriation from the respective administrative counsels, soliciting increased community contributions, fund raising activities and other modalities are to be thoroughly discussed and worked out among all stakeholders.

The basic essential factor in ensuring self - reliant programmes is the investment to be made on human resources development endeavours, and the popular participation of communities at all levels. Communities participate in the decision making process. The more attention to be given for training community members, the continuous sensitisation work, the perpetual participation, the capacity building endeavour will highly contribute to programme sustainability.

**4.6. Measuring Results:** Monitoring implementation and follow-up for actions is a responsibility of both governance and management. The programme includes the expansion of current performance standards for management to deliver on the strategic directions and core areas. A baseline is established for all activities to measure future achievements and minimize set-backs.[v]

## 5. Code of Practice for a mutual accountability Peer-review Mechanism

A major constraint to the development of the CD system is that states, CSOs and development practitioners remain weak and highly dependent on economic and political forces outside their countries. The competition for funding greatly erodes their capacity and commitment to mobilise collaborative action and achieve consensus around issues of common interest for autonomous development. While many proposals for remedial action have been formulated, real commitment to collaborative processes at inter organisational level has always been limited. By publishing such a Code, CD actors will have taken a first bold step in gearing individual groups and networks into action, and generating the momentum required for a true process of collaborative development.

This in itself is a testament to the voluntary accession to communities of practice based on commonality of objectives and unity of purpose. As a living document, the need for periodic review of the Code will continue to encourage opening up forums for such initiatives, as they pave the way towards consensus and alliances for empowerment. Any discussion on strengthening international partnership in CD must at some point address the issue of those organisations' competence to accede to common principles of human security. The business of capacitation is driven by two moral values: it is codified with defined business standards and specifies who can promote CD; and it is the responsibility of all people; spreading the message and stimulating more CD at the grass roots level. Hence, the Code is a statement of institutional principles and ethics for practice, designed as a reference for practitioners, to enhance organisational partnership to encourage relational qualitative improvement with their constituencies. Towards this end the objectives of the **Code of Practice** are

5.1. contribute to on-going efforts of the CD partnership towards commitment to the use of standard practices and encourage societies and polities to develop collective capacity for an effective process of institutional strengthening and horizontal linkages among themselves;

5.2. *serve as a guiding document for improving the partnership by setting out institutional modalities aimed at enhancing pluralistic processes and foster a genuine commitment on the part of partners to a locally-driven approach to the challenges of under capacity and help in focussing the attention and resources to eradicating the grinding poverty reflected in many quarters;*

5.3. enable societies and polities to be aware of acts of public offence, such as pollution, violence against women, exploitation and abuse, which customarily pass unnoticed by law enforcement;

5.4. It is necessary to build systems of **knowledge management** (KM) for CD as a systematic creation, acquisition, synthesis and sharing of knowledge, required to transform an organisation into a learning enterprise, a knowledge powerhouse. Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information and expert insight. It could be formal, codified knowledge that comes in the form of books, documents, white papers, databases, and policy manuals, etc., or tacit: informal, un-codified knowledge found in the heads of people: highly experiential, difficult to document in any detail, ephemeral and transitory.
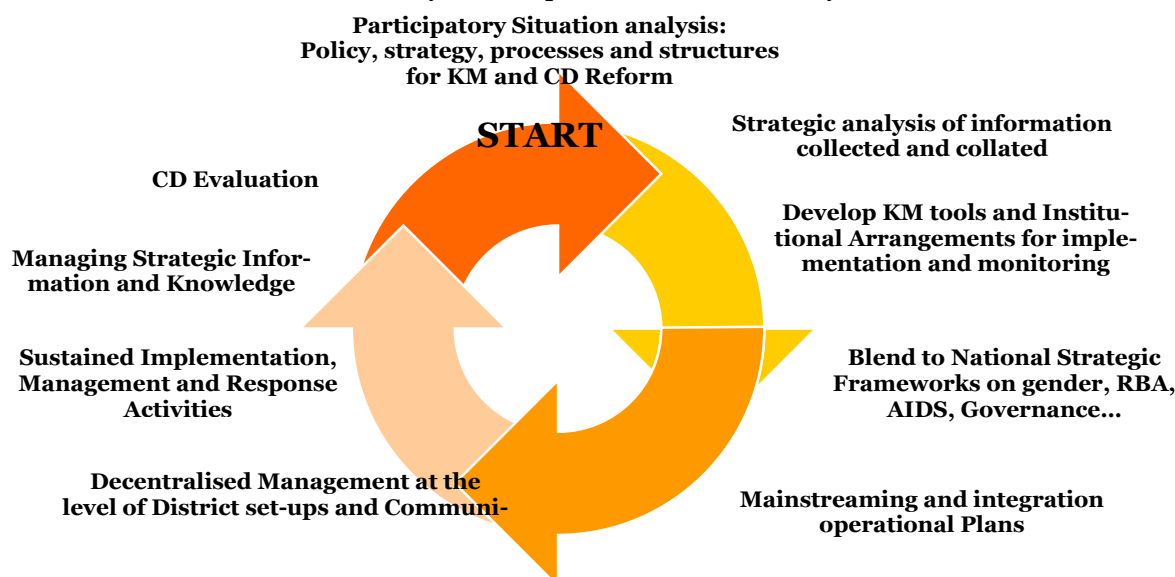


**Participatory Situation analysis: Policy, strategy, processes and structures for KM and CD Reform**

**START**

**Strategic analysis of information collected and collated**

**CD Evaluation**

**Develop KM tools and Institutional Arrangements for implementation and monitoring**

**Managing Strategic Information and Knowledge**

**Sustained Implementation, Management and Response Activities**

**Blend to National Strategic Frameworks on gender, RBA, AIDS, Governance…**

**Decentralised Management at the level of District set-ups and Communi-**

**Mainstreaming and integration operational Plans**

*Fig 1 Integration and mainstreaming*

5.5. The concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations. The term was first used in 1991 by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger who used it in relation to an attempt to "rethink learning". Wenger extended the concept and applied it to other contexts, including organisational settings. More recently, CoPs have become associated with KM as people have begun to see them as ways of developing social capital, nurturing new knowledge, stimulating innovation, or sharing existing tacit knowledge within an organisation. It is now an accepted part of CD. (Wenger, E, McDermott, R & Snyder, W.M., 2002; Saint Onge, H & Wallace, D, 2003) The earlier work of Lave and Wenger (1991)[vi] had the notion of legitimate peripheral participation as the central process in CoP. In his later work, Wenger abandoned the concept of legitimate peripheral participation and used the idea the inherent tension in a duality instead.

6. **Conclusion:**

In a cross-national analysis of democratic transitions in Africa at the beginning of the wave of democratic experiments, we asserted that political culture and democratic development derives from the following three distinct sets of factors… *Firstly, many assert that certain structures, which reflect long-term historical developments in the economy and society, determine whether there is an enabling environment for democratic development. The structural factor most commonly cited as favouring democracy is an advanced industrial economy with a high average of per capita income. Secondly, on the other had there sis the school of though that underpins the fact that, from a contingent perspective, political development is installed as a result of the conscious reform initiatives of individual leaders, elite factions and social movements. The trajectory is driven by the short-term calculations and immediate reactions of strategic actors.* (GCA/ALF, 1993)

Outcomes are indeterminate because all these actors make hurried reactions to unforeseen events, and must struggle against one another. If predictable at all, the prospects for democratic development seem to depend on the relative strength and cohesion of a shifting set of conservative and reform coalitions within the state and outside of it. A third school of thought submits that democratic development depends upon the emergence of supportive set of political institutions. Institutions are recurrent and valued patterns of political behaviour that give shape and regularity to politics. Institutions draw attention to the regularities rather than the quirks of individual behaviour. Political institutions are more proximate to transition dynamics than "deep" socio-economic structures. An institutional approach to political culture development would appear to offer considerable explanatory power.

Nonetheless, the widespread incidence of social conflict and political instability in Africa is directly attributable to basic weaknesses of political institutions. They may be manifest as rules or as organisations. Hence, an institutional approach locates the analyst at an intermediate level between individuals and whole systems." While poor states have greatly expanded since independence, this growth has not usually been accompanied by a concomitant improvement in the capacity of the state to extend authority throughout the territory and to deliver public services.

With few exceptions, fragile states have failed to win popular legitimacy; hence the dire need for leadership capacitation. Indeed, leadership is more than a job; *it is a calling*. Leaders are on the one hand responsible for breaking the boundaries of inward bound wisdom, of common sense, of patterns of thinking and behaving which, over the years, have built themselves into routines which pacify people to dormancy. Leadership also means mutual accountability as indicated strongly in the Paris declaration. The existence of meaningful transparency, 'voice' mechanisms of 'bottom-up' public accountability can help ascertain whether public services are needed, wanted and whether people believe that their livelihoods are improving as a result. (Costantinos, BT., 1997)

Institutionalisation of citizen voice mechanisms on such as gender, human security and human development responsive budgets, community score cards and citizens report cards enhance mutual accountability that is inextricably linked to capacity issues: first, it implies that without mutual accountability there would not be an effective partnership to support capacity development; and second, an effective mutual accountability framework itself requires a threshold of capacity to be effective". The contest is between creation of an unprejudiced relationship between the capacity builder and the capacity receiver; leading to identifying ways and means of helping

- to foster institutions which currently do not exist;
- reorienting institutions which have been diverted to non-democratic ends; and
- building in-country capacity for democratic governance on the basis of African demand and with a minimum of outside expertise;

On the other hand leaders have to maintain continuity whilst simultaneously promoting change; such is the nature of leadership ambiguity and contradiction that comes as part of the same deal. The allusion of the foregoing is that the leader is responsible for change management, and change in a transition implies some degree of anarchy. The nexus between the status quo ante and the new, between letting go of the status quo ante and adopting the new order, is most often a place where rules are bent, and habit and routine are replaced with periods of chaos - which are indeed pieces of good fortune and opportunities for change, although, if prolonged, can become perilous to the nation.

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UNDP (1994) The UNDP's *Human Development Report* of 1994 (chapter two) pioneered exploration of these questions http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1994/en/pdf/hdr_1994_ch2.pdf International Chamber of Commerce www.iccwbo.org the UN Global Compact www.unglobalcompact.org and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development www.wbcsd.org for perspectives on the important roles of business in fostering human security, in coalitions with civil society and governments. The human security Network

UNDP (2006) Capacity Development Strategies: Let the Evidence Speak, Conference Report, Madrid, Spain

Wenger, E, McDermott, R & Snyder, W.M., 2002, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, HBS press

[i] We are dedicated to securing diversified funding from different multilateral, bilateral, public, private, northern and southern sources, to avoid dependence on any one donor. We advocate for the mobilization of local resources, especially from the private sector, including African businesses and regional offices of multinational corporations. We further seek to develop funding relationships with a long-term perspective, which will enable African NGOs to develop their capacities as a whole, beyond programme specific implementation.

[ii] However, with an estimated 17 million people remaining forcibly displaced across the continent, the challenges still faced are many. A substantial proportion of these populations have now been in displacement for years and in some cases decades, as a result of protracted crisis. Whilst the need for assistance remains paramount, donor fatigue is placing vulnerable populations at risk of dwindling support. The protection and assistance that people receive is already very basic, a drop in which would be catastrophic. Therefore it is essential that adequate funds be secured to ensure the necessary support and protection, and empower assisted populations to positively contribute to achieving durable solutions to the challenges they face. Displacement in whatever guise poses huge challenges to a person; disrupting social norms, exposing people to increased risks.

[iii] In 2006-2007, AHA, with support for DFID, improved its "Knowledge and Learning" capacity, and brought information and communication technology up to date at the Head Office. The AHA website was modernized and expanded. AHA also engaged with various institutions and universities in Africa and overseas in offering on-the-job training to humanitarian workers and researchers benefiting both parties. In 2007, AHA launched its new programmes initiative on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). The initiative targets two groups of equal importance to increase success. The first group is composed of AHA's governance, management, staff and volunteers at all levels of the organization. The second group composes AHA's beneficiaries and partner communities. This initiative is a commitment to carry out essential institutional change, to diversify and scale up assistance and services and to work with vulnerable communities across Africa. It will serve to facilitate the integration of country work plans and programme capacity development through a common framework.

[iv] On top of AHA's current governance structure is a Board of Trustees, which meets in an Assembly every three years. Staff roles are defined on the basis of decentralised management and clear responsibilities; professional and transparent recruitment procedures put into place; needs led, systematic staff development processes put in placed; staff motivation and team building exercises carried out; human resource and administrative systems procedures in place and followed; resource Mobilisation and Financial Management; institutional donor mapping carried out, new donors identified and applications submitted; African fundraising initiatives carried out; Financial management systems put in place which meet management, donor, regulatory and auditing requirements; Current relationships mapped and priorities identified for future relationship development.

[v] Management develops more specific performance indicators and relate them to operational plans and priorities. Monitoring and reporting will be based on two criteria. One is satisfying the needs and priorities of communities and people in weak positions. The other is being transparent and accountable with the management of AHA's resources to AHA's partners and supporters. The implementation of the programme will also be reviewed on a regular basis by a high-level "Monitoring Group" composed of senior members from the governance and country associations and offices. The group will advise and support senior management on ways and means to ensure a successful implementation of the programme by country associations and the Head Office.

[vi] Wenger (1998) described CoPs in terms of the interplay of four fundamental dualities: participation vs. reification, designed vs. emergent, identification vs. negotiability and local vs. global although, possibly because of the possible link to KM, the participation vs. reification duality has been the focus of most interest