



Capacity Building Process: a Breakthrough for Africa

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Abstract: Capacity building aims at enhancing the skills, abilities and resources that individuals or communities need to work together in achieving their set goals. The different techniques, concepts and approaches for capacity building mentioned here, makes it sustainable for the development priorities of poorer nations. Africa, a rising continent of fifty four countries can apply the capacity development strategies to accelerate its growth trajectory.

Key words: Capacity building, Capacity development, Africa, Sustainability.

Introduction:

The terms "capacity building" and "capacity development", relative to each other, are used in numerous contexts to describe various activities. In general, capacity consists of a party's ability to set objectives and solve problems to achieve them. Capacity building focuses on strengthening parties ability to work together for their mutual benefit by providing them with the needed skills and tools to formulate solutions (Maiese, 2005). The availability of fundamental human needs: food, clean drinking water, health care, basic education, and economic opportunities within a society enables building capacity for effective governance. Societies need to have basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, hospitals, schools etc in place. With the absence of this infrastructure, it becomes relatively difficult for institutions, governments, and organizations to solve the problems that society faces. The article has been summarized in to six sections: strategies, concept, application, problem analysis, process, and approach to capacity building and development. Finally, it speaks about how Africa is apt for capacity building, and the needed capacity development can accelerate growth in all the sectors here.

Here, two queries have been raised regarding capacity building.

- For any given sector, can capacity building be implemented and diligently followed to get productive solutions?
- Can this implied process be made continuing and long lasting sustainably?

As discussed later in the article, various strategies like the national level programmes and frame works adopted help capacity works to reap the benefits in all sectors. This could be read in part A. Also, capacity building is an on going process bearing its fruits in a sustainable manner. The most important factor for gaining this sustainability, is the total involvement of local stake holders who are concerned about the same. The process needed for implementing capacity building and taking the required corrective actions is explained in parts D and E respectively.

Capacity building is development at all levels of society including institutional development, community development, and economic development. Some of the central assets that individuals, organizations, communities, and governments need in order to achieve their full potential include knowledge and technical skills, institutional and organizational capacity, and the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. The three broad types of capacity: political capacity, conflict resolution capacity, and the ability of individuals, communities, institutions, and organization help to implement sustainable development strategies (Maiese, 2005).

Capacity building : path paved for Development and Sustainability

Capacity building is an important part of development work. It could be described as a matter of strengthening the ability of individuals, groups, institutions, and organizations to identify and solve development problems over time (Lusthaus.C.et.al 1993:p.3). This leads to helping local people and institutions to realize their own development objectives and address issues of human survival and welfare. Governments, aid donors, and NGOs commonly contribute to capacity development by investing in people, institutions, and practices that will help societies to deal with their development needs in an effective manner. To some extent, sustainable development also depends on nations capacity to implement effective government policies (Maiese, 2005).

Building capacity involves skills transfer, training, human resource management, organizational development, and strengthening communities. This training follows for individuals serving in national or international technical assistance programs; and also policy makers and practitioners who implement sustainable development strategies. The members from civil society to receive capacity training include government workers, community leaders, members of women's groups, and other civil society actors. For capacity within the legal system, jurors and employees within the court system should receive training from international legal mentors who are able to train and lead by example.

A) Strategies for capacity building:

For capacity building in poorer nations, national level programs designed for the people and the expansion of academic especially scientific communities for their connection to the international networks is fostered.

National programs are designed to expand the capacities of institutions as they can resolve people's needs. Through this institutional capacity building, people and organizations use their capacities to mobilize the resources needed to solve that nation's economic and social problems. The government institutions, the private sector, and civic organizations need to be equipped with their capacities for economic and social transition. This leads to a raise in the standard of living by accepting the new institutional reforms, policies, and rules of behaviour.

To develop the capacities of poorer nations, the growth of academic and scientific communities and their linkages with international academic networks must be prioritized. Second, individuals should get the chance to participate directly in the design and implementation phase of the project oriented capacity development programmes of the nation. The participation enhances the individuals, knowledge and skills needed for development projects in their home countries. Along with the participation, local ownership of national development projects is of importance. This ensures the local people being independent by playing the lead role in policy formations rather being dependent on donors. The local participation helps to build a strong civil society with a responsible government. This participation fills the people with experience, ownership, skill paves the way for lasting relationships (Maiese, 2005).

“Capacity Development is the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities; to perform functions solve problems and achieve objectives; to understand and deal with their development need in a broader context and in a sustainable manner”(ITC-ILO module 12; United Nations Development Programme, 2009;p.54).

Capacity aims to identify the skills of individuals, organizations and societies to perform functions, and achieve the set goals (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/genericdocument/wcms_633611.pdf ; UNDP, 2009; p.53). Capacity development encompasses utilization of that capacity to reduce poverty, instill self-reliance, and thus improve the standard of living. It requires investment in self- skills, institutional capacities as well as the development of opportunities to put these skills and networks to productive use for transforming the society

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/genericdocument/wcms_633611.pdf

Capacity building can take any of the following forms:

- Country-specific
- Programme/Project-related

- Organisational-related
- Job/Task specific-related

Necessity of capacity building in any given field:

Is capacity building the productive solution for any given sector? Could this be made long lasting and sustainable?

Capacity Building is discovered to be the key for promoting sustainable development especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition .Nevertheless capacity building has been embedded in the objectives and programmes of work of many international organizations offering a wide range of these activities. To support work in this area organizations such as the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) adopted frame works such as:-

- Marrakech Declaration on Capacity Development(2003)
- Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building(2005) (UNEP, 2006).

These included developing a plan of action on capacity development for impact assessment, health impact assessment, social assessment, strategic environmental assessment and management. Capacity building is supported through mainstreaming technology support and its dedicated activities (UNEP, 2006).

A) Analyzing the concept of capacity building:

‘Capacity building’ is institutional building leading to empowerment. Empowerment is the new adornment for the older concept of capacity building, stressing emphasis on the self-empowerment of people. Capacity building also includes;

- Human resource development: the process of imparting knowledge and training to individuals that enables them to perform effectively (UNDP 2017;p.5),
- Organizational development: the enhancement of management processes and procedures, including within and outside the organizations, and
- Institutional and legal framework development: proceed with legal changes for institutions at all levels and in all sectors to enhance capacities(UNDP 2017;p.6).

Capacity building takes place at the individual or group levels (covering skills and knowledge requirements), at the institutional or organizational levels (covering operational and administrative aspects), and at the strategic or systemic level (covering legal political, economic frameworks)

- The three levels are mutually interactive and influence each other through complex co-dependency relationships.

- There are some core principles to guide effective capacity development at the organizational or societal level: ownership, sustainability participation mobilization of local resources and change processes.
- All capacity development efforts and training are geared towards better performance of an institution or society in a sustainable manner.
- The capacity of an institution is essentially the product of the dynamic interactions between the people managing the institution with its laws, rules norms and traditions.
- The performance of the people is determined by the three factors namely: availability of supportive infrastructure, equipment and financial resources, technical skills and professional competence with their commitment and integrity.

Hierarchy of capacity development:

Capacity development is a hierarchical structure understood in three respective levels

Table1: Key capacity notions and elements at three levels of capacity development

Level of capacity	Notion of capacity	Elements of capacity
Individual	The capability to set objectives and achieve them with one's own experience and skills.	Knowledge, skills, values, attitude, health, awareness.
Organisation	To positively influence organisational performance.	Human resources (capacities of individuals in organizations). Physical resources (facilities, equipment, material, capital). Intellectual organisational resources (organisational strategy, strategic planning, business know-how, production technology, program management).
Environment	A conducive environment –political, legal, economic, social and cultural promotive of individual and organisational performance.	Formal institutions (laws, policies, ordinances). Informal institutions(customs, culture, norms). Social capital, social infrastructure).

Source: Adapted from UNESCO-IICBA 2006 ; pg6

Capacity development is an endogenous change process that must be initiated by the concerned entities, i.e. individuals, organisations and society as a whole in the partner countries and taking over the responsibility for the same (Pultar 2011). Capacity is understood as the ability of people,

organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. Capacity development thus is a change process wherein people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time. Thus we also determine that capacity development is a dynamic change process initiated by the people concerned. This dynamic change process should be initiated with the local actors concerned and maintained in a sustainable manner for better improved results.

B) Application of capacity development :

Capacity development is applicable across various fields thus making it a productive option across sectors. The most prominent being human resource development, developing efficient institutions and organizations and finally developing social and institutional frame work conditions for the betterment of human race.

Table 2: Levels of application of capacity development

Developing human resources	Developing institutions	Developing social & institutional framework
By imparting skill training & knowledge	By training of individual staff	By providing support to public, private sector and civic society institutions in i) organisational development ii) improvement of political, legal, cultural and administrative framework for organisations
By enhancing communication skills most needed for team work	By extending incentives	Enhancing cooperation amongst public sector, private sector and civil society
Increasing opportunities to take part in political, economic & social life	Fostering organisational and leadership culture	
By inculcating values to take responsibility	By building organisational networks	

Source: Pultar (2011); p.10

Basic principles for Capacity development:

- Do not rush through capacity development as it is a long-term process. It is not supportive to delivery pressures, quick fixes, and short-term results seeking (Lopes and Theisohn 2003; p.21)
- Have respect for the value systems and foster self-esteem. Capacity development builds upon respect and self esteem.
- Learn locally and globally and reinvent locally. Capacity development grows from voluntary learning, with genuine commitment and interest.
- Challenge mind-sets and power differentials. Encourage transparency in the work culture for capacity development.
- Always think and act for sustainable capacity outcomes. Capacity which is at the core of development should be a continuous not a one time process.
- Reinforce positive incentives. Parameters like motives and incentives need to be aligned with the objective of capacity development goals, along with proper governance systems .
- Include external inputs which correspond to the actual demands of national priorities and systems. It is essential to reform and strengthen national systems that are weak. Encourage to build on existing capacities rather than creating new ones. This asserts the primary use of national expertise, strengthening of national institutions, as well as protection of social and cultural capital.
- Be accountable to the final beneficiaries (Lopes and Theisohn 2003)

To achieve sustainable development results, it is essential to pursue a systematic approach in planning capacity development measures. Existing needs and demand for capacity development must be determined by carrying out an analysis, before designing long-term capacity development strategies and translating these into tangible action plans.

C) Problem analysis : needs and demand for capacity development:

To be effective, capacity building measures must be based on the required demand of the end-users and fulfilling their needs, priorities, and interests.

A problem analysis should therefore be able to predict a differentiated survey and assessment of strengths and weaknesses along the three levels: individual, organisational

and environment/political framework conditions. This can finally lead to the specific action plan for the capacity development indicators and set goals.

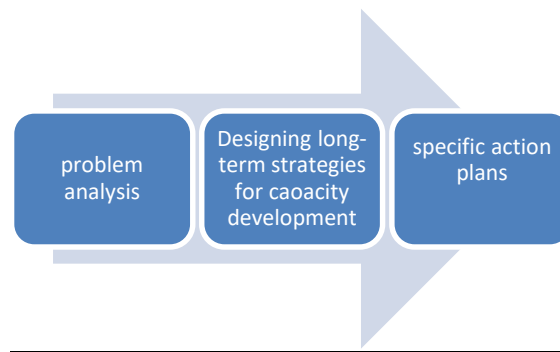


Figure 1 : Strategic approach for capacity development

Principles of effective capacity development:

All the entities ownership, sustainability, participation, mobilization of local resources and change process together enable capacity development to be a dynamic sustainable process.



Figure 2: Principles of effective capacity development

- Ownership- The people or organisation for which a capacity building project is meant must claim it, own it and drive it. Externally driven capacity development programmes may not be sustainable.
- Sustainability- In executing capacity building programmes attention and strategic planning should be focused in its sustainability.
- Participation- Capacity development programmes must be participatory. Improving knowledge and skills, changing organisational culture and introducing modern techniques in institution should be based on active involvement of the major stakeholders of those projects.
- Mobilization of local resources- Capacity development drawn on external resources, whether human or material is not sustainable. For capacity development to be indigenous, it must mobilize local resources to gain commitment.
- Change process- Capacity development must change the actions, processes and culture of an individual or organization for better performance. This requires clear bifurcation of issues of capacity for whom, for what and in whose interests.

Evolution of capacity building:

Since the early 1970's, capacity building then called 'institutional building' was given to United Nations Development program (UNDP). This included building preliminary capacities for national organisations, in the fields of civil aviation, meteorology, agriculture, and health. All UN specialised agencies like the FAO, WHO were supposed to be a part of capacity building activities in their areas of technical expertise. (http://www.coastalwiki.org/wiki/The_Capacity_Building_Concept)

In 1991 the term evolved and transformed from institutional building into **capacity building**. By 1992, capacity building became a known concept in Agenda 21 and in other United Nation Conference on Environmental and Development(UNCED) agreements. (Maica, 2013).

In the year 2000, UNDP through its partnership with the GEF Secretariat, launched the Capacity Development Initiative (CDI). The process was to identify countries priorities issues in capacity development needs, to develop a strategy and action plan to fulfill the needs and meet the challenges of capacity development.

In 2002, the World Summit in Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Second GEF Assembly reasserted the need to build capacity of developing countries (http://www.coastalwiki.org/wiki/The_Capacity_Building_Concept). Here, financial resources to developing countries were given to meet their capacity needs for training, technical knowhow and fortifying national institutions. In 2005, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) redefined capacity building parameters which involved human resource development, the development of organizations and an overall policy environment (Maica, 2013; Bester 2016;p.12).

An essential milestone in the UNDP capacity development approach is transformation (UNDP, 2009).

Table 3: Evolution of capacity development approach

Stages	Assumption	Practice	Result
First	Developing countries need money	Developed countries lend or grant money to developing countries through development aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime focus is on investment and reporting rather on results • Dependence on foreign aid • Projects end when money runs out
Second	Developing countries should model after the developed ones	Technical Assistance is foreign experts come in to operate their own projects, expecting similar results to those seen in developed countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects launched, but disconnected from local goals or priorities • Assumes few or no resources available locally • Dependence on foreign experts • Expertise not always transferred from foreigners to locals • The externally driven model may ignore

			local realities
Third	Developing countries should partner with developed ones	Technical Cooperation is greater emphasis on training, transferring knowledge, based on national policies and priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local expertise enhanced • Projects somewhat more in line with local priorities and goals • Driven by outside forces, opportunities missed to develop local institutions and strengthen local capacities • Expensive
Current	Developing countries should own, design, implement and sustain the process themselves	Capacity Development is a focus on empowering and strengthening local capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes the most of local resources – people, skills, technologies, institutions – and builds on these • Favours sustainable change • addresses issues of power inequality in relations between rich and poor, mainstream and marginalized (for countries, groups and individuals) • stresses on lasting transformations through policy and institutional reforms

Source: UNDP 2009

D) Process of Capacity development

Capacity development is an evolving process of incremental growth with positive change.

This transformation is driven by a set of skills known as functional capacities. These functional capacities allow for planning, implementing , and evaluating initiatives for growth. Capacity is a process of an upwardly spiraling cycle of events. This is a five step process (UNDP, 2017;p.8).

Steps for capacity development process are:

- Engage stake holders
- Assess capacity

- Formulate a response for capacity development
- Next implement the capacity development response gathered
- Evaluate the capacity development response

Maintain the whole process as an on going cycle, with the needed corrective actions and implementations at the junctures required.



Figure 3: Capacity development approach

Source: UNDP 2017; p.8

Step1: Engage stakeholders

Capacity development begins with effective communication. The first step is to communicate among all those who benefit from the process. The priority should be to involve people committed to the process. To initiate national development priorities it is necessary to involve all the participants in local decision making and be a part of the process. Establishing accountability would follow through clearly stated goals and responsibilities.

Step 2: Assess capacity

This step involves measuring progress through clearly stated indicators. The progress is measured and action taken, by comparing them to the existing capacity assets and checking the desired level of capacity set for development or organizational objectives (UNDP, 2017).

The capacity assessment process consists of three steps:

- mobilization and design;
- conducting the process; and
- summarizing and assessing the results.

Step 3: Formulate a capacity development response

A good capacity development response address the gaps identified in a capacity assessment. A good capacity development response should include quick-impact initiatives and short- to medium-term initiatives for both post-crisis and changing situations. The costing involved for a capacity development response should be clearly calculated in advance (UNDP, 2009).

Step 4: Implement a capacity development response

- This phase involves all the actions from thinking, planning, assessing, analyzing and designing being tested in the real world. For sustainable long-term results, implementation should be managed through national systems and processes rather than through the parallel systems of external partners.
- engage with national systems and integrate your work in existing national processes, leverage capacity development to integrate efforts from other development partners and in building consensus.
- integrate capacity development systematically in all programming efforts, define capacity development actions and indicators and integrate them in the monitoring and evaluation framework.
- think sustainability and exit strategy upfront – focus on designing programmes and projects that leave something valuable behind.

Step 5: Evaluate capacity development

Capacity development is evaluated through the improved efficiency and effectiveness reflected through the change in performance. An evaluation framework that captures the key issues has to be designed and applied accordingly. (UNDP, 2009).

E) Approach to capacity development :

The approach to capacity development are assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and finally evaluation of capacity policies.

Excellence can be achieved through systematically following the above mentioned capacity development approach steps. The final goal of achieving the target policies need to be kept in mind , while taking each approach step.



Source: Adapted by the Author

Figure 4: Capacity development approach

Factors that Contribute to Capacity Building and Sustainability:

Factors aligned with strategic planning for capacity building and sustainability are;

1. **Administrative structures and formal linkages.** These must be built and strengthened so that the organizations and systems responsible for the implementation, integration, and oversight of programs have the capacity to carry out their functions effectively and to sustain them over time.
2. **Champion and leadership roles.** Leadership buy-in and promotion by multiple champions across organizations and systems help ensure success. Valuable champions and leaders with the ability to communicate their commitment, engage others, address barriers, and build system capacity are considered as assets.
3. **Resource development.** Adequate and sustainable funding, staffing, technical assistance, and materials can help sustain innovations (Johnson .K.et.al. 2004).
4. **Administrative policies and procedures.** These policies support programs, organizations, and systems for adoption and sustainability of innovations. These help to assure that innovations remain part of the routine practice of organizations and send a clear message about the desirability and expectation for sustaining efforts. The absence of the policies can create political barriers to sustaining the innovation
5. **Community and practitioner expertise.** Maintaining expertise in areas such as needs assessment, logic model construction, selection and implementation of evidence-based programs, fidelity and adaptation, evaluation, and cultural competence supports capacity building and sustainability

The goal of sustainability is to implement and maintain effective programs and systems that are continually responsive to stakeholder needs. This is accomplished by examining another five factors which, if addressed through strategic planning, can facilitate building sustainability. These five factors include:

- 1) **Alignment of program with stakeholder needs.** Despite innovations in capacity, the organizations must meet the needs of the intended users and other stakeholders for long run sustainability. Less complexity, more compatibility, and a high degree of perceived benefit are associated with sustainability.
- 2) **Relationship among stakeholders.** Establishing and maintaining positive relationships among stakeholders supports sustainability. Collaboration between program developers, implementers, and supportive networks is helpful in maintaining sustainability (Johnson. K. et.al 2004)
- 3) **Quality of program implementation.** Commitment to quality of program implementation via process, fidelity, and outcome evaluation based on logic models helps sustain an innovation and ensure commitment by adopters.
- 4) **Effectiveness.** Commitment to effectiveness is also critical to sustainability.

- 5) **Ownership among stakeholders.** Strengthening ownership of an innovation among stakeholders and adopters increases its sustainability. Ownership has a stronger influence on sustainability than do regulative measures.

Each of these 10 factors can be addressed with action steps. These action steps include:

- assessing existing conditions
- developing a plan to strengthen that factor
- implementing the plan
- evaluating the plan's effectiveness
- reassessing/ modifying the plan.

Taking these actions in support of the capacity building and sustainability objectives, represents an ongoing process not a one time event (Johnson, K. et.al 2004)

Why and How capacity development in the African continent?

The World Bank reports reveal that Sub-Saharan Africa has severe constraints in majority sectors like shortage of skilled staff, inadequate training facilities and limited capacity to satisfy the need for skilled personnel. Africa, a continent of 54 countries differs in their government policies and implementation levels. Also, the weak institutional environment refrains the proper utilization of existing capacities. The essential technical tools required to promote development and the capacity to formulate and implement policies and to manage the economy are weak or non-existent here. Here, capacity building could be identified as the missing link in Africa's development. Capacity building is needed in all sectors of the economy and should be incorporated into all systems of development (Singh, 1997). Having understood the necessity and significance of capacity building and development, let's understand the factors that make **Africa the next big frontier for capacity development.**

The African continent is known as the land of opportunities. It has a plethora of strengths to be worked upon and transformed into probable opportunities for growth.

Listing a few below:

- *Vast cropland and natural resources:* Private sector initiatives can enhance the agricultural production output in Africa. In Africa, with the improved crop production techniques, the agribusiness industry is estimated to reach US\$ 1 trillion by 2030 (AGRA, 2017: p.8). With the vast arable land capacity development can raise the agricultural production and the agricultural sector.
- *Mining and mineral resources:* The Africa Development Bank has predicted the resources sector to earn US\$ 30 billion per annum for the government revenue in the coming twenty years (AfDB, 2015). The government needs to create sufficient jobs for the locals in the resource sector.

- *Growing youth population:* The youth population estimated to rise from 1.2 billion to 3.75 billion in 2100 could be effectively trained and used for industrialisation (UNDESA, 2019). The youth could be productively used for self employment & entrepreneurial activities. This youth population could be better skilled and employed in many sectors of growth. Africa can provide the population with the education and skills to turn them into a powerful means of global consumption.
- *Growing private inflows:* Africa always had a steady flow of external finances through remittances, FDI , and ODA. Post COVID-19 pandemic, the external financial flow to Africa has dropped by 5 per cent of the total; here remittances have dropped by 25 per cent and FDI by 40 per cent of the total inflow (UNCTAD 2021: p.38).

Capacity building is an integral part of development work. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognizes that capacity building is a long-term, continuing process in which all stakeholders (ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, academics, and others) participate (UNDP, 2009). According to Africa Capacity Indicators database 2019, the continent has ten high capacity countries, 31 medium capacity countries, and five low capacity countries (Africa Capacity Report 2019).

For African countries to move forward with capacity development, their capacities need to be enhanced in four clusters. These are:

- **The Policy environment:** focuses on the country's levels of commitment to meeting development and poverty reduction objectives established within Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Africa Capacity Report, 2019).
- **The implementation** process involves creating an environment that supports individuals and leaders in managing policies, strategies, and projects.
- **Development results at the country level:** are tangible outputs that permit development.
- **Capacity development outcomes:** these are the actual indicators of the achievement of specific Millennium Development Goals, which now progress to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Africa Capacity Report, 2019). For bridging the predominant skill gap in Africa and funding capacity building programmes, institutions like the African Development Bank (ADB), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Africa Union Commission (AUC), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP's) regional Bureau for Africa and (Africa Capacity building Foundation) ACBF have been actively involved. At the policy front, Africa adopted Agenda 2063 in 2015 for improving its developmental trajectory through skill development and education, while at the global level United Nations adopted the Sustainability Development Goals (SDG's) (African Union, 2015). Apart from the developed countries, developing countries like India is actively involved in the capacity building activities in Africa through the Indian development cooperation lying within the umbrella of South-South Cooperation.

Conclusion:

Having known the necessity and importance of capacity building, it can be used as a source of sustainable means of a nation with its human resource and economic development.

The prime objective of capacity building is the ability to create the framework for the identification and analysis of problems along with the formulation and implementation of solutions to enhance sustainable development. Capacity building could be used to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities available in the developing countries for their progress and growth. The continent of Africa is blessed with many conducive factors for its growth opportunities. These could be efficiently molded through capacity building activities in many sectors for its progress. Effective government policies with local ownership by the people can transform Africa in to a rising continent.

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