

The CAAST-Net Bulletin

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NETWORK FOR THE COORDINATION AND
ADVANCEMENT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA-EU
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

a **Research** publication

Building bridges between policymakers and experts

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

A wide variety of research specialists and policymakers attended a CAAST-Net workshop in London, UK, in July, in order to help enhance science and technology cooperation between the continents of Europe and Africa.

“The idea was to create an informal forum between experts and policymakers, advancing cooperation between Europe and Africa,” explained CAAST-Net project coordinator Andy Cherry.

The workshop was jointly facilitated by Birgit Wirsing, the senior scientific officer at the International Bureau of Germany’s Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and Eric Mwangi of Kenya’s Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

“The workshop objectives were at the very heart of our responsibilities, since the International Bureau supports the ministry in developing and implementing its international relations,” explained Jörn Sonnenburg, executive director of the International Bureau.

“The highlight was the active and fruitful dialogue between the participants, who shared a common interest in developing the science and technology cooperation framework for the EU and African science and innovation communities,” said Sonnenburg, who attended with colleagues Susanne Madders and Anne Pflug from Germany’s Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

“Providing new momentum for the policy framework as it is defined among others by the Joint Action Plan agreed upon between the EU and the AU was one of the key targets of this dialogue,” he said.

Topics at the meeting included the renewal of the eighth partnership on science, information society and space in the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), the discussion of key principles for a senior official science and technology policy dialogue to be set up between the EU and AU as well as scenarios for making optimum use of the academic diaspora, Sonnenburg said.

Twenty-five people attended the informal discussions and shared their perspectives. The workshop was hosted by the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

“The meeting was useful because I got the opportunity to explain how a greater African Research Area - that is open to the rest of the world but is run on the basis of inter-Africa research networking - may be organised,” said Mammo Muchie, the Ethiopia-born editor of the African Science, Technology, Innovation and Development Journal.

“We discussed how the FP6, FP7 and later FP8 can be used to facilitate the creation of a greater African research area by building research partnerships and cooperations,” said Muchie, who is director of the Research Centre on Development Studies and International Relations at Aalborg University in Denmark.

“This was included in the workshop’s recommendations, and it was very inspiring that it was accepted,” said Muchie, who also holds the research chair at the Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa.



Woburn House in London, UK, home to the Association of Commonwealth Universities, where the workshop took place in July this year

Policymakers who participated in the workshop included Robert Burmanier and Alessandro Damiani from the European Commission, in Belgium, and senior policy officer Hambani Masheleni from the African Union Commission in Ethiopia.

Funda Mpanza, the senior programme officer for science and technology at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) secretariat in Gaborone, Botswana, also attended the workshop.

From France’s IRD (L’Institut de recherche pour le développement) participants included Günther Hahne, director of the department for capacity-building of southern scientific communities, and Yves Savidan, the European Research Area Network for Africa (ERAFRICA) coordinator and IRD representative in South Africa.

South Africa was represented at the workshop by Segopotso Moshapo, the Information and Communication Technology national contact point (ICT NCP) and a researcher at the European-South Africa Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP).

Another South African in attendance was Iqbal Parker, director of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB).

National representatives at the workshop included Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry from Egypt, Thabisa Mbungwana from South Africa and Orji Emeka from Nigeria.

The European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), based in the Netherlands, was represented at the workshop by director Charles Mgone, while Neil Runnalls, the coordinator of the two-year African Water specific support action to increase the involvement of African researchers in the EU Seventh Framework Programme came from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, the United Kingdom’s Centre of Excellence for integrated research in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and their interaction with the atmosphere.

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Coordinator's Column

Andy Cherry, CAAST-Net project coordinator

The year 2010 has been one of transition for CAAST-Net. At the end of 2009 the European Commission published a call for proposals for expansion of INCO-NETs, including CAAST-Net. A major focus therefore for partners in early 2010 was the drafting of an expansion proposal. The efforts paid off as the proposal was approved with flying colours. Then began the process of translating the proposal into a new CAAST-Net description of work (DoW), now close to final approval. Our new DoW sees CAAST-Net embarking on a strategy of engagement with Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) for advancing continental science and technology (S&T) priorities. The strategy will come to dominate our activities in 2011 and 2012. Over the last year we have been striving to lay the foundation of relationships with RECs' science desks on which to build collaborative activities.

Towards the end of July, CAAST-Net participated by invitation in a meeting of experts in S&T from member states of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission. That several ECOWAS countries are represented in the CAAST-Net consortium almost certainly oiled the wheels of progress. We are now looking forward to a face-to-face discussion in the near future to explore S&T priority issues and avenues for advancing cooperation between ECOWAS and interested European parties.

Following our exploratory meeting in February 2010 with the representatives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) we have started discussions on a possible policy and research programme dialogue between SADC and European parties in the first half of 2011. In association with other Framework Programme (FP) projects, we'll also offer FP awareness raising and training for FP contact points. The collaboration we develop with SADC and ECOWAS will, we hope, pave the way for collaboration with other RECs. We're keen to meet with officials representing the science desks of other RECs, and particularly those playing a role in advancing the programmes of Africa's consolidated plan of action (CPA).

Providing forums for examining Africa-European Union (EU) cooperation is something that CAAST-Net does well. During July CAAST-Net hosted a stimulating follow-up to our 2009 Mombasa conference on EU-Africa cooperation. Featured in this issue of the Bulletin, the gathering in London of about 20 African and European experts and policy officials provided a timely

forum for informal but informative exchanges about a future bi-regional S&T policy dialogue, and the renewal of the joint Africa-EU strategy action plan. Other topics discussed included the role of the academic diaspora.

In November CAAST-Net facilitated two workshops in Marseille, France. Drawing on the experience of partners and coordinators of past and present EU-Africa cooperation projects, the events applied lessons learned to improving the nature of cooperation and to building greater cooperation between initiatives, for example around training and awareness raising activities for the FP.

In recent months we've been keeping a close watch on the Africa-EU S&T partnership. With many CAAST-Net partners also sitting on the Joint Experts' Group (JEG8) wearing their national hats, the insight we have to that forum provides valuable context to our activities. In the same vein, readers may be aware that a new action plan for the S&T partnership emerged from the Tripoli summit of African and European Heads of State and Government. Among its clauses, the new action plan emphasises the mainstreaming of S&T into REC programmes, and gives support for an African Union-EU high-level S&T policy dialogue. Both these features have parallel support actions in the CAAST-Net DoW which partners are keen to mobilise in support of formal processes.

Looking forward to 2011, in addition to the programme of activities with RECs, a second pillar of our new DoW offers networking support to enhance the impact of the Africa-EU projects funded by the EU's 2010 coordinated call for Africa. Collectively those 20 or more projects across 15 topics contribute to Africa's priority programmes on water, food security and the environment.

In 2011 we'll be making greater efforts to extend our group of stakeholders and more effectively communicate CAAST-Net activities and outputs. We see this Bulletin as a primary channel for active dissemination to our stakeholders and we encourage you to send us your inputs and reactions.

All in all, as we approach the end of our third year, CAAST-Net's new strategy adapts us better to the evolving landscape, and partners have a clearer vision and a more comfortable understanding of our role and contribution to the Africa-EU S&T relationship.

What is CAAST-Net?

CAAST-Net is a joint bi-regional project whose goal is to increase the quality and quantity of cooperation in science and technology between Europe and Africa, targeting areas of mutual interest and benefit through greater use of instruments under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) as well as through other instruments of international cooperation, and through lobbying for greater synergy between research and development, and development instruments. In support of its goal, CAAST-Net has a range of activity clusters aiming:

- to support and inform existing Europe-Africa science and technology policy dialogue and cooperation processes
- to identify and prioritise common research areas of mutual interest and benefit, especially for inclusion in the thematic priorities of the FP7 Cooperation programme, harnessing cooperation to address specific problems faced locally and regionally within Africa as well as common problems of a global nature
- to promote synergy between Europe-Africa science and technology partnerships and development cooperation instruments in order to enhance the creation and application of new knowledge in support of achieving the millenium development goals, poverty alleviation and economic growth

- to undertake specific activities dedicated to strengthening of the participation of African countries in the FP7 through a series of events aimed at raising awareness, providing information, brokering partnerships and optimising synergies
- to monitor the performance and impact of Europe-Africa science and technology cooperation under the FP7 to inform future cooperation policy

Many of CAAST-Net's activities, such as brokerage events, conferences, information days and thematic discussion platforms are open to participation by interested parties. CAAST-Net has an "open-door" policy to its wider stakeholder community and is dedicated to continued dialogue and networking with our stakeholder community. We strongly encourage engagement with the project by all stakeholders to share information, and to be kept informed of opportunities.

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Letter

What CAAST-Net partner TÜBİTAK brings to the table

International scientific cooperation (INCO) was integrated in the Community Research Framework Programmes in 1992 and has been further developed in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) to help find solutions to global challenges necessitating region-based responses. Turkey has participated in the Framework Programmes since 2002, and from that day on the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (known as the Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu in Turkish or its acronym TÜBİTAK) has been performing as the national coordinating body of the European Union (EU) Framework Programmes in Turkey. In the context of the INCO theme in FP7, TÜBİTAK has been involved in eight INCO ERA-NET projects and seven INCO-Net projects.

The INCO-Net projects, including CAAST-Net, focus on enhancing bilateral and regional scientific cooperation between the EU and target countries and regions. In the CAAST-NET project, TÜBİTAK is taking part in work package five (WP5) and work package six (WP6). Within the WP5, one of the training visits by African National Information Points (NIPs) will be organised in Turkey. As the co-leader of WP6, TÜBİTAK will participate in the tasks aiming at increasing FP7 awareness in the partner countries.

Another example of the INCO-Net projects funded under FP7 is WBC-INCO.NET, which is targeting Western Balkan countries. TÜBİTAK's main roles within the WBC-INCO.NET project include communicating with relevant directorate generals and INCO officials of the European Commission, organising brokerage events to facilitate networking and partnership building, monitoring the take-up of Western Balkan countries science and technology priorities under the Cooperation Programme and in other science and technology programmes (such as COST or EUREKA) and organising meetings for regional networking support to National Contact Points (NCPs).

TÜBİTAK is also participating in the SEA-EU-NET project, which focuses on facilitating the bi-regional EU-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Science and Technology Dialogue. TÜBİTAK is contributing to the project by linking to activities which focus on cooperation with South East Asia or other INCO-NETs. The intention is to form a network of FP7 NCPs among the South East Asian countries and to increase their participation in the People Programme of the FP7 through events, trainings and workshops.

The above-cited projects have resulted in building a substantial information multiplier capacity (such as NIPs or NCPs) and increasing awareness on FP7 in the target regions. The accumulated experience and capacity gained from the INCO projects enabled Turkey to carry out similar projects in different countries and regions (such as CAAST-Net) and to take the leadership in other initiatives (such as the ERA-NET scheme in collaboration with Japan). The Connecting and Coordinating European Research and Technology Development with Japan project (CONCERT) will be coordinated by TÜBİTAK and will bring together the European countries to consolidate and structure their science and technology cooperation with Japan.

The experience gained and the capacity developed through involvement with the INCO projects has put TÜBİTAK in an excellent position to contribute to the CAAST-Net project. TÜBİTAK will share the most influential strategies that have been designed and implemented in the ongoing INCO projects in order to promote the establishment of a fully-fledged science and technology cooperation between Europe and other regions. TÜBİTAK will also contribute to the creation of synergies and the establishment of a policy dialogue with the INCO projects by drawing the consortium members' attention to the best project implementations and success stories as well as ensuring the networking between experts, policymakers and specialists dealing with the challenges in the target areas of the INCO projects.

Nebilay Erdoğan

CAAST-Net project officer for the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK)



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Nebilay Erdoğan is currently responsible for the day-to-day management of the participation of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) in the ERAfrica and CAAST-Net projects



CAAST-Net workshop, London, United Kingdom

The focus of the CAAST-Net workshop, held from the 13 to 14 July in London, United Kingdom, was on 'recommendations on enhanced European Union -Africa science and technology cooperation.' Speakers included Hambani Masheleni from the Africa Union Commission, Alessandro Damiani from the European Commission, Iba Kone from the African Academy of Sciences, and Susanne Madders from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung). The photographs were submitted by Nnaemeka Orji, the special assistant to the director general at the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP) in Nigeria, who was a participant at the event.



Anne Pflug, the national contact point for life sciences at the PT-DLR and Robert Burmanjer, the head of the directorate D3 at the EC, DG RTD



Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, the coordinator for European Cooperation at the Egyptian ministry, and Andy Cherry, the CAAST-Net project manager



Yves Savidan, director of IRD Southern Africa office; Emeka Orji, chief technology officer of NOTAP; Eric Mwangi, chief research officer at MoHEST



Günther Hahne, a director at the IRD, David Dickson, director of SciDev Net, and John Wood, the ACU secretary general



Thabisa Mbungwana, the manager for strategic partnerships at the DST, and Rafael Rodríguez-Clemente, the coordinator of INCO-NET MIRA



Led by Sara Calamassi, delegates head across Trafalgar Square in London towards the Royal Commonwealth Club for a workshop dinner

Cape Verde and Portugal to collaborate on the FP7 information system in Africa

Gerard Ralphs



José Bonfim



Alfred Moreno

The Directorate General of Higher Education and Science (Direção Geral do Ensino Superior e Ciência or the DGESG) in Cape Verde and the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia or FCT) are leading a key work package in CAAST-Net focused on providing training and support services to African countries that wish to improve their researchers' participation in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Alfred Moreno from the DGESG and José Bonfim from the FCT comment on the role of CAAST-Net's work package five.

What is the goal of work package five?

The goal of work package five (WP5) is enhanced participation of African countries in Framework Programme (FP) actions, and increased opportunities for Europe-Africa partnerships as a result of those actions.

What steps have been taken to achieve this goal?

WP5 have undertaken a series of activities to improve the quality and quantity of support to African participants in FP projects. In 2009 we organised three FP7 information days in Cape Verde, Cameroon and Mombasa. We also organised a brokerage and networking event, with a focus on the 2010 call for proposals under the information and communication technologies theme of FP7. The CAAST-Net Bulletin and website has also provided an important platform for the dissemination of information by WP5. During 2010 we published a summary of NIP activity in Africa. This will be updated in 2011.

What plans are in the pipeline for WP5?

We are currently preparing for a series of training sessions targeted at African National Information Points (NIPs) for the FP, as well as for specific activities to raise awareness in Africa about the mobility instruments offered to researchers under FP7. These activities will be conducted in collaboration with recognised National Contact Points (NCPs) networks, such as the INCONTACT network of INCO NCPs with which we have good linkages. Looking into the future, we aim to organise "African sessions" at major European scientific conferences in order to raise awareness in Europe of African expertise, and to assist European and African researchers with similar interests to find each other.

Should African countries have a network of national information points?

The existence of NIPs in non-EU countries is critical to boosting the participation of researchers from those countries in FP. Without NIPs, a country will struggle to gain access to critical information and know-how and, thus, fail to adequately inform its researchers about opportunities to participate in FP-funded collaborative research.

How many NIPs should a country have?

The number of NIPs appointed per country is a national decision and depends on the national strategy relating to the areas of the FP in which a country is more interested. A single NIP may cover several areas but ideally, we would recommend at least one official NIP per country be appointed.

How are NIPs appointed?

NIPs for a given country are appointed by the national authority in charge of science and technology. This authority should address a letter to the body representing the European Commission (EC) in the country, specifying the name and profile of the person or persons being nominated as NIP in different areas of FP7. The name will be forwarded to the relevant authorities at the EC, following which the formal accreditation process will begin. CAAST-Net can advise national authorities on how to appoint NIPs in their countries.

What knowledge does an NIP need in order to be most effective in this role?

Nominated individuals should be fully familiar with the FP to ensure the correct and appropriate responses are provided to the questions of researchers interested in responding to FP7 calls. The training of the NIP is therefore a critical step.

What are the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of NIPs?

NIPs are information multipliers. They play an important role in the communication of information to researchers either on opportunities for calls for proposals, or rules of participation in FP7. It is also a role of NIPs to help researchers in the search for partners in other countries through the network of NCPs across countries.

Do NIPs meet and, if so, when and how often?

NIPs do meet together regularly (often, but not always in Brussels) and through these meetings receive detailed information from the EC about current research programmes and calls. NIPs will then act to disseminate this information in tailored ways within a given national scientific community. It is the decision of the NIP as to how the dissemination of information in the country should be organised. An informal meeting of Africa's international cooperation (INCO) NIPs took place in Johannesburg, South Africa on 2 and 3 December 2010 in which CAAST-Net participated.

What resources and support is available to national information points from Africa?

It is important to note that the resources required to support the work of NIPs are provided by national governments and not the EC. However, the EC may in certain instances choose to reimburse the travel costs for NIPs to attend official meetings.

In June 2009, CAAST-Net hosted an information day in Cape Verde. How is Cape Verde progressing toward building its own NCP network?

In 2009, we identified an individual with the requisite expertise and experience to act as the Cape Verde legal NIP. The nomination of the relevant individual was completed by DGESG in mid-2009. Formal accreditation is currently pending.

* The term National Contact Points (NCPs) is used in Europe. Outside Europe, the terms NCPs or National Information Points (NIPs) are used interchangeably.

Nigeria launches Abuja technology corridor

CAAST-Net partner NOTAP helps improve scientific collaboration in Nigeria

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

Nigeria is developing an ambitious plan to improve collaboration between local scientists and industry in the capital, Abuja.

The plan, named the Abuja technology corridor, will help scientific organisations, education institutions and companies situated along the road from the Nnamdi Azikiwe international airport to the national sports stadium.

The idea is to make a hub which would attract other technology companies, in the mould of Silicon Valley in the USA, on either side of what used to be called the airport road. It is now named Umar Musa Yar-Adua Road after the late president.

Umar Bindir, the director general of the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), hopes the institutions will collaborate once they “know each other.”

“People build walls around institutions. NOTAP, a government agency which seeks to promote the use of technology, is trying to break these walls so communication can start moving,” Bindir said, adding the plan seeks to help organisations to partner at no cost.

A key institution situated on the Abuja road is the African University of Science and Technology, led by acting president Charles Chidume, who is also the senior vice president for academic affairs.

The National Biotechnology Development Agency, which was established in 2001 by the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (FMST) and is led by director-general Bamidele Solomon, is also situated along this road.

The Abuja Technology Village, a cluster of high-technology companies and for-profit research intuitions which has been in preparation since 2008, is also due to be launched soon in the same area.

Karniyus Gamaniel, the director general of the National Institution for Pharmaceutical Research and Development, has welcomed the plan. However, implementing the Abuja technology corridor may not be easy.

Scientists in Nigeria, as in other African nations, are sometimes accused of preferring to partner with colleagues in Europe or North America rather than with local organisations.

Bindir said this will not deter his organisation.

“It’s not easy to crack islands. We are taking things in a narrow manner and this will take time but we are focused about where we are going,” said Bindir, a chartered engineer.

Collaboration will help Africa’s most populous country achieve the economic goals contained in the Vision 2020 plan, run by the National Planning Commission.

It will also be crucial in improving the commercialisation of research results, he said.



Umar Bindir, the director general of the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), explaining how the Abuja technology corridor will be implemented at a NOTAP meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria in September this year

To download the Nigeria Vision 2020 document, visit the National Planning Commission website at <http://www.npc.gov.ng>. Then click on “Downloads” and find the latest draft under “Latest News NV20.20 Draft Documents.”

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Upcoming event

CAAST-Net Annual Assembly 2011

The CAAST-Net Annual Assembly 2011 will be held in June at Woburn House, the offices of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), in London, UK.

This year’s CAAST-Net Annual Assembly took place at the International Conference Centre in Durban, South Africa in May. The meeting was kindly hosted by South Africa’s Department of Science and Technology, with Research Africa as the media partner.

The Assembly is the one occasion per year for all CAAST-Net partners to meet face-to-face, to discuss technical progress with special guests, to address housekeeping, governance, and financial or administrative issues, and to receive strategic advice from our panel of independent panel of external experts.

In 2010 a few self-financing members of the stakeholder group attended the event, a process we hope to repeat in 2011.

An agenda for the 2011 meeting will be finalised in coming months and participants will be able to view it on the CAAST-Net website.

For further information, please contact Andy Cherry, the project coordinator of CAAST-Net, at the ACU.

A way forward: language policies in enhancing bi-regional cooperation in science and technology

David Hallberg



David Hallberg

CAAST-Net accepts occasional papers from external contributors. The following represents the personal views of David Hallberg, from the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences at Stockholm University in Sweden, who was an invited guest at the CAAST-Net stakeholders' conference in Kenya last year.

This paper illustrates potential ways to take account of the use of languages in international conferences and in transnational cooperation, and may be fruitful for readers delving into efforts to promote global cooperation.

It communicates research notes and documents from CAAST-Net's stakeholders' conference, entitled "Africa-Europe Cooperation in Science and Technology: Status and Way Forward", on the 10th to 11th November 2009. The conference was held in Mombasa, a coastal town in Kenya.

The meeting was held to enhance bi-regional cooperation in science and technology (S&T) through an examination of the nature and the role of cooperation processes.

The conference was organised by the Kenyan Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST) in cooperation with the International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

Building relationships through languages

It is worth noting here that in Kenya, while English is the official medium of instruction in schools, Swahili is widely used, especially in lower primary school (Hungu, 2009), and there are more than 40 tribal languages (Sida 2009; Kenya.go.ke 2010; CIA 2009).

Despite this, the only accepted working languages at the Kenyan conference are the colonial languages of English and French. Not even Swahili, the lingua franca of all of East Africa, is included.

It is true that the process of globalisation has caused the English language to become the lingua franca for scientific communication internationally (Altbach, 2007).

So the fact that little in CAAST-Net's strategies or policies refers to different languages is not in itself unusual.

However, two critical factors for CAAST-Net's

relationship-building efforts to succeed are an educated population who can use knowledge effectively and a dynamic information and communication infrastructure in order to facilitate the processing of information and enhancing productivity.

Both of these issues rely on language.

According to CAAST-Net, promoting global partnerships and international cooperation in order to share and learn from the experiences of partners, building national expertise, and enhancing knowledge generation capacity are all ways of achieving these goals.

This cannot happen without understanding – which relates again to the effective use of language.

CAAST-Net should therefore strive to identify and develop multicultural joint initiatives – including the use of different languages – as a way forward.

This can perhaps be seen in some of the debates among delegates on the major barriers to ICT-driven transnational collaboration on issues of S&T and education.

One of the key speakers, Daan du Toit from the South African mission to the European Union, stressed at the Mombasa meeting that "a dialogue should be a real dialogue."

Another speaker, Minnattallah Boutros from the University of Würzburg, Germany, made the suggestion that communication – the major tool for human interaction – is a problem. Not sharing the same language is an important consideration.

A related, problem is interdisciplinary communication, when different participants may use the same language but not share the same vocabulary. Who, in such a case, takes priority?

Boutros also said: "Communication is the tool – and the biggest challenge. Traditional and local knowledge must be involved in a dialogue."

To bridge communication cleavages and other divides, to have a dialogue, the same speaker notes other important factors: respect, trust and responsibility, curiosity, fun and time.

But many of the comments on communication may in fact refer to the use of language.

There are of course other barriers to relationship building mentioned by the speakers, such as the shortage of local researchers, limited research infrastructure, and the isolation of geographical distances.

During different group sessions, solutions to

bridge those barriers are discussed.

"Cooperation between African and European nations has to be mutually beneficial...strong cooperation at local, national, and regional level between research institutions as a prerequisite for international cooperation," said the CAAST-Net coordinator, Andrew Cherry, who is based at the Association of Commonwealth Universities, UK.

However, group sessions did not identify language issues as a specific barrier. It may be that the issue of language needs to be revisited.

After the conference, a summary report with recommendations and conclusions was sent to all delegates.

This report concludes that national S&T strategies should embrace international and, in particular, regional cooperation.

In this respect, it may be worth noting that many regions have a non-colonial lingua franca, whether it is Swahili in the East African Community or Zulu in the Southern African Development Community.

Nevertheless, the word "language" is not mentioned even a single time in the report.

Language, policy and culture

"Language rights are things which people have strenuously struggled for, sometimes even to the point of sacrificing their lives." [Chen, 1998, p. 46]

Chen (1998, p.49) presents different perspectives on language rights. Language rights can be considered individually (being informed in one's own language) or collectively (to ensure the survival of a group's language and to transmit the language to future generations). Chen also examines the role of a particular language within publicly-funded services such as education, publications, broadcast media, and so on.

To understand language rights, Chen (1998, p. 48) introduces three instances of violation of such rights.

1) An organisation may use a language unfamiliar to the overwhelming majority of the population, disregarding access to adequate translation and interpretation services, which may cause major issues in reading and understanding rights and policies.

2) An organisation may recognise only its own language or that of the capital city, so that delegates who are not proficient in that language are disadvantaged in their dealings and communications. This includes not being given the opportunity to receive education and information in one's mother tongue, being compelled to use a colonially imposed language.

3) An organisation may adopt a policy of assimilation, attempting to establish a homogeneous culture and uniform language. The educational and social policies may be such that the languages of minority linguistic groups are pushed to extinction or just made available as a transitional measure with a view to eventual linguistic and cultural assimilation of the minority group.

Chen's article on the philosophy of language rights also has a moral function: multilingualism is a fact of life in modern states.

Language diversity is an expression of human culture's diversity. However, diversities based on language may result in barriers to communication, social and political cleavages, and conflicts. So, how to approach the issue of multilingualism?

As one example, the Indian educational system uses a trilingual system, known as the Three Language Formula (TLF), set out in the 1950s and revised in the 1960s.

The TLF recognised the mother language (often a tribal language), the official language, and another language that served as lingua franca. TLF and its re-formulated versions have been put into practice in various countries (Mukhopadhyay et al, 2004).

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) states that this formula is not a "magical" solution, and is open to criticism and debate over whether it represents the failure of state policy or is in fact representative of a dynamic linguistic policy which reconciles tradition and modernity in conjunction with institutional and civic responsibilities (UNESCO, 2008, p. 19-21).

Regardless, the TLF is not obligatory. This means that organisations to at least some extent are free to choose how to apply the TLF. As a result, there is an argument over whether organisations need to consider using other languages in their operations.

Conclusions

Previous studies and theories have revealed different accounts of language.

The CAAST-Net conference recognises two languages, English and French.

The use of English in this context can be explained by the fact that it has become globally accepted, even if it is not the mother tongue of most of the delegates, whether from Europe or Africa.

Communicating in French, in a conference held in Kenya, is nevertheless not an obvious choice.

Certainly French is an influential language, especially in Central Africa, and is used by regional groupings such as the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and the

Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale (CEEAC, also known as the Economic Community of Central African States, or ECCAS). It is important that delegates from Francophone Africa can participate in debates.

But Swahili is such a major language in East Africa, that I would argue that an event in Kenya should prioritise its use.

It is true that the African Union (AU) functions in only four languages: English, French, Portuguese and Arabic.

But the EU – which supports CAAST-Net – makes sure that representatives from member states can make themselves understood in their 23 native languages (Europa, 2007).

It could therefore be questioned why this does not apply to the EU's transnational work through organisations such as CAAST-Net, in order to ensure that the organisation's vision reaches not just a minority but the better part of the population.

Better and cheaper means of communication have increased transnational cooperation, allowing cooperation at a distance (World Bank, 2007).

These transnational collaborations and bilateral relations are based on the belief that such approaches may increase a nation's intellectual capital (Dlodlo, 2009).

However, for transnational work that strives to enhance a nation's or region's educational levels, it is vital to consider local culture and languages (Obijiofor, 2009).

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Profile: EU-Africa collaboration

Poverty reduction through water research network

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

An initiative to improve the uptake of technologies that will improve the storage and use of water is underway in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Uganda.

The three-year project, which is named WASHTEC, hopes to make use of a technology assessment framework (TAF) that will be developed in 2011 to assess water technologies available in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Uganda.

"The TAF will be an integrated diagnostic and evaluating tool. As a whole the framework gives a picture of what elements are weakening sustainability for newly introduced technologies and an objective view of the suitability of each in given contexts."

"It aims to answer more the question, should we promote this technology or approach, or why is this technology not proving sustainable or why is uptake so poor?" said Jo Smet, a senior programme officer for the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre based in the Netherlands.

The countries were selected for the project because "they have reasonably developed water and sanitation sectors and good sector frameworks," Smet, a sanitary engineer who has 30 years experience working on water service and human waste management in Africa and Asia, said.

He said "stakeholders" in the three countries will select the appropriate technologies that will be assessed in order to improve water and sanitation.

"The project's objective will support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by providing the essential intermediate step that can ensure new technologies that will be able to contribute substantially to reaching the target for water and sanitation but also play a greater part in poverty reduction," said Smet, whose organisation initiated the project but has drawn in partners from other European and African organisations.

Some of the African partners are Eugene Larbi, the managing director of Training, Research and Networking for Development in Ghana and Cate Nimanya, the project manager for the Network for Water and Sanitation, a non-profit organisation in Uganda.

The TAF will also identify challenges that derail the uptake of water technologies in the three countries.

"The TAF will involve households, communities, district and national stakeholders using these stakeholders' feedback and results from the research.



Cate Nimanya, the project manager for the Network for Water and Sanitation, a non-profit organisation in Uganda, is one of the African WASHTEC partners and can be contacted at cnimanya@yahoo.com

The TAF will provide a more general picture of sustainability and identified weaknesses which affect scaling up."

"It provides the research framework to test the sustainability, replicability and also why stakeholders do not respond by applying specifically chosen promising water and sanitation technologies," Smet said.

A learning alliance comprising of "relevant" policymakers and scientists in each of the three countries will spearhead research for the project.

"The learning alliance for WASHTEC will have interconnected multi-stakeholder platforms at the national level and at the decentralised level where the actual introduction and uptake of technologies takes place.

"It comprises all relevant sector stakeholders. This group will help steer the research and by doing so will also be involved in adjusting approaches according to the findings and adopting the technologies found to have the most potential," the senior programme officer said.

Smet hopes the results from the project can be used in other African countries to alleviate water shortages and improve sanitation.

The European Union (EU) will make two million Euros available to the consortium to implement the project, which was selected among the 26 winners of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Africa Call.

The FP7 Africa Call is meant to find solutions to the challenges facing Africa.

Smet also offered a word of advice to scientists who wish to submit a proposal for the FP7, the EU's chief funding instrument for research.

"Look for partners which you can trust in terms of research, learning and communication capacity, with whom you have been working together in smaller and larger projects," he said.



Eugene Larbi, the managing director of Training, Research and Networking for Development in Ghana and an African WASHTEC partner, can be contacted at eugenelarbi@yahoo.co.uk

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Profile: EU-Africa collaboration

David Taylor, the coordinator of the Healthy Futures project, with two graduate research students from the Department of Biology, Mbarara University of Science and Technology in Uganda, sampling a short core of sediment from Lake Victoria. Sediments are used to determine how environments and climates have changed over a period of time. This information can then be related to previous disease outbreaks. For further information on the Healthy Futures project, David Taylor can be contacted at taylor@tcd.ie.



Healthy Futures: an example of international teamwork

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

A new project due to be launched next year could make it easier for East African countries to predict and prevent the outbreak of water and vector borne diseases.

The 3.4 million Euro project, which is named Healthy Futures, will be launched by 15 African and European scientists who hope to develop a disease risk map that will highlight the areas which are expected to have outbreaks of water borne diseases in the future.

“Outbreaks of water related, vector borne diseases such as malaria and rift valley fever have complex relationships with environmental conditions. As environmental conditions change, such as through climate change and land use changes then the incidence of disease outbreaks is likely to change.”

“Generally the most marginalised members of society will be at greatest risk of any changes. The project aims to minimise these risks by improving our ability to predict the extent and severity of future outbreaks under different environmental change scenarios,” explained David Taylor, the coordinator of the Healthy Futures project.

Taylor said the information would be useful to prevent the outbreaks of malaria and rift yellow fever.

“Understanding the spatiality of future outbreaks can facilitate a more effective response-by helping to concentrate efforts in the most at risk locations and support preventative measures including disease surveillance,” Taylor, who is a professor of geography at the School of Natural Sciences at the University of Dublin in Ireland, said.

Taylor said the partners hope to work with the East African Community (EAC) to implement the project, which is among the 26 winners of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Africa Call that is meant to find solutions to Africa’s developmental challenges such as the water and food shortage.

The EAC is the regional intergovernmental organisation for Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

The project has drawn a wide participation from African partners who include Winnie Mitullah, an associate research professor at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Mitullah has a PhD in political sciences and public administration from the University of York in the United Kingdom.

Felicia Akinyemi, the director of the Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing Centre at the National University of Rwanda; Sammy Njenga, a senior research officer for the Centre of Microbiology Research at the Kenya Medical Research Institute; and Noella Umulisa who works for the

ministry of health in Rwanda are among the other African partners who are involved in the project.

Taylor hopes the project will also give each partner an opportunity to develop their skills.

“Healthy Futures seeks to enhance knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply these successfully to research on the environmental change impacts on water related diseases” he said, adding that ownership of the project among its partners is crucial for its success.

“A consortium is at its strongest when all members feel that they have some shared ownership of the research proposed. Consortium members have to give up some of their valuable time to contribute to the proposal writing and working out and agreeing to budgets. They are unlikely to do so if they do not feel ownership of both the process and the outcome,” the geographer said.

He adds his consortium used an “online proposal management system” that each partner used to contribute to the development of the project proposal.

Taylor also offered some advice to scientists who wish to submit applications for the FP7 Europe’s chief funding instrument for research for the period covering 2007 to 2013.

“I would urge scientists to think about the balance of a consortium, not just in terms of its expertise but also the geographic location of consortium partners and be prepared to consult actively with consortium members,” he said.

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Profile: EU-Africa collaboration

International cooperation effort initiates three pilot projects in Africa

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu



Seni Kouanda



Diederike Geelhoed

Eight scientists from Europe and Africa have developed a multi-million dollar project to improve maternal health in Africa.

The five-year project, which is due to kick off in 2011 with pilot projects in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique, will see the partners develop a “package of interventions” that includes the training of health workers to reduce infant and maternal mortality, said Els Duysburgh, the researcher and team leader for the International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH) at Ghent University.

The project is named the Missed Opportunities in Maternal and Infant Health (MOMI).

The project, which was recently selected for funding for the European Union (EU) Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Africa Call, hopes to address causes to maternal deaths and infant mortality on a continent where one out of every 100 pregnant women die in childbirth or soon afterwards.

“In the past decade, maternal health services have largely focused on the management of intrapartum complications and on rationalising the package of antenatal services to include emergency obstetric care provided by skilled birth attendants.”

“This approach fails to address many underlying morbidities that are instrumental in generating high rates of maternal mortality such as anaemia and inadequate birth spacing. To address these gaps in maternal and newborn care the MOMI project was developed,” she said.

The FP7 Africa Call is meant to find solutions to specific developmental challenges facing Africa.

Marleen Temmerman, the director of ICRH and the first female professor of gynecology appointed at the University of Ghent, is the brains behind the project, which has drawn participation of African scientists that includes Seni Kouanda of the Institut de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé in Burkina Faso. Kouanda is a biomedical scientist who is also involved in other collaborative projects that included an International Development Research Centre funded initiative assessing the distribution of healthcare workers in Burkina Faso.

Other African scientists taking part in the project are Charles Mwansambo, a consultant paediatrician for the Parent and Child Health Initiative at the Kamuzu Central Hospital in Malawi and Nafissa Bique Osman who was the head of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology at Maputo Central Hospital in Mozambique. She is also a lecturer at the faculty of medicine at Eduardo Mondlane University.

The interventions that will be employed to improve postnatal care, Duysburgh said, will include growth monitoring of infants, initiation of early breastfeeding, management of low birth weight, and early treatment of ill women or newborns.

Duysburgh said the interventions will be designed after an assessment of post-natal care policies in the four countries to ensure they meet the needs of the locals.

“Intervention design will be preceded and informed by a situational analysis of post-partum policies and practices in the four countries and a feasibility assessment.

“This will ensure that interventions are amenable to scaling up and appropriately tailored to local contexts. The interventions will be developed

and agreed upon as part of or during the research project,” said Duysburgh, who has 13 years working experience in health programmes in developing countries that include Nigeria.

Partners also plan to set up policy advisory boards in the four countries where the project will be implemented, Duysburgh said.

The advisory boards will comprise of scientists, policymakers and health managers who will be tasked with ensuring that the project’s research results are used to inform policy.

“From the onset of the research process, the African partners will strongly promote the participation and involvement of the local and national health authorities and policymakers in the research project to bridge the gap between research and health policy, and to improve local ownership.”

“To read this goal [...] a local policy advisory board will be established in each of the four partner African countries. They will give advice on, for example, the adequacy to the needs of Africa, dissemination and use of project results, ethical issues, translation of research results in policy-relevant strategies,” Duysburgh said.

The project is a timely one for Africa which experiences high maternal rate. This is particularly so in Mozambique where mortality rate is 400 per 100,000 live births, according to the World Health Organization.

Diederike Geelhoed, a representative of ICRH in Mozambique, hopes to talk with officials from the country’s ministry of health about the uptake of the project’s research results.

“Access [to health services] is difficult because of distance. Poverty is another issue and good post-partum care is not available.”

“The project provides opportunity to network,” Geelhoed, a medical doctor who holds a master’s in public health in low-income countries, said.

The project will also be instrumental in developing research skills of scientists in partner organisations, Kouanda said.

“We will get funding for research as we will build a strong partnership and we will expected to strengthen our research capacity by training junior researchers,” Kouanda said, adding that the success of the project will also depend on researchers being trained to write policy briefs so they can effectively communicate their results to decision makers.

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