IMPROVING POLICY ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY

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PREFACE

Significant poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be achieved without strong policy analysis and management capacity both in the public sector and civil society at large. This report provides a comprehensive needs assessment of policy analysis and management for poverty reduction (PAMPR) and current levels of expertise in seven countries in East and Central Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). On the basis of this assessment, the report proposes the creation of a well resourced Poverty Reduction Learning Network that systematically addresses both the generic as well as more specialist sector learning needs of PAMPR practitioners in all countries in East, Central and Southern Africa.

The study was undertaken by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex with funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The findings and recommendations of this report are based on an extensive process of consultation among all the key stakeholders involved in PAMPR in the seven counties visited. The British development studies community and head office personnel of donor agencies in Europe and North America have also been widely consulted. In addition, a regional meeting in Uganda was held to provide feedback on the report and the potential for creating a Poverty Reduction Learning Network.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACBF	African Capacity Building Programme
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
AVU	African Virtual University
CBO	Community-based organisation
COMESA	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
DPAM	Development policy analysis and management
DSI	Development studies institution
EAC	East African Community
ESAMI	Eastern and Southern African Management Institute
FICHE	Fund for International Cooperation in Higher Education
GDN	Global Development Network (World Bank Institute)
HEI	Higher education institution
HRD	Human resources development
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IDT	International Development Target
IEC	International Extension College
IFI	International financial institution
MBA	Masters in business administration
MTEF	Medium term expenditure framework
NPRLN	National Poverty Reduction Learning Network
OU	Open University
PACT	Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa
PAMPR	Policy analysis and management for poverty reduction
PRLN	Poverty Reduction Learning Network
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme
RIPRL	Regional Institute for Poverty Reduction Learning
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SARIPS	Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies
SAPES	Southern African Political Economy Series
SDP	Sector development programme
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Poverty reduction in Africa

Over forty percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than a dollar a day. It is now widely accepted that eliminating this extremely high level of poverty should be the overriding development objective for governments, donor agencies and all other development partners in the region. The most ambitious International Development Target (IDT) is that the incidence of poverty in the developing world should be reduced by half by 2015. The overall capacity of governments and other key stakeholders in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to design and implement effective poverty reduction strategies and related programmes is, therefore, of critical importance if this target is to be achieved. Where this capacity is inadequate, it is clear that action needs to be taken as a matter of priority.

An assessment of what needs to be done to improve **policy analysis and management for poverty reduction (PAMPR)** must be based on two sets of questions. First, to what extent do PAMPR practitioners in central and local government, development NGOs and other relevant civil society organisations, and donor agencies have the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are indispensable for the design and implementation of poverty reduction strategies and other interventions? And second, if there is a need to strengthen PAMPR, what should be done to improve competencies in an efficient and effective manner?

1.2 The review process

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is committed to achieving the International Development Targets. As part of its overall contribution to this effort, it has recently established a Skills for Development Programme which 'seeks to address pervasive skills gaps that exist in many developing countries which urgently need to be reduced in order to increase public and private sector efficiency'. Given the crucial importance of PAMPR capacity in attaining poverty reduction goals, DFID provided financial support to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) located at the University of Sussex to undertake a review of this key area of skills development in SSA.

This review has been undertaken in two separate phases. The first phase consisted of a desk-based study, which was prepared by an IDS consultant, Dr Paul Bennell, in May 1999 and looked mainly at the provision of post-graduate training in SSA and elsewhere in support of **development policy analysis and management (DPAM)**, broadly defined. The executive summary of the report is reproduced in Annex 1. The full report can be accessed at the following website address: http://2000..

The two main conclusions of the report are that training capacity for DPAM in SSA should be significantly increased as quickly as possible and secondly, that development studies organisations and other relevant institutions in the United Kingdom and elsewhere should play a much greater supportive role than they do at present. The report also outlined a number of possible options for strengthening training capacity in this area including the establishment of a regional training consortium and distance learning.

Clearly recognising the limitations of a desk study of this kind, the second phase of the review, which commenced in late 1999 has involved a wide ranging process of consultation with governments, training institutions and donor agencies both in the region and elsewhere. The principal activities have been as follows:

Selection of the review team: IDS has overall responsibility for the review. However, from the outset, it was recognised that, given the nature of this review, it must be undertaken in partnership with other organisations with professional interests and expertise in this area. Considerable thought and effort was devoted, therefore, to the composition of the team.

In view of the likely importance of distance education in any proposed programme, the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom agreed to be involved. IDS and OU staff visited possible partner organisations in Central and Eastern Africa in January 2000. This resulted in experts from the following two organisations joining the team: the Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) in Harare, Zimbabwe and the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

A well-balanced team of four social scientists from Africa and the UK has undertaken the review. The review team members are: Dr Paul Bennell, (IDS consultant and team leader, Brighton, UK); Mr Eldred Masunungure (SAPES Tutor and Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics and Administrative Science, University of Zimbabwe, Harare); Professor Njuguna Ng'ethe (Former Director, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya); and Dr Gordon Wilson, (Senior Lecturer, Open University, Milton Keynes, UK).

Consultation with the UK development studies community: A one-day meeting for UK development studies institutions (DSIs) was held at IDS in December 1999. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a detailed briefing on Phase I and to discuss what role British DSIs could potentially play in supporting capacity building for PAMPR in Africa.

Country consultations: Members of the review team made one-week visits to seven countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, in East Africa, and Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in Central Africa) in March and April 2000. Members of the review team had a total of 146 meetings with senior officials in key ministries (43), university and other training institutions (64), and donor agencies (39). These semi-structured interviews (which, typically, were 45-60 minutes in duration) provided the opportunity for respondents to give their views on PAMPR needs, capacities, and training provision as well their suggestions and recommendations about what should be done to strengthen capacity in this area. The questions around which these discussions were loosely structured are presented in Annex 2.

Consultations with donor agencies in the North: A total of 26 meetings were held with officials from major donor agencies in Europe and North America. The purpose of these meetings was to find out what policy analysis and management capacity building activities have been supported by each agency in recent years, what have been the main strengths and weaknesses of these interventions, and, in the light of this experience, what could be done in the future. This includes the possible involvement of donor agencies in a closely co-ordinated support programme.

1.3 Report structure

This report summarises the key findings of this extensive process of consultation and information gathering and presents the review team's views concerning the establishment of a poverty reduction learning network for Africa.

The report is structured as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 present respondent views concerning the need for PAMPR, current capacity in this area, and the provision of training services at relevant local and overseas institutions. The next six chapters of the report then focus on what could be done to strengthen PAMPR capacity and, in particular, describe the possible features of a region-wide learning network for poverty reduction. The final chapter focus' on outputs from the regional meeting in Uganda.

1.4 Regional consultation meeting

This report was widely disseminated among all key stakeholders. It served as the key background document for a two-day regional meeting on 'Strengthening policy analysis and management for poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa', which was organised by IDS as part of the review process. The meeting took place in Kampala, Uganda on the 30th October - 1st November 2000, and was co-hosted by the Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and IDS. The main participants at this meeting were representatives from governments, training institutions, and development NGOs in East and Southern Africa as well as donor agencies operating in the region. The purpose of this meeting was for participants to discuss the main findings and recommendations of the review team. Out of this discussion, concrete proposals emerged for the development of a major new initiative to strengthen PAMPR capacity in the region. The main outputs of the meeting are described in Chapter 10.

1.5 Terminology

This report is primarily concerned with PAMPR in sub-Saharan Africa. In practice, of course, it is often very difficult to separate PAMPR from other areas of policy analysis and management that are more widely concerned with other development objectives. This is particularly the case in the context of pervasive poverty, which prevails throughout the continent.

We refer to all individuals both in the public and private sectors who are directly involved in policy analysis and management, which focuses specifically on poverty reduction as 'PAMPR practitioners'.

1.6 Acknowledgements

The review team would like to express its appreciation to the several hundred PAMPR practitioners who found the time in their busy working days to meet with us. We would like to thank the Ugandan Mininstry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for co-hosting the regional meeting. We are also grateful for the support of Mr Michael Cockerell, Ms Jill Clements, and Mrs Carole Walton at the Institute of Development Studies, and Dr Mark Waltham at DFID.

2. THE NEED FOR PAMPR CAPACITY IN THE REGION

There was unanimous agreement among all interview respondents in each of the seven countries visited by the review team that the capacity to formulate and implement poverty-reduction policies and programmes in an efficient and effective manner is of paramount importance. This is true for all PAMPR practitioners in central and local government, development NGOs and other civil society organisations, and donor agencies.

The need for high-quality policy analysis and management for poverty reduction (PAMPR) is increasing very rapidly in all countries. The following section discusses the main reasons for this.

2.1 The need for PAMPR

2.1.1 The primacy of poverty reduction goals

In terms of official policy, poverty reduction is now the top development priority for most governments in SSA. While the actual commitment of individual governments to poverty reduction does vary considerably, increasing pressure is being applied by the international community for all governments to accord the highest priority to poverty reduction. In particular, as part of the HIPC initiative, all governments of low-income countries in SSA will, over the next few years, be asked to prepare comprehensive and detailed Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs).

The main focus of the international finance institutions (IFIs) in the past has been on macroeconomic reform. This is still clearly fundamentally important, but it is now widely recognised that tackling deep-seated poverty is a far more complex and difficult challenge and that the required reforms that are needed to reduce poverty go much 'deeper' than achieving conventional macroeconomic policy objectives. A comprehensive strategy based on a long-term holistic approach is needed, therefore, that addresses the key social and structural constraints affecting the livelihoods of the poor.

The preparation of well conceived PRSPs must be based on an in-depth understanding of poverty and its causes, the ability to design complex policies and programmes, the creation of a transparent process of setting budget and policy priorities, and the setting and monitoring of outcome indicators using participatory processes. A critical mass of highly competent PAMPR practitioners is required if these tasks are to undertaken successfully.

2.1.2 Public sector reform

While the public sector reform programmes vary from one country to another, they all include the following common elements: privatisation, rationalisation of the civil service, and significant decentralisation. This process of reform has both broadened the need for policy analysis and management capacity within government and other stakeholders (particularly among the NGO community), and expanded the kinds of knowledge and skill that are required.

Decentralisation is fundamentally changing the nature of the policy and analysis management process in nearly every country. Wide-ranging decentralisation of government functions is being rapidly implemented as part of local government reform programmes. The responsibility for the delivery of most public services is, therefore, being devolved to the district level. In the future, central government is expected to be mainly responsible for policy formulation and performance monitoring.

Government officials at the district level are increasingly having to work much more closely with local politicians and civil society organisations in order to translate government policies into practice and to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation. To facilitate this process, district planning units are being established in most countries. We are witnessing, therefore, the emergence of a very sizeable group of PAMPR practitioners at the local government level. In some countries, their numbers are already much larger than the cadres of policy and planning personnel working in central government ministries.

2.1.3 Ownership and participation

Development policy analysis and management was, until fairly recently, regarded as a technical matter to be entrusted to a few planners (mostly economists) in one or two key ministries (in particular finance and planning). However, this is rapidly being replaced by a very different conception of the planning process. In particular, the state is no longer regarded as *the* agent of development, but co-exists among an array of other private sector and civil society stakeholders as well as the donor community. We have moved, therefore, from a situation where development policy analysis and management had been seen as the province of the few to where many individuals in a wide range of organisations are expected to influence and shape the design and management of policy. This new approach, based on broad and intensive participation of all key stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation, generates high levels of ownership that are essential if poverty reduction strategies are to be successful.

With regard to development assistance, the traditional project approach minimised involvement of local ministries and other stakeholders in the planning and design of interventions. Most donors were also narrowly concerned with project design rather than wider policy issues. However, the increasing reliance on sector wide approaches as the principal modality for development assistance requires much higher levels of policy analysis and management skills among both government and donor agency personnel. The establishment of 'performance benchmarks' that are based on high quality policy analysis and which can be effectively monitored are particularly crucial.

2.2 PAMPR competencies

The following discussion provides a broad assessment of the overall levels of competence among PAMPR practitioners in the seven countries that were visited by the review team. This assessment is based mainly on the views of three main respondent groups: ministry planners, training institutions, and donor agencies. The reasons why PAMPR competencies are generally so weak will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.2.1 Overall levels of competence

There is unanimous agreement that there must be a critical mass of PAMPR practitioners among all major stakeholders, who have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to design and implement effective poverty reduction strategies at the national, sector, and local levels. To what extent, therefore, does this capacity exist? The large majority of respondents stated that there is a fundamental lack of capacity for effective PAMPR. This is a longstanding problem in all countries. However, with so many different types of reform initiatives currently being implemented almost everywhere, there is a pervasive feeling that there is 'just too much going on at the moment'. Planners in many ministries are overwhelmed and confused by the new policy environment. With the much greater involvement of donor agencies in the policy process, there is also a sense of loss of control and ownership, particularly in ministries which have very limited capacity for policy analysis and management. As one respondent put it 'There is an amazing flurry of activity and a rapid

increase in the demands for more sophisticated policy analysis and planning. But the fact remains, that in most ministries you have the same people having to cope with the same system'.

Despite these fundamental capacity problems, the donor community continues to push ahead with the process of economic and political reform. Thus, even where sector-wide approaches are working quite well, the reality in the majority of countries is that foreign consultants and long-term advisors continue to do the bulk of policy analysis. This limited involvement of nationals in the design and management of policy frequently results in a fundamental lack of national ownership of the reform process.

A minority of respondents argued that PAMPR capacity is not a serious problem. Their principal concern is that, although this capacity is generally adequate, basic institutional/system constraints prevent PAMPR practitioners in government from effectively utilising their knowledge and skills.

2.2.2 Systemic and institutional factors

Nearly all respondents emphasised that there are other reasons apart from the individual competence of PAMPR practitioners why ministries find it so difficult to undertake effective policy analysis and management. Systemic and institutional constraints undermine the effective utilisation of PAMPR knowledge and skills. Some of the most frequently mentioned are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Explanatory factors for weak PAMPR
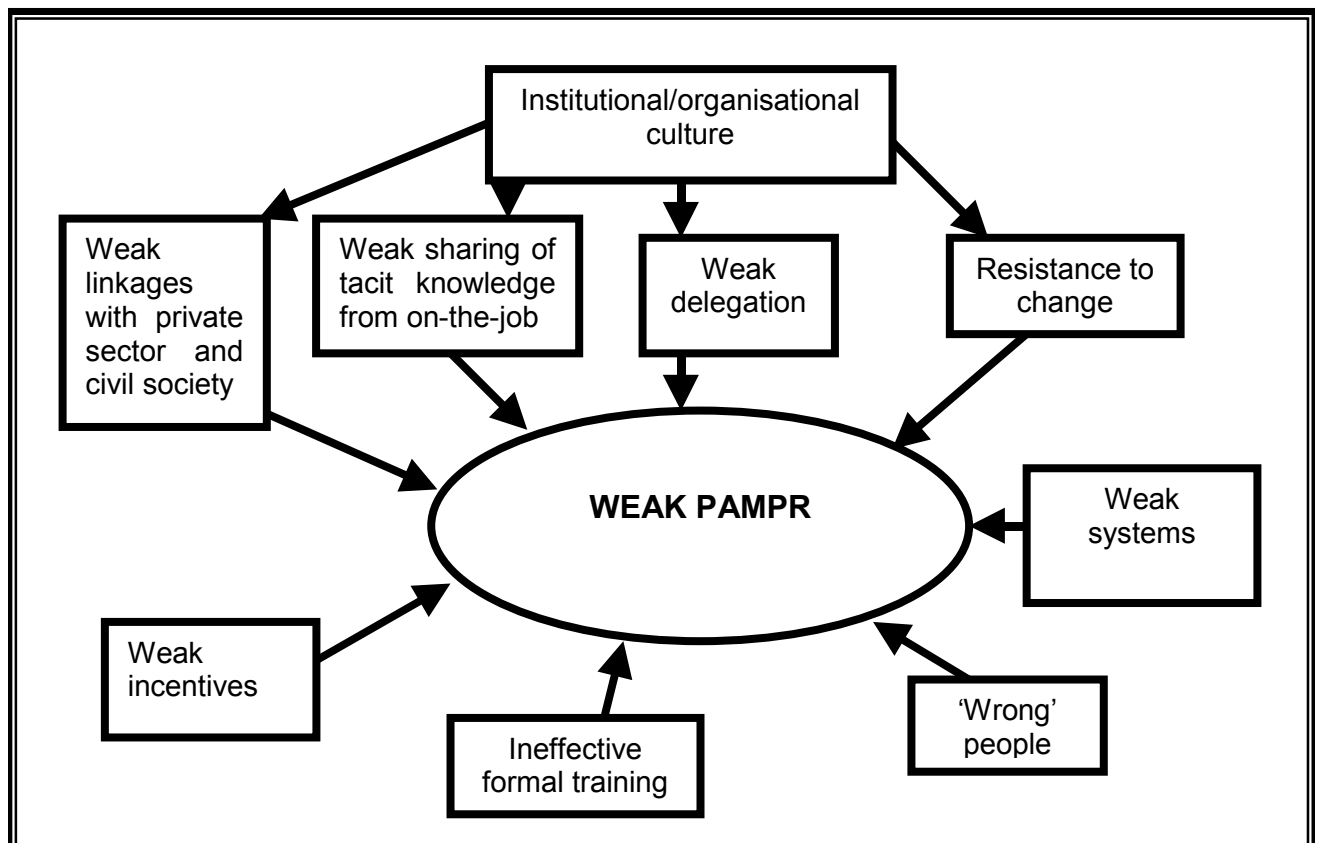
Eliminating these constraints is obviously closely linked to the entire process of public sector reform in each country. These must be effectively tackled if PAMPR is to improve significantly. However, the fact remains that basic shortcomings in the competence of PAMPR practitioners must also be addressed. Both sets of activities must be done simultaneously. It will take time to develop effective learning systems for PAMPR so a start needs to be made straight away. Equally important, PAMPR

practitioners must be able to work within the existing institutional and system constraints because, even with the most effective programme of public sector reform, it will take some time before these constraints are removed.

2.3 Competence deficiencies

The majority of interview respondents expressed concerns about the professional competence of PAMPR practitioners in a number of basic areas. Before we discuss these, it is important to make a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the generic knowledge and skills needed by all PAMPR practitioners in order to design and manage effectively poverty-reduction programmes and, on the other, the more specialist knowledge and skills that are required for PAMPR in specific sectors or types of activity (education, health, infrastructure, etc.).

2.3.1 Poverty analysis: understanding poverty and poverty interventions

Most of our respondents openly and frankly admitted that, though they are involved in poverty alleviation activities of one type or the other, they have had little or no specialised professional training in this area. Consequently, they do not possess the knowledge and skills that enable them to undertake effective PAMPR.

There generally exists a poor understanding of the causes of poverty, the coping strategies of the poor, and the actual and potential efficacy of policy interventions. In the past, poverty tended to be viewed as primarily an economic phenomenon. However, it is now widely accepted that poverty is multi-dimensional. The very complexity of poverty as a social phenomenon has seriously undermined the efforts of African countries to develop effective poverty reduction policies and programmes.

Knowing how to measure correctly the incidence of different types of poverty is closely linked to the adoption of a proper conceptual framework with which to analyse the causes and consequences of poverty. If poverty is, for example, conceptualised largely as an economic phenomenon, then income becomes the main measure of well being. However, if it is accepted that poverty is multi-dimensional, then a range of measurement criteria is required.

2.3.2 The policy process

There was general agreement among respondents that the ability to conceptualise policy is a key area of competence, which few PAMPR practitioners currently possess. The result is that policies are frequently poorly articulated.

Related to policy conceptualisation is the much broader, but nonetheless equally important skill of understanding the overall policy making process. Many times our respondents expressed their frustration that 'things are not moving'. Frequently, this is because policies themselves 'keep changing'. PAMPR practitioners need to have, therefore, a keen understanding of the institutional and system constraints highlighted in Figure 1.

2.3.3 The macroeconomic policy environment

Outside of Ministries of Finance, the generally poor understanding of macroeconomic policy reforms among PAMPR practitioners, but particularly non-economists, was widely commented upon by respondents. This included such key issues as the overall rationale for economic liberalisation, the debt problem, the role of the Bretton Woods institutions and, more generally, the overall relationship between politics and economics.

2.3.4 'How to' skills

'How to' competence is the practical, operational knowledge and skills needed for all development policy analysis and management. This includes data collection and data analysis, policy management (especially negotiation and communication), budgeting and financial management, and project management. Serious skill deficits in all these areas were identified in all countries.

Data collection: Sound policies must be based on good quality data. Without a solid database, policy remains a mere declaration of intentions. For this reason, all respondents recognised that data collection skills are of fundamental importance for effective PAMPR. Respondents frequently cited data collection exercises, which have yielded inappropriate data, sometimes at great public expense. The weak capacity of most central statistical offices also means that PAMPR practitioners have to be more self-reliant with respect to data collection activities. In the new context of pervasive decentralisation, data collection skills are essential for planners working at the regional and district levels.

Effective participatory research (with its primary reliance on more qualitative data) requires a high level of skills, which are quite different from conventional survey data collection techniques.

Data analysis and report writing: The paucity of data analysis and report writing skills is a universal concern. As a result, foreign advisors and consultants frequently write major policy documents. This is especially the case in countries where experienced PAMPR practitioners are thin on the ground. Even in those countries, which are much better endowed with human resources, only a small proportion of public servants have good data analysis skills. Individuals with these skills are often found in training institutions, particularly the universities.

Communication and participation: It is widely accepted that PAMPR practitioners must have a high level of inter-personal skills for effective communication and for ensuring adequate participation of major stakeholders, including the poor themselves. Poverty is a sensitive subject, partly because of the general belief that someone somewhere must be responsible for it. Poverty analysts must, therefore, possess excellent communication skills, which are sensitive to the feelings of both policy makers and the poor.

Policy management: Respondents often made the point that good, well designed policies have failed because they are poorly managed. Policy management has a number of aspects all of which affect policy outcomes. Perhaps the most critical of these is the ability to anticipate constraints to effective implementation. The ability to engage other stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society is no less important. Again, this is often overlooked in skills development programmes. Policy evaluation skills are now widely accepted as crucial to policy success.

Negotiation skills, in particular with donors, and the ability to apply what has been learned in day to day work were also frequently mentioned. Time and time again we heard the comment, "But I do not get the chance to apply my skills". However, when pressed further, many respondents admitted that they really needed to learn the skill of how to apply other skills.

Project management: Traditional project management skills are still required by PAMPR practitioners, particularly those employed in local government and NGOs. They are becoming less important however, for planners in line ministries, which have adopted sector wide approaches with their donor partners.

Budgeting: Everyone interviewed emphasised the crucial importance of budgeting and financial management skills. These skills are lacking in nearly all ministries, which, as one respondent aptly put it, often makes ministry budgets "exercises in guesswork and imagination". Comprehensive, poverty-orientated, medium term expenditure frameworks have been adopted in all countries, but

outside of Ministries of Finance, the knowledge and skills needed for the implementation of these new budgetary and financial management systems are seriously deficient. Many donor respondents identified finance and budgeting as the top priority areas for skills development.

2.3.5 Sector specific skills

Respondents also pointed to a pervasive shortage of personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to design and manage poverty-focused programmes in key sectors such as agriculture, education, health, and community development. Effective PAMPR in each of these sectors requires specialist knowledge and skills.

There was no common pattern in the nature and extent of skill deficiencies across the main line ministries in the seven countries visited by the review team. Typically, however, PAMPR capacity was heavily concentrated in the Ministry of Finance. In some countries, this is giving rise to some concerns about excessive centralisation of policy analysis and management in this one ministry.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT FOR PAMPR

3.1 Introduction

The shortcomings in competence relate directly to the overall process of human resource development among PAMPR practitioners. This chapter considers the main problems with this process of skills development in the seven countries that were visited by the review team. The poor learning environment and limited relevant training provision stand out as the two most important contributory factors.

In spite of the importance that is now attached to the development of comprehensive poverty reduction strategies, simply not enough 'tooling-up' is being done to ensure that PAMPR practitioners have the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are essential for the design and implementation of these strategies. There is, therefore, no comprehensive skills development strategy for PAMPR in any of the seven countries visited. Part of the reason for this inaction is that the traditional capacity building model, which relies very heavily on technical assistance and overseas post-graduate training is widely regarded as having been largely ineffective in developing a strong cadre of policy and planning professionals. However, considerable uncertainty exists about what a new model for capacity building should like look.

3.2 Staff development

3.2.1 Public servants

In most of the ministries visited by the review team, the staff development function, which underpins the process of continuous job-related learning, is weak. Well-conceived policies, which are needed in order to create 'learning organisations' have been or are being increasingly adopted as part of wider public sector reform. However, serious constraints often prevent the translation of these policies into effective practice.

What, then, are the main reasons for this situation?

Resource constraints: In the past, the lack of government resources for training has meant that ministries have not had any significant control over and thus ownership of the skills development function. Rather than driving demand, ministries have had to take whatever training courses have been available from national and overseas providers. Invariably, these training opportunities have been quite limited (especially for more specialist areas of policy analysis and management) and have not addressed the priority learning needs of individual ministries. More generally, the scarcity of resources has meant that it has not been possible to address the learning needs of policy and planning staff in a systematic, on-going manner throughout their careers. Induction/apprenticeship has been particularly weak.

Diploma disease: There has been excessive emphasis on overseas post-graduate training and insufficient attention given to the usually more important process of incremental, on going learning on-the-job. Although the proportions of planners with masters are quite high in many countries, training needs assessments continue to identify major deficiencies in their knowledge and skills.

Learning incentives: Incentives to learn are frequently very weak. In most countries, public servants will not attend externally organised workshops unless they are paid to do so. In the worst situations, they are so poorly paid and demotivated that neither they nor their managers attach any importance to investing time and effort in acquiring new knowledge and skills. The lack of

accreditation of short courses and other learning activities is also widely seen as a major disincentive.

Low trainability: In some ministries, relatively large numbers of policy and planning staff are regarded as 'deadwood' with little prospect of being able to improve their overall job performance through learning activities. However, we suspect that this problem of 'the wrong people in the wrong jobs' is often over-stated, and that well-conceived learning strategies could, therefore, significantly improve the performance of 'problem-players'.

Sharing of knowledge and skills: The incentives to impart accumulated knowledge and skills are weak in many ministries. Effective learning on-the-job hinges on the willingness of staff, in particular those who are more experienced, to assist other staff. A legacy of mutual suspicion engendered by political repression is an important reason for this behaviour in some countries. Mutual distrust and antagonism among the major PAMPR stakeholders is also another important cause for the limited sharing of relevant knowledge and skills. Senior government policymakers, in particular, are frequently reluctant to collaborate with civil society organisations and the private sector.

Learning from foreigners: Many ministries have found it very difficult to use long-term advisors as an effective learning resource. Where this has happened, there have been some significant improvements in the competence of national counterpart staff. Concerns about the need for greater local ownership coupled with the low effectiveness of expatriate staff with regard to capacity building has generally resulted in relatively few long-term advisors being employed. Increasing reliance has been placed on short-term consultants who generally have a very much more limited role as trainers.

3.2.2 Other organisations

Both donor agency and NGO staff who are involved in PAMPR have received relatively little systematic training in this area. In general, the need for such training is increasingly recognised and concrete steps are being taken to address this need.

3.3 Formal training provision

The review team visited the main social science departments at national universities as well as public administration and management training centres in each of the seven countries.

Two main types of formal training provision can de delineated - long term training for formal qualifications (masters, diplomas, certificates, etc..) and short courses.

3.3.1 Masters training

Type and availability of post-graduate training: Public universities continue to provide the majority of post-graduate training in the disciplinary areas that are most relevant for PAMPR. With a few exceptions, only traditional mono-disciplinary masters degrees in economics, public administration, sociology, and social work are available. Other types of post-graduate qualifications (certificates, diplomas) are rarely offered. Public administration and management centres (most of which are now autonomous) also run MBA and other masters-level programmes in management.

The availability of multi-disciplinary post-graduate degree training that is directly focused on the learning needs of PAMPR practitioners is very limited. There is only one development studies institute in the seven countries, which offers masters degree training in development studies (The

Institute of Development Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam). Similarly, there is just one masters programme in applied policy analysis. This is run (on a regional basis) by the Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS) in Harare.

Masters degrees for policy analysis and management in specific sectors (such as agriculture, education, environment, health, and local government) are not available anywhere in the region. In part, this is because the numbers of policy and management practitioners in specific sectors are generally too small for this type of training provision to be viable. Regional training programmes for these sectors are, therefore, needed.

Postgraduate degree training in the social sciences is non-existent or very limited in three out of the seven countries interviewed (Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia).

Enrolments: The numbers of PAMPR practitioners, especially from government, who are enrolled on social science masters degree programmes are generally very small. Total intakes for two-year masters are typically 5-10 individuals, and enrolments have been declining for a number of programmes. There are several reasons for this. First, funding to sponsor students is very limited. University departments are now required to charge tuition fees on a full-cost basis. Second, there is still a strong preference for overseas training. Third, most programmes are only offered by face to face instruction during the daytime, which seriously limits the involvement of individuals who are in full-time employment. The majority of students tend therefore to be fresh graduates who have yet to join the labour market. Where it is possible to attend in the evenings, enrolments are usually much higher (as is the case for the majority of masters courses in Uganda). Fourth, many departments do not have the staff, financial and other resources to run large masters programmes. Under-graduate teaching invariably crowds out most other activities. Lecturers are often obliged to do consultancies or engage in other income generating activities outside their normal teaching duties.

Learning methods: Nearly all masters programmes rely on traditional teaching methods. Students take a relatively small number of core and optional courses with most teaching based on formal, 'chalk and talk' lecturing. Apart from the Open University's masters degree programme offered by the Zimbabwe Open University, there are no other opportunities for study through distance learning. Study materials are mainly standard textbooks and journal articles.

Relevance and quality: Most masters degrees are not sufficiently relevant in order to meet the generic and specialist learning needs of PAMPR practitioners working in specific sectors. Generally speaking, only a small proportion of the curriculum of most masters degrees is directly useful in helping these individuals design and implement poverty-oriented policies and programmes. The large majority of respondents in ministries felt that the subject matter of these degree courses tend to be too theoretical and 'academic', and generally divorced from 'the world of work'. In part, this is attributed to the marginalisation of university academics from policy formulation and implementation. Strained government-university relations have exacerbated this problem in some countries.

With some significant exceptions, there are also serious concerns about the overall quality of masters degree training. The qualification and experience profiles of lecturers in many departments are weak. This is particularly the case in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia. Where there are relatively large numbers of Ph.D. trained lecturers (as is the case in some departments in Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe), the main challenge is to harness their knowledge and skills in a far more concerted and systematic manner. Facilities for learning are also poor. Few students have access to good quality learning materials, which are up to date. Access to the internet remains very limited.

3.4.2 Short training courses

Generally speaking, universities and other higher education/training institutions run very few short courses on a regular basis which address the learning needs of PAMPR practitioners, especially in the area of poverty analysis. National and regional management training institutes offer mainly mainstream management courses. Training at regional institutes (such as the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI) in Arusha, Tanzania) is relatively expensive. A high proportion of courses continues to focus on macroeconomic policy issues.

Many of the reasons for this lack of relevant short course training relate directly to the overall weaknesses in training capacity discussed above. At universities, in particular, under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes and consultancies tend to take precedence. Also, many departments do not have enough lecturers with relevant experience-based knowledge and skills. Individual lecturers with relevant expertise tend to be used as resource persons for short courses offered by other organisations. Even at some national public administration and management organisations, there is an acute shortage of well-qualified lecturers, particularly for courses targeted at senior policymakers.

Considerably more workshops are sponsored by donors and overseas organisations. However, the main problems with these training activities are that they tend to be usually one-off events, are of short duration (typically 3-5 days) and, because they rely very heavily on overseas trainers, are costly. They also tend to be 'off the shelf' and thus frequently do not directly address the learning needs of participants.

3.4.3. Distance learning

There are still very few distance learning short courses targeted at PAMPR practitioners, either by local or external providers. The World Bank Institute Global Development Learning Network has developed some relevant dual mode courses on poverty reduction topics. However, these only cover a small proportion of the generic and specialist knowledge and skills needs of PAMPR practitioners and there are still only a handful of GDLN training partners/centres in East and Central Africa.

The African Virtual University has at least one (and in the larger countries 2-3) partner organisations in each of the seven countries. However, the AVU is concentrating mainly on the development and delivery of computing, engineering, and general management courses, which have little or no relevance to PAMPR.

3.4.4 The role of Northern training institutions

Discussions with PAMPR practitioners and trainers in the seven countries confirm the findings of the desk study that short-term training support in this key area by UK and other institutions in the North is surprisingly limited. DFID funding of short course training in the UK for social scientists from Africa fell by almost a half between 1993 and 1998. There were only 182 trainees in the UK in these subject areas in 1998/99 for the whole of SSA.

DFID's Fund for International Co-operation in Higher Education (FICHE) supports over 400 collaborative links between universities in the UK and in developing countries. There is no evidence to show that this programme has had any impact on improving PAMPR capacity in any of the seven review countries. However, other links arrangements, which have provided for significant long-term teaching support from partner institutions in the North have generally been quite effective.

4. RATIONALE FOR A POVERTY REDUCTION LEARNING NETWORK

This chapter summarises the views of respondents about what should be done to improve PAMPR competencies and then outlines the overall rationale and vision for a **Poverty Reduction Learning Network for Africa (PRLN)**.

4.1 What should be done? Respondents' views

The views of stakeholder respondents concerning what should be done to improve PAMPR competence can be grouped under the following headings: urgency, realism, ownership and participation, duplication and co-ordination, a regional learning network, competency requirements, institutional diversity, type of training, learning incentives, technical assistance, and distance learning.

Urgency: For all the reasons discussed earlier, most respondents believe strongly that decisive action must be taken to improve PAMPR competencies. Despite a lot of 'hand-wringing' about the lack of PAMPR capacity, current efforts in this area are too limited and fragmented. A 'big push' is needed, therefore, that is both well-conceived and properly resourced.

Realism: While there is broad agreement that the current situation is not acceptable, it is clearly recognised that there are no simple solutions. The learning environment remains extremely difficult for most PAMPR practitioners, especially in central ministries and local government. As noted earlier, other factors seriously constrain improvements in this area and, therefore, interventions that seek to improve individual competencies must be closely integrated with the overall process of public sector reform at national and local government levels. Narrow, 'technicist' approaches to capacity building for PAMPR must be avoided.   Given the size of the challenge, any programme of action should be based on carefully sequenced interventions with clear priorities.

There is widespread recognition of the disappointing outcomes of many, but certainly not all, capacity building efforts in this area in the past. Consequently, the widespread enthusiasm and commitment to do something must be grounded in a hard-nosed assessment of what is achievable over the next 10-15 years.

Finally, it is clear that **some governments still do not attach much priority to improving capacity in this area. Government commitment to working with other major stakeholders, especially in civil society is also weak in some countries**. Partnership between governments and development agencies and between government and civil society has to be based on a process of learning together with minimum capacity levels for PAMPR among all concerned.

Ownership and sustainability: There is a strong consensus among all those consulted that ownership and sustainability are principal concerns of a programme of this kind. A number of respondents stated that one of their main concerns is that any initiative will merely serve the 'interests' of donor agencies. While donor funding will be required, the overall design and management of the learning network must be the responsibility of national governments and other stakeholders. Representatives of the UK development studies institutes were particularly insistent that 'the lead should be taken by African professionals'. This is considered essential for a number of reasons, one of which was to allay fears among African colleagues that this initiative is merely a way of 'drumming up business' in the North. The success of the African Economic Research Consortium has been largely due to the fact that there were no obvious vested interests, and donors (although funders) have kept out of the operational day to day management of the network.

The sustainability of any initiative is always a key concern. Long-term funding will have to be provided by donor agencies. Given the nature of the programme, the scope for cost recovery is likely to be fairly limited in most countries. In view of the importance of poverty reduction, developing a critical mass of highly competent PAMPR practitioners is a key public responsibility. PAMPR is, therefore, a public good.

Duplication and co-ordination: Any new programme should closely complement on-going interventions and avoid the excessive fragmentation and lack of co-ordination that has been common with many donor-supported efforts in the past. It is important, therefore, that any programme of action, which emerges from this process of consultation, is not seen as 'empire building'.

A regional learning network: There is near unanimous support for the concept of a regional learning network for PAMPR. The knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to design and implement effective poverty reduction strategies are similar in all countries in the region and there are major economies of scale in establishing a well-managed learning network. While some limited 'action research' may be needed in key areas, the primary focus of the network should be to develop effective learning strategies that draw on existing knowledge and skills on how to combat poverty. The key challenge is **to harness the human and physical resources that are already available across the region.** For this reason, there is widespread agreement that there is no need to establish a new regional training institution for PAMPR, which would undertake the bulk of training. What is required is a looser organisational structure that can support learning among PAMPR practitioners at the national and, where necessary, regional levels. However, most respondents felt that **the network must have a strong hub if it is to provide the coordination and technical support to 'make a difference'**. Some even suggested that a regional 'institute of poverty analysis' with a clear training mandate should be established.

Competency requirements: PAMPR requires a wide range of analytical skills. Learning has, therefore, to be multi-disciplinary with 'trainers' and other resource persons from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, primarily in the social sciences. Most respondents (including many in Ministries of Finance) believe that too much emphasis is still being placed on macro-economic policy and that this should be corrected as quickly as possible.

Institutional diversity: The cross-disciplinary nature of PAMPR means that a number of separate organisations have to be involved in supporting learning among PAMPR practitioners. This increases the complexity of the institutional arrangements that are needed in order to provide comprehensive learning support.

Type of training: There is general agreement that **the PAMPR learning process must be demand-driven, focused, high quality, practical, and problem-oriented**. The key objective is to facilitate 'learning by doing'. Formal training courses are needed, but they must be strictly job-related. Active, learner-centred methodologies must replace the traditional teacher-centred pedagogy, which still predominates. Formal training is important, but disruptions caused by excessively long and poorly scheduled training courses must be minimised.

Incentives: There must be **strong incentives for PAMPR personnel, particularly in the public sector, to acquire new knowledge and skills and apply these in their everyday work.** These include formal accreditation linked to career progression. The training offered by the learning network must have a high status among PAMPR practitioners.

Technical assistance: Respondents were generally wary about expatriate technical assistance. Where long term advisors are employed, they should have an explicit capacity building function through both on-the-job training and through running conventional short courses on a regular basis. But among the relatively few ministries that have used technical assistance effectively, respondents still see some role for 'centres of excellence' outside the region.

Distance learning: With a few exceptions, there was broad agreement concerning the role of distance learning in any learning network. Ministry respondents especially noted the advantage it offers of not having to take people away from work for long periods and of its suitability for public servants working in locations outside of the capital city. Some also noted the potential of distance learning to reduce or 'blur' the boundary between study and work. If PAMPR practitioners are still doing their normal jobs while studying, they are able to reflect continually about the relevance of what they are learning, and such reflection can be encouraged by formal activities in their study materials. In other words, effective distance learning helps develop 'reflective practitioners'.

However, even those respondents who welcomed distance learning, felt that a cautious approach should be adopted. This is because of all the usual problems including student isolation; maintaining motivation in the face of so many different pressures on one's life; and finding the time to study. Major concerns were also expressed about the still very low levels of connectivity to the internet in most countries. Whereas postal services are generally reliable, if slow, in some countries, respondents were much less sanguine about anything more 'high tech' – from telephone systems, to computers, the internet, and tele-conferencing. Thus, some respondents suggested that conventional courses that are taught face to face should be offered first of all, followed by distance learning versions once these are well established.

Annex 3 provides further background notes on distance learning.

4.2 The way forward

The review team strongly endorses the views of respondents on what should be done to improve PAMPR competencies in Africa. However, we are concerned not to pre-empt the further analysis and discussion that will be needed in order to design a comprehensive programme of action and translate it into an operational reality. The purpose of the following discussion is, therefore, to provide some preliminary ideas, suggestions, and further elaboration of key issues that we hope will help to take this process forward and, in particular, facilitate discussion at the regional meeting (see Annex 4 for outputs). The remainder of this chapter discusses the overall vision of a learning community and the broad structure of the network that is likely to be needed.

4.3 The vision: effective learning to eliminate poverty

Overall goal: Any programme of action must be based on a clear vision of its overall purpose and goals. On the basis of our extensive discussions, it seems clear that **the overriding need is to create a cohesive, effective, and mutually supportive learning community of PAMPR practitioners in SSA.** The overall objective of this learning community is to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for the design and implementation of poverty reduction policies and programmes that, collectively, will ensure the attainment of the International Development Targets by 2015.

An intensive and comprehensive process of tooling-up is urgently required in order for an 'enhanced framework for poverty reduction' to be effectively established in each country. It is widely acknowledged that the broad participation of civil society is crucially important to this process. A strong, inclusive community of PAMPR practitioners at both the national and regional level will play a key role in facilitating this.

Community membership: This professional community should comprise all stakeholders - central and local government, the higher education sector, and civil society as well as donor agencies. It is important to recognise that donor agency personnel and foreign advisors and consultants do not generally have any greater capacity to design and implement pro-poor policies. They invariably lack detailed local knowledge. It is also very important, therefore, that they participate on an equal footing in the PAMPR learning community.

Research and training institutions outside of the region (primarily in the North but also elsewhere in the South), which have relevant expertise should also be involved in a supportive role. As was discussed at length in the first report, these institutions have far more resources at their disposal than counterpart institutions in Africa and yet these are only being utilised very marginally to promote learning for poverty reduction in Africa.

Learning by doing: The learning process among PAMPR practitioners should be based on a set of clearly defined and appropriate learning principles. In particular, it is imperative to get away from the simplistic and flawed notion of 'skills transfer' between those that have knowledge and skills and those that do not. It is clear that no one individual or organisation has all the answers. While much is known about the causes of poverty and what should be done to reduce poverty, much is still not known. With such high levels of collective ignorance, learning by doing is of paramount importance. Well-designed training facilitates the sharing of this learning among a wider group of practitioners.

The role of research: It is still the case though that a great deal of knowledge is being generated about the causes of poverty and what should be done to design and manage effective interventions. However, much of this knowledge is not being effectively translated into practice. Consequently, a properly designed and resourced learning programme for PAMPR practitioners should play an analogous role as the agriculture extension service, namely to disseminate relevant knowledge and develop skills. While this implies that research (ie knowledge creation) should not be a core activity of the PRLN, it will be very important in identifying future research priorities.

Donor co-ordination: Close donor agency co-ordination will be essential if this vision of a PAMPR learning community is to become a reality. With the emergence of sector wide approaches, the main donor agencies are already working much more closely together than in the recent past. Given the nature of the proposed programme of support for PAMPR learning, some type of basket funding will probably be needed to support core activities. But, there should also be scope for individual donors to support specific activities, both at the regional and national level.

4.4 Network structure

For the reasons discussed below, a regional network with a strong central hub is the preferred structure, which emerged from our consultations, for addressing the learning needs of PAMPR practitioners. Each member country should also develop its own learning network, comprised of organisations that employ PAMPR practitioners as well higher education and training institutions that provide learning/training services.

4.4.1 The rationale for a regional network

Why is a regional learning network for poverty reduction necessary?

❑   It acts as an external catalyst for improving PAMPR in member countries while, at the same time, being a genuinely regionally owned and managed initiative. In particular, it can serve as an effective mechanism for establishing performance standards for both countries and institutions. Performance criteria can be established for both membership eligibility and levels of funding support.

❑   Countries in the region have similar kinds of learning needs for PAMPR, but individually have generally quite limited capacity to develop high quality curricula and related learning materials, provide distance education using up-to-date information and communication technologies, and improve the capacity of relevant training institutions. It is logical, therefore, that these services should be developed and managed on a regional basis as a part of a common learning strategy.

❑   The numbers of PAMPR practitioners in most sectors (education, health, international trade, etc.) are relatively small in most countries. Thus, it is only cost-effective to address the sector-specific learning needs of these personnel on a regional basis.

❑   It provides an institutional mechanism for PAMPR practitioners in different countries to exchange information and experience on a regular basis. A lot of this is sector specific.

❑   It is supportive of government objectives for greater regional co-operation (in particular COMESA, SADC, and EAC). Human resource development is a focus of the SADC Programme of Action.

❑   It would enable countries that have greater PAMPR capacity to assist weaker countries in the region. There is a considerable amount of relevant expertise in larger countries in the region. The challenge is, therefore, to harness this in a systematic manner.

❑   It would be able to draw on assistance from donor agencies and research and training institutions, which are located outside of the region, in a co-ordinated manner and in line with the strategic objectives of the network. There is a strong desire among most donor agencies for a more co-ordinated approach. A regional network could also enable the considerable expertise that exists in research and training institutions in the UK and elsewhere in the North to be tapped more effectively.

4.4.2 Geographical coverage of the network

What should the geographical scope of a poverty reduction learning network be? It is important to point out that while DFID requested the review team to consult with PAMPR practitioners in seven countries in East and Central Africa, the intention was always to treat these as pilot countries and to extend the scope of any proposed network to a larger region.

There would appear to be three main geographical options. First, a global poverty reduction learning network, which includes all developing countries. This is a key objective of the Global Development Network, which is being sponsored by the World Bank in its role as a global 'knowledge institution'. Second, a network for all countries in sub-Saharan Africa could be established. And thirdly, there is the possibility of creating two or more sub-regional networks within SSA.

While a global network is desirable, we do not believe that such a network will, on its own, be able to respond to the learning needs of PAMPR practitioners in Africa in the intensive manner that is required. A clear regional focus is needed if the development challenge in Africa, which has its own distinctive features, is to be effectively addressed. Ownership and participation are also critically important issues. The learning network must be fully owned and managed by member countries with the network centre located in the region.

An Africa-wide learning network for poverty reduction learning would have a number of distinct advantages. Learning needs are similar across countries and the inclusion of all African countries would ensure that important economies of scale could be realised. In particular, the curricula for core and sector specific learning modules could be used right across the continent thereby spreading the large fixed costs involved in curriculum development. The main drawback is that such a network is likely to be difficult to manage from a single central organisation. Thus, even if a learning network for the entire continent is considered to be desirable, there will still be a need for focused sub-regional networks with their own central hubs that are able to service the learning needs of smaller numbers of member countries. It is with this idea in mind that representatives from COMESA member countries were invited to attend the regional meeting held in Uganda in the latter half of 2000.

5. CLIENTS AND CURRICULUM

This chapter discusses the main target client group for the proposed learning network and the type of curricula that will need to be developed.

5.1 Target group

The main target group for the poverty reduction learning network is all individuals who are responsible for policy analysis and management for pro-poor national and sector strategies and programmes. This group can be sub-divided as follows:

❑   Ministries: senior policymakers, personnel in planning and policy departments.
❑   Local government: planners and other senior staff involved in interpreting government policy, identifying local needs, and developing district-level and other plans.
❑   Researchers in higher education institutions and elsewhere who assist in the formulation of policies and undertake policy and programme evaluations
❑   Civil society organisations including NGOs and CBOs, employer organisations, and trade unions.

It is not possible at this stage to state just how large these client sub-groups are in each country. The largest numbers of individuals are probably in local government. Consequently, at the district level alone, each of the main sector ministries will have at least one planner or other professional who would benefit from participating in the learning network. In larger countries, this adds up to well over 500 public servants.

In addition, the following two groups of individuals will need to belong to the network, mainly in order to facilitate directly the learning process:

❑   Managers who are responsible for managing the human resource development function.
❑   Lecturers and other professionals who train and provide learning services in this area.

5.2 The curriculum

What exactly should be learned? The PRLN curriculum should cover the key competencies required by PAMPR practitioners in order to design and manage effectively poverty-focused strategies, policies and programmes in their specific sectors. Many of these competencies are generic. In other words, they are core knowledge and skills that are needed for effective practice by all PAMPR practitioners. Others competencies, however, are sector-specific and require, therefore, specialist curricula.

It will not be possible to include in the network curriculum all the knowledge and skills which are needed by professional planners. The focus of the PRLN should be on critical areas of competence, which are indispensable for the design and implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Sector Development Programmes. It is also generally accepted that the curriculum should be based on a 'policy as process' approach.

5.2.1 Core competencies

Core competence refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by PAMPR personnel in all stakeholder organisations. Skills development is already going on to develop these competencies, but the main concern is that this is not happening in a systematic and concerted manner. As noted earlier, training tends to be too infrequent, provided on an ad hoc basis, is not sufficiently practical,

and many key areas of core and specialist knowledge are not adequately covered. A major objective of the PRLN is, therefore, to a develop a comprehensive model curriculum that covers the key competencies needed by PAMPR practitioners to design and implement poverty reduction programmes - at national, sector, and regional/district levels.

There are two key elements of competence: knowledge and skills (the capacity to act) and attitudes (the motivation to act).

A.   Knowledge about poverty

An ability to design and manage poverty-related interventions requires a detailed understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty. The key areas of knowledge are as follows:

The nature of poverty: Who are the poor? What are the causes of poverty and ill being – both in general and in specific countries? What conceptual frameworks (e.g. the sustainable livelihoods approach) can be used to analyse the needs and capacities of poor people. This includes international structural issues and human rights.

What can be done to reduce poverty? How do government policies and other interventions affect the livelihoods of the poor? What are the main lessons that can be drawn from these interventions, both in country and elsewhere?

The policy making process: What factors shape the policy-making process and, in particular, what are the key social, political, and bureaucratic constraints that must be tackled in order for pro-poor policies to be successfully formulated and implemented.

Macro-economic, cross-cutting and sectoral policies: PAMPR practitioners need a sound understanding of all relevant policy and practice. Priority areas are macro-economic policy (theory, objectives, outcomes), the planning and budgetary process for MTEF, decentralisation, good governance, gender, and environment. They should also have a basic understanding of key pro-poor policy issues in all the main sectors.

B.   Analytical and applied skills

There are core general analytical and specific, 'technical' skills that are needed for the design and delivery of all poverty reduction policies, programmes and projects. Some of the most important activities where these skills are needed include poverty assessments, public expenditure reviews, institutional and governance reviews (including stakeholder analysis), monitoring and evaluation, budgeting and financial management (in particular in relation to the MTEF and new national financial management systems), gender analysis, the analysis of household and other surveys, and participatory research appraisals.

C.   Attitudes

The learning network should help promote professional ethics and attitudes that are supportive of pro-poor strategies and policies.

D.   Institutional management skills

These skills help staff cope with the wide range of institutional and systemic problems that collectively undermine job performance. At a generic level, these include the ability to work in *groups;* understand the complexities of the institutions within which they work as well as inter-institutional relationships; *negotiate* ways forward; and *learn how to learn*, so that on-the-job experience is explicitly recognised and is able to feed into the policy process.

These skills are not intended to replace, but rather add value to, more conventional skills that are required as part of policy analysis and management. They might be thought of as *process* skills because they are intended to facilitate processes of learning and change which lead to greater effectiveness in policy formulation and implementation.

5.2.2 Sector competencies

Poverty-reduction strategies and programmes cover the key policy sectors, all of which have large but specific bodies of knowledge and related skills. The learning network must develop curricula, which cover these sector-specific learning needs.

The most important sectors are as follows:

- agriculture and rural development
- community development
- education and training
- employment
- environment
- health
- international trade
- local government
- small enterprise development

5.3 Curriculum development

The PRLN Regional Centre should take overall responsibility for the development of both core and sector curricula. It is clear that, wherever possible, well-designed learning materials that have already been developed should be incorporated into the PRLN model curriculum. This applies, in particular, to interesting and relevant case study materials and other problem solving exercises. Coordination of this function could be undertaken by another body on an interim basis whilst the PRLN Regional Centre is being established.

6. THE LEARNING PROCESS

Having discussed what PAMPR practitioners should learn, we now consider how the learning process itself could be organised. It is clear from the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 that there are serious shortcomings in the learning process for PAMPR practitioners in the seven countries that were visited by the review team. Unless, therefore, a more effective process of learning can be established, the proposed learning network will achieve very little.

The following discussion first provides an overview of key principles for effective learning and then considers some of the specific characteristics that should shape the learning process of the PRLN. Respondents, especially those who are trainers, generally recognised the importance of adopting modern, learning-centred teaching methodologies.

6.1 Effective learning: key principles

What do we mean by 'effective learning' in the context of the proposed PRLN? Certainly, it is about the effective assimilation of knowledge, but respondents also added a second dimension. They talked of the need to be able to translate knowledge gained by studying or training into practice and vice versa.

How can learning effectively incorporate both dimensions? It is a function of what we learn and how we learn. *What we learn* is about curriculum/content, ensuring that it is relevant to practice; and that it is also *competence*-based – ie it is about the ability to do things. Thus, it combines *knowing about* with *knowing how*. We generally refer to the latter as *skills*, which are in turn about the ability to use appropriate *tools*. In the context of the PRLN, we are referring both to hard tools, such as information and communications technologies (ICTs), and soft tools, such as budgeting, participatory rural appraisal, and logical framework analysis.

The key point about skills is that they are not just learned. They have to be practised continually in order to achieve sustainable improvements. Everyone knows this if the tool is a screwdriver, but it is equally true for soft tools. For example, if one simply takes a tool like PRA (participatory rural appraisal) off the shelf and uses it in an instrumental, technical manner, exactly according to the manual, it is unlikely to be effective. Like all tools, PRA has to be adapted or 'crafted' to the specific circumstances where it is being used, and sometimes it may even be rejected as the correct tool for the job. In other words, every tool has to be used critically. The implication is that the PRLN has to provide, via its content/curriculum, this critical understanding of tools as well as the opportunity to practise and become skilled in using them.

How we learn is about forging an inter-dependent relationship between formal learning and experiential learning through practice (on-the-job). Two main principles are involved. First, learning is *active* – ie it is *not* passive receipt of knowledge. Thus, it is about engaging actively with what one is taught and adopting a questioning approach. In this way deeper and independent understandings emerge. And secondly, learning is *reflective* with respect to experiential learning (or what one knows already). One uses what one is taught to reflect on practice on-the-job, and, in turn, one uses one's practice to reflect on what one learns. In this manner, knowledge is transformed and the possibility of new knowledge emerges. A student who is able to reflect in this way is a *reflective practitioner*.

6.1.1 Learning feedback loops

Ideally, poverty conceptualisation, data collection and analysis should be linked to policy via a continuous learning process of feedback loops Thus, one might start by conceptualising poverty, which, to a large extent, frames the data that are collected. Then analysis of the data leads *either* to formulation of policy on poverty and on to implementation of that policy, *or* a challenge to the

original conceptualisation which leads to new data collection, and the loop is repeated until a policy is formulated and implemented. Implementation should, however, itself yield fresh data (via monitoring and evaluation) which might *either* lead to refinements in the implementation of the policy *or* again to re-conceptualisation leading eventually to rejection of the old, and formulation of a new, policy. Both categories of learning are important, not least because they bring with them the acknowledgement that policy on poverty is not a fixed product, but a dynamic process.

6.2 The PRLN learning process

A PRLN designed on the basis of these learning principles would have the following characteristics:

The learning organisation: The overall organisational context in which learning takes place is of paramount importance. PAMPR practitioners need a highly supportive learning environment where senior managers take their learning needs seriously and have the management skills to discuss and identify individual learning priorities. The PRLN should provide, therefore, assistance to managers in order that they can undertake effectively their responsibilities for human resources management and help create effective learning organisations.

Individual learning programmes: Establishing clear learning priorities for each individual is essential. This must be based on a detailed understanding of the essential competencies (knowledge and skills) that are required to perform particular types of PAMPR activities and related tasks. Areas of weakness can be identified and specific learning needs can be targeted with particular learning modules, which have been specifically designed for this purpose. Individuals have a strong motivation to learn when they have a clear understanding of their immediate as well as longer term learning needs and are then given the opportunity to address these in a systematic and programmed manner. In particular, each individual staff member should have adequate time for individual study and participation in off-the-job training courses.

Learning methodologies: PRLN learning must be based on best-practice, learner-centred methodologies. To reiterate;

❑   The work-based learner should be a 'reflective practitioner' who is able to engage critically with what he/she is being taught;

❑   There should also be a shift of emphasis away from training to learning i.e. 'you don't have to be trained before you can learn'. Learners learn by doing through structured problem-solving activities both on-the-job and in more formal learning environments;

❑   A variety of learning mediums should be employed: print, computer and multi-media, one-to-one, group learning, exposure to best practice (internship etc.), and conventional face to face instruction (see below).

The need for a learner-centred approach is increasingly being appreciated and has been adopted in a few training organisations. However, a key objective of PRLN should be to provide appropriate support for 'training of trainers'.

Learning modules: The basic building block of the PRLN learning system should be the accredited learning module. These should be competency-based and, therefore, designed to meet the knowledge and skill requirements of well-defined sets of activities and tasks. Appropriate accreditation enables each PAMPR practitioner to acquire prescribed combinations of learning modules, which leads to formal certification (usually a post-graduate certificate, diploma, or masters degree). The curriculum for each learning module takes a standard period of time to complete (100 hours is common). The modular approach is particularly suited for job-related learning of the kind that is needed by PAMPR

practitioners because it is flexible, competency-based, and promotes learner motivation. Individuals can select from a menu of learning modules that cover all the generic and sector competencies.

Professional apprenticeship: All PAMPR practitioners must have minimum levels of competence to carry out a range of core activities. These activities are both generic and sector-specific. As part of a professional apprenticeship, new recruits to government organisations should be required to undertake a comprehensive learning programme within a certain time period. This will entail studying a specified number of accredited learning modules (both generic and sector-specific), which, once completed, will be equivalent to a masters degree. In time, therefore, all PAMPR practitioners will have a high quality masters degree that specifically targets their practical learning needs. As the status of the PRLN grows, its masters degree would hopefully become as highly valued as the MBA and other professional qualifications.

Dual mode learning: There should be a 'mixed bag' of conventional and distance learning. This is to ensure a flexible offering to meet student needs, and recognise especially their varied levels of access to the new ICTs. The ICT infrastructure needed for more interactive distance learning methodologies is being rapidly developed in much of sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank, for example, plans to establish basic ICT infrastructure in remote rural areas. The PRLN should tap into this expanding infrastructure rather than try to 're-invent the wheel'.

As noted earlier, many respondents stated that the initial focus should be on conventional, face to face training programmes. However, it is in fact easier to first prepare materials for distance use and then convert them for face to face teaching rather than the other way round.

The principles of student support outlined above should apply to both learning modes. This is especially important for distance learning, where there are issues of maintaining learner commitment in the face of their comparative isolation and competing pressures for their time.

Efficient administration is also essential. This again applies especially to distance learning, where there is no classroom or college notice board that can inform students of important items. All notices have to be sent to students in good time with allowances made for the fact that such students are studying part-time and may be away for quite long periods of time. Also, swift turnaround of student assignments is essential for distance learning.

Figure 2 shows how a 100-hour learning module could be organised. In this example, learners have the choice between an intensive, three-week conventional, face to face course and eight weeks of part-time study, mainly via distance learning. All students have to submit two written assignments as well as sit an examination. The distance learning mode also allows for extra tuition that is optional (either by face to face or electronic tuition).

7. PRLN ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

What is the appropriate organisation and management structure for the PRLN? Again, the purpose of the regional meeting was to discuss the various issues and options and make specific recommendations (see Annex 4). The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to clarify what the review team sees as the core functions of the PRLN and the kinds of organisational and management arrangements that may be needed if these functions are to be undertaken in an efficient and effective manner.

To reiterate, the overall goal of the PRLN is to improve significantly the competencies of PAMPR practitioners to design and manage pro-poor strategies and related programmes. This will entail a number of inter-related sets of activities including the development of regional and national learning networks, curriculum development using both conventional and open learning technologies, the

organisation and delivery of training services by a range of training and other institutions, and the training of trainers. Consequently, the PRLN will have a more complex organisational and management structure than a network, which has only a limited number of stakeholder clienteles and a narrow range of activities.
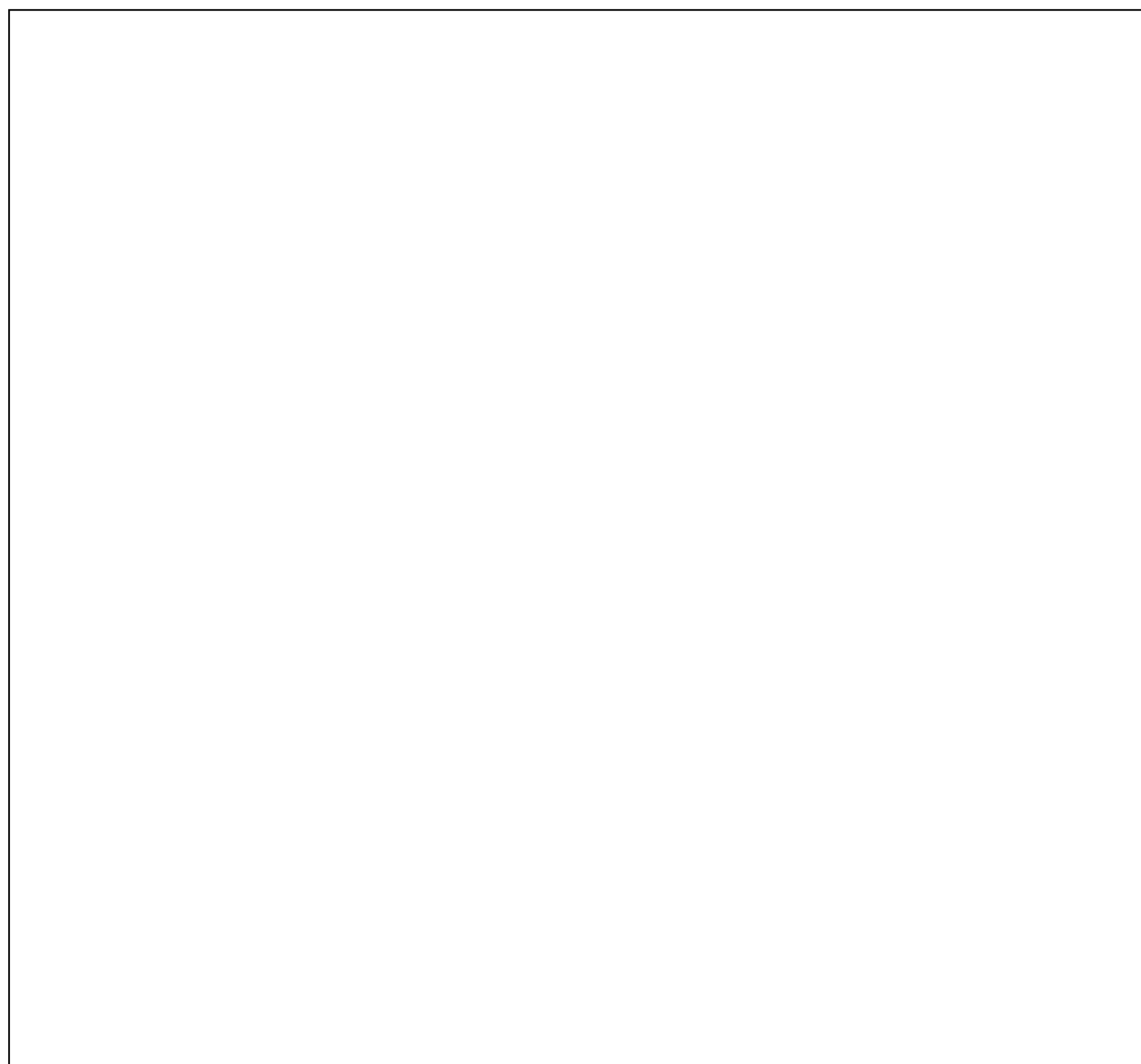
7.1 Key design issues

Figure 3 below shows the three basic components of the organisational structure of the PRLN. These include: the centre or hub of the network; national PRLNs, which comprise of learners (PAMPR practitioners) and training organisations; and sector learning centres, which provide learning services to national PRLNs. The PRLN is, therefore, both a regional network and a series of national networks. It is first and foremost a learning network as opposed to a more conventional training network.

The network must be both accountable and legitimate, but at the same time enjoy a high level of organisational autonomy. Consequently, the key design issues that must be addressed are as follows:

❑   What should be the overall institutional status of the PRLN?

❑   What are the main roles and responsibilities of the PRLN centre?

❑   Where should it be located?

❑   What are the main roles and responsibilities of each national PRLN?

❑   What can be done to minimise start-up time? As is well-known, establishing new organisations tends to be a time-consuming process

7.2 Network accountability and autonomy

To be legitimate the PRLN must have the respect and wholehearted support of the PAMPR client group it has been set up to serve and, to be accountable, it must have an appropriate governance structure. It is important that the network transcends national and regional politics.

The key organisational question is whether the PRLN should be established as the direct responsibility of an existing organisation or should it be set up as independent corporate entity (similar to the AERC, for example).
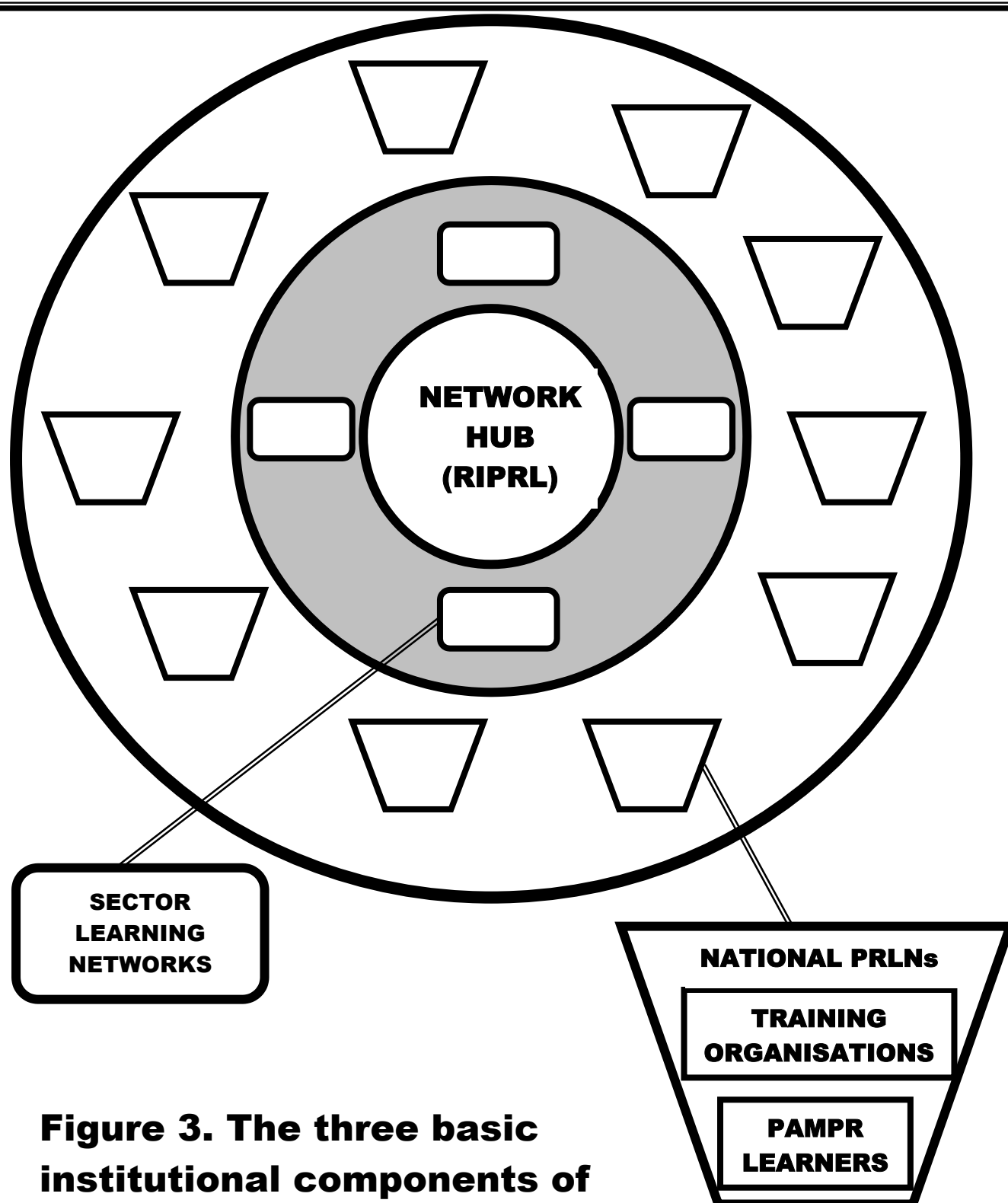
International organisations that have the mandates (both in terms of objectives and geographical coverage) which cover the activities of the PRLN include the United Nations, the African Capacity Building Foundation, and the Southern Africa Development Community. However, any parent organisation must itself have sufficient legitimacy among the target client group.

The ACBF would appear to be a particularly suitable institutional home for the PRLN, especially since it is currently in a 'process of change and enlargement'. However, even if ACBF is chosen, there are still a number of possible organisational arrangements. In particular, should the PRLN be directly managed by the ACBF in Harare (as a separate programme or department) or should it have the same or similar autonomy as the other, mainly research institutions, which currently receive ACBF financial support?

7.3 The network hub

In a network of this kind, the hub or centre should provide a range of activities and services in support of the national client groups and, more generally, ensure the necessary managerial impetus and drive to achieve the overall objectives of the network. The centre must, therefore, have a very high calibre of leadership and technical expertise as well as sufficient power and authority to ensure that network objectives are being effectively realised among all member countries. It is equally important though that the size of the centre is kept to a minimum in order to ensure that management overhead costs do not become excessively high. One possible name for the (sub-) regional hub of the PRLN could be the **Regional Institute for Poverty Reduction Learning (RIPRL).** For expositional convenience, we shall use this name in the following discussion.

NETWORK HUB (RIPRL)

SECTOR LEARNING NETWORKS

NATIONAL PRLNs

TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

PAMPR LEARNERS

Figure 3. The three basic institutional components of the PRLN.

7.3.1 Location

With a relatively small management team, it is important that the PRLN centre is in a single geographical location. Just where this should be will depend on a number of factors. Perhaps the most important is the overall commitment of the host government and other local stakeholders to poverty reduction and the creation of a strong learning network to support PAMPR. The host country must also have a relatively good telecommunications system.

7.3.2 Governance

Regardless of the overall institutional status of the PRLN, RIPRL will need to have its own board of directors with representatives from all member governments, funding agencies, training centres and civil society organisations.

7.3.3 Responsibilities

The Institute should take responsibility for the overall management/coordination of the PRLN. While all countries in the region should be eligible for membership of the network, it is important that there is an appropriate incentive structure that encourages individual countries to meet certain membership criteria. In particular, governments need to demonstrate a high level of commitment to poverty reduction as well as to the overall goal of the PRLN itself. This commitment must also be matched by actual performance in meeting agreed learning objectives by both PAMPR practitioners themselves and the providers of training services.

Another possible incentive mechanism is that RIPRL should decide the overall level of core funding of each national PRLN, which would be largely performance-related. It would, therefore, be the responsibility of the centre to review carefully the annual plans of each national PRLN and to monitor and evaluate the learning activities that take place. Operationally, however, each national PRLN should be responsible for the design and implementation of its own programme of learning activities.

It is likely that the functional responsibilities of RIPRL will need to be divided into the following programmes:

- national PRLNs
- curriculum development
- the development of the PRLN open learning and communication system
- the training of trainers
- the development of PRLN sector centres.

RIPRL management should take overall responsibility for all these programmes. However, most of the substantive work that will need to be undertaken should be contracted out to appropriate organisations in the region. Where necessary, expertise from organisations outside of the region should also be utilised. All this work should be tendered for on a competitive basis. Advisory/technical committees will also need to be established for each programme.

In order to minimise start-up costs and time, it might be possible for a completely autonomous RIPRL to be initially housed and managed by an established and reputable organisation. For example, the AERC was initially established as part the Rockefeller Foundation office in Nairobi.

7.3.4 Staffing requirements

Given the proposed mandate, responsibilities and overall structure of the PRLN, the regional centre will require a minimum complement of six professionals and each national PRLN will also need a national director. Overall management costs will, therefore, be high, but these will be justified by much improved PAMPR throughout the region.

The PRLN is an African network and it should be staffed by Africans. However, it may be necessary to appoint non-Africans on an interim basis where the appropriate expertise is not available. The Director-General of the PRLN should be an outstanding manager with a proven track record in developing learning networks of this kind. He/she must have visionary leadership skills with the energy and enthusiasm to establish an ambitious learning network.

Programme directors will also need to be appointed for each of the main programmes-national PRLN, curriculum development and training of trainers, open learning system/information management, and the overall supervision of the sector PRLNs. They should work as a close knit team under the direct leadership of the Director-General.

7.4 National PRLNs

7.4.1 Overall objective

The goal of each national PRLN is to develop an effective learning community of PAMPR practitioners. Given this overall mandate, **all organisations, both in and out of government, who are involved in the design and management of poverty reduction policies and programmes should be included as network members.** In most countries, the majority of these practitioners would continue to be public servants in the policy and planning departments of central ministries and increasingly in planning units at the local government level. However, civil society organisations are playing an increasingly active role in both policy formulation and implementation.

While the national PRLN must be inclusive, only organisations which demonstrate strong commitment to the overall goal of improving PAMPR competence should be allowed to participate and benefit from the resources that will be made available. It may well be the case, therefore, that not all ministries, local governments, and NGOs, and donor agencies will be members.

7.4.2 Organisation, governance and management

As a national institution, each national PRLN should be locally owned and managed. It should, therefore, have its own board to which network management and member organisations are answerable. While public sector organisations are likely to comprise the bulk of network members, the NPRLN should be an independent, not for profit organisation outside of government. Consequently, its board should comprise of representatives from all the key stakeholders both in and outside of government.

The relationship of each national PRLN to RIPRL has two main aspects. First and foremost, the Institute should provide high quality support services to each national network (in particular, curriculum development and training of trainers) and generally facilitate communication among PAMPR practitioners in the region as a whole, using new information and communication technologies. And secondly, RIPRL should also directly fund each national network. Funding allocations could be based on two types of criteria - need and performance. It is important that strong incentives exist for each NPRLN to attain clearly stated learning objectives among its constituent organisations. Some centralisation of funding is, therefore, required if this kind of incentive structure is to work successfully. It would probably be unwise, however, if national networks were completely

reliant on RIPRL for funding. Governments and donor agencies should directly contribute to the core funding of each NPRLN. Network learning objectives could be formally included as intermediate performance targets in PRSPs and SDPs.

A full-time National Director should be appointed with overall responsibility for the management of each national network. An appropriate person should also be appointed as the NPRLN Sector Co-ordinator in each of the key sectors that are included in the PRLN. These Sector Co-ordinators should be expected to undertake this role as part of their normal professional duties and they would not therefore receive any salary support from the network. Wherever possible, the NPRLN Secretariat should be housed in an existing organisation.

7.4.3 Learner support

The learning needs of all PAMPR practitioners - from the most senior policy makers in government to the most junior planning officers - should be catered for. Each participating organisation will need, therefore, to undertake a detailed learning needs analysis. In particular, HRD managers will discuss and agree with each staff member an individual learning programme. This will comprise both generic and sector-specific learning modules, which will have been developed by RIPRL and jointly accredited with local higher education institutions (see below). However, each national network should be encouraged to modify and/or develop new modules that meet country-specific learning needs.

In line with international best practice, PAMPR practitioners in member organisations should be allowed to devote 5-10 percent of their working time on meeting their own learning needs, or, in other words, around 2-4 weeks per year. Normally, this should be divided between individual study and more conventional face to face instruction and interaction with other learners. Staff who want to study more than this in their own time should be encouraged to do so.

The goal of the PRLN is to include all PAMPR practitioners in member countries as active participants. It will clearly take some time, however, for the network to develop the capacity to achieve this. In the larger countries, the total number of learners is well over 200 in the planning and policy departments of central government ministries, and probably over 1000 at the district level. Realistic targets need to be established. An average of 250 learners in each country during the initial five years of the network's existence would be an ambitious but achievable target.

7.4.4 National and regional PRLN training consortia

PRLN learners will need to be supported in two main ways. First, they will be required to attend formal training courses as part of the curriculum of most core and specialist modules. And second, each learner should have her/his own tutor or adviser who is responsible for marking written assignments and generally monitoring the progress of each learner.

These learning services should, to the greatest extent possible, be provided in-country by nationals. Certainly, in larger countries, there is a relatively sizeable pool of expertise that can be tapped for most core and some sector-specific learning needs. It will be necessary, therefore, to establish a consortium of local training institutions that can furnish these learner support services. Competitive tendering would be the most effective way of deciding which institutions should be involved, but there are probably not enough training institutions in each country for this to be possible. Thus, there is little alternative but to appoint the relevant local institutions and to ensure the strict enforcement of performance standards.

The training consortium should normally be based at the national university, but with the active participation of other training institutions. While we recognise the concerns of some PAMPR practitioners about the knowledge and experience of university staff in this area, the fact remains that

this group comprises the largest source of expertise in every country. The review team was also impressed by the efforts currently being made by most university administrations to improve the quality, relevance and cost-effectiveness of both teaching and research. It is essential, therefore, that the capacity of university staff to provide high quality learning services for each NPRLN is improved as part and parcel of the wider efforts that are being made to strengthen the higher education sector.

Accreditation is the other key reason why national universities should be centrally involved. PRLN core and sector learning modules should be accredited by the national university which, in turn, will be accredited by RIPRL. Most universities will almost certainly need to bring in outside people in order to meet the high training standards that will be required if PAMPR practitioners are to be actively involved. In the case of those countries which do not have locally available expertise, these individuals will have to be brought in from abroad and much greater attention will need to be given to capacity building among the training consortium members.

An appropriate management structure should be established to ensure the efficient and effective provision of training services. A PRLN Learning Services Co-ordinator could be appointed at each participating training institution and the PRLN National Director could chair a committee comprised of these co-ordinators.

7.4.5 PRLN sector learning networks

With regard to the provision of learning services for individual sectors, a more regional approach will probably be called for. As discussed earlier, RIPRL should identify the most appropriate institution in the region to be the learning centre for a particular sector. There should be much greater scope for competitive tendering at the regional than the national level. It will be the job of each of these sector learning centres to develop a regional consortium of training institutions that already have or have the potential to offer learning services for specific sectors (education, health, small enterprise development, etc.). Again, wherever possible, sector learning modules should be delivered in-country. However, in smaller countries and more specialist areas, it will be necessary to run regional or sub-regional courses.

The relationship between the national and sector PRLNs will need to be thought about very carefully. The national PRLN director should probably have overall responsibility for learning services provided to PAMPR practitioners in each country. However, this will involve close co-ordination with the management of the PRLNs.

7.4.6 Training of trainers

Ensuring very high standards of training and other learning support services will be essential for the success of the PRLN. It should be a formal requirement, therefore, that all instructors at national and regional training consortia institutions undertake specially designed staff development programmes. Training of trainer programmes are needed both for learner-centred teaching methodologies (i.e. teaching proficiency) and in substantive areas of PAMPR knowledge and skills (both core and sector specific). RIPRL, supported by the sector learning centres, should be responsible for developing the content of these staff development programmes.

A simple cascade training model could be adopted. For example, with regard to teaching/learning methods, a small group (typically 4-5) of the most able instructors from the PRLN training consortium in each country could attend 5-10 day regional workshops on effective learning. This group could then be given the responsibility of running short, one-two day workshops for all PRLN trainers in each country. Other experienced teacher trainers could also be involved. The most able trainers should also be used as resource persons for regional training activities as well as for national courses where local expertise does not exist.

8. FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is clearly not possible at this stage to make precise estimates of the overall funding needed for the PRLN. This will depend on the overall scale of regional and national network activities over time. The purpose of the following discussion is to provide some broad indications of the possible costs of the main elements of the network and briefly consider some key implementation issues.

8.1 Funding components

8.1.1 RIPRL and the sector learning centres

Annual operating costs: Attractive international salaries will have to be offered for the key management posts at RIPRL and the PRLN sector centres. The personnel costs for the Director-General and the four Programme Directors are likely to be in the region of US$0.5 million per annum. With office rental, office operations, support staff, and travel costs, the total operating budget could well be in excess of US $1.0 million per annum.

It is very difficult to estimate the likely annual operating costs of each designated PRLN sector centre. These centres should be part of existing organisations and each will be responsible for the development of sector learning modules and running workshops, many of which will have to be regional or sub-regional (clusters of countries). While the direct costs of these two activities will be met from other budget headings (RIPRL curriculum development and national learner support -see below), each centre will need a core staff to provide the necessary management and administrative support. One high-powered centre director with good administrative and financial back up would probably suffice. Including overhead payments for the host institution, the likely running costs of each sector learning sector is likely to be US$150-200,000 per annum. During the first five years, a reasonable target would be for the PRLN to establish at least three sector centres (education, health, and local government are perhaps the most likely candidates). The total running costs of these three centres would, therefore, be US$450-600,000 per annum.

Preparation of learning materials: RIPRL should be responsible for learning materials development for the core learning modules. However, the actual preparation of each module should be contracted out to consortia of training and research organisations in Africa and elsewhere. A 100-hour core module will require at least 150 person-days to prepare. Consequently, the total preparation cost per learning module is likely to be in the region of US$100,000 ($90,000 fees and US$10,000 other costs). With 30 core learning modules, this amounts to a one-off expenditure of approximately US$3.0 million.

The PRLN sector learning centres will be responsible for developing the specialist sector learning modules. Material development costs will probably be higher, mainly because more input is likely to be needed from organisations in the North. The direct cost of each 100-hour learning module could, therefore, be in the region of US$150,000. With a total of 20 modules, this amounts to US$3.0 million per sector. The total cost of materials preparation for three sectors will be approximately US$9.0 million.

Distance learning support and the development of the PRLN website: RIPRL should take the lead in developing the PRLN website. As information and communication technologies (ICTs) improve in the region, it will become possible to place increasing reliance on this website for the delivery of learning materials to individual PAMPR practitioners and enable fully interactive communication among all participants in the learning community. Development and operational costs for the website could be as high as US$200,000 per annum for at least the first five years.

The PRLN should utilise existing ICT learning facilities, in particular the AVU and the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network. With 15-20 countries in the PRLN, the total costs of using these facilities in an intensive manner (including video-conferencing) is likely to be at least US$0.5 million per annum.

Training of trainers: RIPRL should take overall responsibility for organising training of trainer workshops on a regional basis. As discussed earlier, each year, between 3-6 lecturers from the PRLN training institutions in each country could receive intensive training in both effective learning methods and as well as substantive training in the knowledge and skills required for core and specialist learning modules. Ideally, these workshops should, on average, be five days in duration with 15 participants. With say 15 member countries and an average of four participants per country, four of these regional training of trainers workshops would need to held every year. The total cost per workshop including tuition, accommodation and subsistence and travel is likely to be in the region of US$40-50,000 (which is equivalent to US$530.00-670.00 per trainee per day). The total cost for the four workshops would be US$160,000-200,000 per annum. This will be considerably higher if participants are paid honoraria.

8.1.2 National PRLNs

The budget for each National PRLN is likely to comprise of three main components: management, learner support, and training of trainers. As discussed earlier, each national PRLN will have two main sources of funding: directly from RIPRL and from the national assistance programmes of individual donor agencies in each country. The following estimates of funding requirements cover, therefore, both these funding sources.

Management: Total salary costs for the National Director would be around US$75,000 per annum. This is very high compared to pay levels in the public sector, but is 'the going rate' in most countries for top quality nationals working for private sector and international organisations. Some honorarium will also probably have to be paid to the PRLN learner support co-ordinators at each of the institutions participating in the training consortium and, possibly in some countries, the PRLN co-ordinator in each participating government ministry. If each government provides rent-free office accommodation, total management costs (including an administrator/finance officer) are likely to be in the region of US$100,000 per annum.

Learner support: There are three main budget items with respect to the system of supported open learning that is being proposed for PAMPR practitioners: learning materials, tutorial support, and face to face learning.

The total cost of learning materials for each module is likely to be around US$100. Past experience indicates that at least 5 hours of individual tutorial support is needed for a 100 hour learning module of the level and type that is required for professional policymakers and planners. PAMPR practitioners would, of course, continue to participate in learning/training activities that are not part of the PRLN. Consequently, a reasonable target would be that each PRLN learner should complete one module every year. With an average of 250 learners per country, the total cost of learning materials and tutorial assistance would be US$25,000 and US$25,000-50,000 (depending on local hourly rates for assistance of this kind) respectively.

The amount of facilitated face to face learning per module will vary according to the type of module and the location of the learner. It is important, however, that every learner has the opportunity to benefit from more conventional, 'workshop' learning of this kind. On average, therefore, 25 hours of each module (i.e. 25 percent) could be allocated to this type of learning support. Class sizes need to be kept small (i.e. no more than 15) for effective learning. With this number of participants, training

institutions in the region currently charge US$500-1000 for a full (six hour) day. For at least half of all participants, accommodation, subsistence, and travel costs (both local and international) will also have to be met. Total workshop costs for 250 learners per country will, therefore, be in the region of US$200,000 per annum.

The involvement of overseas resource persons will probably be necessary for some of the more advanced/specialist courses and also in countries where training capacity is weak. If at least one-third of all PRLN workshops require one overseas resource person, total workshop costs per country will be around US$175,000 per annum. Even so, the unit (variable) cost per participant is still only US$110 per day.

Training of trainers: National training of trainer workshops could be held in every PRLN member country on an annual basis. If all PRLN trainers are required to attend at least one two-day residential workshop every year, an average of two 15-person workshops will need to be organised in each member country. If so, the total costs are likely to be around US$5,000-7,500 per workshop.

8.2 Implementation

The proposed PRLN would be a complex and ambitious learning network, and would need at least a 20-year life-span to be fully effective. Very careful scheduling of all activities will be essential in order for the preparation and delivery of high quality learning materials and services to a large target group of PAMPR practitioners to be undertaken in an efficient and effective manner. The first priorities will be to establish RIPRL and the sector learning sectors, develop learning modules, and gradually increase the number of member countries. Assuming a target of 15 member countries after five years, the key activities of the PRLN during the first five years of the network's existence are likely to be as follows.

Year 1: Establish RIPRL; intensive stakeholder consultation and learning needs analysis; identify subject areas for core training modules; curriculum development for first 10 core learning modules; initial development of the network website and organise access arrangements for distance learning ICT infrastructure, agree joining dates for member countries.

Year 2: RIPRL fully operational, first group of five national PRLNs established (appointment of national director, training consortium institutions); first 10 core learning modules piloted; curriculum development for the next 10 core modules; assign responsibility for the first three sector learning centres; curriculum development for the first ten learning modules for each sector (30 in total); organise first regional and national training of trainer workshops.

Year 3: Next five national PRLNs established, last 10 core learning modules developed, and second group of 10 sector modules developed (30 in total) and piloted.

Year 4: Remaining five national PRLNs established, and full availability of 30 core and 60 sector modules in first two groups of national PRLNs (12 countries).

Year 5: The PRLN is fully operational in all 15 countries.

8.3 Total budget

On the basis of this implementation schedule, Table 1 presents the annual total costs of the PRLN for the first five years. Once learning models have been developed, the costs of delivery learning services to 3,750 PAMPR practitioners (an average of 250 in 15 member countries) will be US$8.3 million per annum. While clearly a very sizeable outlay, the average cost per learner is only US$2,200, which is very cost-effective given the high proportion of regional workshops and the sizeable inputs from non-national resource persons in the delivery of formal training courses. More generally, if the learning network can make a significant contribution to improving PAMPR, then this outlay will be fully justified. It amounts to less than 0.05 percent of the US$20 billion of donor assistance to SSA each year.

Table 1: Possible initial five year budget for the PRLN   (US$ millions)

Budget item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1. RIPRL					
Running costs					
RIPRL	1	1	1	1	1
PRLN sector centres	0	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
ICT					
Website development	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Use of ICT facilities	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Curriculum development					
Core modules	1	1	1	0	0
Sector modules	0	4.5	4.5	0	0
Training of trainers					
Regional workshops	0	0.05	0.1	0.15	0.2
2. National PRLNs					
Running costs	0	0.5	1	1.5	1.5
Learner support					
Workshops	0	1	2	3	3
Materials & tutorial support	0	0.4	0.8	1.1	1.1
Training of trainers	0	0.05	0.1	0.15	0.15
TOTALS	**2.2**	**9.8**	**11.8**	**8.2**	**8.25**

Even when the network is fully operational in year five, network management costs are still likely to be relatively high at 37.5 percent of total expenditure. However, it should be possible to reduce the size of the management team at RIPRL once materials and other services have been developed. Other costs are also likely to fall as the network matures, including training of trainers, reliance on trainers from the North, and the cost of ICT services.

9. THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONS IN THE NORTH

The envisaged PRLN should be an African institution, run by Africans directly in support of PAMPR practitioners in the continent. This being the case, what should the involvement be of British and other Northern organisations in this learning network? Where appropriate, there should be no reason why the PRLN should not actively involve organisations and individuals in the North. Three main roles can be identified, namely learning support, learners, and funders.

9.1 Learning support

Development studies institutes as well as other organisations (including NGOs) in the North constitute a very sizeable learning resource that could be used to support the PRLN. Currently, however, they are only marginally involved in capacity building efforts for PAMPR in Africa. The main reason for this is lack of funding, although some organisations are likely to be a lot more interested than others are.

As noted earlier, the PRLN should draw on all available African expertise. However, this expertise may well not be sufficient for such a major learning network, especially during the start up period. External assistance could, therefore, be required, in particular for curriculum development, the use of ICTs and distance learning, the training of trainers, and direct assistance in the delivery of national and regional training workshops.

Once RIPRL has established a comprehensive strategy with its national partners and secured the necessary resources, it will be in a position to determine what external support is needed and contract the services of appropriate institutions in the North. Ideally, the network management should be free to decide which organisation(s) should be contracted for specific services. As long as there are no strings attached, local ownership of the network is unlikely to be compromised by even relatively high levels of external support.

Careful thought also needs to be given to what kind of institutional arrangements are needed to ensure the optimal involvement of development studies institutions and other relevant organisations in the North. One option is for one organisation to be the principal point of contact with the PRLN. The primary benefit of such arrangement is that it could significantly reduce transaction costs for network management. The Northern link institution could be contracted (on the basis of competitive tendering) to organise and manage the provision of services to both RIPRL and, where appropriate, national PRLNs.

9.1.1 UK University links

The desk-based study reviewed the contribution of the UK collaborative link programme in strengthening post-graduate training for development policy and analysis in SSA. It concluded that, although these links generally play a useful role, the size of each link is much too small to enable UK research and training institutions to make significant contributions in this area. If it gets off the ground, the link programme should, therefore, become much more strongly focused on supporting the PRLN. This would, however, require much larger and longer links.

9.1.2 Training in the UK

Long-term post-graduate training in the UK is unlikely to be a priority for most PAMPR practitioners. However, British development studies institutions have very significant capacity to provide high quality short course training that is directly related to PAMPR in Africa. The same is true (although usually to a lesser extent) for most other countries in Europe and North America. It would be very desirable if this expertise could be more fully exploited in helping countries in Africa meet the international development targets (IDTs). While it is usually preferable for short courses to be held in appropriate African locations, some short course training for PAMPR practitioners and trainers in the North will probably be needed (in particular when courses have a global recruitment).

9.2 Donor personnel as learners

Donor agency personnel are working in close partnership with governments in SSA to develop well-conceived and properly resourced poverty reduction strategies and sector development programmes. Thus, they are themselves PAMPR practitioners who need to upgrade continually their knowledge and skills in this area. In the spirit of partnership, they should therefore fully participate as learners in the PRLN. This is particularly the case for donor agency professionals who are working in SSA, but with appropriate learning materials and ICT support, staff in the North could also study the same core and sector learning modules. Learning together in this way provides the basis for more equal relationships and mutual understanding.

The UK's DFID and other donor agencies are currently developing their own staff development programmes in order to ensure that their professional and other personnel have the capacity to develop effective pro-poor assistance programmes. It is clear, therefore, that, without proper co-ordination, there could be serious duplication of effort between these activities and those of the PRLN.

9.3 Donor funding

Poverty-reduction is now the superordinate goal of most donor agencies. The PRLN is, therefore, an entirely appropriate institutional arrangement for supporting learning and training activities that are directly focused on achieving significant poverty reduction over the next two decades.

If the ambitious PAMPR learning objectives that were discussed earlier are to be achieved, the PRLN will require very considerable external funding over the next 15-20 years. Basket funding by a consortium of donor agencies will probably be essential. This will also enable many of the key development studies and other relevant organisations in the North to be fully involved in supporting the network.

Given the objectives of the recently inaugurated PACT programme, this could be a major source of funding for the network.

10. THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

This report was intensively reviewed at a two-day conference of major stakeholders in Kampala, Uganda on 30 October - 1 November 2000. The meeting was co-hosted by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Government of Uganda. Representatives from government, higher education and independent research institutions, and development NGOs from 15 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa were invited, as were most of the major donor agencies. A total of 46 participants attended (see Annex 4 for detailed list).

The meeting was opened by Uganda's Honourable Minister of Finance. During the first morning, the study team outlined the main findings and recommendations of the report. This was followed by formal responses from each of the seven pilot countries in which consultations took place, and further comments from participants from the other countires. In the afternoon, four working groups continued to discuss specific issues relating to the establishment of a PRLN. During the second day, working groups focused on the following themes: curriculum, pedagogy, and accreditation; information, communication, technology and the learning environment; organisation and planning; and, next steps.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to gather information on recent developments that are pertinent to the proposed PRLN.

10.1 The PRLN Concept

Without exception, the participants supported the overall concept of a PRLN as outlined in the report. With HIPC and the emerging 'PRSP movement', the need for such a learning network is more urgent than ever. In particular, it could provide a locus for the integration of poverty reduction efforts. Participants recommended, therefore, that immediate steps be taken to develop the report, which is essentially 'an expanded concept paper', into a fully operational project document.

While endorsing the need for urgent action in this area, a number of issues and concerns were raised by conference participants:

Realism: Participants were acutely aware of the difficult environment in which the network will have to operate. It is imperative, therefore, that realistic objectives are established. There was a general concern that that every effort must be made to incorporate the lessons from previous capacity building programmes into the design of the network.

Legitimacy, ownership and participation: Although participants fully understood and appreciated why IDS-UK had taken this initiative, there was full support for the proposal that Africans must own the PRLN. It is important, therefore, that the proposed Steering Committee and Interim Secretariat are established as soon as possible with full participation and control by Africans. It will also be important to build political support for the PRLN among member countries. It was recommended, therefore, that a high level regional meeting for relevant government ministers be held in late 2001.

Size and geographical coverage: There was general agreement that the PRLN should cover all the key learning needs of PAMPR practitioners and that therefore the proposed size of the network was appropriate. There have been many small and fragmented initiatives created to tackle poverty yet exactly because they are small and disparate they have been ineffective.

While it was appreciated that the network should be fully inclusive, too large a country membership could create serious complications. During the initial phase, therefore, there was a broad consensus

that the network should cover countries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, in particular because regional structures are reasonably well developed and most countries are English-speaking.

Duplication and co-ordination: The relationship of the proposed PRLN with on-going developments was extensively discussed at the meeting. The proposed network must clearly be supportive of the PRSP process, but at the same time it should not be 'taken over' by it. More than ever, there is an urgent need for countries in SSA to have their own research and training capacity, which helps to ensure the full participation in, and ownership of national poverty reduction programmes.

The establishment of the PRLN must also be closely co-ordinated with other recent initiatives in this area. In particular, National Capacity Building Focal Points are being established with the support of the ACBF in a number of countries in order to support the PRSP process.

Sustainability: The long-term sustainability of the proposed PRLN was a key issue. Some participants felt that there was more scope for income generation than was suggested in the report. Others recommended that a portion of donor or other funding should be used to set up an endowment fund.

The role of universities: It was accepted that universities must play leading roles in both national and sector PRLNs. However, given that most universities are 'very far from the grassroots', it is important to extend the network to other lower-level training institutions'.

Role of DSIs in the north: There was relatively little discussion of the role of development studies institutes in the north at the conference. In part, this reflected the overarching concern that the proposed PRLN fully exploits training and research capacities in the region. However, it was clearly recognised that DSIs in the north have an important contribution to make in both the design and delivery of learning materials.

Budget: Some questions were raised about the breakdown of the outline PRLN budget presented in the report. In particular, it was felt that the ICT budget is too small, given the emphasis that is being place on distance learning and that management costs seem disproportionately high.

Network name: Various alternative names for the network were discussed, but no improvement was agreed on the Poverty Reduction Learning Network for Africa (PRLN), which was therefore retained.

10.2 Thematic areas

10.2.1 Curriculum, pedagogy and accreditation

The conference endorsed the key learning principles and the curriculum outline proposed in the report. The importance of addressing the practical learning needs of PAMPR practitioners in specific sectors was a major theme.

A number of specific points were raised both by the working group and in the plenary sessions.

Curriculum:

❑ Curriculum design should be a participatory process involving academia and practitioners. It should include both public sector and civil society actors.

❑ There is a need for co-ordination between modules, especially between sector-specific and core modules, in order to provide a programme of study that is integrated and 'adds up'. Overall, there should be a holistic approach.

❑ The focus of the curriculum is on poverty analysis and management. The management part of the curriculum requires careful consideration. It should not repeat standard, 'technical' management training that can be obtained elsewhere.

❑ Detailed needs assessments of core and sector competencies need to be undertaken. This should obviously build on existing needs assessments.

❑ A pilot using existing materials should be considered. The pilot should be evaluated and feed into the main curriculum development process that would be taking place in parallel.

❑ A detailed inventory of all relevant training and related materials is required in order to ensure that all available resources are properly utilised in the development of PRLN learning modules. The World Bank Institute is about to launch a training programme on poverty reduction in SSA. However, the availability of sector-specific learning materials is likely to be quite limited.

Pedagogy

❑ The overall aim is to create reflective practitioners who possess relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes.

❑ Part of the reflective practitioner process should involve learners, at least those at district level, working in the field. The assessment process would be crucial in assuring this: for example, district level students might be required to 'design' a district plan as the culmination of their assessment, together with an explanation of the process that they have been through and supporting evidence of having worked directly in the field.

❑ A strong capacity building and staff development programme is required to enable the distinctive pedagogic approach to be enacted through all modules.

Accreditation

❑ The universities participating in the network should accredit individually.

❑ The network hub is essentially a servicing organisation for the national and sector PRLNs. It sets performance standards and generally acts as a quality assurance agent that ensures parity in standards across the network.

10.2.2 Information, communication technology and the learning network

There was broad agreement that distance learning should be an important focus of the PRLN in order to respond to the learning needs of all PAMPR practitioners. At the same however, it was recognised that distance learners must be properly supported and that distance learning should not be 'ICT-led'. Learners need to have pro-active tutors and also a face to face component (i.e. a weekend school at a central location) in most modules.

PRLN learning materials should be developed in partnership with all major distance learning institutions in both Africa and the North. It is very important that existing ICT capacity for distance learning is fully exploited. In particular, the African Virtual University has 23 sites in SSA.

Communications during the start-up phase: Setting up effective communication mechanisms within the initial network should be an early priority. This could be done by a combination of E-mail (including bulletin boards) and the web. The task of deciding who should co-ordinate this should be decided by the Interim Steering Committee (see below).

Information dissemination: Three main audience groups were identified: trainers, learners, and a broader group of policy makers and practitioners (including network alumni) - as part of an on-going professional support function.

To co-ordinate information flows it was felt that a strong information nucleus or focal point is needed somewhere. This could be part of the network hub, or linked closely with it. This would play a role in identifying and cataloguing relevant source material (most of which would be online) and co-ordinating the transfer of information to national centres (which themselves would need good connectivity to be able to operate effectively).

This learning focal point will need to be clear on what it's core objective is – i.e. supporting the learning network - but it should link to other related initiatives and resources, and make sure it does not duplicate existing initiatives.

Learning materials will need to be prepared in a variety of formats, depending on the specific audience and the particular country circumstances. This will include a mix of: E-mail, web, satellite/videoconferencing links, CD-ROM, print, other media (radio, video, etc.).

Keeping costs down will be a key consideration. Though technology is moving fast, it was recognised that for many audiences, print is still the only effective medium for the foreseeable future.

10.2.3 Network governance, organisation and management

While the conference felt that the proposed network 'architecture' was logical and well conceived, it was felt that a lot more work needs to be done in order to develop fully the necessary organisational and management arrangements.

The importance of a strong hub, which can effectively support national PRLNs was fully endorsed. It should be 'an easy clearing house not encumbered by bureaucracy' and a 'catalyst of activity, not just a provider of resources'. Its role with regard to quality assurance was also emphasised. The precise articulation between the hub, sector PRLNs and national PRLNs is crucially important in a matrix organisation of this kind. In particular, some participants were unclear about the network's 'hierarchy'. The geographic location of the hub is also critically important in order to ensure 'flexibility, dynamism and openness'.

10.3   Next steps

The conference participants discussed at great length what steps need to be taken to ensure that the PRLN is established as soon as possible. It was resolved in a formal declaration that 'all participants at this conference are fully committed to the establishment of a comprehensive learning network for poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa'. It was agreed that the following governance and management arrangements are required in order to take the process forward:

❑   An Interim Steering Committee (ISC)
❑   An Interim Secretariat (IS)
❑   An initial start-up or bridging phase

10.3.1 Interim Steering Committee (ISC)

This committee should represent the main stakeholders (government, training institutions, and NGOs across the region). It should be a small committed group, which has overall responsibility for the establishment and supervision of the PRLN Interim Secretariat (see below). It will need, therefore, to meet at least 3-4 times a year.

It was also proposed that working groups should be set up by the ISC, which will give specialist advice on specific aspects of the PRLN, in particular curriculum development, distance learning, and ICT and information systems. The other key function of the ISC is to promote the PRLN among governments and donor agencies.

The ISC was established at the conference, Members being selected with a view to ensuring a small committee with representation from the different regions, the different types of institutions, and providing for continuity with the earlier work. Membership is as follows:

❑   Mr Khalil Abdalla Muhammed Ali, Ministry of Social Planning, Republic of Sudan.
❑   Professor Sam Moyo, Director of Studies, SARIPS/SAPES Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe.
❑   Mr Keith Mukahanisi, Acting Director of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Government of Uganda.
❑   Mrs Bernadette Musundi, Chief Executive, Mandeleo ya Wanawake, Nairobi, Kenya.
❑   Professor Njuguna Ng'ethe, Independent consultant, formerly Director, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya.
❑   A representative from the institution which will host the Interim Secretariat.
❑   A representative from the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK.

The ISC met briefly directly after the conference and nominated Professor Moyo as the Chair. It was decided that the first full meeting of the ISC should be held no later than mid January 2001 and that IDS-UK will service the Committee until the Interim Secretariat is established.

10.3.2 Interim Secretariat (IS)

The Interim Secretariat will be responsible for undertaking all the necessary preparations for the establishment of the PRLN. It will be staffed by an Interim Co-ordinator and a secretary. The Co-ordinator will, in collaboration with ISC Working Groups and consultants, develop a comprehensive and detailed project document and identify all possible sources of funding. He/she will report regularly to the ISC who will review progress. The Interim Secretariat should have a life of no more than 18 months. A reputable institution in the region will host the IS. It was provisionally estimated that the budget for the IS and associated activities would be between $200,000 and $300,000.

10.3.3 Bridging phase

The conference recognised that it will take at least 5-6 months before the Interim Secretariat can be established. A suitable host institution must be identified, funding secured, agreement reached on its terms of reference and work-programme, and a co-ordinator appointed through the normal recruitment procedures. During this start-up period, it was agreed therefore that IDS-UK will provide the necessary management and administrative support for the ISC in order that these key activities can be completed as expeditiously as possible. DFID has agreed to provide funding to IDS for this. As part of this phase, IDS-UK will host an interim website where this report can be accessed and interested parties can share information (www.ids.ac.uk/prln).

ANNEX 1:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT: 'STRENGTHENING POST-GRADUATE TRAINING CAPACITY IN DEVELOPMENT POLICY ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'.

1. REPORT OBJECTIVES

The availability of high quality development policy analysis and management skills in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is essential for achieving the overarching development goals of DFID and other donors with respect to high and sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, good government, redressing gender imbalances, and improved environmental management. The major social, political and economic forces that are fundamentally influencing the overall development process in SSA are still poorly understood. Post-graduate training in this area is therefore critically important in improving the knowledge base and ensuring an adequate supply of the requisite skills to design and implement major policy initiatives.

The overall purpose of this report is twofold:

> (i) to provide an overview of donor-supported interventions to strengthen post-graduate training capacity in development studies in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) during the 1990s; and

> (ii) to then consider how the knowledge and skills of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex and other UK development study institutions (DSIs) can be best applied to improving training capacity in this key area in SSA countries over the next decade.

Numerous donor-funded initiatives have attempted, either directly or indirectly, to enhance the post-graduate teaching and research capacities of higher education institutions (HEIs) in SSA in development studies, broadly defined. In developing any new programme of support, it is clearly very important therefore to assess the overall impact of these efforts and, in particular, establish why it has generally been so difficult to achieve significant and sustainable improvements in training capacity. It is also essential that any new programme closely complements on-going projects and programmes in this area in order to avoid the excessive fragmentation and lack of co-ordination that has been such a hallmark of donor-supported efforts in the past.

The report is structured as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 provide an overview of current post-graduate training in development policy analysis and management both in SSA, the UK and elsewhere in Europe. Chapter 2 identifies the target group of DSIs and other relevant institutions in anglophone SSA countries Chapter 4 reviews the available information on the main types of initiatives that have attempted to improve either directly or indirectly, post-graduate training in DPAM in SSA and draws together some of the main lessons that have emerged from these interventions. Chapter 5 discusses the potential role of distance education in SSA. Chapter 6 gives a preliminary assessment of the overall development needs and effective demand for post-graduate training in this area. And finally, Chapter 7 discusses some of the possible options for supporting post-graduate DPAM training.

2. POST-GRADUATE TRAINING PROVISION

There are very few development studies institutes in the higher education sector in anglophone SSA. Only Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and possibly Zambia have at least one sufficiently large DSI with the capacity of delivering a masters degree programme in development studies. Excluding South Africa, the total number of professional academics in-post at DSIs in the university sector in anglophone African countries amounts to no more than 100, of whom less than one half have Ph.D.s. The overall quality of post-graduate degree training and short courses at these DSIs is generally not high. For social and behavioural sciences as a whole, post-graduate enrolments were minimal at least up until the mid 1990s. Very little distance learning in DPAM subjects was offered by universities in SSA.

In marked contrast, DSIs in the UK have a very large and growing post-graduate training capacity. While they do not all undertake research and training on SSA, they employ at least four times as many staff than in equivalent DSIs in SSA. A large number university faculties and departments in the UK also offer DPAM-related masters and doctoral degrees. There are currently over 100 masters courses with total enrolments of well over 1000. Post-graduate training has become an important source of income for most DSIs in the UK. Demand is generally considered to be quite buoyant although most of this demand now comes from countries in the North. Cuts in DFID and other donor funding for post-graduate training have undoubtedly led to a reduction in students from developing countries. Not only, therefore, is the bulk of post-graduate training capacity situated in the North, but also only a small share of the total student population comes from the continent with the greatest developmental problems and challenges.

Only three institutions in the UK have developed distance learning courses at the post-graduate level in DPAM subject areas: Wye College and the Centre for International Education in Economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies (both part of the External Degree Programme of the University of London), and the Global Programme in Development Management at the Open University.

 DSIs in the UK also offer a wide range of short courses, typically of 4-12 weeks in duration. The numbers of Africans sponsored by DFID for short-term training in development studies in the UK have remained at around 20 since 1994. In overall terms, development studies courses have accounted for only 5-12 percent of all short course enrolments from Africa in the social sciences during the last five years. The total number of sponsored Africans attending short courses in social sciences in the UK has fallen dramatically in recent years - from 339 in 1994/95 to just 182 in 1998/99. Relatively few short courses are delivered by British DSIs in SSA, at either national or regional levels. In part, this is because of the increasing unwillingness of donors to meet the high costs of this type of training, but the additional effort and inconvenience of running short courses in SSA is also likely to be an important factor among a number of DSIs. Nonetheless, the pay-offs from well designed and properly funded short courses, especially if run on a regular basis, have been considerable.

3. BUILDING TRAINING CAPACITY:
DONOR INTERVENTIONS

Donors have supported four types of initiatives in effort to strengthen post-graduate training capacity in DPAM in SSA: overseas scholarship programmes, expatriate assistance, link programmes, and networks and consortia. The provision of overseas scholarships has traditionally been the principal modality for improving research and training capacity in HEIs in SSA. A lack of critical mass of well trained and experienced staff, as well as sufficient numbers of students at most universities in SSA, has meant that universities have continued to rely on overseas universities, particularly for Ph.D. training

Long-term technical assistance involving the deployment of expatriate academics to university departments in SSA was the main form of donor support during the 1960s and 1970s. However, it is no longer seen as cost-effective and is politically unacceptable in many countries.

However, collaborative links of various kinds continue to proliferate in the higher education sector in SSA.   DFID funds around 470 links between UK and developing country universities, but social science links with institutions in SSA comprise less than five percent of the total. This is despite the fact DFID has stipulated that all new links must directly support DFID development priorities and that SSA institutions should receive 40 percent of FICHE funds. The main reasons for this situation are: (i) it reflects the interests of UK academic researchers who are mainly concerned about research ratings; and (ii) links do not cover staff costs and overheads of the participating institutions. Support for teaching and other capacity building activities, if not properly funded, provide no incentives for UK institutions.

There are numerous social science and DPAM-related networks in Africa. Most, however, are primarily research-oriented. While they have as their overall goal capacity building for research and teaching, most have not therefore directly supported improvements in post-graduate learning. However, the African Economics Research Consortium (AERC) is widely regarded as being an outstandingly successful training initiative. The AERC Collaborative MA Programme is based on the delivery of a common two-year masters degree at 20 universities in mainly anglophone Africa. Its main objective is to strengthen staff development in participating universities by providing training that meets international standards, is relevant to local needs, and is ultimately sustainable from local resources.

4. CONSTRAINTS TO EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

Building post-graduate training capacity is a long and very complex process. Progress to date with respect to DPAM has, with the notable exception of the AERC, been limited. Staff retention remains a major problem. One of the most important consequences of high staff attrition is that "a large proportion of research and scholarship previously housed in universities has moved out, and now occurs across a variegated host of institutions, activities and networks" (Court, 1995:301). Teaching loads are also very high, especially for junior faculty. Because university salaries in SSA are so low, "non-commercial research bears a very high opportunity cost" for university-based social scientists in SSA who have not left for 'greener pastures'. Most DSIs in SSA have become de facto consulting partnerships with a prevailing organisational culture of 'everyone for themselves'.

Among DSIs in UK and the rest of Europe, training lacks status compared with research and consultancy. Training is not generally therefore a popular option. Capacity building with respect to post-graduate training in SSA has been of marginal importance during the 1990s. In part, this has simply been due to a lack of resources. However, more fundamentally, the institutional coping strategies of DSIs have focused mainly on promoting their own training programmes along with research and consultancy.

5. THE ROLE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

It is widely accepted that "with good learning materials, effective networks and proper support, students can learn better at home than in class". The provision of higher education is being profoundly affected by the on-going revolution in information and communication technologies (telematics). Consequently, conventional campus-based courses will become rapidly obsolete. With the rapid internationalisation of higher education provision, universities and other training organisations in the North are increasingly looking to develop franchised distance education courses in developing countries.

Currently, distance education courses in DPAM subjects offered by African institutions are relatively insignificant. However, there are a number of major donor supported programmes that will significantly increase the availability of distance learning courses using the new telematic technologies.

6. TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Macroeconomic policy analysis has been the favoured area of DPAM since the start of economic reform programmes in SSA in the early-mid 1980s. However, with the rapidly increasing emphasis that is now being given to the removal of more deep-seated structural constraints at the sectoral level along with poverty alleviation, other key policy objectives and subject areas need to be urgently addressed. This requires a wide ranging, multi-disciplinary approach to development policy and management which is the key defining characteristic of 'development studies'.

The overall need for high quality technical skills required for effective policy analysis has grown rapidly during the 1990s. Most senior policymakers do not have the appropriate skills for the new economic and development context. This remains a major hindrance to public sector reform and the overall restructuring of SSA economies.

Universities and other HEIs in nearly all countries in SSA continue to be afflicted by deeply entrenched, systemic problems. The quality of university education and training has seriously declined at most universities during the last two decades. Under-graduate enrolments have increased rapidly but the resource base has eroded massively. The ability of a country to compete internationally and become effectively integrated into the global economy is dependent on the skills of its workforce, particularly at the highest levels. African universities simply do not have the capacity at present to produce graduates with the knowledge and skills that are required.

The market for post-graduate degree training in DPAM continues to be public-sector dominated. As a result of cuts in public expenditure coupled, in many countries, with reduced donor funding for higher education, the actual resources available for DPAM training have probably diminished during the 1990s. Furthermore, individual demand for most DPAM training is relatively low mainly because short-term private rates of return are inevitably low when most potential trainees are government employees.

7. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of strategic options that should be explored in developing a programme of support for DPAM post-graduate training in SSA: These include an African development training consortium, validated courses, distance learning, link programmes, and better integration with donor-funded research activities.

More generally, support for post-graduate training in DPAM must be consistent with the broad objectives for higher education reform in SSA. The broad principles that underpin 'good practice' in capacity building efforts in SSA must also be adhered to. In view of the relatively small size of target clienteles and, more serious still, the very limited training capacity of most DSIs in SSA, heavy reliance should be placed on regional 'centres of excellence' and any new programme must complement and build on on-going training and research initiatives.

An African Development Training Consortium. There would be major benefits of establishing such a consortium which would be broadly modelled on the AERC. Such a consortium should have a multi-disciplinary membership and would focus on research and training on key development issues (in particular poverty reduction, as well as gender, environment and good government). In

common with the AERC, the ADTC should be based in SSA, be staffed predominantly by African professionals, and be assured of long term donor funding. However, it should have a number of other design features, namely greatly institutional diversity, a primary focus on training with more diversified training clienteles, different forms of accreditation, and more concerted and systematic support from DSIs and other relevant organisations in the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

UK validated courses: Franchising local training institutions in SSA to deliver the post-graduate degree courses of one or more DSIs in the UK has a number of attractive features. However, there are potential serious disadvantages, in particular, lack of effective demand in local training markets and insufficient training capacity to ensure the maintenance of the high training standards that would be required by a UK partner.

Distance learning: There is, however, considerable scope for expanding the range of distance education courses in DPAM core subject areas. This would require the establishment of partnerships with local training institutions in order to ensure all-important face to face tutorial support. DFID and other donors could fund the relatively high fixed costs of developing distance learning materials in a range of priority subject areas which could then be made freely available to training organisations in SSA. Serious consideration should also be given to launching a masters degree in development studies (similar to the M.Phil. at IDS, Sussex and QEH, Oxford).

Donor-funded research: DSIs in the UK are usually required to collaborate with researchers in SSA in order to access DFID research funds. However, strengthening local capacity, particularly with respect to post-graduate training, is not a central objective of this collaboration. Increased emphasis could therefore be given to supporting the post-graduate training of young African academics who are part of donor-funded research projects.

Training support links: While performing a useful, mainly catalytic role, FICHE links are generally too small and limited in duration to have a significant impact on capacity building. Given the importance of high quality DPAM in ensuring the attainment of DFID's development goals, the link programme could be restructured so as to provide a much stronger focus on these objectives. If it is accepted that one of the principal functions of UK DSIs is to help strengthen teaching and research capacity in SSA and other low income countries, then sufficient resources should be made available to undertake this function in a concerted and sustained manner. This is not the case at present. To make such an impact, much larger and longer term (at least ten years) links need to be established which enable UK DSIs to provide high-levels of support for post-graduate training (both degree and short courses).

ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDENTS

A. MINISTRIES

1. Introduction. Give plenty of opportunity for respondents to seek clarification on DPAM programme. Demarcate clearly DPAM capacity building/training. Design and delivery of policy. So embraces all key management functions. Concerned mainly with senior and middle level officials. Confidential.

2. What are the ministry's training needs in this area? Strengths and weaknesses of policy analysis and management (PAM) in the ministry. Has a formal training needs assessment ever been undertaken? PAMPR as a priority training area. Get relevant documentation, if possible.

3. Main PAM training activities, both in-house and at outside training institutions. Get basic information about training activities. Courses, numbers, providers, funding (government and donors). Any noticeable trends in the intensity and type of PAM training being undertaken during the last five years?

4. Main strengths and weaknesses of PAM received by ministry officials. Relevance (training objectives, curriculum), quality (instructors), duration, numbers trained, frequency, cost. Overall impact of training on PAM in the ministry.

5. Assessment of donor-funded interventions in this area

6. Future strategy for strengthening PAM in the ministry? Specific training needs in this area. Especially in light of government/donor priorities, including poverty alleviation, decentralisation. Wish list of training activities that would be supported if resources were available ('the pot of gold' question).

7. What should be done? Views on training consortium concept, distance learning, role of the national university, private sector training institutions, overseas training institutions.

B. DONOR AGENCIES

1. Introduction. Give plenty of opportunity for them to seek clarification. Demarcate clearly PAM capacity building/training for poverty reduction. Design and delivery of policy. So embraces all key management functions. Concerned mainly with senior and middle level officials.

2. What PAM training (if any) and/or related institutional strengthening activities (links, technical assistance, etc.) have they supported during the last five years? Get project documentation covering objectives, inputs, outputs, and impacts (evaluations). What have been main strengths and weaknesses of these projects/programmes? What are the key lessons that can be drawn from this experience?

3. Views on local training provision for PAM-both post-graduate degree and short-term training. (ministry-based institutions, relevant university departments, private sector providers both for-profit and not-for-profit).

4. Views on efforts by ministries and NGOs to improve their capacity in this area? Overall impact of PAM training on ministry performance. What are major weaknesses of ministries and NGOs that need to be addressed?

5. What are their plans for future programmatic interventions in this area, especially given new aid modalities (sector wide programmes) and development priorities (poverty alleviation, good governance, etc.)? What would a programme focusing on 'skills development for poverty alleviation' look like?

6. Views on training consortium concept, distance learning, role of the national university, private sector training institutions, overseas training institutions.

7. Scope for a co-ordinated donor initiative. How to move forward? Likely problems- bureaucratic, political, others?

8. Closure. Where do we go from here? Report, and regional meeting.

9. What are their own training needs in this area?

C. UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

1. Introduction. Give plenty of opportunity for them to seek clarification. Demarcate clearly PAM capacity building/training. Design and delivery of policy. So embraces all key management functions. Concerned mainly with senior and middle level officials. Confidential.

2. What post-graduate and short-term training courses offered by department? Get details on courses (curriculum, duration, full/part-time, target group, fees), enrolments (number, organisations, gender), graduates.

3. Resources. In-house (staff qualifications, experience, turnover), facilities (including library, telematics, accommodation), core budget (if relevant), income generated from research, consultancy, and training. Get relevant documentation, including annual report. Use of external resource persons. Salaries of staff (university salary scales and scope for/actual supplementation)

4. Strengths and weaknesses of training provided – relevance, quality, and cost-effectiveness. Any formal evaluations?

5. Views on any donor/external involvement? Specific projects - including links, expatriate personnel, overseas training for staff

6. Views on efforts by ministries and NGOs to improve their capacity in this area? Overall impact of DPAM training on ministry performance. What are major weaknesses of ministries and NGOs that need to be addressed?

7. What plans do they have? As part of overall university strategy? If they had additional resources, what training courses would they offer?

8. What could be done? Views on training consortium concept, distance learning, private sector training institutions, overseas training institutions.

ANNEX 3: BACKGROUND NOTES ON DISTANCE LEARNING

Distance learning is a key learning modality. World-wide interest in the potential of distance learning to contribute to the education and training is growing very rapidly. This interest has to a large extent been fuelled by the maturing of new *information and communications technologies* (ICTs). There is, in fact, a strong historical link between the evolution of distance learning and communications technologies. Thus, in the UK, the correspondence tuition movement 'took off' around 1850, as the UK developed a swift and reliable postal service. The first national 'Open University', again in the UK, started life in 1970 as most people in the country acquired television sets and telephones. Today, the African Virtual University (AVU) has been established using modern information technologies – basically the World Wide Web, the Internet and video-conferencing.

The current interest has also spawned national open universities in sub-Saharan Africa – in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya. But the idea of distance learning in the region is not new. Before the Zimbabwe Open University came into being in early 1999, there existed the University of Zimbabwe University College of Distance Education, and there currently still does exist a Directorate of Distance Education of some years' standing at the University of Zambia. In South Africa, meanwhile, UNISA is well established and has contributed widely to regional higher education.

What is distance learning? In its simplest formulation, it is a system whereby students are separated in space from the source of their learning – principally from lecturers and libraries. Historically, it has meant studying for most of one's time in isolation from one's fellow students and tutors; ie studying from home or wherever else one happens to be. This is still far and away the dominant mode, although conventional campus universities now exist where students spend at least part of their time in teleconferences where they hear lecturers who may be based in another continent. Alternatively, the teleconference may link students at different universities in joint seminars. Another possibility is that such seminars may take place over the Internet. Many see these recent developments as the 'future' for the conventional campus universities where the demise of the professor holding forth in front of an appreciative audience, that is seated in a lecture theatre, is widely predicted.

One can think of a spectrum of distance learning, varying in its sophistication. At one end, lecturers from conventional universities simply write up their lecture notes. These are then packaged in some way to form a coherent course or programme of study and are given to students who are told to 'get on with it'. Students may do assignments and augment their packages with some face to face teaching, and they of course usually have to do a written examination at the end of the course, but essentially they are left alone.

As one moves along the spectrum, greater attention is given to the design of the package, and especially to pedagogy; in other words, how students are going to learn from their packages. Attention to pedagogy is important because students need to be encouraged to engage critically with distance learning materials, especially if there are no frequent and regular seminars to discuss them with other students and a tutor. Above all, students need to be stimulated by the materials. If they are not, there is little or no peer group pressure to keep them at study, and daily life will soon crowd it out for all except the most committed. Probably the single, largest difficulty with distance learning is that of student retention – ie how to stop them from dropping out of courses before completion.

Many argue that providing excellent course materials, while necessary, is not sufficient to retain students through distance learning courses. At the far end of the spectrum, therefore, is what the UK Open University calls *supported open learning*. As well as providing excellent course materials (both in subject content and pedagogy), this model supports students by offering them with a range of services from a regional centre, and, crucially, by allocating each student to an *active* tutor. The

word 'active' is emphasised because the tutor does not only do core tasks such as running occasional tutorials and marking student assignments, but engages with each student at a personal level – listening, encouraging, helping where the student has difficulties, expanding the horizons for the bright student, and so on. Such a tutor in the UK Open University will have on average 25 students under her or his wing at undergraduate level, 15 at postgraduate level. Typically, she or he, will take the initiative by contacting students at key points, especially to introduce oneself at the start of the course, but also at other times, often shortly before scheduled tutorials in order to encourage attendance. She or he will also be sensitive to student difficulties, often manifested in failure to send in an assignment and will offer help. Dealing with assignments is not just a matter of providing a mark, essential as this is, but of providing teaching comments on the student's work that are as encouraging as possible. In short, the personal tutor is often described as the *human face of the University*.

Like all models, supported open learning is an ideal to be striven for, but no one can claim that it is perfect in practice. In any case, the more support that is provided, the more is demanded, so that there can never be enough support. Nor is it an exact science and tutors have to strike a careful balance between offering positive support and not interfering in students' lives to the extent that support becomes intrusive and unwelcome.

Distance learning and technology

As suggested above, communications technology has always been at the heart of distance learning. Even the most basic of correspondence courses requires a reliable and reasonably efficient postal service in order to supply course materials and administrative information to students, and for the students to submit assignments. As one moves towards supported open learning, however, interactive communications technologies are required. At the UK Open University this has traditionally been the telephone – tutor and student literally hold telephone conversations. Although the telephone is still extremely popular, tutors and students are increasingly using fax or email to communicate. The main advantage of email is that the student does not have to spend valuable time trying to contact the tutor (or vice versa) who may not be immediately available. The message is sent and stored ready to be read by the tutor (or student) next time she or he logs on. It also allows tutors to give a more considered reply to student queries.

Going beyond individual, interactive contacts, it cannot be stressed enough that the very essence of teaching and learning is about communication. It is worthwhile reflecting briefly, therefore, on how the various technologies employed in distance learning contribute directly to this core activity. The main technologies involved are print, audio-visual, computer-aided learning via CD-ROM, teleconferencing and the Internet and these are now considered in turn.

Print

Forget the hype about the new ICTs for a moment, because the age-old technology of print is still the most popular medium for students and teachers alike. This is hardly surprising, because print is so versatile in the sense that you can take a book with you literally almost everywhere. You only need eyes to see. It means that students can study at any time in any place and many do – at home, during lunch break at work, on a bus, train or aeroplane. (One side effect of distance learning is that it helps develop excellent time management skills!).

The disadvantage of print is that it can be bulky and, if there are many items of print, difficult to find one's way around. Mainly, however, from a teaching and learning perspective, is the problem that it can never be fully interactive between teacher (the author of the text) and the student reading it. It is a statement of the obvious that a student reading a text can hardly hold a discussion with the author while doing so (unless the author happens to be looking over the student's shoulder).

One must not overstate this last problem, because it is possible to go a long way, even in print, towards making texts interactive. This is done by paying careful attention to pedagogy, referred to above, such as including activities and exercises within the text that invite students to reflect on what they are learning. Activities are often followed by a 'discussion' in the text, where the author tries to 'second-guess' how the students may have responded to the activity, to conceptualise it and take it further. However, this 'discussion' cannot by definition be the same as holding a direct discussion.

Audio-visual

Audio-visual teaching has traditionally been supplied via the media of television and radio, but increasingly video and audiocassette are used. Whatever form they take they require equipment and an electricity supply (which may be batteries for audiocassette). As such, audio-visual is less versatile than print.

The key question to ask of audio-visual material (and this question applies to the new ICTs too) is: 'What can it deliver that well-designed print can't?' The answer for visual material, such as a video, is that it potentially provides students with a means of applying what they are learning in theory (and via print) to 'real life'. Students are given 'armchair field trips' which make the subject matter 'come alive'. This means again that great attention has to be given to presentation for visual material, and, for example, it should certainly not consist solely of 'talking heads' – shots of people talking and giving their opinions. People can give their opinions just as well in print, and although some interview material is invariably essential in a video, it should not dominate.

Audio can also to some extent provide the 'armchair field trip', although obviously it is more limited in this regard than visual. The main added value of audio is its immediacy. One can interview many different people in order to obtain their views on issues related to the course, and carefully weave these together to form a coherent discussion. Also, because audiocassettes are made relatively easily, they can be remade and provide regular updating material.

CD-ROM

Perhaps the main potential of CD-ROM is that it is able to bring together text, audio and visual together into an integrated package. The principles of design and pedagogy still apply, but more opportunities are opened by virtue of such integration. The creative use of computer graphics can also greatly enhance the attractiveness of the materials and the ability to move interactively between text and visuals is another bonus.

Unlike a book, the CD-ROM itself has no bulk and is easy to carry around. The difficulty of course is that to view the CD-ROM, and hence the course materials, you need a computer. And, if you plan to study mainly from home, you need a computer there. If you plan to study while travelling, you need a laptop computer. If you don't have a computer of your own, you will have to gain access to one in some other way. This is likely to be at a central location, such as a district centre. You will probably have to pay a fee and you are unlikely to be able to access the computer whenever you want, which tends to cancel out the flexibility advantage of distance learning. The centre will only be open set hours of the day. Others may also want access so that there is no certainty that you will get to a computer, even during opening hours, unless there is a rigorously applied advance booking system (which means in turn that you have to plan very carefully). You also have to depend on the technicians at the centre keeping the computers serviced and in working order. Everybody knows that this is more difficult with shared facilities – you personally might look after the computers you use, but others might not.

Tele-conferencing

The big advantage of tele-conferencing is that distance is no object. You can see and hear, via a television monitor, experts giving a lecture who may be located literally the other side of the world.

You may also have a chance to ask questions of the lecturer if the system is interactive. Such lectures do tend to be set pieces, however, and it is useful to augment them with tutorial discussions afterwards.

Tele-conferencing also enables tutorials to be held between dispersed groups of students. The UK Open University Business School, for example, sometimes holds a combined tutorial of UK students in one centre, and overseas students in another centre or centres.

Tele-conferencing, alas, requires big investments in equipment and infrastructure. It is impossible, even in the medium term, to think of participating from home. Tele-conferencing must, therefore, take place from centres that do have the facilities, centres that you have to travel to at set times.

The Internet

The Internet opens up several further possibilities for distance learning, which is why the current interest is so tied up with it. Thus, the Internet can be used to:

❑   Download course materials that would otherwise have been sent as print. This isn't a very exciting use of the system, but it does have its advantages if the postal system is unreliable or slow (or both).

❑   Access literature on the subject that you are studying via the World Wide Web (ie use it as a virtual library). Access to the wider literature becomes increasingly important at higher-level study, and the World Wide Web has become indispensable for those who don't have physical access to a conventional library. It really does open up advanced-level study to the whole world.

❑   Students, their tutors and any central administration can communicate with each other using email instead of a telephone or the postal service. This has the advantages mentioned above of not requiring whomsoever you are trying to contact to be immediately available. It does assume, however, that everyone who is in the communication ring logs on regularly, which may not always be the case.

❑   Set up electronic conferences to form student 'virtual' self-study groups, where they can give mutual support to each other. Tutors can do the same.

ANNEX 4: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS, REGIONAL MEETING, KAMPALA, UGANDA, OCTOBER 30TH – NOVEMBER 1ST, 2000

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