



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

African Think Tank Network

THE AFRICAN THINK TANK NETWORK

CONCEPT NOTE

October 2015

The current proposed Concept Note for the African Think Tank Network aims to support the implementation of the recommendations of the First and Second Africa Think Tank Summits as well as the action plan of the Think Tank Taskforce Meeting on the “need for greater networking” in order to better maximize limited resources, more effectively disseminate expertise throughout the think tank community, and reach a larger audience with relevant knowledge for addressing the continent’s capacity gaps.

1. Introduction

The First Africa Think Tank Summit was held in Pretoria, South Africa, on the theme: ***Think tanks and the Transformation of Africa***. The Summit was co-organized in Pretoria, South Africa, on February 3-5, 2014 by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP), and the African Leadership Centre (ALC). The Pretoria Summit was followed by the Second Africa Think Tanks Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Addis Ababa Summit was organized on April 6-8, 2015 by ACBF and TTCSP, and hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The theme of the Second Africa Think Tank Summit was ***the Rise of Africa’s Think Tanks – Practical Solutions to Practical Problems***.

Both Summits offered an opportunity for Africa’s think tanks to exchange ideas and experiences on various strategic issues and consider the implications of the new dynamism taking place on the continent regarding the nature and breadth of their work. The Summits brought together a cadre of knowledge experts from think tanks, academia, international development partners, government officials, media and civil society organizations. The Summits concluded with a set of recommendations to be implemented. Key amongst the recommendations was the necessity to establish an Africa Network of Think Tanks and the establishment of a Think Tank Task Force¹ which would follow-up with the implementation of the recommendations of the Summits.

In order to sustain the interest and keep the momentum with respect to the implementation of the recommendations of the Africa Think Tank Summits, ACBF organized the First Meeting of the Task Force on June 3–4, 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In addition to reviewing the recommendations from the two Summits, the Task Force Meeting deliberated on the need for prioritization and noted that all recommendations were critical to the sustainability of think tanks.

To move toward with effective implementation of the recommendations, the Think Tank Taskforce, as recommended by the Summits, mandated ACBF to establish the African Think Tank Network and its Secretariat. This was considered as a first and important step towards effective implementation of the recommendations of the African Think Tank Summits. Additionally, according to the

¹ The Think Tank Task Force is constituted of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET), the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), and the Centre d’Etudes et de Renforcement des Capacités en Analyse et Plaidoyer (CERCAP, Mali).

Taskforce, establishment of the African Network of think tanks would be a critical countermeasure to the isolationist tendencies within the community.

This concept note presents the objectives, membership, and modalities of the African Think Tank Network.

2. Objectives of the African Think Tank Network

The overarching objective of the African Think Tank Network is to provide a platform for information sharing, exchange of ideas, knowledge creation and dissemination, and creating partnerships among think tanks in order to individually and collectively develop evidence-based solutions to the pressing development challenges facing Africa.

The specific objectives of the Network are to:

- Create a space for knowledge sharing and mutual learning around the role and importance of think tanks for effective policy impacts and development results;
- Facilitate partnership and networking among think tanks in Africa and teasing out ideas that could be jointly promoted at the continental and global levels;
- Strengthen TTs voices in continental and global development challenges by creating the platform to offer policy advices and contributions to such discourses through common positions;
- Facilitate the mentoring of young think tanks through staff exchanges and training;
- Reach out to all stakeholders and economic actors (public and private sectors, non-state actors, media, etc.) for coordinated interventions;
- Facilitate the development of media and public engagement training programs;
- Create knowledge sharing platform that focuses on research, capacity building and best practices;
- Develop a database/resource center related to think tanks in Africa so as to identify comparative advantages; and
- Promote a platform of collaboration between political leaders and Think Tanks for effective implementation of development strategies at the country level.

3. Membership of the African Think Tank Network

Any think tank based in Africa will be considered for membership to the Network. For purposes of accountability, memberships will not be granted to individuals acting in a personal capacity. Membership will be by invitation but any entity which considers itself a think tank based in Africa can send a request for membership to the Secretariat for consideration by the Advisory Group constituted of the Think Tank Task Force (ACBF, TTCSP, UNECA, ACET, KIPPRA and CERCAP).

While no membership fee exists at the inception stage, the African Think Tank Network members are expected to contribute in concrete terms to the work of the Network. This could include contributing resources (financial or in kind) to one or more activities, reviewing draft knowledge

products, participating in meetings, mentoring of new think tanks, and supporting country, regional and/or continental level work, according to members' interests and priorities.

Entities which are not think tanks may be invited to participate on an ad-hoc basis in certain meetings or activities of the Network if deemed appropriate by the Advisory Group (for instance, in cases where broader consultation may be required to discuss or deliberate on new or specific issues/themes).

4. Governance of the African Think Tank Network

The governance of the African Think Tank Network will be constituted by (1) the Advisory Group; (2) the Secretariat; and (3) the think tanks.

The African Think Tank Network Advisory Group

The Advisory Group shall oversee all operations of the Network and advice on the annual activities, membership, and relations with other international bodies/processes. Moreover, the Advisory Group will:

- approve the work plan of the Network;
- present the objectives and activities in external discussions;
- be tasked to call for and identify partners to support the Network and its activities;
- have the mandate to make decisions on behalf of the members of the Network; and
- approve the formal reports of the Network, either during a meeting or written procedure.

The Advisory Group will be constituted by the six (06) members of the Think Tank Task Force as established during the Second Africa Think Tank Summit. These are the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF); the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTSCP); the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET); the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA); and the *Centre d'Études et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Analyse et Plaidoyer* (CERCAP).

The Advisory Group may propose changes to its composition. Such changes would have to be approved by the members during a given Annual Africa Think Tank Summit.

Secretariat of the African Think Tank Network

The Secretariat of the Network will be hosted at ACBF as mandated by the Think Tank Taskforce and recommended by the Summits. The following key functions will be performed by the Secretariat:

- Create a knowledge sharing Platform and a Website for the Network;
- Together with the Advisory Group, develop the strategic vision and putting to action the agreed upon Annual work plans;
- Position the Network's activities within the context of Africa's development agenda as well as the global issues;
- Ensure for accessibility of information and reporting back on Network activities to all members, donors, African Governments, RECs, the AUC, and interested partners;
- Be advisor to the Network on emerging priorities and events of importance to the Network;

- Preparing for, managing and facilitating effective summits, forums, meetings; workshops and such other related functions necessary for an effective Network; and
- Coordinate the mentorship and staff exchange program for effective linkages and experience sharing.

African Think Tanks

All think tanks based in Africa are members. They are the implementing bodies of the activities of the Network and recommendations of the Summits at the country level. The responsibilities of the members include the following:

- to join the working streams, if any, within the African Think Tank Network; and
- to implement the agreed upon activities, programs and initiatives at the country level.

5. Modality of Operation for the African Think Tank Network

The work program of the Network will be proposed by the Secretariat on a yearly basis and submitted to the Advisory Group for inputs, discussion and approval. The key broad annual activities of the African Think Tank Network will be:

- Annual Africa Think Tank Summit
- Consultative Forums (according to needs and resources, targeting specific countries, themes and/or actors)
- Targeted trainings and exchange programs for learning and exchange of experience
- On demand interventions/initiatives
- Production and dissemination of knowledge products and services
- Participation to diverse events organized by regional, continental or international organizations

The working modalities of the members shall consist of face-to-face meetings, plus conference calls and written communication as appropriate.

6. Resources

Tasked to establish and host the African Think Tank Network, ACBF will endeavor at the inception stage to provide the necessary human and financial resources for an effective implementation of the Network and the rollout of its activities.

However, the Advisory Group should call for and identify willing sponsors who will be prepared to cover the costs of meetings, on a case-by-case basis. Willing members will also be invited to voluntarily contribute (financial, in-kind or human resources) to the realization of one or more specific activities under the work plan.

7. Contact

The Secretariat of the African Think Tank Network will be housed by the African Capacity Building Foundation, under the Knowledge Monitoring and Evaluation Department. For further information, you can contact the focal person:

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8. Annex: Proposed activities of the African Think Tank Network

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	REMARKS
Strengthen collaboration and partnership among African think tanks	Establish on-line continental think tanks platform	A functional web-based platform established	Online community of practice for discussions Virtual library Database of think tanks
	Organize annual think tanks summit	Annual Africa Think Tank Summit organized	Summit for all think tanks to discuss and share experience on common strategic issues
	Organize policy oriented sensitization conference for state and non-state actors in Africa	Continental workshop organized to showcase the products and services of think tanks	Platform for State and non-State actors
Enhance sustainability of African think tanks	Develop think tanks sustainability framework	Think tanks sustainability framework developed	Developed by the Think Tank Task Force
	Organize training on resource mobilization for think tanks	Think tanks trained on resource mobilization	Offer think tanks the possibility to have resource mobilization strategies
	Pilot implementation of resource mobilization strategy with selected think tanks	Resource mobilization strategy of think tanks piloted	Selected think tank to develop strategies
	Support think tanks to develop communication strategies	Think tanks develop communication strategies	Think tanks to get an update on communication
	Provide research oriented technical support for think tanks in countries in transition	Think tanks in countries in transition receive technical support in research	Support to selected think tanks
	Procure statistical and economic modeling software packages to think tanks	Statistical and economic modeling statistics software packages procured and distributed	Technical support to think tanks
	Provide hands-on training for staff of targeted think tanks	Staff of targeted think tanks trained	Matured think tanks provide the training
	Facilitate mentoring and coaching of young policy analyst and researchers from targeted think tanks in countries in transition	Young researchers and policy analysts from targeted think tanks benefit from coaching and mentoring	Fellow from selected Think tanks