

MCC Partner Countries in Africa Increase Aid Effectiveness through a Network of Best Practices

Implementing large scale development programs is never easy. Over the past 60 years, the development community has found that “one size does not fit all” as it worked with partners to design and implement poverty reduction programs worldwide. When the U.S. Government’s Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) was created in 2004, it offered an innovative model of development assistance that enabled the country itself to take greater ownership of its development needs. In Africa, MCC has funded 11 of the world’s poorest countries to implement ambitious five-year poverty reduction programs. Practicing the core principles of country ownership and aid effectiveness, MCC expects partner countries to lead the implementation of their programs. Each country has established an accountable entity, or MCA, to manage this responsibility.

As implementation of the compacts funded by MCC progresses, an increasing number of countries in Africa are exchanging knowledge in the areas of compact development, management, procurement, financial reporting, and monitoring and evaluation. By increasing knowledge capacity in these areas, MCC and its partner countries are building a network of best practices and effectively developing and implementing a wide range of antipoverty programs. Country-led development is critical to sustainable development and MCAs have shared best practices on effective strategies to complete MCC compacts within the five-year timeline. Realizing they are accountable for compact results, MCAs have taken the initiative to establish these networks. For instance, they have shared information on how to monitor and manage cost escalations, as well as manage the design, environmental planning and resettlement, and construction of roads. While each country needs to satisfy accountability requirements to use MCC funds, they are also accountable to their own domestic stakeholders for economic development decisions and actions.

Many MCAs are not only embracing the basics of ownership, but are taking extra steps to strengthen their capacity to exercise ownership through learning from other countries. For example, Malawi is a threshold country that



MCA-Tanzania and MCA-Malawi share best practices related to aid effectiveness during a May 2009 meeting in Dar es Salaam.

became eligible for an MCC compact in December 2006. Following the principles of country ownership and in an effort to gain additional expertise on how to improve its compact development process, the MCA-Malawi team organized a visit to their MCA counterparts in Lesotho in February 2009. During these sessions, the Lesotho team shared their experience preparing and implementing their compact, and advised the delegation to streamline the number of projects and target economic constraints in specific sectors because it is easier to manage and implement them. In another instance, in May 2009, the Malawi delegation visited counterparts in Tanzania to share best practices. During his welcoming remarks, the MCA-Tanzania Chief Executive Officer Mr. Bernard Mchomvu said



MCA Participants from over 18 countries attend MCC University in 2008.

that to be effective and efficient when implementing development programs, there needs to be respect for “teamwork, timely decisions, adherence to guidelines and... a comprehensive networking system.”

Like Malawi and Lesotho, the MCA teams in Mali, Benin, Ghana, Zambia, and Namibia have organized “educational” visits to other MCA countries. For example, Néné Traoré, the General Director for MCA-Mali recently visited the Millennium Development Authority (MiDA), the accountable entity for Ghana’s program. She shared her experience regarding the resettlement process in Mali while the MiDA team provided input and suggestions based on the preparation and work they had to do to effectively implement MCC’s resettlement policy along the N-1 highway, which runs through Accra. Traoré noted, “It is important for African countries to meet and share challenges as we all have a common view. This trip exceeded my expectations and I can put in place what I learned as soon as I return. Meeting other MCA directors gives me energy as I have a support group to face these challenges.”

To expand on the network that countries around the world have built, since 2006, MCC has been organizing a yearly meeting called “MCC University” for MCA staff to meet and share best practices while providing training in different sectors. There have been several “MCC Colleges” organized as part of this initiative, focusing on communications, environmental and social assessment, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation. Some of the topics covered include methods, issues, and lessons of contract administration and how to use work plans for activities and resources as part of program management. These meetings provide the MCAs the space to present their experiences, learn from one another, and improve processes to increase the speed and effectiveness of implementation.

MCC supports the open lines of collaboration that its partner countries have built, and uses the lessons learned and best practices to continuously improve compact development and implementation. Findings are also shared with other donors. Poverty reduction demands a global response among partners, and MCC and MCAs have built a support network to train and build capacity that facilitates effective poverty reduction through sustainable economic growth.