

2007 Annual MOPAN Survey of the African Development Bank Comments by African Development Bank on the Survey Findings

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

1.1 The African Development Bank (“The Bank”) welcomes this 2007 MOPAN survey. It represents an additional source of important information, which will further enrich and strengthen the Bank’s information base as it strives to learn from its own experience towards increasing the development impact of its operations. Coming after the 2004 survey, it provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate the road travelled and to draw lessons going forward.

1.2 Overall, the findings of the Report are welcome as they point to (i) the increasingly positive impact of recent efforts aimed at strengthening the Bank’s field presence through the implementation of an effective decentralization strategy, (b) the need to continue to generate knowledge and increase awareness of its operations in the field; and (c) the high priority that the Bank should continue to accord to efforts aimed at improving its contribution to policy dialogue, capacity building, advocacy, alignment, partnerships and information sharing.

1.3 On a more methodological note, there is the issue of whether the group of bilateral donors covered by the survey is fully representative of the broad range of development partners active at the country level. In the case of Ethiopia, for example, the full regional dimension of field activities carried out with institutions such as the African Union Commission or with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa may not be adequately captured by the survey. There may also be a need to repeat the evaluations in the same countries in order to enhance their ability to assess progress over time.

1.4 In a nutshell, it would appear that what the survey findings really suggest is the need for the Bank to step up its communication and outreach efforts at the country level, and better inform all stakeholders about the many contributions it is making to the various dimensions of national and inter-agency partnerships surveyed. As the survey reveals, the Bank is already moving in that direction. Field offices are increasingly being empowered to take responsibility in many areas, including information sharing with stakeholders. Corporate communication is also being strengthened, including by the recent upgrading of the communication function, which occurred as part of the Bank’s new organizational structure.

II. SPECIFIC COMMENTS

2.1 Partnership towards national stakeholders

2.1.1 *National Policy Dialogue*: The Bank welcomes the survey’s finding that its contribution to national policy dialogue is improving in countries where it has strengthened its field presence by recently establishing a country office. This finding is not surprising since the Bank normally consult, and ensures the participation of, a wide range of national stakeholders in the design and implementation of its operation, therefore providing them with the opportunity to present their views on any particular project. Undoubtedly, there is still room for improving the Bank’s contribution to policy dialogue as the survey results have rightly pointed out.

2.1.2 *Capacity Building*: Most Bank projects include a component for capacity development. This capacity development is geared towards both the public institutions as well as the

beneficiaries at large. For example, in Egypt, one of the countries where the survey was undertaken, the on-going projects in the social sector such as the Women Economic Empowerment Project, the Beheira Rural Development Project and the Health Sector Reform Program, all include components of capacity development, training, and awareness raising. There is no doubt that there is scope for the Bank to increase its interventions in this important area, particularly in respect of governance. Thus, in the new Governance Strategy, for example, the Bank has identified capacity development, including support to central and local level public institutions, local NGOs and the private sector as an important area of focus. The Uganda Institutional Support project for Good Governance, for example, was designed along these lines.

2.1.3 *Advocacy*: The survey notes a somewhat stable contribution of the Bank to advocacy activities in the field. This may be attributable to the issue of the role of advocacy in the Bank's mandate, considering the type of assistance it provides. In fact, Bank assistance is often provided in the form of loans, which may be less flexible in terms of financing advocacy activities than the financing provided by other institutions.

2.1.4 *Alignment*: The Bank welcomes the positive assessment of its performance with respect to alignment of its operations on national poverty reduction strategies. This is mainly the result of long standing efforts by the Bank to design its operations in the framework of country strategy papers, which are firmly grounded on countries' poverty reduction strategies.

2.2 Partnership towards other international development agencies

2.2.1 *Information sharing*: Information sharing is an important aspect of Bank operations. It is, therefore, important for field offices to share information on Bank activities not only with government officials and local institutions but also with development partners. Through the decentralization process, for example, authority is gradually being delegated to country offices, including in matters relating to procurement and disbursement. Thus, in Burkina-Faso, sector specialists in water and agriculture have been granted increased decision taking authority, which has resulted in improved portfolio management and enhanced information flow with the beneficiaries and partners in the country. Other step being studied include the dissemination of important project documents in local languages, where this would add value to communication efforts.

2.2.2 *Inter-agency coordination*: The Bank welcomes the positive perception of its efforts on strengthening coordination with other development agencies, as revealed by the survey results. It is crucial for the Bank to intensify its partnerships, as it is almost impossible for the Bank to accomplish its mandate and meet the development challenges of the African continent alone. It is vital for the Bank to work with other partners not only to leverage more resources but also to share risks, participate in knowledge generation and dissemination networks, and reduce transaction costs. In fact, the Bank has, recently, been coordinating major partnership initiatives such as the African Fertilizer Conference Mechanism, the Markala Sugar Lenders meeting, the High-level meeting for Africa's regional economic communities on the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Second decade of education for Africa (2006-2015), the 7th Annual Donor Meeting on Rural Development in Western and Central Africa, and the African Ministerial Conference on Financing for Development. The Bank also has plans to continue hosting other partnership initiatives in 2008, such as the Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA), Congo River Basin initiative.

2.2.3 *Harmonization*: The Bank also welcomes the fact that the survey's results note positive perceptions of its role in harmonization among donor agencies. This is certainly the outcome of major efforts that the Bank has undertaken recently in this area. Increasingly, the Bank has been working with a broad range of bilateral and multilateral partners to prepare joint assistance strategies. In fact, the Uganda and the Tanzania joint assistance strategies in which the Bank has participated, and the Côte d'Ivoire country dialogue paper, can be cited as examples of Bank efforts to reach out to other development partners to present its strategy and analytical work, and seek better harmonization of its operations. It is anticipated that, going forward, Bank achievements relating to greater harmonization will become even more visible as the on-going process of removing the procurement limitations stemming from the "rules of origin" requirement is successfully completed. These limitations have, on some occasions, not been very supportive of the Bank's harmonization efforts, for example, in the context of sector-wide approaches operations.