Greater than the sum of its parts

AREAP Partners explain their role in strengthening the capacity of civil society to advocate for pro-poor and gender sensitive policies
The Africa Regional Empowerment and Accountability Programme is a four-year project funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). It aims to improve access to high quality relevant data, evidence and analysis for African citizens, non-state actors and policy makers. It also supports the development of coalitions of citizens to use this information, voice their concerns and interests, and influence decisions of the state.

Three implementing partners (IPs) deliver AREAP:

- Afrobarometer (AB) conducts citizen perception surveys across 35 countries in Africa
- The Southern Africa Trust (the Trust) undertakes policy advocacy, capacity building and disbursement of grants provided for pro-poor regional integration
- The State of the Union Coalition (SOTU) focuses on engagement in policy development and monitoring state compliance

AREAP’s Learning Information and Communication Hub (the Learning Hub) is managed and led by Triple Line Consulting. The Learning Hub was established in December 2014 to identify lessons and capitalise on synergies and joint working between the partners. The Learning Hub facilitates the partners to share experiences and learn from the practices, processes and outcomes of AREAP’s empowerment and accountability work.

The case study, Understanding off the lograme results, is the work of Andrew Osiany and Osai Ojigho (The State of the Union Coalition); Carolyn Logan and Boniface Dulani (Afrobarometer); and Lusungu Kanchanche and Bhekinkosi Moyo (The Southern African Trust); with support from Janah Ojigho (The State of the Union Coalition); Carolyn Logan and Boniface Dulani (Afrobarometer); and The Southern African Trust partners (civil society organisations which conduct the AREAP surveys).

The case study was developed by the partners under the banner of the AREAP Learning Hub which has met on a quarterly basis during 2015. Key tools that AREAP Partners felt could improve their capacity strengthening offering include: greater use of web-based approaches including webinars and survey instruments such as Survey Monkey which can be used to both investigate capacity needs but also as a follow-up tool.

Abstract

‘Greater Than the Sum of the Parts’ explores approaches taken by the AREAP Partners to strengthening the capacity of civil society to advocate for pro-poor and gender-sensitive policy across Africa at continental, regional and national levels. It provides examples with insight into results and learning. The case study highlights the importance of AREAP’s capacity strengthening work that is internal, i.e. building skills and knowledge to improve organisational effectiveness as well as facilitating access to learning that is external to organisations, i.e. through building new relationships and creating organisational linkages. The case study was developed by the partners under the banner of the AREAP Learning Hub which has met on a quarterly basis during 2015. Key tools that AREAP Partners felt could improve their capacity strengthening offering include: greater use of web-based approaches including webinars and survey instruments such as Survey Monkey which can be used to both investigate capacity needs but also as a follow-up tool.

Introduction

1. Capacity strengthening is the process by which people and organisations create, develop and strengthen individual, team and/or organisational capacity and capability over time. In this case study we use the term capacity strengthening to define a process that brings together both internally and externally driven changes. AREAP Partners act as external change agents for their partners and members, while using learning experiences to reflect about programme development and their own organisational capacity development.

2. A DFID Working Paper on capacity building identifies the importance of individual and organisational learning through building social capital and trust; developing knowledge, skills and attitudes; and creating an organisational culture through objective setting, problem solving and the achievement of results. The AREAP Partners facilitate their members and partners through processes of individual and organisational learning by providing training, mentoring, and consultancy support. The Partners provide guidance about the value, collection, analysis and presentation of monitoring information and the acquisition of advocacy skills, which they regard as key to the delivery of robust empowerment and accountability policies and initiatives.

3. The AREAP Partners are aware that the civil society organisations (CSOs) with which they work may operate in isolation and may possess limited knowledge about linkages to other CSOs with similar objectives at national and/or regional level, and that their programmes may not have robust working relationships with policy makers and government implementing agencies. For example, the Trust noted in its ‘Strategic steer’ paper in 2011 that the civil society sector in the southern Africa region lacked a coherent strategic approach, was fragmented and that efforts could be duplicated, thus reducing effectiveness. Advocacy positions adopted by CSOs, including regional civil society apex organisations, were not necessarily informed by evidence as a result of weak internal or shared research capacity and poor linkages with recognised research bodies.

AREAP partners and their partners

Afrobarometer’s partners: National civil society organisations which conduct the AREAP surveys.

SOTU partners: Civil society organisations that belong to the SOTU x SOTU platforms advocating for better monitoring of the African Union.

Southern African Trust partners: Grant partners (civil society organisations) who have received grant funding through the Trust as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC).
Different approaches

The three AREAP Partners have used different approaches to develop and strengthen the capacities of those with whom they work.

The Trust has adopted a learning by doing approach where institutional capacity strengthening is provided according to specific needs. The example presented in this case study illustrates how its support improved the management and operations of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Council for Non-Government Organisations (CNGO), which is recognised as a force for change regionally.

In contrast, SOTU, a relatively new organisation established in 2010, conducts a routine assessment of the training needs of the CSOs it assists to monitor the legal instruments and policy standards of the African Union. In deciding how to address these needs with little funding, SOTU has used a peer exchange approach.

Afrobarometer’s approach to capacity strengthening has evolved from reflecting and learning on what works to assist its network of members to more effectively apply what they learn in relation to data collection. Afrobarometer is adapting its training and learning opportunities to ensure that Africans (men and women) also author Afrobarometer products.

Southern Africa Trust: the process and outcomes of capacity strengthening

The Trust provides support to a diverse range of CSOs representing different interests and constituencies in southern Africa and beyond. Key objectives for the Trust are to bring about an environment for sustained change, and to enable partners to influence and develop policy changes that contribute to overcoming poverty and inequality regionally. The Trust’s Grants Programme provides financial support to a broad spectrum of civil society organisations in southern Africa, including the SADC Regional Poverty Observatory, SADC CNGO, Southern Africa Miners, Southern Africa Informal Cross Border Associations, Centre for Citizen Participation in the African Union and the Southern Africa Solidarity Network.

In selecting proposals for funding, due diligence is conducted on potential grant partners. This process is mandatory for first-time prospective grant partners requesting more than ZAR 350,000 ($24,066). The checks allow the Trust to identify key areas for improvement and capacity strengthening, which are considered alongside the proposal that has been submitted. The Trust’s assessment criteria for all proposals include: robustness of project design; the willingness within organisations involved to improve management capability; organisational health; governance issues and information systems; and focus on research, communication, advocacy, networking and policy analysis skills.

Success in the Trust’s delivery of capacity strengthening is best illustrated through an example. The SADC CNGO is the lead membership-based apex body of the NGOs operating in all SADC member states. The CNGO aims to facilitate meaningful engagement between the SADC Secretariat, civil society and other relevant regional structures, while promoting national-level engagement with member states through national NGO umbrella bodies and other specialised organisations. The CNGO is one of the Trust’s strategic partners, and the two organisations have worked together over a considerable period of time to enable the CNGO to become a credible regional force for representing and driving change for civil society organisations in southern Africa.

The CNGO before the Trust intervention

The CNGO started its operations in 2004 with almost no budget, a low profile and basic staffing. The governing council and executive committee, made up of national member NGO coalitions from 12 SADC countries, was not convening meetings and was operating out of a container in the back yard of the Southern Africa Solidarity Network in Gaborone, Botswana.

In line with its commitment to contributing to the architecture of civil society organisations across the southern Africa region, the Trust worked with the CNGO more as a partner and mentor than a traditional grant maker. This included providing technical assistance to establish the CNGO’s offices in Gaborone. The CNGO had no internal financial management capacity, systems, organisational policies or plans, and hardly any staff. The General Secretary had not been paid a salary for many months and was working between Gaborone and home in Johannesburg. He had the support of only one part-time officer. The CNGO had no core donors at this stage, but had received a grant of €900,000 from the African Trade Union Coordinating Council in Gaborone. The CNGO had no internal financial capacity and was not able to implement any projects.

The CNGO capacity strengthening process

The CNGO capacity strengthening process involved an initial grant of ZAR 350,000 ($24,066) to: improve its management capability; involve its partners in decision-making; implement its policies and procedures; increase its board capacity and establish a financial management framework.

The Trust conducted a grant needs assessment on the CNGO, which led to an improvement in its internal capacity. The Trust launched an independent audit of the CNGO’s financial management system, which revealed a wide range of weaknesses.

These weaknesses are particularly acute for both the Trust and SOTU, who work closely with their partners and/or members to develop the required knowledge, skills and abilities so that they can harness their collective potential as a community of rights advocates to become ‘greater than the sum of the parts’ of their organisational strategies and actions plans. As noted throughout this case study, all the AREAP Partners provided examples of how their partners and/or members now understand what actually happens when live data is collected, action research is undertaken, reports are written, policies are developed, linkages across civil society organisations are made and face-to-face interaction with policy makers takes place at the continental, regional and national levels.

Southern Africa Trust: Youth Exchange
The Southern Africa regional programme advisor at Norwegian Church Aid stated that the CNGO is now more able to make an impact as there is renewed confidence by the members and more focus in their programme work. The support the Trust provided put them on a path to sustainability.

The Director of the SADC CNGO, Abie Ditlhake, stated that the credit for his organisation’s success should be shared with the Trust. He commented that “we are who we are because the Trust believed in us at a time when we had no other consideration...[the Trust] enabled us to grow and others followed.”

Organisational and training needs assessments were undertaken by a consulting company, which identified a number of weaknesses. Funding was provided for the establishment and equipping of an office for the CNGO in Gaborone, followed by technical assistance that included financial management and reporting as well as strategy and programme development. The Trust mentored the CNGO through the arrangements for and hosting of executive committee meetings and the strengthening of linkages with new national members. Guidance was also provided for governance and leadership development support, and support for stakeholder engagement and management, including facilitating national engagement with members in all SADC countries. Assistance with fundraising was an additional element of the grant.

At the programmatic level, the Trust worked with the CNGO and its members in different countries, providing guidance about the regional poverty agenda, the SADC Regional Poverty Observatory and national poverty observatories. This support was partly achieved by deploying two policy advisors who were seconded from the Trust and based at the CNGO between 2009 and 2011. The advisors provided technical support about regional poverty issues and the commissioning of research, supported by a programme targeted at expanding and improving links with the national membership. As a result, the Madagascar national civil society platform joined the CNGO network during this period of support.

After the Trust intervention

Today, the CNGO operates effectively internally, with the appropriate management and human resource systems, and externally through formal linkages with partners in the civil society, faith based, trade union and business sectors. It has a diverse and growing membership across the southern Africa region, whose collective efforts are now focused on building bridges between civil society and regional policy makers.

The CNGO has eight full-time personnel, including an advocacy officer responsible for policy, research and programmes, a financial manager and an administrator. Its governing structures are fully operational. Management and strategic planning meetings are held regularly. Sound financial management systems are in place and annual audit reports are produced. The CNGO finances its own offices and operations with contributions from a mix of long-term core donors. Furthermore, the CNGO has adopted an organisational code of ethics, a human resource management policy and a governance and operations policy. In the past two years the CNGO has achieved 100 per cent staff retention.

The SADC Secretariat has officially recognised the CNGO as a collective voice for civil society and a facilitator of policy dialogue with the NGOs in the region. The CNGO has a Memorandum of Understanding with the SADC Secretariat, and is working collaboratively on the new draft SADC Common Plan of Action as well as facilitating the formation of regional NGO thematic networks within the SADC Council of Ministers. Better information about policy developments in SADC filters through the CNGO network, and members are actively engaging in policy development processes. The quality of member voices on these issues has improved significantly. The CNGO is now more visible in terms of the quality and impact of the policy and advocacy work it undertakes with its members, which resulted in the strong alignment with the SADC Secretariat.

The relationship between the CNGO and the Trust developed into strategic support and partnership once the CNGO capacity-strengthening programme ended in 2011, as illustrated by the timelines in Annex 1. The CNGO now applies to the Trust for grants as a recognised regional apex civil society organisation. These grants have enabled the convening of the annual Civil Society Forum, with the most recent grant received being for convening the 11th Civil Society Forum at the margins of the SADC Summit in July 2015.

Taking the learning wider and deeper

The Trust has learnt that the investment in building innovative and dynamic working relationships with partners adds value to its work. It also opens up access to policy makers for the CSOs it supports. The Trust has incorporated its ‘learning by doing’ approach into its other programmes, rebranding it as ‘the policy advocacy value chain’. The Linkages programme is a good example of how the Trust has applied its learning. The programme operates across six countries in southern, eastern and western Africa and provides regional to national support to civil society organisations. Specific attention is given by the Trust to building relationships and creating linkages between advocacy, research and media groups and the people directly affected by issues as well as policy makers. The Trust provides guidance and support for national CSOs to build relationships, alongside the promotion of credible regional civil society platforms. The Trust uses this ‘policy advocacy chain’ approach to strengthen capacity because it appears to make the whole more than the sum of its parts.
Prior to SOTU being established, a number of civil society organisations across the African continent formed a loosely connected network within the human rights advocacy landscape. This group created the initial civil society framework for engaging with the African Union (AU): it monitored the legal instruments and policy standards; it facilitated the raising of citizens’ voices; and it reviewed progress and agreed the involvement of civil society organisations in Summit meetings through a specific mandate to enable more effective monitoring of the 49 AU instruments. SOTU was formed in 2009, enabling the informal network to develop into a broad-based formal coalition with a clear mandate and funding. Currently there are ten member organisations in the SOTU coalition.  

A missing component, however, was funding to address the many capacity deficits. For example, lack of financial resources meant board members were not able to meet and exercise their strategic roles; strategic plans were only partly developed using the limited skills and knowledge within the CSOs; and financial management systems were often basic and ineffective. Consequently, the SOTU team looked for ways to overcome these constraints without additional resources and funding through a brainstorming session that produced some creative solutions, listed in the table on page 9.

SOTU members are applying the learning to their policy advocacy work and the improvement of policy briefs and compliance reports. A number of the members now use the branding guidelines provided by the SOTU Secretariat for promoting the ‘My African Union’ campaign. At least one member of a national SOTU partner organisation now attends the AGM. In 2014 those attending were mainly journalists from the national platforms and programme staff, with a diverse range of other platform members attending in 2015.

The Commissioners used the CESC shadow report to ask the government questions during the evaluation. SOTU members were able to follow the discussions and the Commission’s recommendations, which enabled effective monitoring of the recommendations to take place.

Our recent visit to South Africa was underpinned by an understanding of “peer or exchange learning”. We were interested in comparing and contrasting tested methodologies and learning from success stories and best practices in the area of policy advocacy and regional and continental engagement in governance. The visit afforded us the opportunity to better understand advocacy from a cross-border and continental perspective.

We enhanced our knowledge about alternative ways of engaging both CSOs and policymakers to work together for the promotion of improved democratic practices. Our linkages with continental organisations were strengthened, which will enhance our participation at the proceedings of the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights in the Gambia and other continental bodies.

In 2014 the Secretariat undertook a review of its own capability and concluded that the team now has the relevant competences to actively engage in policy dialogue on a wider range of issues with delegates during the African Union Summits and the Pan African Parliament. This newly acquired knowledge includes the policy areas of agriculture, human rights, gender issues and democratic governance, and the team constantly passes on advocacy and influencing skills to members at key events. For example, in 2014 the Senegal SOTU members, with the support of members of the Secretariat team, visited the Ministry for African Integration, NEPAD and the Promotion of Good Governance. The members were able to clarify the importance of ratifying the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance at the meeting with the policy makers, which was positively received by the hosts.

In 2014 SOTU members collaborated with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to hold an event in Banjul, Gambia, to promote human rights related to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. This
was followed by one of the members, the Centre for Civil Society Learning and Capacity Building (CESC) in Mozambique, producing a shadow report when the African Commission declared its intention to evaluate the government of Mozambique’s Human Rights Country Report.

Putting peer-to-peer learning on the SOTU AGM agenda

Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning is now a regular agenda item at the SOTU AGM. Coalition members are given space to talk about their challenges and needs and to seek peer support. For example, questions were recently raised about how to engage national governments in advocacy events that would benefit from their involvement. Recently the Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Defense des Droits de L’Homme au Rwanda (CLADHO) shared its experience and explained to the meeting how it had established a sound relationship with the government of Rwanda.

One-off training, with mentoring support for a year, increases SOTU capacity in MERL

The SOTU Secretariat recently accessed funding for a two-day training course for its members on the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) Framework used across the SOTU network. The course was a ‘one-off’ and designed as an introduction to monitoring and evaluation. However, the consultants who delivered the training maintained online support for 12 months, allowing SOTU members to develop their own systems. Each member organisation now has its own MERL Framework as well as increased awareness about monitoring and evaluation as a valuable tool.

Brown bag lunch sessions

During 2015 the SOTU Secretariat introduced lunch-time ‘brown bag’ discussions, using the Internet to create an online training platform. One-hour training sessions were presented on emerging issues using Voice Over Internet Protocols to connect members. Brown bag sessions held in mid-2015 focused on the Africa Agenda 2063 and the MERL Framework. Members were encouraged to discuss the vision and action plan for achieving inclusive development over the next 50 years. A key objective was to help SOTU members unpack the concept and develop an approach and framework for planning until 2063. The MERL discussion offered a platform for debate about the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of this system for monitoring, and allowed the members to learn from each other’s experiences.

Afrobarometer: training and learning with and for partners

Afrobarometer’s approach to capacity strengthening has evolved over the last 15 years since citizen perception surveys were first conducted by country level partners in Africa in 1999. At the outset, Afrobarometer’s capacity-strengthening focus was on building basic skills in survey research and enabling partners to collect high quality, representative survey data. National partners were trained in survey skills and basic analysis through a series of short courses and in-country technical assistance during survey implementation. As a result, partner skills in survey and data collection and management increased rapidly, as learners and practitioners soon became involved in training. However building partners’ data analysis and writing skills proved to be far more challenging, leading Afrobarometer to review its training approaches in this area as well as the products required from the research partners once trained.

During the review, Afrobarometer noted difficulties in encouraging and enabling African authors (especially from national partners) to contribute to its publications. The problem stemmed from the burden placed on partners to produce lengthy, academic-style papers, a process that was time consuming and often stretched their analytical capability. To address this, Afrobarometer provided one-week training courses aimed at building partners’ analytical and writing skills. However, two further challenges emerged. First, the lengthy country reports were not only difficult to produce, they were also difficult for target audiences to digest and understand. Second, the short training courses were not sufficient to impart the analytical skills that partners needed. In response, Afrobarometer implemented several major changes in order to promote better African authorship of reports and publications:

• A new focus on shorter, simpler
documents such as briefing papers, dispatches, policy papers and media briefings. These documents are easier for partners to produce, and for target audiences (especially non-academics) to use.

- Different ‘levels’ of publications, providing opportunities for authors and consumers with different skill levels and needs.
- A four-week Summer School for writers that replaced the one-week training. The first Summer School for Anglophone partners was conducted at the University of Cape Town (UCT) during Round 3, and the first for Francophone partners at the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy, based in Benin, during Round 4. Subsequently, two training tracks were introduced: a beginner track, and a more advanced track for those with stronger analysis skills or for those who had completed the beginner level.
- The Afrobarometer Fellowship for advanced statistical analysis. This is open to those who have completed Track 1 and 2 training and provides an opportunity to attend an international statistical analysis summer school at the University of Michigan in the United States.

Despite the improvements brought about by these changes, one problem remained: insufficient higher-level publications produced by African partners. Afrobarometer felt that the only way to address this was through more coaching in the final analysis and writing stages. On reflection, Afrobarometer has realised that providing one-on-one support and mentoring is more effective than training alone. Starting in 2014, two major changes were introduced that enabled the learning to be taken further, with significant success. Summer School participants who produce the best quality papers are first provided with detailed feedback and mentored in the revision of their papers. They are then invited by the Summer School tutors to a one-week ‘writing sabbatical’, and other work responsibilities are set aside. In addition, Afrobarometer’s publications manager works with the authors to mentor them through the final stages, i.e. presenting the analysis.

These changes to both Afrobarometer’s communications and capacity strengthening approaches have been broadly successful, as the following indicators demonstrate:

- 49 Afrobarometer dispatches have been published since the start of Round 6 in 2014, and all but three were authored or co-authored by African partners;
- 27 Afrobarometer policy papers have been published since the start of Round 6, and all but two were authored or co-authored by African partners;
- 61 Afrobarometer briefing papers were published during Round 5 (2011–14), and all but six were authored or co-authored by African partners;
- All of the PowerPoint media briefings provided in Rounds 5 and 6 (more than 100) were produced by African partners; and
- In 2015, ten Summer School participants had their papers published as Afrobarometer policy papers, with more coming in the revision phase. (A further week of writing sabbaticals will be conducted in October 2015).

Afrobarometer considers the dominance of African authors a strong indicator of hard-won success in capacity strengthening. Whilst the authorship of the working paper series is still dominated by a handful of senior members and academics, this will continue to change.

A final thread to this story concerns the consistent pursuit for gender balance. Gender balance shapes Afrobarometer’s work at all levels. At least 40 per cent of the field workers involved in carrying out surveys must be women, women are interviewed in equal numbers to men, and women are represented among Afrobarometer’s core staff.

Senior staff positions among national partner organisations are not always gender balanced, and the knock-on effect is that women are not trained in the Summer Schools in equal numbers to men. Both Afrobarometer and its development partners are aware of the need to encourage African women authors. All Afrobarometer’s partners are therefore encouraged to submit Summer School applications from women with strong potential, recognising that women generally will have had less access than men to educational opportunities. Afrobarometer monitors the percentage of women among its African authors and, although the target is yet to be realised, it has seen a marked improvement:

- Of the ten policy papers by Summer School participants published in the last year, half were by African women authors; and
- Of the five participants who attended the University of Michigan summer school for statistical training in 2015, two were women (and a third woman was granted a Fellowship for advanced training in monitoring and evaluation).

In 2013 Tiyesere attended an Afrobarometer Summer School at UCT having first worked with Afrobarometer in 2011 on a short training course at Chancellor College, Malawi. She had limited experience with statistics and undertaking quantitative analysis.

She noted that: “The step-by-step approach, which took into account the different levels of capacities in quantitative methods amongst the course participants, helped me with the exact knowledge that I needed to be able to do and understand basic statistical analysis. Because of that exposure I have been able to design studies that use mixed methods, something that I could not have dreamt doing were it not for the Afrobarometer training.”

Tiyesere recently published one Afrobarometer Briefing Paper and is working toward the publication of an Afrobarometer Policy Paper. She says: “I am currently working on a Norwegian embassy project. I am designing my own survey and using Afrobarometer data for a comparative analysis. I am confident that the yearly Afrobarometer training will go a long way in equipping researchers like me with introductory or advanced skills in quantitative methods in a more systematic manner, something which is rarely achieved in many similar training sessions.”

Tiyesere Chikapa, lecturer in Political and Administrative Studies at Chancellor College, University of Malawi
Conclusions and lessons learned

The AREAP Partners’ approaches to capacity-strengthening focus mainly on internal skill and knowledge development at both the individual and organisational levels to enable their partners and members to increase their effectiveness. Attention is also placed on facilitating access to learning that is external to the organisation through building new relationships and creating organisational linkages. Annex 2 summarises the approaches used in terms of skills development, organisational learning and external relationships.

During Learning Hub discussions, AREAP Partners recognised that a wide range of innovative training and learning methods exist that could be introduced into their capacity-strengthening strategies at little cost. These include the use of webinars, and Survey Monkey – an open source internet platform useful for gathering quantitative and qualitative feedback and reactions. Key lessons in delivering capacity strengthening identified during the Learning Hub discussions include:

1. Capacity strengthening is an invaluable process for individual and organisational change, but it requires time and guidance for changes and learning to evolve. This is demonstrated through the examples of the Trust’s development of the SADC CNGO and the impact this had over time, and through Afrobarometer’s evolving initiatives to increase the analytical and writing skills of African and women authors.

2. Capacity strengthening can have a fixed end date, as with SOTU’s objective of reducing the need for its Secretariat to exist, and the SADC CNGO being eventually recognised in its own right as a force for change in the southern Africa region.

3. Apex organisations such as AREAP play a significant role in improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of partners and member networks regionally and continentally. Their training, coupled with continued efforts to facilitate dialogue, learning and linkages with research partners and social movements, is yielding results. The initiative taken by the CESC in Mozambique, following a SOTU learning event, in presenting documented information on human rights to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights is a good example.

4. Responsive regional and continental organisations, like the AREAP Partners, are reflecting on and assessing what works and what works less well. For example, Afrobarometer reviewed its seemingly effective training approaches, and recognised that a significant change in approach was required to bring African men and women authors to prominence.

5. Gender perspectives are key in any assessment of capacity development to redress existing inequalities and empower women, as with the approach taken by Afrobarometer to improve the balance of women authors and women’s participation in training programmes.

Synergies and jointly realised capacities

Despite having different mandates, expertise and staffing levels, the AREAP Partners have taken the opportunity to look within their own collective resources to provide learning and capacity-strengthening opportunities across their three organisations. In December 2014, during the first Learning Hub meeting, partners agreed a plan of action to collaborate on specific issues in 2015–16. The partners’ own action plans informed the joint collaboration plan, and both were linked to the overall AREAP logframe indicators. The joint plan identified three areas of action: policy dialogues, research and enhancing capabilities. The partners have made good progress with this plan, and Annex 3 provides examples of activities that are either completed or ongoing.
INTRAC, specialists in building civil society organisational capacity, distinguish between capacity development and capacity building. INTRAC suggests that capacity development is a complex process based on values, emotions and beliefs involving changes in relationships between different actors as well as shifts in power and identity, and should be seen as an internal organisational endeavour where the main actor(s) take primary responsibility for the change processes. In contrast, capacity building is defined as a purposeful, external intervention to strengthen capacity over time. Simister, N & Smith R. (2010), ‘Monitoring and evaluating capacity building: is it really that difficult?’ Online paper: INTRAC, http://www.intrac.org/resources.php?action=resource&id=677.


The grants are received from various sources, including international development partners (among which DFID is a key funder), and philanthropic and non-governmental organisations such as the Ford Foundation, Trust Africa and Oxfam. Three windows are used for CSOs to access funding for their activities.


The consultancy company was commissioned through the grant provided to the CNGO by the Trust.

The SADC CNGO has two categories of membership. First, national umbrella bodies which are eligible for election to the Regional Executive Committee (REC) and second, associate members that include apex organisations of other civil societies, regional thematic organisations and specialised networks. These organisations can bring sector-specific value to the CNGO activities but cannot be voted into the REC.

The SADC CNGO donors include the Austrian Development Agency, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Open Society Initiative South Africa, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Norwegian Church Aid and the European Union.


The countries involved in the Linkages programme are South Africa, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana.

The SOTU Partners are Fahamu, Kenya; CLADHO, Rwanda; Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), Tunisia; Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), Nigeria; Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA), South Africa; Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Ghana; Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), Malawi; La Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme (RADDHO), Senegal; Centre for Civil Society Learning and Capacity Building (CESC), Mozambique; and Nouveaux Droits des L’Homme (NDH), Cameroon.

An Oxfam team, which performs the role of the financial managers of the SOTU programme, designed the needs assessment.

Afrobarometer has been sending staff and partners to this school at the University of Michigan for many years. However, evidence suggests that that partners benefit more from the courses after having already received more in-depth training from Afrobarometer through the network’s own Summer Schools.

‘Areas of collaboration between AREAP Partners in 2015-2016’, v091115, internal AREAP document.
**Annex 1:** Timelines identifying the Trust support to the CNGO between 2006 and 2015

The Trust Grant Support to SADC-CNGO:

![Timeline chart showing the support to SADC-CNGO from 2006 to 2015.](chart.png)

**Annex 2:** Range of capacity strengthening approaches used by the AREAP Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity strengthening to:</th>
<th>Promote skills development</th>
<th>Promote organisational learning</th>
<th>Promote new relationships and shared learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Africa Trust</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of (individual &amp; organisational) capacity development needs</td>
<td>Organisational Capacity Development Plans</td>
<td>Facilitation to assist with organisational linkages and building key relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Skills training – financial management, Technical Advisers based in organisations to demonstrate the “how to do” and build knowledge, skills &amp; abilities</td>
<td>Mentoring support to strengthen governance and management approaches and systems</td>
<td>Policy Advocacy Chain operates across continent</td>
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<td><strong>SOTU</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of (individual &amp; organisational) capacity development needs</td>
<td>Open access for members to AGM to share and feedback to organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Skills training – e.g. Policy development &amp; advocacy skills, MERL Framework (at AGM and/or short courses when funds allow)</td>
<td>Enable peer review and learning exchange through VOIP meetings and attendance at AGM</td>
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<td>Update knowledge areas</td>
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<td><strong>Afrobarometer</strong></td>
<td>Basic skills training e.g. survey methods, analysis, data management)</td>
<td>Gender balance monitored at training workshops and by authors to ensure value of equal representation</td>
<td>Africa based Summer Schools for beginners and advanced groups to enhance practical application and learning exchange</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use former high performing trainees in training programmes to enable learning from experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Longer term sabbaticals for potential authors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching &amp; mentoring available for authors in final stages of potential publications</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Annex 3: Examples of collaboration and shared learning between AREAP Partners

#### 1. Policy dialogues: Examples of collaboration and learning across the AREAP Partners in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>AREAP Partners (commitment)</th>
<th>Actions / progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) Regional Women’s Forum concerned with marginalisation of women small holders and challenges to agricultural assets.</td>
<td>The Trust provided SACAU with a grant to hold the Forum in the Seychelles in May 2015.</td>
<td>SOTU arranged for an OXFAM Policy and Advocacy Officer to provide expert advice to the meeting. Afrobarometer agreed to discuss possible areas of collaboration to enable SACAU to use Afrobarometer data for planning and advocacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa Learning Partnership (SALP) Platform event with regional and international CSOs, courtesy of Google Hangout.</td>
<td>The Trust and SOTU participated.</td>
<td>The discussion covered the sharing of tools and mechanisms including peer review and evaluation as well as lessons learned by the AREAP Partners through the LICH. It was agreed that a matrix should be developed across the organisations, which could be used to guide terms of reference for a SALP working document and the drafting of a Peer Learning Memorandum of Understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Is the Media Playing its Role in Regional Integration?” Panel Discussion.</td>
<td>The Trust convened a group of editors in the margins of the Highway Africa Conference in September 2015.</td>
<td>Afrobarometer was invited as a member of the panel through its linkages with the Trust and provided technical support by assisting the editors with the interpretation of survey data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan African Parliament (PAP) Roundtable Dialogue.</td>
<td>The Trust participated in the roundtable dialogue in October 2015 that involved Development Partners &amp; CSOs. The Trust invited SOTU members to attend.</td>
<td>Two representatives from SOTU member organisations attended a discussion in the sidelines of the PAP Roundtable, thus furthering SOTU members’ involvement with the PAP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrobarometer Policy Conference in October 2015.</td>
<td>Afrobarometer invited SOTU and the Trust.</td>
<td>Both SOTU and the Trust attended the conference and participated in reviewing ways of enhancing the accessibility and utility of Afrobarometer’s data and research for policy makers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2. Research: Examples of agreed areas for collaboration between the AREAP Partners in 2015-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research area</th>
<th>AREAP Partners (commitment)</th>
<th>Actions / progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracking and Monitoring Mechanism: Mechanism for tracking compliance and monitoring the implementation of AU &amp; SADC Protocols.</td>
<td>The Trust is exploring the possibility of supporting the research process.</td>
<td>SOTU sent out a call for Expressions of Interest and collaborated with the Trust in identifying consultants to develop the draft mechanism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Poverty Status Report: Research and production of Report providing data on the status of poverty in Southern Africa.</td>
<td>Afrobarometer to provide data and their analysis on poverty.</td>
<td>The Trust will share with Afrobarometer on the output of the Report and on opportunities to share platform to disseminate information on poverty in southern Africa region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3. Enhancing capabilities: examples of joint training and learning events for the AREAP Partners in 2015-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joint events</th>
<th>AREAP Partners (commitment)</th>
<th>Actions / progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of ICT for facilitation and presentation skills: Seminars delivered by Southern Africa Trust.</td>
<td>SOTU and Afrobarometer to be provided with an ICT facilitator from Trust.</td>
<td>Presentation skills training was provided to SOTU team from 29 March to 2nd April 2015 by a Trust staff member. Dates for Afrobarometer training to be advised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media &amp; Communications Forum: A media and communications and strategy session enabling peer to peer learning for all AREAP Partners.</td>
<td>Collaborative Forum for all AREAP Partners.</td>
<td>A media strategic learning meeting was held on 3 July 2015 using Skype. Topics discussed included different organisational approaches used by AREAP Partners for media and communications, sharing of highlights of best media moments, key learning and challenges in engaging with media, sharing challenges in communicating products and ideas with members and partners, use of new media (digital), exploration of collaboration opportunities to leverage on each others’ publications/newsletters and media contacts and way forward on the upcoming Highway Africa event.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>