The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

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Chapter 7

THE IMPACT OF EXPERT ADVICE ON POLICY-MAKING IN YOUNG DEMOCRACIES: SECTOR STUDIES

There are, as was shown, significant variations between South Africa and Tanzania with respect to their financial power, administrative capacity and the local knowledge base and also across the different sectors. In the following chapter, we will investigate whether and how these differences impact on policy processes. It is of particular interest how the influence of external experts on these processes is conditioned by them.

Comparative empirical research is inherently confronted with diverse matters and material. Thus, the case studies presented below unavoidably differ in terms of their complexity and depth. Yet, they share some core themes and a broad texture. Each case is introduced with shortly delineating sectoral challenges and governance structures before sketching donors and their ‘entry points’ in the respective field. Then follows a detailed description of policy processes and players involved, with a particular focus on whether, how and in which roles external experts were engaged. While the narrations are not squeezed into a fixed grid, they are guided by some key questions, namely: At which stage and on which grounds (e.g. ‘capacity gaps’) did foreign actors enter the policy space? How did actors from government, aid organisations and academia position themselves and at which levels did they interact? Whose expertise and interests were finally taken up and reflected in policy decisions? The case studies are concluded with an assessment regarding external experts’ impact on policy-making and governance in the field under review, taking the structural conditions found into account. A synthesis of findings that can be drawn from comparing the empirical accounts concludes this chapter.
Tanzania education: The hijacked agenda

Sectoral context

In the light of international goals for education, Tanzania’s performance appears commendable at first glance: access to primary education is nearly ‘universal’, the completion rate stands high at 90%, and gender parity has almost been achieved (UNESCO Office Dakar and Regional Bureau for Education in Africa et al. 2011: 7). In secondary education, the Gross Enrolment Rate has gone up from 20.2% in 2006 (Sumra & Rajani 2006) to 35% in 2012 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2014), while in the same period enrolment numbers in higher education quadrupled (see Education Sector Development Committee 2012).¹⁶³

Yet, this rapid expansion has put substantial stress on the education system, manifesting in plummeting literacy skills and mass failure in national examinations (see, for instance, Twaweza 2013; Uwezo 2013). While children have successfully been brought into school, they struggle to learn under deteriorating conditions in overcrowded classrooms without adequate furniture, basic learning material and pedagogical support (see Mhonyiwa et al. 2011); as of 2011/2012, the teacher-to-pupil ratio in primary education stood at 1:70 (Education Sector Development Committee 2012). The quality crisis in education has become a prime concern among educational stakeholders, sparking off serious dispute between the government and the aid community.

Governance structures

The two main authorities in charge of formal education from pre-primary to tertiary levels in Tanzania are the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) and the Prime Minister’s Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG). While the former is responsible for policy development, the provision of regulations and guidelines, standard setting, quality assurance and teacher training (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2014), the latter is mandated to oversee and coordinate the administration of schools which are managed by local government authorities (President’s Office Public Service Management 2011). Hence, while MoEVT is the central body regarding policy issues, PMO-RALG is directly concerned with the day-to-day running of the school system. Both ministries collaborate with a range of other institutions concerned with educational

¹⁶³ Total student enrolment in higher education increased from 40,993 in 2005/2006 to 166,484 in 2011/2012 (see Education Sector Development Committee 2011).
matters, such as the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) which develops curricula, teaching and learning materials, the National Examinations Council of Tanzania which designs and administers national examinations and the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children dealing with Folk Education.\textsuperscript{164}

Donor presence in the education sector

Compared to other policy areas, the number of donors engaged in education appears rather limited; as of 2012, the ‘Education Development Partners Group’ (ED-DPG) comprised seven active members, namely CIDA, DFID, Sida, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID and the World Bank.\textsuperscript{165} Depending on the respective focus of these organisations, representatives participate in one or more of the eight Technical Working Groups (e.g. ‘Quality Improvement’, ‘Enrolment Expansion’, or ‘Resource Allocation, Cost Efficiency and Financing’) to discuss issues coming up in these areas and to share information about their activities with ministry officials. If required, topics are brought forth to a higher-level task force and eventually to the Education Sector Development Committee chaired by the permanent secretary of MoEVT. While all actors are supposed to stick to this structure, both ministry and aid officials conceded that “it isn’t really working that way” (Interview 30), and a lot of things are “sort of decided upon and shared outside” (Interview 40). Various interviewees reported that the tone of the ‘dialogue’ has become tense.

Understanding current aid relationships and the government’s positioning towards the donor community requires an awareness of the history of cooperation. Tanzania has gone through different phases in this regard.

The rise and fall of Nyerere’s ‘Education for Self-Reliance’ vision

When in 1961 the state of Tanganyika became independent, it inherited a society which was deeply affected by more than seven decades of imperialist rule. Both the Germans and British colonisers had installed a racially segregated formal education system whose main objective was to form a submissive yet productive workforce serving the external regime (Mushi 2009).\textsuperscript{166} Very few Africans attained more than two years of formal education (Galabawa 1990).

\textsuperscript{164} Detailed information on mandates and functions of these institutions is provided on their websites: www.tie.go.tz/ (last accessed on 18 January 2015); http://www.necta.go.tz/ (last accessed on 18 January 2015) and http://www.mcdgc.go.tz/ (last accessed on 18 January 2015).

\textsuperscript{165} Moreover, GIZ and the World Food Programme are mentioned in some documents, but their engagement seems to be quite focused on cross-cutting issues (e.g. HIV prevention and awareness raising in schools) and specific concerns (e.g. community-led school feeding), respectively.

\textsuperscript{166} For a detailed account of colonial education in Tanzania, see Mushi (2009).
At independence, about 85% of the population could not read and write (Nationalist Newspaper, 24 August 1967, as cited in Bhalalusesa 2003). Aside from one university college affiliated to the University of London (which later became a constituent college of the University of East Africa), there were no higher education institutions in the country (Ngirwa et al. 2013).

Building a literate and capable citizenry became a central endeavour for Tanganyika’s first post-colonial leader, Julius K Nyerere, who became Prime Minister in 1961 and was elected President in 1962. Himself a teacher prior to his political career, Nyerere considered education a fundamental pillar for realising his vision of a socialist state based on his philosophy of Ujamaa (the Swahili term for ‘familyhood’) which should free the society from the yoke of domination. Right after coming into power, Mwalimu as he was popularly called (meaning ‘teacher’ in Swahili), issued an Education Act which legally abolished all forms of discrimination in education, nationalised primary schools, streamlined school curricula and examinations, and promoted Swahili as the national language (Ministry of Education and Culture 1995). This first step of change was followed by the release of Nyerere’s influential ‘Education for Self-Reliance’ policy of 1967. As a sequel to the Arusha Declaration, the document emphasised the essential role of education in ending external dependence and delineated the principles of the envisaged socialist education system; amongst others, it stated:

*The education provided must therefore encourage the development in each citizen of three things: an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains (...).*

*The education provided by Tanzania for the students of Tanzania must serve the purposes of Tanzania. It must encourage the growth of the socialist values we aspire to. It must encourage the development of a proud, independent and free citizenry which relies upon itself for its own development (...).* (Nyerere 1967)

In Nyerere’s vision, primary education was to become ‘a complete education in itself’, preparing students for life in a socialist society; an overhauled curriculum should include ‘non-academic’ subjects and practical activities such as agriculture and farming. Schools were to be integrated into villages and
communities; education should be regarded as a process of lifelong learning rather than a formal system leading to white-collar skills (Nyerere 1967).

A cornerstone of Nyerere’s philosophy was the idea of compulsory and free primary education. Following the abolition of school fees as provided by the Musoma Resolution of 1974, the intake in primary schools almost doubled; by 1980, the gross enrolment rate stood at 98% (Galabawa 2001: 13). Galabawa, a Tanzanian professor affiliated with the University of Dar es Salaam, expressed the excitement about the government’s successful campaign at that time as follows:

Both internal and external observers witnessed something akin to a miracle as enrolments in primary schools across the nation soared and the nation was gravitated in the frenzy to implement the call for education for all in a poor country committed to an equitable and fair provision of education to all the citizenry. (Galabawa 2001: 17)

Yet, the ‘miracle’ of having all children in school entailed some serious drawbacks. Absorbing masses of new students required not only additional facilities and learning materials (which were not available), but also teachers. Since expanding teacher training was not sufficient to meet the exploding demand, the government introduced “teaching in turns, distance training of teachers and using secondary school students to teach in primary schools” (Galabawa 1990: 13). Such alternative measures, however, led to a serious decline in educational quality as reflected in the cognitive capabilities of school leavers. By the end of the 1970s, there was a public outcry about the ‘falling standards’ in the education system, with parents complaining about a “universalization of illiteracy” (Omari et al. 1983: 45).

The overt discontent about the deteriorating quality in education coincided with “a period of stress for Tanzania on many fronts” (Samoff 1994: 134) exacerbated by the global economic crisis during the mid-1980s. Initially the government had financed programmes such as the UPE campaign mainly from its own resources. Now it was forced to turn to foreign donors to maintain the system; as Samoff (2003: 380) illustrates, this shift had significant implications for educational governance:

167 The notion of life-long learning is not explicitly discussed in the ‘Education for Self-Reliance’ document, but prominently featured in later publications and speeches of Nyerere. In his New Year’s Eve Broadcast on 31 December 1969, he particularly emphasised the importance of adult education and learning throughout life, stating: “Education is not just something which happens in the classrooms. It is learning from others, and from our own experience of past successes or failures (…). To live is to learn; and to learn is to try to live better” (Nyerere 1973: 138–141).
As the director of planning in Tanzania explained, planning had in fact become marketing. His task was less a process of exploring needs and developing strategies to address them than an effort to study the market of prospective funders. He then identified its priorities and value points, using that market knowledge to craft, advertise, and sell projects and programs. That strategy was perhaps effective for coping in difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, it entrenched the role of the funding agencies in setting national education policies and priorities. It also reinforced the status and influence of a particular set of actors within the country, not those with the clearest or most dynamic education vision or those with the most solid national political base but rather those who proved to be most effective in securing foreign funding. When after a period of resistance (and Nyerere’s replacement by Ali Hassan Mwinyi as president) the government gave in and began to adopt structural adjustment policies as required by the IMF and the World Bank (see Hyden & Karlstrom 1993), it was pressured to reverse fundamental features of the education system. In 1993, an inter-ministerial committee was commissioned to develop a new Education and Training Policy which should serve as a framework for both government action and donor support.\textsuperscript{168} The final document released in 1995 clearly reflected the move from a socialist to a liberal vision of education geared to a market economy (Buchert 1997). The policy confirmed the re-introduction of school fees (promoted as ‘cost-sharing mechanism’), encouraged private education providers to establish and manage learning institutions, and decentralised administration responsibility to the sub-national level (Ministry of Education and Culture 1995). The imprint of external agencies whose representatives provided comments and participated in discussions was manifest not only in the turn to privatisation and liberalisation, but also in the emphasis on issues such as gender equality and local autonomy which were key areas of donor support (Buchert 1997). Without any wider public discussion in the media or by parliament, the policy was approved by the Cabinet in February 1995. The respective amendment of the Education Act following in October finally provided the legal basis for a re-

\textsuperscript{168} Buchert (1997: 46–51) provides a detailed account of the different stages of policy formulation and actors involved therein, concluding that it remains an open question to what extent “certain areas were truly reflecting [government] thinking as compared to being imposed through agency pressure” (p. 51). According to her research based on interviews with stakeholders and observers, the document was perceived as a product of negotiation between technocrats in ministries and agency representatives; teachers, parents or students had not been invited to contribute their views to the debate.
structured education system which was now broadly in accordance with the ideas and principles prevailing in aid circles at that time.

Reform initiatives from 1995 onwards: Invading experts and a plethora of plans

The adjustment of Tanzania’s macro and education policies to the international agenda paved the way for immense donor engagement in the sector. Adding up the activities listed by Buchert (1997), at least 86 education projects were carried out by different agencies during the 1990s, with the information provided not being exhaustive. The fact that the various funders, including the World Bank, UNICEF, EU, Danida, Norad, Sida, GTZ, Irish Aid, France, CIDA, the Netherlands, and the UK, operated largely disconnected from each other became a serious concern on both government and donor side (Buchert 1999). Proposing a ‘sector-wide approach’ (SWAp) as a new, ‘harmonised’ mode of assistance, the aid community pushed for the development of a comprehensive ‘Education Sector Development Programme’ (ESDP) which aimed to synchronise interventions and to pool resources for the implementation of the new Education and Training Policy. Yet, this was seen as an ambitious undertaking which – from the donors’ point of view – was not doable by the ministry on its own. An education advisor working for Canada, herself being Tanzanian, expressed the sentiment in aid offices at that time as follows:

You see, there were new concepts coming around with the development. But then your counterparts are not talking that language. The challenge we also had was how much of the preparatory work should be done and who should do it? Even doing the needs assessment, doing the initial situation analysis to find out where we start, where we go? We ended up bringing a lot of TA [technical assistance] input – a lot. At a moment, that was a year we counted, I think almost between 25 to 30 different TAs were coming to do different things from different donors (…), and the ministry was like invaded, literally. And some donors even felt we should have offices in the ministry to make it feel that we are working with the government, for the government. So you go along the corridors of the government ministry, and you are seeing this mzungu and that one and this one. (Interview 31)\textsuperscript{169}

The fact that these ‘mzungus’ came not only with expertise but interests of their organisations was obvious; a Tanzanian consultant who had worked for the World Bank commented in this regard:

\textsuperscript{169} Mzungu is a Swahili term which is commonly used in East Africa for talking about or calling white people; literally translated it means ‘someone who wanders without purpose/someone constantly on the move’.
It was not an easy one. I saw all of that game coming up, you know, every donor will see what they are doing is more important [and] how to push that onto the agenda. (Interview 32)

Many priorities outlined in the final draft published in 2001 obviously match what were key issues of donor concern and investment (United Republic of Tanzania 2001: 14). The focus on strengthening management capacity and introducing a computerised Education and Training Management Information System, for instance, reflected the technocratic-managerial approach to education championed by external consultants. Some paragraphs virtually read as if copied from donor documents; the following extract, for instance, more or less echoes the World Bank’s human capital view on education as reflected in various publications of that time (see, for instance, World Bank 1988, 1995, 1999a):

> The ultimate goal of any education and training system is to provide relevant and high quality education and training services to a broad range of clients in the most equitable, effective and efficient ways. This entails building the management capacity at all levels in the education sector. (United Republic of Tanzania 2001: 20)

The terminology used here indicates a stark conceptual shift: as opposed to the previous notion of education as a public responsibility with the aim to transmit “the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society” to the younger generation (Nyerere 1967: 1), education was now regarded as a ‘service’ provided to ‘clients’ that was to be managed ‘in the most equitable, effective and efficient’ manner. It is questionable whether this kind of wording was a deliberate choice of ministry officials or – what seems more likely – of technical assistants writing the draft.

The language used in such strategic documents is significant insofar as it structures and constrains the policy discourse; it conveys particular conceptions, directions and policy preferences (Samoff 1992: 67). In this case, the new emphasis on ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ implied the need to prioritise basic (understood as primary) education on the grounds that it had the highest ‘rate of return’ – an argument which had been pushed particularly by World

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170 Nyerere, in contrast, had formulated the goal of a nation’s education and training system as follows: “That purpose is to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development” (Nyerere 1967: 1).

171 For an early conceptualisation of ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ in education which was published by the World Bank, see Lockheed and Hanushek (1994).
Bank economists (see, for instance, Psacharopoulos 1994; World Bank 1995) who deemed higher education with its high unit costs “a fiscal nightmare” (Youssef 2005: 20) in developing countries.\footnote{An important point here is that ‘basic education’ for most donors meant primary (and lower secondary) education whereas for the Tanzanian government, the term included pre-primary, primary, adult, secondary, and teacher education. This divergence in definition led to tension, as an education advisor working for the Canadian embassy reported: “So there is already that conceptual issue: You have to argue between Canada and Tanzania: ‘When we support you, this is what we mean’. So the issue becomes then: Who is the interlocutor there? And how do you interpret that?” (Interview 31)} Consequently, the first sub-sectoral plan developed as a sequel to the ‘Education Sector Development Programme’ addressed primary education. The so-called ‘Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP)’ (2002–2006) outlined four major goals, namely expanding enrolment, improving the quality of teaching and learning processes, building capacity and strengthening institutional arrangements for better educational planning and service delivery (Basic Education Development Committee 2001). While in the foreword, the involvement of “a variety of stakeholder groups” (Basic Education Development Committee 2001) in the formulation of the document was emphasised, it was regarded as mainly made by donors, first and foremost the World Bank which “allegedly [used] its Mozambique strategy as a template” (Holton 2002: 24). It was also the Bank which was the largest external financier of PEDP, providing a grant of USD 150 million to be released over a period of three years; other donors (including the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, France, Norway, Ireland and the EU) pooled their resources and contributed around the same amount (USD 154 million) through a joint basket fund (World Bank 2005b: 4). Even though the latter was set up to support government priorities as outlined in PEDP, conflictual discussions on what the money should be spent emerged. A Tanzanian education specialist working for the Canadians remarked:

\begin{quote}
This issue of prioritisation then came up to be quite an issue. What is it that we want, and what is it that the government really wants? The biggest issue, for example, at that time – 2000 to 2005/6 – there was this huge enrolment taking place, all over the country (...). So the main challenge for the government was having classrooms constructed. As donors we stood there and we said, ‘We are not supporting construction work. We would like to see more inputs, but not buildings. So put your money into capital assets. Put your money in buildings, we’ll come in with inputs.’ So that’s a clear case where the government’s cry was on more construction (...), where if the government was left on its own – and
\end{quote}
knowing my government counterparts – maybe that is what they would have first done, put those structures in place. (Interview 31)

The decisive role of donors in determining the content of PEDP and the tight earmarking of resources in the basket dampened enthusiasm about the programme on the part of ministry officials. Observers of the process saw the insufficient internalisation – or to use the buzzword ‘ownership’ – of the programme by government bodies as a predictable consequence of external interference. Holtom (2002: 25) cites an aid representative (!) acknowledging:

PEDP was formulated mainly by donors and according to the donor programme, and donors have allocated their resources. So how can the Ministry of Education be involved in the process with ‘their’ ownership? Actually they cannot! And of course they cannot deny [accepting] aid from donors because, yeah, something is better than nothing.

Amongst ministry officials the sentiment that the education agenda had been ‘hijacked’ by the donor community (particularly the World Bank) slowly but surely solidified.

A case in point which fuelled this perception was the abolishment of school fees which surprised Tanzanian officials, academics and civil society alike. As indicated earlier, the government had re-introduced school fees at the end of the 1980s as a condition of structural adjustment loans (Samoff 1994), with the result that enrolment rates dropped immediately (Mbilinyi 2003). Against internal critique, this decision was confirmed in the Education and Training Policy of 1995, with the education ministry allegedly anticipating that donors still advocated for cost-sharing mechanisms (Jerve 2006). Five years later, however, the World Bank suddenly signalled a reversal of its stance: in a late stage of preparing Tanzania’s first poverty reduction strategy, the country director “announced to the President directly that the Bank had changed its position on user fees in primary education and was prepared to finance the shortfall in revenue” (Jerve 2006: 14). To the surprise of even high-level officials, the final draft of the strategy entailed the proclamation that “in a reversal of past policies, it is intended to abolish primary school fees, starting in FY 2001/2002” (United Republic of Tanzania 2000: 19). That this about-turn had not at all been discussed internally is reflected by the fact that after the release of the document the permanent secretary of the education ministry publicly deemed the passage a mistake (Jerve 2006). While civil society organisations welcomed

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173 Both ministry officials and observers from NGO and academia are quoted using this notion in the context of the ESDP and PEDP processes; see Buchert (1997: 54) or Holtom (2002: 22).
this shift, leading academics who had advised against a blanket removal were shocked (Jerve 2006). Nonetheless, the commitment was confirmed in PEDP which followed shortly after (Basic Education Development Committee 2001).

The external influence on key issues in PEDP is particularly remarkable considering that the adoption of a sector-wide approach as introduced by the Education and Training Sector Development Programme and the establishment of a basket fund were actually meant to strengthen national leadership and foster “a new kind of partnership” (Basic Education Development Committee 2001: 21) based on consultation as opposed to conditionality. Therefore, a sophisticated ‘dialogue’ structure was put in place, ranging from technical working groups to sub-sectoral development committees to a high-level steering committee for education (see United Republic of Tanzania 2001: 70). Donors were ‘invited’ to participate at various levels in order to share information and provide policy advice. The cooperation should culminate in a joint annual review process of the education sector to evaluate the success of specific programmes and plans. The creation of these institutions as an attempt to align activities under the guidance of government was highly commended by stakeholders and observers; with similar mechanisms installed in other sectors (e.g. health), Tanzania was considered a forerunner in realising the new ‘partnership’ principles formalised by the 2005 Paris Declaration a few years later.

Since then, aid experts as members of the dialogue have routinely been involved in the development of various policies and programmes brought forth during a decade of reform, including two sequels of PEDP, equivalents in other subsectors and a revised version of the comprehensive Education Sector Development Programme. Yet, there are strong indications that this ‘new kind of partnership’ has not grown as planned.

The return of the quality crisis: Frustration and frictions

By 2013, both government and donor officials conceded that while the institutions of the dialogue formally continued to exist, they were de facto

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‘barely functioning’ (Interview 30). A Tanzanian education specialist working for Canada commented in this regard:

_The membership or representation in those working groups is very, very erratic, if I may use that word. And I think to some extent the government is using it to its advantage. When they feel they need something to get that support, they will champion an issue, make sure it goes to the right channel, it’s discussed and off it moves. If they are not really with you, (...) they may just decide, ‘No, I’m not attending. I’m delegating my third level down to chair the meeting.’ So there you are just talking._ (Interview 31)

In a similar vein, the education team leader in the Canadian Embassy remarked:

_We find it very frustrating, because we try to follow these structures, but it’s clear the government finds it very frustrating also. So it’s not really working. (...) I think from their side, they really feel it’s a donor imposed structure. And we feel like this is their structure that they created – so it is sort of both sides pointing fingers._ (Interview 30)

Given the high level of frustration on both sides, relationships between the government and donors were palpably strained. The worsening condition of primary education became the issue which exacerbated the frictions and sparked off serious dispute. The government had been praised for its ‘outstanding achievements’ made through its first Primary Education Development Programme for 2002–2006 (see Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2008), but the evaluation of the second phase covering the years 2007–2011 produced rather disappointing ‘results’: pass rates for primary school leaving examination significantly declined from 70.5% in 2006 to 53.5% by 2010 which together with a constantly high number of drop-outs levelled down the transition rate to secondary education from 67.5% in 2006 to 52.5% in 2011 (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2012a: 90–95). The poor performance was to a large part ascribed to the unfavourable learning environment found in many schools where teachers and pupils were squeezed into over-crowded classrooms with few desks, books and learning materials, housed in buildings which often lacked even basic infrastructure such as toilets and clean water (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2012a). The massive enrolment expansion which had previously been celebrated as a

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175 The failure of learning was further documented by a study carried out by Uwezo, an education NGO which found out that many children in their last year of primary school were not able to read simple passages in Kiswahili or English or do basic arithmetic (Uwezo 2013).
success now turned out to negatively affect educational quality as reflected in plummeting literacy rates at both primary and secondary levels.\textsuperscript{176}

The education crisis became a major issue in both public debate and donor–government relations. Media reports focused on the failure of learning and the resulting implications for the future of Tanzania’s school children (see, for instance, Nkosi 2012; Kaijage 2013; Mgaya 2013; Tambwe 2013), whereas donor–government discussions rather turned on ‘missed targets’, as the following narrative of the DFID advisor reflects:

\textit{The evaluation which is commissioned by government overall is quite negative and pointed out that a lot of the resources weren’t released by government, some particular things like the amount of school grants that were rewarded on a population, or school enrolment ratios which weren’t delivered in full – it’s been very large. They have missed many of the targets by (a) very large amount, particularly inputs around building buildings, deploying teachers, providing books … The government systems to decentralizing things haven’t worked particularly well.} (Interview 35)

According to the DFID officer, the fact that the government had not nearly ‘delivered’ what has been expected created “a sort of difficult dynamic” (Interview 35) with respect to future aid. Major donors considered reducing budget and sector support through which PEDP II had mainly been financed, arguing that these modalities had failed to show results. The education team leader of the Canadian Embassy stated in this regard:

\textit{For the education side, we are looking at options. I don’t know whether we will carry on with sector budget support, we might, we might not. This is exactly the discussions we are having right now in our team because there’s pros and cons. I mean we are getting a lot of pressure – all donors, I think, are getting a lot of pressure to demonstrate results.} (Interview 30)

Similarly, the first secretary responsible for education in the Swedish Embassy reported:

\textit{At present, we really don’t know when it comes to General Budget Support and so on, I think, that is clearly questioned by our Minister for Development Cooperation (…). So she has clearly stated we are not going to continue with GBS. This is not the government’s official stand}

\textsuperscript{176} According to Wedgwood (2006: 4), observers with a morbid sense of humour allegedly jest that the abbreviation of Universal Primary Education ‘UPE’ in Tanzania stands for Ualimu Pasipo Elimu in Swahili, meaning ‘teaching without education’.
at present – they are discussing this. That’s why we had to prolong the present strategy. So there’s an on-going discussion. We are trying to find a way within – not only focusing on General Budget Support but having a mix of modalities. (Interview 40)

DFID had already decided to significantly reduce its contribution to budget support on the grounds that its 2010 country programme evaluation “suggested that GBS was not the most effective way to deliver results in the current circumstances” (DFID Tanzania 2011: 3); in DFID’s view, the ‘unsatisfactory performance’ of PEDP II corroborated this evaluation.

The donors’ turn-around was not only based on the negative assessment report but followed a general trend reversal regarding aid modalities (see Chapter 5). They used the education crisis to legitimate the pulling out from joint funding mechanisms. This is remarkable insofar as the decline in quality was in a way a predictable implication of mass enrolment, as a DFID advisor acknowledged:

You could argue that perhaps it was never feasible to have such a major expansion against the MDG goals which are very much focused on gender equity and universal access (...). If you tried this in any country in the world, you wouldn’t expect it to have anything like the same level of pass rates measured by a standard pass mark because you’re putting huge pressure on the system to deliver the schools, the teachers, the learning resources needed. But also you’re promoting up into the system children who come from very poor, underprivileged, remote, rural backgrounds, children entering primary schools who are much more likely to have illiterate parents themselves coming from very poor backgrounds. All of the things which are the best predictors of how well children do, how educated your parents are, how much opportunity you’ve got from other resources to help you learn. So clearly there are many more children who are coming in very disadvantaged, so the system is struggling to cope. So given that background, the government very reasonably can say, ‘Well, what did you expect when you encouraged us to expand this way’. (Interview 35)

Hence, although enrolment expansion had significantly been pushed by the aid community in order to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015 (the second Millennium Development Goal), it was now the government which was held responsible for coping with the consequences and regarded as not taking sufficient action to improve the situation. Tanzanian policy-makers, on the other hand, felt unduly blamed, and perceived the announced reduction of budget support as a breach of agreement and sign of distrust; from their
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perspective, donors and their unreliable disbursements were at least partly at fault for the failure of reaching certain goals, as a high-level official in PMO-RALG remarked:

*Three months you can continue discussing, you know, what and why the government is not up to its promises. But in actual fact, it is both. The government depends on collection (...)*. Tax payers, fine, that’s one resource. The donors are another source – borrowing. Now, if the donor funds are not forthcoming and it was included in the budget, then that’s the reason why we cannot get the amount of money this time. (Interview 60)

In the course of tedious discussions over indicators, ratings (as essential ‘triggers’ for the release of aid money) and the reasons why targets were not met, donor–government relationships increasingly soured.\footnote{Given the numerous meetings dealing with rating frameworks and the like to ‘measure’ progress in education, Languille (2013) remarks that the “processes of performance quantification (...) contribute to crowd out the policy space of government staff: target setting and endless discussions over numbers are so time-consuming that no time is left to deliberate, in substance, upon the quality challenge and the policies to address it.”}

The friction between the two parties culminated when the education ministry in August 2012 distributed its PEDP III draft for comments – and received abrasive criticism from the ‘Education Development Partners Group’ (ED-DPG) which assessed the document as ‘quite weak’ (Interview 30), recommending

*that significant changes need to be made (...) to ensure that it becomes a credible plan – attractive for both internal and external financing and an implementable plan that will deliver the human capital needed to put Tanzania on the right track to development.* (cited in Education Development Partners Group in Tanzania 2013: 19)

Amongst others, donors criticised the – in their view – unconvincing costing scenarios, deficient sector analysis and strategic orientation. Referring to the latter, the education team leader of the Canadian Embassy who acted as chair of ED-DPG in the interview commented:

*It was a grouping of activities without a strategic orientation with a clear flow of: ‘These are our objectives, and this is how we are going to do it’. It was just sort of a piecemeal document of well, we do much of these activities and we will do some of this, we do some of this. It didn’t really have any coherence to it and it didn’t seem to have any connections between obviously whatever is coming out of – when students leave primary, they should
be prepared to go to secondary school, and there should be appropriate numbers who are passing to fill the places in the secondary and none of that had been considered. So there were some weaknesses in that way, and there was no monitoring framework at all which we felt was a major gap. (Interview 30)

When donor representatives put forward their fundamental ‘concerns’ regarding the draft to the government, ministry officials made no pretence of their irritation which was a rather unusual reaction. Canada’s education team leader attributed the blunt annoyance of his counterparts to a lack of receptiveness for critical feedback:

They were seeking editorial comments, I think. They said, ‘Look, this is our plan’. But they were going through the formality of consulting, ‘Let’s consult the donors because we have to’, but I’m not sure they were really interested in serious consultations – which is why when we came back with major revisions, they were kind of upset. (Interview 30)

A second version circulated by the MoEVT by mid-October responded to some of the issues raised but still did not please the aid community. Given the – from their perspective – need for substantial changes, donors suggested resorting to experts to help rework and finalise the document:

We had said, ‘Look, we think this isn’t just something for comments, it really needs to be worked on a lot more.’ And so we said, ‘We are happy to help you with that, we can provide our experts to do that.’ We can hire experts to do that, but in this case because of timing, we just said we all have experts here. And so the government thought that was a good idea and they invited a couple of us to provide technical expertise and to sit down in a room with their technical experts and they rewrote the document over a few days. They went off to another city and they just got it done. (Interview 30)

To what extent the government, in fact, judged the use of external assistance a ‘good idea’ remains an open question; one can find at least indications that there were certain issues at stake which led the government to accept the suggestion, such as its application to the ‘Global Partnership for Education’.

Eventually, a small group of ministry officials, civil society representatives and educational specialists provided by CIDA and UNICEF spent six days in Morogoro, a town around 200km west of Dar es Salaam, in order to rework the PEDP III document. As stated in the Minutes of the Education Development
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Partners Group Meeting of 17th October 2012, the draft was “significantly revised” (ED-DPG 2012) in the course of the retreat exercise. Most notably, it now entailed a comprehensive costing and budgeting framework, as well as a logframe matrix including quantified targets – as, for instance, to raise the percentage of a cohort completing Standard VII (the last year of primary school) from 54.8% in 2012 to 72.8% by 2016 (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2012b: 48).

Interestingly, it also contained a passage insinuating that the government had given up the insistence on budget support for education; after reference to the Joint Assistance Strategy of 2006 which clearly emphasised GBS as the preferred aid modality, the text declares:

*The Government has been encouraging Development Partners to channel their development assistance through General Budget Support (GBS) rather than basket funds and direct project support. However, the Government will continue to be flexible to accommodate assistance from Development Partners who have decided not to use the GBS funding modality but who are interested to support education interventions.* (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2012b)

It is questionable whether this concession of individual interventions derived from a changed government position or – what appears more likely – from donors’ return to projects through which they are more easily able to trace their investments and put their flag on results.

The conditionality of consultation and the centrality of aid in policy-making

The PEDP III process reveals pervasive patterns which in their interplay severely affect educational governance in Tanzania. One pertains to the conditionality of donor consultation and the effects on the nature of interaction; another to the (perceived) dependency on aid money and the resulting implications for agenda-setting in education.

As to the former, the education team leader in the Canadian Embassy, reporting on the great deal of annoyance caused by the donors’ feedback on the PEDP III draft, assumed that the harsh reaction of government officials derived from the fact that they ‘were going through the formality of consulting’ without actually seeking advice, but with the stance ‘let’s consult donors because we have to’ (Interview 30). This perception is supported by various narratives of government officials. Asked to assess the usefulness of regular meetings with donors, the primary education director in the MoEVT responded:
You know, sometimes it may not be useful – but they’re the funders. They’re the ones who support you, so you have to go into negotiation. (Interview 49)

In fact, the ‘dialogue’ in the education sector (and similarly in other policy fields) has been constructed as a requirement of budget support modalities (i.e. GBS and basket funding for education). Clearly, the point of departure for the institutionalised interaction between donors and the government is the financial need of the latter. Hence, while the ‘dialogue’ is formally framed as “an open space for discussions, challenges and agreements on technical and policy issues” (United Republic of Tanzania 2012b: 1), it is inherently based on a dependency relationship structured by financial power. From a government perspective, policy discussions are primarily held to comply with funding requirements and not because there is a genuine request for advice. The ‘process conditionality’ (Gould & Ojanen 2005: 25) of donor consultation renders actual demand for advice irrelevant. Against this background, it is not surprising that ministry officials – as in the case of the PEDP III draft – were not receptive to and were displeased about critical feedback.

The obligatory interaction with external experts forced upon the government due to financial needs has resulted in a rejection of additional technical assistance offered by donors. Referring to her ministry counterparts, a Tanzanian advisor working for Canada reported:

Consequently they have been refusing, at least in our sector education, when you touch issues of – ok, we don’t have money to do X, Y and Z, but what you people need may be just somebody to take you through, so that you know how to plan better, how to implement better. How about us providing that resource, not in money, but we are bringing [someone] to sit with you to do X, Y and Z? They are not very willing. (Interview 31)

Since deliberation with donors has become an inevitable feature of educational governance, the reflexive refusal of technical assistance can be interpreted as an attempt to secure a last resort of autonomy on the part of policy-makers whose discretionary power is markedly constrained. Ministry officials have become used to bargain convictions against money, as a statement from the director of Primary Education reflects:

Sometimes you have to lose what your belief is. And the other side also has to lose some of the elements … And you come to a place where you win a little bit of it and the other side wins a little bit of it as well. (Interview 49)
The understanding that the feasibility of policies and plans depends on the approval of donors is widely internalised among leadership ranks and civil servants in the education ministry. Many consider the government’s scope of action as determined by the consensus and agendas of external funders who eventually hold the ‘whip hand’, as a high-ranking official in PMO-RALG pointed out:

_You cannot implement unless you agree, and you have agreed this dialogue should be consultative, respecting one another, you need to listen to a colleague, you see. So there are times when these strategies and the policy get stuck to stand still because you have not agreed with the experts from the embassies, from the donor cooperation agencies._ (Interview 60)

Similarly, a senior official in the higher education department explained:

_There’s finance from someone who says, ‘Yes, if you do this, I’m willing to convince someone somewhere to release that sum, so that you can do this’. But that ‘this’, what is it? Is it the real that you want? (…) But what you want to address, you have no funding for it._ (Interview 48)

Asked to give a concrete example, the interviewee pointed to the ministry’s first Higher Education Development Programme (HEDP) approved in 2010 and covering the years 2010–2015. As the outcome of almost a decade of research, consultation and retreats, the document presented a detailed list of activities proposed to enhance access and quality in higher education, focusing on institutional reforms, service delivery and sustainability mechanisms (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2010a). Despite being commended for its clarity and thorough analysis (see Education Development Partners Group in Tanzania 2013), HEDP has not yet received much attention from the aid community. As the following statement reflects, the lack of support for implementing the suggested interventions caused much frustration among officials in the higher education department:

_It is just in our shelves now. When it started, there was the idea that someone would fund that – none came up to now (…). But you have spent the department’s budget for almost two years or so on that. Nobody came up and said yeah, I’m willing to even pick a portion in that, nobody is there. Of recent, we have been advised to go through it and – I don’t know how to put it, but to make different portions, so that you can sell each portion separately (…). But even doing that, again we had to dig into the_
department’s budget to prepare that, in hope that someone would come up to support that one. (Interview 48)

The terms used here are telling: The government had to ‘portion’ its programme in order to make it ‘sellable’ to external financiers. The fact that aid providers showed little interest to buy-in is used as an explanation why HEDP was put ‘on the shelves’. In this case as in many others, officials experienced themselves as being at the mercy of the donors.

The dependency on external funding proved to be the predominant point of reference across interviews with education policy-makers. The centrality of the theme as the decisive condition structuring relationships and its use as a legitimating pattern for action/inaction is striking. Although education is de facto less dependent on foreign funding than other sectors (see Chapter 6), aid money constitutes the prime concern of all actors in the field and the linchpin of debate, as a Tanzanian education specialist emphasised:

So the resource issue becomes the driving – it’s like you talk around the needs, you talk around, yes, a little bit on the priorities, but how much on those priorities. (Interview 31)

The claim that aid money and resource flows have indeed become the prime subjects of discourse is supported by various narratives and documents related to the PEDP III process presented earlier; to iterate just two extracts for illustration:

Now if the donor funds are not forthcoming and it was included in the budget, then that’s the reason why we cannot get the amount of money this time. (PMO-RALG official, interview 60)

Significant changes need to be made (…) to ensure that it becomes a credible plan – attractive for both internal and external financing. (DPs cited in Education Development Partners Group in Tanzania 2013: 19)

The fact that ‘development partners’ called for significant changes of the PEDP III draft on the grounds that it should be made ‘credible’ and ‘attractive’ for local and foreign financiers points to the central role of aid as a frame of reference in the education sector. In this particular case, PEDP III was considered important not only for donor decisions on future budget support for education, but also
for prospective funding held out by the ‘Global Partnership for Education’, a multi-lateral financing body which signalled it would allocate about USD 100 million if Tanzania applied; a successful application, however, required the endorsement of educational plans by ‘development partners’. In their view, the first PEDP III versions were ‘not good enough’ to be approved, as a representative of the Canadian Embassy reported:

We said, ‘If you submit this, they are not going to accept it.’ And we were quite confident that it wasn’t good enough. (Interview 30)

Because of the ascribed and perceived centrality of external funding for educational governance, the assessment of policies and programmes against donor standards and agendas has become a common pattern. If need be – as obviously in the case of PEDP III – the government very pragmatically adjusts strategic documents or reports to make them ‘fit’ by including formal elements (e.g. tabular logframes) or the ‘right’ catch-words that match the aid community’s current concepts. Often, the reframing is not even done by ministry officials but by technical assistants familiar with the terminology and formats required. Gratifying funders in order to ensure that ‘money flows’ seems to have become a priority of policy-makers. Canada’s education team leader commented in this regard:

When there’s a cheque on the horizon, again GPE is a good example, it’s 100 million dollars, that caught their attention. (…) And then I do think they sort of figure out, ‘Okay, what do we need to do to satisfy the donors so that we can get the money?’ Yeah, I think that’s a big part. (Interview 30)

The ‘charade’ of ownership in educational policy-making

The significance of donor agendas as a point of orientation, the focus on compliance with aid organisations’ requirements and the intense involvement of external experts in formulating decisive documents infer that educational

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178 The ‘Global Partnership for Education’ (formerly known as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative) is a multilateral financing mechanism providing grants to low-income countries aiming at accelerating the achievement of free, universal primary education. Its budget is made up of contributions from European and North American donor countries which are represented on the governance boards. The GPE secretariat is based in Washington.

179 Referring to the formulation of annual sector reports, an advisor in the Canadian Embassy explained: “Even though we say we read and we provide input, it is not quite just an issue of reading and providing input. Sometimes you are actually writing the sentences” (Interview 31).
policy-making in Tanzania has been externalised. This claim is supported by the first secretary for education in the Swedish Embassy who critically acknowledged:

_We have all these very good policies and programmes and on paper, but it's not owned. It's very much from the outside._ (Interview 40)

Donors have become involved in policy-making to such an extent that it has become difficult to trace where priorities originate. After decades of interference, they find themselves in a situation where they are trying to guess whether there is a genuine government agenda and if so, what it looks like. An advisor working for the Canadian Embassy – herself being a Tanzanian – remarked:

_My biggest challenge over the years has always been: What is the government thinking, when they sit on the other side and we are on this other side? They know their need; they know their priorities as a government. And that's why even right now, as we are talking, they are busy finalising their national budget speech for the year, so they will definitely have to go look backwards and forward. So they are planning! They have issued the Five Year Plans, now they are talking of a long-term plan, those things are on the table (...). The question is still, is that what the recipient government would wish to see happen?_ (Interview 31)

In view of the well-entrenched involvement of donors over more than 20 years, it is hard for many to imagine what educational governance in Tanzania would look like if the government was in a position to decide and operate independently from external interference. The first secretary of education in the Swedish Embassy commented:

_I've stated … at least ten times in the dialogue from last year, ‘What would happen if we suggested that we took time out and just supported the Tanzanian government to come up with a curriculum with a starting point from the Tanzanian context on the African continent. How would it look like? Would the subjects be the same? Would the content be the same?’ And I've raised this question a couple of times. And then the government people say, ‘Well, that's an interesting idea’, but they know that the charade must go on._ (Interview 40)

The ‘charade’ going on in the education sector is outlined by a civil society leader who, similarly to the Swedish official, used the notion of an ‘act’ being
played. The main protagonists are a “weak, distracted government not clear on what it wants” and donors who “start filling the gaps and trying to make things happen, because of the absence of strong clear government leadership” (Interview 70):

> When that is not there in our government, the donors start stepping in. But we have to all pretend that government is in charge, in the ‘driving seat’. So you live this kind of double life of officially everything has government stamps and leadership and so on, but in reality, the people pushing things are the donors. (Interview 70)

The fact that donors collectively and individually start “creating what they want to see in Tanzania” (Interview 40) can be observed in various processes. Two examples, the push for re-entry of girls in schools and ICT in primary education, are briefly sketched.

“*There are different, mixed feelings*”: The issue of pregnant girls in schools

By 2012, the large number of girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancy had come up as a serious matter of concern in Tanzania (IRIN News 2007b). According to media reports citing ministry statistics, 5,157 girls had to leave primary school in 2011 due to pregnancy even though no law explicitly prescribed the expulsion of students for that reason (Assey 2012; Robi 2012).

Donors strongly pushed the government to include a clear policy statement on the re-entry of teenage mothers into a revised Education and Training Policy, emphasising Tanzania’s international commitments regarding gender equality and the right to education for all children. According to aid and government officials alike, the issue became a controversial point of discussion which was repeatedly put ‘in and out’ during the drafting process. An assistant director in the MoEVT Department of Policy and Planning delineated the sensitivity of the topic as follows:

> The DPs are of the idea that the right should be given. But then … education stakeholders are many and they are different from cultural thinking. They think maybe from our culture it is not right if you do this. There are religious groups, they have different ideas, they say, ‘No, once a girl has been pregnant to us, it’s a sin’ and so and so. There are different, mixed feelings. (Interview 50)

Similarly, the director of Primary Education argued:
Me, I think that the entry programme is a good programme if you want to have every child in school. But the question is on how to implement that. Because education is cultural-based. And we have our culture. Our communities in Mtwara and Lindi have their cultures. And so I think we have to merge these two things. We want children to go to school but without compromising the culture of the children, the culture of the community of that particular, specific community. But also I think we should not do something that tomorrow will turn against us – that will speed up the rate of pregnancy, rather than stopping or rather than curbing the problem. And so I think those factors have caused this programme to delay. Because you take the idea to the parliament and find a lot of comments come in. (Interview 49)

In fact, members of parliament seemed to be divided over the issue, with some arguing for alternative training of teenage mothers instead of bringing them back to the formal system. A commission formed to examine the matter reported that many teachers opposed the idea of allowing re-entry of girls with children (Tanzania Daily News 2012).

The government found itself caught between these positions. Perceiving resentment on the part of educational stakeholders, communities and religious leaders, the minister clearly signalled to donors that Tanzania was “not ready for this yet” (Interview 40). However, aid representatives continued to exert pressure, as a high-ranking official in PMO-RALG reported:

They say: ‘You know you are late, you signed the human rights convention, you know, the rights of the child, a child must get this [education].’ But you see: Good, we like it. But don’t we need preparations for that? But some of these want it immediately. That’s where we have a problem. (Interview 60)

Clearly, educational decision-makers are aware of international obligations and of the necessity to deal with school dropouts, but they considered the implementation of a re-entry policy unfeasible, expecting little acceptance on the part of their constituency. According to ministry officials, the ongoing disagreement on the subject led to the ‘unsmooth running’ of donor–government meetings due to ‘some sort of resistance’ among MoEVT representatives. During this research, the issue remained unresolved, and the Education and Training Policy continued to be revised. Commenting on the state of affairs, the PMO-RALG leader stated:
Waiting for computers: USAID’s ‘Tanzania 21st Century Basic Education Programme’

Another process which resulted in deadlock was USAID’s ‘Tanzania 21st Century Basic Education Programme’, commonly known as ‘TZ21’. Running from 2011 to 2015 with an overall budget of USD 94 million, the project’s stated goal was to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) into primary education in order to enhance children’s learning achievements (Embassy of the United States Dar es Salaam 2012). Similar to an equivalent project set up in Kenya, schools in two pilot areas – Mtwara and Zanzibar – are to be equipped with computers, learning and management software, with teachers and administrators getting trained in how to use the new technology.180 Thereby, the project was closely aligned to USAID’s new global education strategy which explicitly encouraged the use of ICT for achieving the goal of “improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015” (USAID 2009: 21).

When we met the USAID education team leader in his office on the US Embassy compound in May 2012, he was excited about the recent launch of the initiative on Zanzibar and the upcoming inauguration in the Mtwara region, stating that all partners were ‘jazzed up’ about the ‘fantastic opportunity’ to try out the ‘totally experimental’ approach: “There’s the feeling ‘let’s do it, let’s get started!’” (Interview 42).

The partners he referred to comprised a whole range of stakeholders: Creative Associates International, a US-based development firm which was contracted as implementing agent; Microsoft, Cisco and Intel, as well as two Tanzanian companies – UhuruOne and Zantel – which had been selected as technology supply companies; regional government authorities; and the national education ministries of Zanzibar and Tanzania Mainland.181 With the

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180 Initiated in 2009, the “Accelerating 21st Century Education” project in Kenya focused on providing PCs for classrooms, wireless internet connectivity, digital content, and ICT skills training for teachers (Microsoft News Center 2009; Kenya Ministry of Education 2012). In Tanzania, USAID chose Mtwara region due to its ‘growing population, gas and oil’, and Zanzibar due to the new US focus on investing in ‘Islamic communities’ as a strategy to prevent terrorism (Interview 42). According to the USAID education team leader, local officials from both places had asked USAID “to help introduce computer literacy”, expressing concern “that the digital divide was widening between developed and developing countries and they didn’t want to be left behind” (email correspondence 25 July 2015).

181 Upon reading the first version of this text, the USAID team leader emphasised that representatives from all five technology companies, as well as from the national and the regional governments of Mtwara and Zanzibar, were involved in the competitive selection process of the implementing
latter, he conceded, USAID had ‘a rough time’ during the design stage of TZ21 insofar as the MoEVT was ‘not very enthusiastic’ about the idea, and objected to the project approach in favour of budget support. Undeterred by the reluctance at the national level, USAID directly approached local authorities in the areas where the project should be carried out, and encountered ‘very cooperative’ counterparts. Eventually, when the opening of the project in Zanzibar went through the news, the MoEVT signalled interest in becoming involved; according to the USAID education team leader, the minister was suddenly thrilled by the initiative which he allegedly deemed ‘incredible’ (Interview 42).

Speaking to national government officials ten months later, we found little of that enthusiasm in the ministry.182 Asked how the project was proceeding, the primary education director responded:

Well, the computers are still in Dar es Salaam. They have not been sent to Mtwara. I saw the computers for the first time when the vice-president went to inaugurate. But at the moment they are only in two schools – in Kambarage Primary School there in Mtwara, and the other one is at Naliendele, another school. There I found about two, three computers or laptops. And the rest of the computers have not been sent to Mtwara.

Just last week I was talking to one of their representatives here. So I said, ‘Do you think it’s important for our … computer personnel in here, to go and see the specs’ – the computer specifications. Because the project is three years – sooner or later, it’s going to come to an end. So what will happen if our people, our own people here, do not know the computers – specs of the computer, when they were made, where they were made and all these kinds of things? (Interview 49)

While the director refrained from articulating blunt criticism, his dissatisfaction with the course of the cooperation was implied in various narratives. Aside from the annoyance about the deadlock in computer installation, a salient point seemed to be the fact that the MoEVT was only marginally (if at all) involved by its project ‘partners’, for example, in identifying or procuring the technical equipment which was meant to be supplied to schools. This was confirmed by a Tanzanian education specialist who had temporarily been partner, Creative Associates “from the very beginning of the design of the activity” (email communication 6 April 2015).

182 We did not speak to officials in the regional governments of Mtwara and Zanzibar whose perspective on the project might be a different one.
contracted as an advisor for TZ21. Herself being highly critical about the way
the project was carried out, she stated:

For ownership purposes, you would need also to bring into the process the
government, the technical people, so that they know when we procure an
equipment, let’s say for the primary education, it should be of this kind
because it cannot be an equipment that can be sent to secondary or colleges,
you know, because of young children. Let that be documented and let that
be a process that everybody understands. So there are a lot of implications
of ICT implementation at the school level (...). But when you discuss with
other people in the project, they don’t see that. (Interview 32)

An implication which had obviously not been considered and thoroughly
discussed with national authorities concerned the incorporation of localised
‘e-content’ into the curriculum. While the delivery of education and the
management of schools in Tanzania fall under the responsibility of local
governments, the development of syllabi and learning materials is centrally
done by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), a parastatal organisation
under the MoEVT. Already prior to the release of the government’s ICT policy
for basic education in 2007, TIE had designed an ICT curriculum (‘Teknolojia
ya Habari na Mawasiliano’ or TEHAMA in short) to be applied in pre-primary
and primary schools with adequate infrastructure (Ministry of Education and
Vocational Training 2007). Thus USAID’s aim to introduce externally designed
ICT modules on TZ21 project sites seemed highly problematic to the director
of Primary Education:

You cannot have a module which is not compatible to other modules
that are applied in other regions in Tanzania, or a module that is not
compatible with the curriculum that is being implemented. Otherwise you
have to dismantle everything. And who is ready to do that? Nobody is
ready for that; we are not ready for that yet. We may wish to review, revise
our curriculum, but not because there is this one thing in Mtwara going
on. It might be very difficult. (Interview 49)

The potential deviation of curricula was not the only unresolved issue which
caused irritation among MoEVT officials. Frictions also emerged with regard to
suggested modifications of the ministry’s Education Management Information
System (EMIS). In order to strengthen school administration, TZ21 consultants,
 together with technology suppliers, had developed software for capturing
real-time data on the attendance of teachers and students; in their view, the
information collected through this tool could also be used constructively for
decision-making and planning if aggregated at the national level. Unluckily, the programme offered was not compatible with the system UNESCO had installed in MoEVT, amongst others, since its scope was restricted. Yet, USAID and other donors pushed the ministry to adopt their software solution and adjust the one currently in use. A senior director in the M&E unit who participated in the ensuing debate reported:

We told them: ‘Look, here you have only collected the information for lower primary, from standard one to standard four. But here in the ministry we have a system which collects information from pre-primary to higher education institutions (…). Why can’t you mainstream it to the ministry data base rather than the ministry mainstreams yours which covers only standard one to standard four level?’ So there was some discussion. (Interview 50)

The tensions arising on issues such as EMIS, ICT modules and procurement show a common pattern: the root cause of conflict can be found in a pervasive disregard of local institutions. Bypassing national decision-making entities, USAID drove forward a project in line with its own agenda but detached from the field it encountered. Against this background, the difficulties and frictions which emerged in the course of the operation were predictable.

TZ21 seems to be symptomatic for the particularity of ‘ICT in education’ as a policy subject in the Tanzanian context and its lack of local grounding. In fact, all-round table conferences and workshops held in previous years to explore the opportunities of ICT in education had been facilitated with donor support (see Nielinger 2006; Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2007). A Tanzanian education specialist tentatively indicated that the ICT policy for basic education had primarily been created to please foreign funders, but apart from existing on paper, lacked political concern and feasibility. She supported her claim by stating:

The urgency of preparing that policy, you know, I remember it was not very systematically done because otherwise – by then I was in the World Bank – I would have heard about the process. Usually when it is time to prepare policy, you will know even if you are a donor that something is going on. I didn’t hear about that until when something was there (…). Since that time up to now, that policy has not been developed for operationalization, in terms of operational guidelines at the school level, at the regional level or being budgeted for nothing. So as a donor, how will you prepare such a project? I mean the risks should have been seen by then. (Interview 32)
At the time of writing, the project was still on-going. Aside from photo galleries with children in front of computers and anecdotes of ‘success stories’ on the project website (e.g. about communities mounting iron door gates in schools “to ensure the safety of the ICT equipment that will be installed” USAID & Creative Associates International 2014), no information on what TZ21 has actually achieved until now could be obtained (USAID & Creative Associates International 2014).183

Signs of resistance

Among policy-makers and senior officials in the MoEVT, there seems to be mounting resentment about being exposed to aid activities that consume staff time and energy, yet constantly result in failure. While Tanzanian government members are usually known for their outwardly calm countenance, their frustration has reached a level where it occasionally erupts, as the first secretary of education in the Swedish Embassy reported:

In our monitoring and evaluation technical working group last week, there was an outburst almost when the government officials said, ‘We are so tired of all your projects and there’s no sustainability, you, the development partners should really take responsibility’ and so on. And then we said, ‘Well, ok, we’ve tried to coordinate ourselves, but you could also say no, if you don’t want the money. We come with all those proposals, but you should make sure that you say no if you don’t want them.’ (Interview 40)

The claim that government counterparts did not make clear statements and did not direct donors in education was repeatedly brought up by interviewees in country offices and embassies. A Tanzanian education specialist who had worked for both the government and donors critically stated:

At the end of the day, it is the government receiving aid that has to be organized, and helping to guide anybody coming in. If the government is not going to do that, then you have all these scattered things. (Interview 32)

In the experience of aid officials, most of the issues debated in policy discussions are brought up by themselves. Referring to the technical working groups

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183 The external impact evaluation which was to assess the success of TZ21 was eventually “discontinued as the portfolio was realigned to focus more on reading to meet [USAID’s] Education Strategy and respond to the BRN’s [Big Results Now initiative’s] focus on the 3Rs” (email communication with USAID official 28 July 2015).
and committee meetings which are formally chaired by the government, the Canadian team leader for education commented:

>To be honest I find a lot of the meetings are donor-driven. I’m not sure if it’s because we are more impatient than they are. I mean it was often – this was interesting about being the chair [of the Development Partners Group], because it meant I would meet with their secretariat weekly (…), and we would sit down and say, ‘Okay where are things at?’ And they’d say, ‘Well, we’re going to do this’. They have a work plan, and they’d say, ‘We’ll do this that, this, that, this, that’. We’d say, ‘Okay, what about this, this, this, this?’ – ‘Alright’, and they’d start filling in all these other boxes they had apparently not thought about or not considered, it just seems like there was too much going on. So, I mean, I wonder if we said nothing, what would happen? Would nothing happen? I don’t think so. I think they would eventually just pick up the slack and do something. But I think they’ve become very accustomed to us sort of setting the agenda, saying ‘well, maybe we should do this then, this then and this then’ and they say, ‘Well, yeah, okay’. (Interview 30)

As the accounts above indicate, ministry officials seem to have adopted a conduct of compliance towards the aid community. Various circumstances lend themselves as explanations for the failing leadership. One reason preferably stated by donor representatives is the lack of capacity on the part of MoEVT, which – in their view – results in an ad-hoc way of working, devoid of prioritisation and forward planning.\(^{184}\) In this reading, the failing leadership derives from deficient administrative strength.\(^{185}\)

The ministry’s lack of resolve can also be interpreted as a coping strategy in a relationship of dependence: based on accumulated experiences, many high-

\(^{184}\) The Canadian education team leader, for instance, stated: “When they focus to do something, they can do it. But they can only do one thing at a time. (…) And so, once your issue comes up, it’s great because you get immediate action and it’s, you know, pretty, pretty strong commitment and I mean there are very dedicated people who work long hours. So it’s not that they’re lazy or anything like that, but they do seem to be very sequential” (Interview 30).

Similarly, a Tanzanian education specialist remarked: “Things are done ad hoc, you know? Oh, the priorities today, oh, the minister wants this, oh this is that, oh … There’s no concentration on the priorities that were set” (Interview 32).

\(^{185}\) That donors may exacerbate the ministry’s human resource situation by poaching the most qualified and skilled education specialists was brought up by a Canadian official who commented: “I sometimes am a bit concerned; it’s quite difficult to get good experts, I think. We’ve been lucky, I’ve been lucky. I have colleagues on different programmes who really struggled to get good experts. And I also worry, of course, if all the donors are hiring the best experts, who’s actually running the system? Because I don’t think - unfortunately, we try not to do this, but I think it’s a reality that if you’re really good at something, you’re more likely to go on a job with the Canadians than with the government” (Interview 30).
ranking officials and policy-makers seem to have internalised the fact that overt objection against the aid community leads to nowhere and may eventually result in the withdrawal of money. As securing funding has precedence, concurring with donors opens up more room for tactical manoeuvring than taking an unequivocal stand. That this kind of strategy might be adopted is implied by a Canadian official who, when asked about the government’s receptiveness to donor advice in policy meetings, responded:

*Most of the time they are like, ‘Yes, good idea, great, we will do something about that, we will think about that, we will include that in our next plan’ – most of the time they receive it fairly positively. Whether things change, that is another story.* (Interview 30)

As the last part of the quote implies, agreement with donor suggestions is not necessarily followed by action. In fact, various reports from interviewees suggest that the ministry deliberately uses inaction and delay as a tool of resistance. The persistent postponing of a decision about how to deal with pregnant girls in schools and the resulting deadlock of policy revision can be seen as a case in point in this regard.

Jamming processes may help to thwart plans pushed from outside, but it does not really help to generate a local agenda, let alone execute it. Some observers claim that after years of external domination there is no local agenda left.

**Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the state of education governance in Tanzania could be sketched as follows: the need for foreign financing has legitimised an intense involvement of external actors in the policy space in which aid money has become the central preoccupation. The prevailing sentiment of being at the mercy of donors has paralysed leadership and administration which fails to set or refrains from articulating an agenda of its own. The pervasive entrenchment of donor interference in policy issues has blurred distinguishing what comes from within and what from outside. A civil society leader engaged in the education sector commented:

*It’s almost like you don’t know now, the players, you don’t know what is the truth and what is not the truth because we are all doing this act.*

(Interview 70)

The government is formally ascribed the starring role in this ‘act’, but the scene is set by aid providers whose experts have become the pivotal protagonists of
the play. Their role in driving forth policy and decision-making processes has become so central that an advisor of Tanzanian origin working for Canada critically remarked:

You ask yourself: When will this end? If we did leave this support, does that mean education in Tanzania would collapse? We don’t have an answer, because we have always been there. (Interview 31)

South Africa education: Exploiting outside expertise to create a local vision

Sectoral context

Education is one the most central topics of post-apartheid politics in South Africa. In its first White Paper on Education and Training, the new democratic government stated its conviction that education is an essential driver of transformation:

Appropriate education and training can empower people to participate effectively in all the processes of democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression, and community life, and can help citizens to build a nation free of race, gender and every other form of discrimination. (Department of Education 1995)

The persistent prominence of education on the political agenda after 20 years of democracy arises from the massive challenges the country still faces in terms of building a society in which citizens are provided equal opportunities to attain well-being and prosperity. The development of South Africa’s education system and its deficiencies cannot be understood without knowing about the role and structures of education in the apartheid era. Thus, before looking at current challenges, we sketch the educational politics of the apartheid regime whose devastating effects are still felt today.

Black South Africans had experienced educational marginalisation already during colonial times. The Bantu Education Act passed by the apartheid government in 1953 cemented the establishment of a segregated and suppressive education system. The racial law brought an end to the relative autonomy of mission schools attended by more than two-thirds of black South Africans at that time, centralising control over education in the Department of Native Affairs which imposed a curriculum designed to ‘prepare’ the African population for serving the white minority as labourers and workers (Fiske &
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Ladd 2005). The then Minister of Native Affairs HF Verwoerd legitimised the Act before the South African parliament by stating:

*There is no space for him [the “Bantu”] in the European Community above certain forms of labour (…) Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent for an education which has no specific aim but it is also dishonest to continue it.* (Verwoerd cited in Christie & Collins 1984: 173)

In the course of the apartheid rule, separate schools for each of South Africa’s ‘ethnic groups’ were established, creating an educational hierarchy with ‘whites’ at the top, followed by ‘Indians’, ‘coloureds’ and ‘blacks’ at the bottom.186 Governed by different authorities, the parallel systems differed immensely in terms of syllabi and ideological thrust, facilities and funding. By 1960, the per capita expenditure on education for whites (ZAR 144.57) was more than ten times higher than for blacks (ZAR 12.46) (Christie & Collins 1984). White students enjoyed conducive learning environments, while the remaining majority was confronted with overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated school buildings, a lack of text books and learning materials, and inadequate instruction. According to figures from 1987, 87% of teachers in black schools were underqualified (i.e. had achieved an educational level of less than Standard 10 and no Matric Certificate). The teacher-to-pupil ratio averaged 1:41, whereas in white schools it was about 1:16 (File et al. 1989).

The unequal conditions led to high discrepancies in terms of educational attainment, as reflected by data of the 1996 census:187 taking persons aged 20 and older into account, two-thirds of the white population had achieved education at the level of Grade 12 (39.3%) or higher (26.8%). Almost all remaining had at least some secondary education; the percentage of people who had no schooling was marginal (1.1%). In contrast, among black Africans only one out of six had reached Grade 12 (12%) or higher, with the percentage in higher education being minimal (3.6%). Almost one out of four black Africans (24%) had received no formal schooling at all (Statistics South

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186 The use of race as a form of classification in South Africa is still widespread in both official statistics and academic literature. As Spaull (2012: 2) states, “this serves a functional (rather than normative) purpose and any other attempt to refer to these population groups would be cumbersome, impractical or inaccurate”.

187 The 1996 census was the first statistical exercise which provided accurate demographic and socio-economic data to describe South Africa’s situation after apartheid. The statistical system under the apartheid regime was deeply distorted insolar as it was racially fragmented and disjointed (National Statistics System N/A).
Africa 2012: 34). While coloured people fared only slightly better, Indian/Asian people were markedly better off regarding educational levels. Yet, all of them were structurally discriminated in the system imposed by the apartheid regime. The highly unequal educational opportunities translated into huge discrepancies in labour market status and income: as of 1996, only 3% of white people aged 15–65 were unemployed, as opposed to 23.4% of black Africans (Statistics South Africa 2004: 51). Of those black Africans who were part of the formal employment system, one third (33.3%) earned only R 500 or less per month, whereas only 5% of white employees had such a low salary (Statistics South Africa 2004).

The statistics above reflect the deep impact of apartheid rule on education in South Africa that over four decades “reinforced the inequalities of a divided society” (Msila 2007: 147). Twenty years after the end of the ‘rogue regime’, its legacies are not yet overcome. Although the Constitution of 1996 made education a basic right for every South African (Republic of South Africa 1996, section 29), many still face tremendous difficulties in fully utilising this right (Nevondwe & Odeku 2013), and educational opportunities continue to be racially skewed (Yamauchi 2005). Although significant progress has been made in terms of providing access – with a gross enrolment rate of 99% at the primary level – the quality of education remains at an alarmingly low level (Department of Basic Education 2014b: 7). In comparative international studies on literacy or numeracy (e.g. SACMEQ III or TIMMS 2011), South African pupils lag behind those in poorer African countries such as Ghana or Tanzania (Moloi & Chetty 2010; Human Sciences Research Council 2011).188 This is even more concerning in light of the enormous differentials with respect to learning outcomes between historically ‘white’ schools (attended by a small minority of students from middle and upper class backgrounds) and former ‘black’ schools in township areas (attended by the majority of African children).189 The persistent inequality is documented by various assessments; the National School Effectiveness Study (2007/08/09), for instance, found that Grade 3 pupils from former white schools scored higher on the same test than Grade 5 pupils at former black schools, indicating large discrepancies in learning achievements visible already by the age of eight (Taylor et al. 2012).

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188 For an overview of empirical assessments on the quality of education in South Africa, see Spaull (2013).

189 As Yamauchi (2011) points out, high-quality schools situated in urban, well-off areas (with predominantly white residents) are neither geographically nor financially accessible for many African children. Hence, although racial segregation was abolished 20 years ago, the composition of students is still skewed along racial lines. While historically ‘white’ and ‘Indian’ schools have become more diverse, former ‘black’ schools remain racially homogeneous.
The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

The appalling gap regarding learner performance, resources and teacher qualifications points to the “dualistic nature” (Spaull 2012) of South Africa’s school system which seems to consist of two parallel subsystems:

One which is functional, wealthy and able to educate students; with the other being poor, dysfunctional, and unable to equip students with the necessary numeracy and literacy skills they should be acquiring. (Spaull 2012: 14)

Given this situation, the lag of black youth in terms of educational attainment is little surprising. According to Moloi et al. (2014: 471), “almost 58.5% of whites and around 51% of Indians enter higher education. The rate for coloureds is 14.3%, while that for blacks is even lower at 12%”. Many universities in South Africa are internationally recognised as “world-class academic institutions, at the cutting edge of research in certain spheres” (Moloi et al. 2014: 470). For the majority of learners, however, they are out of reach.

All in all, it appears that – despite massive resource shifts and several interventions put in place by the state – the South African school system in its current form contributes little to support upward mobility of the poor in the labour market (Van der Berg 2007). The economy, in turn, is severely affected by a shortage of skilled workers which hampers productivity and “reduces the country’s capacity to develop a knowledge society” (Rasool & Botha 2011: 9). Providing equitable opportunities of education and training for all citizens in order to foster individual prosperity and economic growth has been on top of the political agenda since South Africa turned into a democracy; yet, it remains one of the greatest challenges for that country.

Governance structures

Since 1994, South Africa’s institutional landscape in the field of education has been in a state of flux, with multiple bodies and structures being replaced, revised or recreated in the course of governance and policy reforms. Since 2014, the major policy-making bodies at the national level have been the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET); both were formed in 2009 when the former Department of Education was split into these two separate ministries. The DBE deals with primary and secondary education, early childhood development and adult literacy programmes; it provides national policy and legislative frameworks to give direction to the provinces which have their own education departments responsible for financing and managing schools in line with their needs. DHET is in charge of all post-school education and training components provided at
universities, colleges and adult education institutions. It took over the Skills Development Branch from the Department of Labour, which shifted the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) concerned with workplace-related occupational training to DHET. An important role-player in this area is the National Skills Authority which liaises with SETAs and advises the minister of higher education on skills development matters.

**Donor presence in the education sector**

Similar to other sectors but certainly more pronounced, the nature and scope of aid for education and training in South Africa has shifted over time. One can roughly distinguish three different phases: the transitional era up to 1994, the period of system building until the early 2000s, and the phase of retreat lasting to the present. During the apartheid era, various countries such as Denmark, the United States and Australia supported non-state actors, which acted in opposition to the regime, by providing education grants and overseas scholarships, training programmes and study tours for blacks and anti-apartheid activists (King 1999). As will be shown below, this informal aid had a huge impact insofar as it put key actors of the democratic movements in touch with education and training systems in Europe and elsewhere which greatly impregnated their thinking. A witness of that time who participated in the exchange commented:

> Many people had studied in Britain and in America; they themselves had gone that route to study. So they came back believing in those systems because those systems had been the ones that had given them the step up. (Interview 20)

With the turn to democracy, the government and its administration – now staffed with many of those who had received support as civil society and union protagonists – became the main recipients of financial and technical assistance. Between 1994–1999, a whole range of bi- and multilateral donors addressed the education sector, amongst others Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Japan, Canada and the United States (Ngeleza et al. 2000). The majority of their funding was spent on human resource development (e.g. teacher training), followed by school building, the development of new institutions (notably the South African Qualifications Authority), mathematics, science and technology programmes and curriculum development (Ngeleza et al. 2000). Hence, aid was used in almost all areas in order to build a new education and training system.
During what we demarcate as the third phase starting in the mid-2000s, both the scope of aid and the number of donors significantly diminished. After a decade in which new policies, institutions and structures had been put in place, many foreign supporters pulled back from the education sector or phased out ODA to South Africa in general. While the Department of Higher Education and Training continues to cooperate with a range of partners, the only donor from which the Department of Basic Education received additional funds during the fiscal years 2010–2013 was the European Union (Department of Basic Education 2011, 2012, 2013). The government went over to using the remaining aid resources for niche areas (e.g. inclusive education) or innovative pilot projects which would otherwise be difficult to undertake, given the pressure of national and provincial education budgets (Fölscher et al. 2010).

Starting from scratch: The creation of a post-apartheid education vision

Design of a policy to radically overhaul the South African education system had already started prior to the official end of apartheid. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, key players of the anti-apartheid movement began to liaise with counterparts and like-minded organisations abroad in order to develop visions for education in a new democratic South Africa. Funded by an NGO called Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA) and by the Swedish Sida, the National Union of Metalworkers (Numsa) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) carried out research projects which included travels to both developing and industrialised countries. The exchange with colleagues in Australia, in particular, heavily influenced the thinking of South African union leaders (Carton & King 2004; Badroodien & McGrath 2005).

A leading protagonist involved summarised the phase of policy exploration as follows:

_We had ideas of what we wanted and how we wanted to do it – but we were keen to learn other ways, to hear ideas._ (Interview 20)

A unified attempt to conceptualise a future education and training system was undertaken in 1993 through the National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) which for the first time brought actors from the government in power and its opponents to one table. Faced with dysfunctional and racially divided schools, masses of illiterate and insufficiently trained people, and a fragmented governance system, including 19 disconnected departments of education, the

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190 Details on the Numsa Vocational Training Project and the COSATU Participatory Research Project which had a great influence on the thinking of lead unionists are provided by Carton and King (2004) and Badroodien and McGrath (2005).
list of issues to be addressed was virtually endless. The challenges confronted with ranged from overcoming materially and symbolically the racial inequalities of the apartheid system to establishing a legitimate governance for all educational institutions, and from reducing spending on personnel to designing new curricula, assessment and accrediting procedures. Also, the national system of examinations and their results had to be reorganised and the teachers’ capacity to participate and get engaged in these efforts developed (Christie 2006: 376).

The National Training Board, at that time an advisory body to the ‘Minister of Manpower’, formed a National Task Team comprising eight committees including representatives from the state, trade unions, employers, providers of education and training, the ANC Education Department, and the democratic alliance movement. Each of the eight working groups was commissioned to investigate a certain topic with a view to South Africa’s situation, ranging from integrated career paths and certificates to legislation and financing.\(^1\) Task group 7 was charged with compiling an international overview on ‘systems building’, drawing on experiences from industrialised countries, emerging markets and developing states (Heitmann 2010).\(^2\) The research of this working group was supported by various donors, most notably Germany, which sponsored study tours to their own but also to other countries. Members of the task group thus travelled extensively to distil lessons and best practices from successful vocational education and training systems around the world. Their findings strongly shaped the principles and ideas adopted in the Discussion Document on a National Training Strategy Initiative which came out of the NTSI process in 1994 (National Training Board 1994). A key person who was part of the National Task Team described the influence of the international comparative work on the preliminary policy document as follows:

It’s very hard to distinguish between what came from the other countries and what was the product of debate here. A lot of people were reflecting on the experience here and drawing bits and pieces, like: We like this Scandinavian work on women’s training. So we had extensive sections from Scandinavia, where we said, look, we’ve got to train women to do traditionally male work and things like that. We knew that – but to see it in practice was very encouraging, and we thought now we can do this.

And there were other things from other countries, I mean, we’ve known some stuff from some countries in Africa even who had come from a similar

\(^1\) For a detailed list of the eight task groups established, see Heitmann (2010: 104–105).
\(^2\) The countries included in the analysis were Australia, Brazil, Germany, England, Malaysia, Singapore, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.
context to us. So that amalgam pot that had been created was captured into a policy document which included a chapter on international experience and was then used as a (...) first training document that had been agreed between the old apartheid officials and the new ones coming from the trade union movement. (Interview 20)

The centrepiece of the proposed model was a single National Qualification Framework which would fully integrate general education and vocational training in a system of life-long learning. Key to the concept was the idea that skills, knowledge and abilities would be measured against a general qualification scale which is so to speak ‘blind’ as to where those have been acquired – whether in a full-time or part-time school, at the workplace, by distance education, at college or university, or a combination of different sites. Most notably, it would also take into account learning that took place outside formal institutions and thereby “give value to the kind of learning people have already achieved in their lives” (Human Sciences Research Council 1995: 3, as reprinted in South African Qualifications Authority 2012). People would receive transferable credits for their competencies which would allow them to move across different fields and to progress within education, training and career paths. The features of the construct thus signalled a transformative endeavour which becomes apparent if one considers the prevailing conditions at the end of the apartheid era: the majority of the population had received few years of schooling and lacked formal qualifications which denied them access to and promotion in the labour market. The new model aimed at redressing the discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities by removing the “obsession with institutional learning as the measure of a person’s worth” (Human Sciences Research Council 1995: 12, as reprinted in South African Qualifications Authority 2012). Instead, learning outcomes were to be the decisive denominator for qualification in a system which gives equal value to education and training.

Adopting the principles of outcomes-based learning, integration and progression, the NQF proposal was heavily influenced by education and training systems applied in other countries. In some Anglo-Saxon states, the concept of National Qualification Frameworks had evolved during the late 1980s. South Africa strongly followed the New Zealand model in that it envisaged a comprehensive framework for all sectors and a unified quality assurance system. Whereas the New Zealand model was favoured by business representatives, union members leaned on Australia’s competency-based education approach which allowed for incremental learning (Keevy 2013); the latter was seen as a crucial aspect in the South African context, as an official who was member of the task team explained:
Within the trade union movement we had started (...) a policy debate and visited Australia in 1990 and they were talking policy ideas that I was extensively influenced by. I still think they were great, whether they were implementable in the form we thought, that’s another story. But those ideas which had to do with a national qualification framework and the ideas that workers could come in at a low level and could progress. Now the German system is more: you get a good schooling and then you train. In South Africa, you have many, many people who have not had a good schooling, so we were very keen to look at this progression idea that you might start as a semi-skilled worker [and] learn skills incrementally. (Interview 20)

Inspired by Australia’s competency-centred approach, unionists advocated an outcomes-based system which would allow flexible career paths, offer lifelong learning opportunities and link education and skills ladders. Integrating general education and vocational training was deemed crucial to eliminate the hierarchy between the two. Labour representatives, sympathising with the German dual system, conveyed the view that in a new democratic South Africa vocational training “should stand alongside the academic tradition with its head held high” (Interview 20).

Although the blueprint NQF presented in the Discussion Document thus entailed elements which had been adopted from outside, it was widely conceived as a product of South African origin and debate. In part, this was a result of the National Task Teams’ resolved adaptation of the findings from the international experiences into local policies. The team explicitly criticised the ‘importation’ of external models without adaptation to the local context as ‘highly undesirable’, emphasising that a future education system must “be indigenous to the needs of South Africa to suit our needs, cultures and values” (National Training Board 1994: 7 as cited in Carton & King 2004: 24). Nonetheless, it was seen as helpful to take cognisance of others’ experiences. An actor involved commented on the extent of external influence as follows:

We were quite heavily influenced – but we were influenced because it served our purpose, it met a need for us (...). And whilst I don’t see external influence in the sense of individuals come into play, I see those ideas straining a little against each other, trying to find the best of combination. (Interview 20)

193 Referring to key role players, Carton and King (2004) describe in detail how the strong linkages between Australian and South African metal unionists evolved and how this exchange subsequently influenced the unions’ positioning in the policy debate.
It is to be stressed here that external policy ideas and concepts were induced by committee members connecting with specialists abroad, rather than imparted by consultants from outside. Although foreign governments certainly had an interest in offering and promoting their own educational models to the emerging decision-makers of the new South Africa, their role was restricted to facilitating the process of policy exploration. International study tours and workshops created a space for knowledge sharing and selective borrowing that was not confined to the donors' own territories or expert communities but determined by local stakeholders (Carton & King 2004: 20). Hence, the policy document which came out of the National Training Strategy Initiative was seen as the outcome of a participatory, locally directed process, expressing a joint vision of post-apartheid education and training (Carton & King 2004).

Shortly after the first democratic elections in 1994, the newly formed Government of National Unity presented its *White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System* to the public which broadly incorporated the principles of the Discussion Document (Department of Education 1995). In October 1995, the parliament passed the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58 of 1995) which formally introduced an integrative NQF approach and created the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as a parastatal body responsible for developing and implementing the NQF (Republic of South Africa 1995).

The Act thus laid the legal foundation for the transformation of the education system, institutions and structures such as quality assurance bodies, although new outcomes-based curricula and funding frameworks were still to be designed and set up. Coping with the scale of the radical reform would have been difficult enough for any administration, even in firmly established democracies. In South Africa, the situation was exacerbated by the fact that the authorities faced with this challenge were themselves in a state of flux, both in terms of structures and personnel. People from the democratic movement who entered bureaucratic bodies were highly committed to bring about change, but "did not, by definition, bring years of experience to the work of government administration" (Bird 2001: 266). They found themselves in a vibrant, but still fragile working environment and were confronted with a massive task which required both governance and specialist knowledge. The decision to approach donors for support was thus not only based on financial demand, but also on the need for external expertise, as a high-ranking official in the Department of Labour pointed out:

_In order to change the whole system, we had to come up with a new legislation, new systems, processes, procedures and we wanted to deliver_
on a mass scale, we wanted to come up with a funding framework. And all those things could not have been achieved [without external support] because we didn’t have local expertise. (Interview 22)

Bringing aid into line with the local agenda: The case of higher education

The two line departments in charge of education and training, the Department of Education and the Department of Labour thus entered into negotiations with the aid community which seemed eager to provide assistance. In the early years of democracy, “requests for educational collaboration were arriving virtually on a daily basis from prospective partners as large as the Russian Federation and as small as Croatia” (King 1999: 260–261). A high-ranking official who then worked for DoE described the dynamism of donor meetings during that time:

I must say that in the beginning it was like, it was a wonderful terrain to work in. You had 23, 24 partner countries all in one room and what we would do is, we would give them our priorities for the three years – this is what, where do you see yourself fitting in? Okay? America said: ‘We want to do curriculum development’. Japan: ‘Oh no, we will give support for schools (…)’. Germany: ‘No, we have got skills, you know, yes, we can work with the Department of Labour and give a little support here to science education’, for example. (…) So donor coordination meetings were critical – firstly, to share with them our plans, to get buy-in, to say ‘look, this is where we get to go’ or ‘this is where we are going to collaborate with another donor’. (Interview 21)

Naturally, not all went well in the beginning. In contrast to non-state actors, government authorities in the education and labour sectors had absolutely no experience in dealing with aid; hence, “the complex universe of development cooperation was an unknown quantity” for them (King 1999: 261). Aside from the pressure of meeting multiple donor requirements and procedures which, as one official stated, were a ‘nightmare’ during the first years, it proved difficult to get external assistance under control: the line departments soon realised that aid providers also used other entry-points to offer their services, particularly the provincial governments which were responsible for delivering reforms at the classroom level. Given that these implementing authorities did not sit around the table in national negotiations, aid projects often ran parallel and uncoordinated; in the worst case, high expectations were belied, as an official remarked:
Then you get a call later [from a provincial official] saying, ‘but you know, Mr So and So came to our province, he promised us X, Y, and Z, I’ve never seen him again’. So we had to coordinate this thing much more effectively. And only after years did we manage to get the coordination. (Interview 21)

It also became apparent that donors, although being supportive of South Africa’s transformative agenda, had their own interests and priorities. This was evident in that they clearly focused their support on areas which were historically relevant to them; a government official commented:

Obviously, the donors also had their own intelligence gathering – they knew exactly where and who they want to support, where their missionaries were before, and now they were closely related to those geographic areas and therefore they wanted to support them. (Interview 21)

For South African negotiators, it often turned out challenging to shift support to geographic and subject areas identified as being in particular need of technical assistance or funding. A case in point in which a mismatch of priorities became manifest was the struggle for aid to the higher education sector. From the government’s point of view, higher education was a key issue to be addressed in order to foster national development and social change in post-apartheid South Africa. The first White Paper on Education and Training, recognising “the massive influence which higher education experts on the cultural, social, scientific, technological and professional formation of the country’s leadership” (Department of Education 1995), emphasised the need to tackle the various challenges of the system, including fragmented structures, chronic financial pressure and absorption difficulties. Transforming the higher education landscape and advancing access to universities and tertiary learning institutions for students from historically disadvantaged communities were thus central concerns of decision-makers in the then Department of Education, as an interviewee involved pointed out:

Our view even at that stage when we were still a single department was that the heart of the system was higher education, was universities. If you get that wrong, you can’t train – you can’t train your intellectuals, you can’t train your teachers, you can’t train anyone. (Interview 21)

Yet, the focus on higher education was not in line with the international agenda of that time. The government’s request for support targeting higher education reform engendered little response from the aid community. Only
a few development partners, notably Finland and Norway, promptly catered to the priorities articulated by the Department of Education by setting up programmes which addressed higher education issues.\textsuperscript{194} The majority of donors preferred to give resources for basic learning needs and schooling – hence for matters which had been strongly pushed by the international community since the Jomtien World Conference (1990) and the related Education for All movement during the 1990s (World Conference on Education for All 1990). Officials negotiating with donor representatives on behalf of DoE had to make strenuous efforts to attract assistance for higher education priorities from their international counterparts:

\begin{quote}
We kept on having to make overtures and to give more bids for higher education because they just wouldn’t bid (...). A few scholarships were thrown in. But that wasn’t what we wanted. We wanted budgetary support to reconfigure, restructure our higher education system. And I think that’s what we managed to do and we got support. (Interview 21)
\end{quote}

The persistence of South African officials in bargaining aid evidently bore fruit. According to an evaluation of development cooperation during 1994–1999, 46\% of official development assistance to the education sector was channelled to higher education (Ngeleza et al. 2000). The review team found that overall objectives of ODA were well aligned to those of the national and provincial departments of education, and that the distribution of aid “closely mirrored the prioritisation of the South African government” (Ngeleza et al. 2000: 14). The success of department officials in bringing aid into line with the South African agenda mainly rested on two structural advantages. First, despite financial needs, the education sector was not substantially dependent on donor money. Second, since many international players competed to be part of South Africa’s educational transformation, government negotiators had a strategically advantageous position in which they were able to set the direction and conditions of support, as a former DoE official indicated:

\begin{quote}
We could be slightly cheeky to a donor to say ‘no, thank you – another partner is going to come (...).’ And so we could push the envelope and say: ‘No that’s not what we want. We want this instead. We want you to support us in developing X, Y, Z.’ I think in retrospect why we could
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{194} Pertinent programmes set up to target higher education issues were the South African–Norway Tertiary Education Development Project (SANTED) which focused on enhancing access for and retention of people from previously discriminated groups and capacity-building of historically disadvantaged institutions, and the South African–Finnish Co-operation Programme in the Education Sector (SCOPE), which, amongst others, helped to transfer teacher education and training into higher education.
get possibly the highest percentage of support to higher education, to universities, was because we could be cheeky. We could tell the donors: Either you support it or not. But we can assure you that we will do it either way. (Interview 21)

The relative financial strength and the role as much-courted recipient enabled the Department of Education to strategically decide whose support and which kind to accept. In doing so, it adopted a rather wary attitude towards external expertise. Advisors or consultants were only brought in after thorough consideration for specific, clearly determined tasks; most notably, department leaders were vigilant about keeping foreign actors outside the centre of decision-making. As the following statement reflects, this caution had grown out of both a strong notion of self-reliance among the new leadership ranks and their awareness of the risks that advice from outside entailed:

So we had that possibility now to shape and to change things, to use our own policy-makers and we have had the years of international exposure and experience to develop our policies. So never did we have experts or foreign policy people in our policy discussions to decide and to determine the route that we are going to take. And it’s not in a kind of arrogant way that we didn’t want that, but we’ve understood also what has been happening in other countries. We have had obviously technical advice and expertise coming from all over the show [but] we’ve used that expertise to support our policy development agenda. (Interview 21)

There is one exception to this: in the area of vocational education and training decision-makers in charge have extensively drawn on external expertise to realise South African policy visions. In particular, the close and long-term cooperation with the German GIZ had a profound impact on policies and institutions addressing skills development in the new South Africa.

**Expert involvement in constructing a new skills development architecture**

When the democratic government came into power in 1994, it inherited an extremely poor skills regime which neither met the needs of society nor of the economy. With the majority of the population being insufficiently or inappropriately trained, the country faced a severe skills shortage across all sectors which had a negative effect on productivity and industrial competitiveness. The situation was a result of decades of apartheid rule under which institutionalised vocational education and training barely existed and non-formal skills training hardly provided prospects of qualification and
employment (Heitmann 2010: 101–102). Thus, it became a central concern of policy-makers in the Department of Labour (DoL) that bore the political responsibility for occupational training to enhance the skills base of workers and unemployed citizens by creating a new, demand-driven skills development system.

Germany was the donor that, from the outset, lent its support to the envisaged reform. Already before entering an official agreement which defined skills development as one of three focus areas of bilateral cooperation, the German government had funded studies, invested in teacher training and supported the National Training Strategy Initiative in exploring vocational education and training systems in other countries. While by the mid-1990s almost all aid organisations had turned to basic education, the GTZ, as Germany’s implementing agency for development cooperation, maintained its focus on skills development and offered significant in-house expertise in this field (Carton & King 2004). When in 1996 the Department of Labour put in place a new chief directorate charged with developing policy and legal frameworks for a new skills development regime, it was agreed that GTZ would provide support to the process through a broad-based sector programme which included financial and technical assistance. In the course of the so-called ‘Skills Development Strategy Initiative (SDSI) Support Programme’ and related projects, a close relationship between senior officials in the DoL and GTZ staff developed. The then head of the Pretoria country office became highly appreciated by key actors on the South African side for his flexibility in responding to the department’s needs and his approach of catering advice to the local agenda. A decision-maker in the Department of Labour described the contribution of the GTZ director as follows:

195 As Carton and King (2004: 19) point out, GTZ obviously had a unique selling point at that time since the presence of donor staff with expertise on labour skills was significantly diminished by the mid to late 1990s: “Sida had only one vocational in-house expert left by the end of the decade, and DFID had none. Meanwhile the once very large staff of technical educators in the Bank had almost disappeared. CIDA too had no in-house professional capacity left. (…) Danida and Irish Aid, which were both to play important roles in relation to South Africa, drew more on the experience of Danish consulting firms and of FAS International Consulting (the commercial subsidiary of Ireland’s Training and Employment Authority) than on their own staff.”

196 The DoL has collaborated with GTZ since 1996 through various skills development and labour-market-related projects which in 2007 were merged under the umbrella of the ‘Employment and Skills Development Service (ESDS) Programme’. Running until 2011, the ESDS programme focused on the development of skills development systems for the first (formal) and the second (informal) labour market and the establishment of a technology transfer network system for small and medium-sized enterprises (GTZ 2007). South African–German cooperation in that field took place also through other organisations such as the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), DED and InWEnt who seconded experts and provided training for college teachers and private company managers; moreover, German provincial states (‘Bundesländer’) such as Bavaria and Lower Saxony established an exchange of experts with partner provinces in South Africa (Department of Labour & GTZ 2008: 7).
He came to assist – he didn’t come to tell us. And that was the big difference. Because once you had a personal debate with him I think he was quick to understand that the South African situation is completely different from the German situation. (…) He would go out and research what is it that we are trying to do and find out very good learning experiences from other places – he would say ‘look, this is what has happened in Sweden, this is what has happened in, for instance, Zimbabwe, (…). I know this is what you are trying but in these other places, this is how they approach this issue and it seems as if you have got these options, these are consequences.’ And where he could not come up with a clear recommendation, he phoned other people that he was working with to search for the solutions that were used in their countries and what were some of the problems. And he would get that information to us, so that we are able to get a balance. (Interview 22)

In view of the internal capacity constraints of the newly established skills unit in the Department of Labour, the assistance of GTZ in exploring how the policy ideas for a new skills regime could be translated into action was highly valued. Most effective: the advice provided by experts funded or employed by GTZ was perceived as being geared to the local agenda, rather than driven by external preferences. The German so-called ‘dual system’ with its combination of theoretical and practical learning served as a central reference for advisors, but that did not foreclose that experiences and models from elsewhere were equally scrutinised for ideas and models that South Africa could take from them to develop its own unique institutions.

The Green Paper: Skills Development Strategy for Economic and Employment Growth in South Africa, presented in 1997, sketched out core elements of the envisioned new system through which the government hoped to bring about the urgently needed “skills revolution” (Department of Labour 1997). First and foremost, it proposed the introduction of ‘learnerships’. As opposed to the previous apprenticeships which offered only a minimal level of theoretical knowledge often unrelated to skills required at the workplace, learnerships aimed at combining career-related learning in an accredited education and training institution with practical on-the-job experience; having succeeded in both areas, learners would obtain a registered occupational qualification signifying their work readiness (Department of Labour 1997). A key feature of the approach was that contrary to apprenticeships it appealed to a wide range of learners in multiple occupational contexts irrespective of their age
and employment status (Kraak 2004).\footnote{For a detailed itemisation of learnership features as opposed to the past apprenticeship system, see Kraak (2004: 120–124).} As funding mechanism, a compulsory levy-grant scheme on payroll would be introduced; of the total revenue collected, 80% was meant to be channelled back to the sector via grants to enterprises that train, and 20% to a National Skills Fund to be used for strategic priority areas (Kraak 2004). The re-allocation of levies was to be managed by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)\footnote{This is how the intermediary bodies were eventually termed. In the Green Paper, they were presented as Sector Education and Training Organisations (SETOs).} which would replace the previous Industry Training Boards and function as intermediary institutions commissioned to coordinate skills development in their respective sector. A central role in the new system was given to the National Skills Authority (NSA) which would substitute the National Training Board as an advisory body to the government, responsible for defining skills development policies and priorities in consultation with the Department of Labour (Department of Labour 1997). Both SETAs and the NSA should be governed by multipartite boards composed of representatives from government, employers and trade unions (Kraak 2004); the ‘social partnership’ between these stakeholders was seen as a crucial principle in the post-apartheid skills regime (Heitmann 2010).

The mechanisms and institutions proposed in the Green Paper of 1997 were formally established through a range of laws passed in subsequent years, most notably the Skills Development Act of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998b) and the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999 (Republic of South Africa 1999). While the reform was an ambitious endeavour due to the mere number of innovations, the government was under immense pressure to set up the new architecture promptly in order to ease the social situation and relieve the stressed economy by delivering skilled workers. In view of the urgency of the reform, the dimension of the workload and the rather small cadre of experienced officials in the Department of Labour, decision-makers approached the aid community for support. External assistance was considered necessary to get the basic infrastructure and frameworks set up in a foreseeable time frame (Carton & King 2004). Hence, the DoL entered into agreements with a number of donors willing to provide financial and technical assistance, including GTZ, Danida, AusAid, Ireland Aid, USAID, the Netherlands Embassy, Korea, and the European Union; the latter accounted for the bulk of support, pledging EUR 46 million over a period of three years (Moodley & Vawda 2000).\footnote{Out of the EUR 46 million committed by the EU, EUR 30 million were to be channelled to the DoL as work plan funds, almost EUR 14 million were set aside for consulting companies and the remaining kept for contingency. At that time, the EU support was the largest technical assistance programme of its kind in the world (Moodley & Vawda 2000).} Various stand-alone projects were started, but all
of them were aligned to an operational strategy of the Department of Labour, the so-called Labour Market Skills Development Programme (LMSDP) which served as an umbrella framework for the implementation of the skills Acts. The Employment and Skills Development Chief Directorate which had designed the strategy took on an active leadership role in allocating resources to the different programmatic components.

Foreign funding significantly backed up the financing of the reform, but the delivery of expertise was the more substantial element of aid in the context of the LMSDP. The EU agreement alone covered more than eleven hundred consultancy months (Moodley & Vawda 2000). Experts from both South Africa and abroad were used to execute critical tasks for which the DoL lacked staff of its own. GTZ consultants, for instance, were contracted to develop detailed guidelines for learnerships, to assist in demarcating SETAs and to train National Standard Body members for their critical role in relation to the National Qualification Framework. Teams of specialists from different EU countries were commissioned to work on various technical issues, for example, to sketch technicalities of the envisaged levy grant system (Moodley & Vawda 2000). All personnel brought in from outside had to report to the respective unit heads in DoL who issued directives, as a high-ranking official emphasised:

We told them what exactly we would have to achieve – and they would never do anything else. (Interview 22)

Hence, although a large number of external experts were intensely involved in key issues of the reform, the process was led by the Department of Labour. The crucial point is that essential decisions were made before consultants were brought in to operationalise the nationally negotiated vision of a new skills system. The recourse to donor support allowed the government to speed up the implementation of reform by trying out and bringing to scale key innovative schemes (e.g. learnerships) within a narrow time frame and thus to meet its own deadlines (Carton & King 2004).

By the turn of the millennium, a radically revamped skills development architecture with a range of new

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200 The EU project drew on consultancy consortia from several countries which were selected through a competitive bidding process (Carton & King 2004). The tendering procedure prescribed by the EU, however, was criticised not only for being lengthy and cumbersome, but also for disadvantaging companies from outside the EU. A review stated that “the perception in the DoL is that the criteria excluded many capable South African organisations from effectively competing” (Moodley & Vawda 2000: 34). In fact, almost all contracted companies were European.

201 A valuable project which helped to refine a new approach was carried out by Danida in KwaZulu-Natal where learnerships in the construction and tourism industries were tested; the experiences gained in that two-year pilot were taken up in the process of adjusting the learnership model before taking it to scale (Carton & King 2004).
institutions and governance bodies had been set up – from the perspective of key protagonists, it is unlikely that this would have happened at the same pace without external assistance.

Governance challenges, structural revisions and changing relationships

The integrative education and training system built by the first government of post-apartheid South Africa was internationally regarded as ambitious and ground-breaking; yet, getting this system to run and to deliver turned out to be challenging. While policies, laws and institutions had been put in place in quick succession, transformation on the ground could not keep pace. Difficulties emerged at various levels. Teachers in schools were struggling to implement the new outcomes-based curriculum (known as ‘Curriculum 2005’ and introduced in 1997), since they were unfamiliar with its concepts and felt alienated by its terminology (Chisholm 2003, 2005). The newly established SETAs faced severe governance problems, including financial mismanagement and fraud (Smith et al. 2005; Kraak 2008). Employers only slowly began to take up learnerships and showed little commitment to proactively invest in training (Moleke 2003). Although they generally embraced the new approach, many companies perceived processes as unduly bureaucratic and felt unprepared to offer learnership agreements (Mummenthey 2008). Hence, despite ‘pockets of progress’ in terms of enhancing the skills base and redressing apartheid’s inequities, education and employment patterns remained racially skewed (Moleke 2003).

A fundamental problem which indirectly contributed to the stagnation was the deep division between the Department of Education and the Department of Labour (Bird & Heitmann 2011). The decision to keep these two separate ministries – with the former being responsible for education and training in public institutions (i.e. schools, colleges and universities) and the latter for private providers of learning in the labour market – instead of merging them into one as expected in the early 1990s – had “serious ramifications, most importantly the failure of the new state to discard the political fiefdoms and territorial modes of working that characterised the divide between ‘education’ and ‘training’ in the apartheid state” (Kraak 2008). Both in a way pursued their own incoherent skills development agendas based on divergent philosophies, as a former DoL official pointed out:

202 Kraak (2008) delineates some successes achieved during the first phase of the National Skills Development Strategy; amongst others, more than 6 million workers out of a total employed workforce of 10.8 million people embarked on and finished structured learning programmes over a four-year period; moreover, almost 900 000 achieved a National Qualifications Framework Level One qualification through adult basic education and training in the workplace. Yet, as Kraak himself emphasises, other scholars have raised doubts about the validity of these government data.
The Department of Labour was influenced I think quite a lot by the German thinking about skilled training, vocational training in particular. But the colleagues in education were moving things by the British. So you had one department influenced by the Germanic tradition and another department influenced by I think the Anglo-Saxon idea. And that led to quite a lot of tension. (Interview 20)

The discrepancies between the two ministries manifested in a range of laws and strategy documents issued by both sides which lacked interrelation and in some cases even contradicted each other (Allais 2006; 2010). The tension between education and labour-side actors culminated when the minister of education in 2000 announced a first review of the National Qualifications Framework for which both departments shared responsibility. After much contestation as to whether there should be an assessment at such an early stage and what it should look like, an international study team comprising South African and foreign experts was commissioned to scrutinise the NQF with regard to its implementation (without probing its design) (Allais 2010). Finding that “broad malaise of discontent with the NQF and SAQA had taken hold among stakeholders” (Department of Education & Department of Labour 2002: 3), the authors provided a range of recommendations to overcome obstacles and take the process of implementing the NQF forward. Yet, the release of the report in 2002 was followed by years of inactivity and silence, although the DoE and DoL had brought themselves to publish a joint response in the form of a consultative document (Department of Education & Department of Labour 2003). Eventually, it took six years until an agreement was reached to make substantial changes through a set of (amendment) bills passed in 2008 (Allais 2010). The reform provided for the split of the single, integrated NQF into three linked sub-frameworks managed by respective quality assurance bodies, namely Umalusi as Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, the Quality Council for Higher Education (QCHE) covering the academic sector and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) in charge of learning in a workplace context. Hence, while the NQF continued

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203 Several scholars hint at incoherent or conflicting legislation and structures related to further/vocational education and training, and the resulting confusion of role-players in the field. Allais (2006) provides a detailed account of conflicts over roles and responsibilities particularly with regard to quality assurance and certification. Bird and Heitmann (2011: 10) note that the Further Education and Training Colleges Act No. 16 of 2006 initiated by the Department of Education and the Department of Labour’s Skills Development Amendment Act No. 37 of 2008 that followed shortly after did “not complement one another in any systematic way”.

to exist as a ‘meta’-framework and SAQA remained the national oversight and coordinating body, responsibilities and structures were significantly reconfigured (see Keevy 2013).

The complex task of establishing this new system was exacerbated by a major reorganisation of line departments which followed shortly after the legislative changes. President Zuma, who came to power in 2009, decided to divide the Department of Education into one for Basic Education and one for Higher Education and Training which would carry over skills development (hence also for SETAs and the newly established QCTO) from Labour (Khumalo 2009). Shifting the responsibility for all post-school education and training was seen as an attempt to overcome the persistent conflicts which had blocked progress over the past decade.

While many stakeholders welcomed this move, it involved the reallocation of staff which inevitably weakened administration in affected government units; in particular, the Department of Labour, which had lost the skills development branch to DHET, felt drained of experienced bureaucrats. In addition, it became evident how much the DoL and related bodies had relied on external expertise provided by long-standing partners. According to the head of the Employment and Skills Development Services (ESDS) Programme of GTZ who took the lead in 2009, the programme had about 120 consultancy contracts running at that time:

*Small ones, big ones, but too many. And I’ve never experienced a project with so many contracts. And I was asking my predecessor, why do you have so many consultants employed? He said ‘it’s because there is no capacity with our partners’. (...) He had contracts with universities, with the research councils, all the experts in South Africa on skills development were on our payroll.* (Interview 2)

With the shift of political responsibilities, GTZ and other supporters turned towards new counterparts in the field. For DoL, this shift meant a severe loss of administrative capacity, as a decision-maker in the employment services branch pointed out:

*Once [the programme] moved, the capacity disappeared and caused challenges (...). And that unfortunately is a setback because you can make that assumption if people who started were still there, but the minute they are gone through this transfer and so on, it’s like going four years ahead and then six years back. It becomes a problem because all the senior people had left here, almost all of the seconded experts that were working here. So it becomes very difficult.* (Interview 22)
The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

The technical assistants provided by GTZ and other aid agencies had functioned as an ‘extra pair of hands’ in various DoL units since the beginning of South Africa’s education and training transition, but their support obviously had not resulted in a strengthened administrative capacity of their host organisation. Already by 2000 a team reviewing ODA had warned that the use of external specialists who executed key tasks instead of mentoring officials would result in ‘minimal skills transfer’ and pose a serious challenge for the DoL once projects ended (Moodley & Vawda 2000).205 Almost a decade later, this scenario occurred, and the Department of Labour struggled to substitute the withdrawn specialists.

Yet, not only government authorities faced difficulties in the course of the restructuring process. Donors as well had to adjust their programmes and establish relationships with new partners who themselves were trying to gain safe ground. As of 2011, the previously much-lauded Employment and Skills Development Services (ESDS) programme of GIZ (formerly GTZ) had reached deadlock since GIZ representatives were unable to enter into a dialogue with DHET decision-makers. For the head of the programme in the Pretoria country office, this caused mounting pressure as he was unable to demonstrate progress and thereby legitimate the on-going operations before headquarters in Germany. In late 2011, his frustration had reached a point where he felt compelled to call in political authorities in order to enforce communication with DHET decision-makers:

So now what I try to do is, when you don’t get a response from a counterpart you invite for meetings (...), you use diplomatic interventions and this is what I have done. And diplomatic interventions I have to use in case, because it’s a lot of resources. If let’s say advisors are not needed, then I have to communicate this. I cannot just assume, ah, we have some progress here and there. You can cover up for 6 months maybe. But in this case, I really used the escalation ladder from zero to, I don’t know, the highest level. There was one letter sent from our ministry in Germany through the Embassy warning ‘if you don’t come to a conclusion now, we will wind down the project’, very clearly. Then they reacted. (...)

And tomorrow we have consultations with Higher Education and Training. When I saw the people on the list that will come to the meeting,

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205 The review team stated in this regard: “As the practice of Technical Assistance is new within the DoL, officials have minimal capacity to effectively and efficiently utilise and absorb technical assistants into project activities and tasks. (...) With the already extensive and intensive workload, and inadequate number of staff to execute tasks, skills transfer is an additional challenge” (Moodley & Vawda 2000: 15).
it’s a shame. It’s really a shame. Two people from international relations and only one technical person from the National Skills Fund; there’s only one person who really knows about the subject. So I don’t understand – we requested on the level of DG, please provide the DDGs for the meetings and technical people. (Interview 2)

The head of the GIZ programme felt uncertain about whether to interpret the bearing of the counterpart as a lack of leadership, sign of disinterest – or simply as the result of the persisting capacity constraints in the department, which, after two years since its formal inception, was still struggling to adequately staff the department. During 2011/2012, DHET’s vacancy rate remained high at 21.73%, and many crucial positions at the senior level (e.g. directors) had not yet been filled (Department of Higher Education and Training 2012a). In light of the fact that officials in place were already over-stretched with day-to-day operations, it is not surprising that donor meetings were not attended or repeatedly postponed, which left programme leaders somewhat in the dark about their new counterpart’s vision. The GIZ director commented in this regard:

There was almost no donor coordination for the last two years. There was a DG, Mary Metcalfe, until September last year, then we have DG Qonde, and each of the DGs just had one donor meeting. And on donor side, we have an interest to know the policy of the department vis-à-vis cooperation, what are other development partners doing and all this kind of exchange. But it was very clear in our case that the Department of Higher Education and Training just didn’t request for that. (Interview 2)

Discussing the GIZ’s discontent and frustration about DHET’s disregard, a high-ranking official who had closely collaborated with the Germans during her previous appointment in the Department of Labour provided the following explanation for the gridlock in cooperation:

206 According to DHET’s Annual Report, the slow progress in staff appointment was caused by both insufficient funding and the difficulty in finding people with adequate expertise and experience: “The specialised nature of work in most of the areas of the Department necessitates the use of highly skilled people who are at some stages not readily available for permanent appointment and have to be appointed on contract for periods as may be required. (…) Some identified critical vacancies could not be filled due to limited funding. The prescribed time frame of four months for the filling of vacancies in some instances is not met or adhered to due to work pressure caused by the staff shortage in the HR section. We have identified a need for staff training and development and a request for the creation of additional posts was approved for filling in the new financial year” (Department of Higher Education and Training 2012a: 48–49).
I honestly believe it was a transitional problem that the German government got caught up in but which had nothing to do with them. What happened was the new department here was set up late 2009, it had to be staffed. There was a change of Director-General in the middle of that process, and that’s a very important person in a new department. So that was still being sorted out. The new Director General, when he took over, he had to get his feel more secure around the policy debates and he didn’t want to commit himself to projects and things before he had that. So I don’t think it had anything to do with the German government or with any of the donors, I think it was a case of the department. What it reflects I think is that the South African government wants to lead any discussion – so it wants to be sure that it knows what it wants and why you’re having a particular conversation. (Interview 20)

Eventually, the South African–German ESDS programme which had been running since 1995 ended in 2012. As a consequence of the tedious negotiations with DHET as counterpart during the last phase, GIZ decided to shift its focus to other players in the field when setting up a new programme called ‘Skills Development for Green Jobs (SDIGJ)’ (GIZ 2012b). While DHET formally remains one of the two ‘lead executing agencies’ (with the second one being the Department of Science and Technology), the actual cooperation takes place with other partners, such as the Office of the Premier in the Eastern Cape Province and the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA).207 Both organisations are assisted in establishing ‘green skills forums’ in order to boost the ‘green economy’, with support including the secondment of advisors, study tours and training programmes.

Although GIZ promotes its new approach as a ‘bottom-up strategy’ with a “much greater potential for mainstreaming green skills” (GIZ 2012c), it is obvious that the shift towards this level was partly enforced by the fact that GIZ has lost its position in the policy-making space. While during the 15 years of cooperation with the Department of Labour, GTZ (as it was then called) had built itself up as an indispensable partner providing advice and assistance in the course of the education and training system reform, it was not able to transfer this relationship to DHET as the new political authority in charge. The reasons are at least twofold. First, the trust which allowed GTZ to be engaged in DoL processes rested to a significant extent on the personal bonds between key actors on both sides that had developed during more than a decade of

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207 Moreover, the programme includes support to the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) focusing on technology transfer which is a continuation of previous cooperation.
cooperation. The importance of this aspect was repeatedly addressed by interviewees involved, with one official stating:

*It was a long-term partnership. If you speak to W. [the previous GTZ programme director], I know this is a strong point on his side that many donors work in the short-term, they go in, do a project and withdraw, and his feeling was always: No, you got to form partnerships at a personal level. And we certainly did form one with Werner.* (Interview 20)

As explained above, such social ties are a key element for advisory processes; yet, as they depend on “histories of interactions” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998: 244), they cannot easily be passed on. Hence, it was not easy for the successor of the previous GTZ director to maintain the importance of the programme when he came into office in 2009 and even more difficult when it should be continued with DHET as the new partner.

Second, it seems that the nature of support sought by policy-makers in charge has changed. While they still signal interest in expertise and experiences from other countries, they seem to refrain from requesting direct advice and assistance in policy development. Instead of bringing in consultants from outside to provide ‘hands-on’ support to understaffed units, DHET appears to prefer a much looser form of cooperation, excluding external actors from decision-making. This is reflected by DHET’s first major political undertaking of system reform in post-schooling education and training. The *Green Paper* released for discussion in early 2012 was largely a product of internal policy work (Department of Higher Education and Training 2012b). An extensive process of national discussion about the new post-school vision followed which included briefings, workshops and conferences with various stakeholders. International partners were invited to take part in some of these activities, but they did not play a decisive role therein. Moreover, the decision-making autonomy of the South African government was clearly evident throughout the process, as a GIZ interviewee commented:

*In April [2012], there was a huge, international conference. We had two speakers here from BIBB [the German ‘Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training’] which was fine, that was great. But there were also Brazilians, people from Indonesia and Australia, six countries were represented, the Swiss as well. That means they [the South Africans] precisely pick what fits for them (…). And then it goes on: The South Africans have their own experts. Of course, they do not know the countries in great detail. But instead of bringing in consultants from Germany, they would compose a group of people travelling to Europe, visiting institutions,
interviewing professors and practitioners, developers and others in ministries and organisations. They have money, they travel. (Interview 3)

The process of policy negotiation and refinement was firmly led by key actors within DHET (e.g. the Special Advisor to the Minister John Pampallis) who were assisted by a drafting team made up of six experts from South African research and advisory institutions, namely the Centre for Education Policy Development, the Centre for Researching Education and Labour of the University of Witwatersrand and Mzabalazo Advisory Services (Stuart 2014). After almost two years of consultation, in which nearly 200 public comments were received, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training was finalised and approved by Cabinet in November 2013 (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013c). One of the main challenges it aims to address is providing prospects for young people who have hitherto fallen through the cracks, that is, the 3.4 million aged 15 to 24 currently not in employment, education or training (so-called ‘NEETs’). To cater for youth and adults who have never attended school and therefore were excluded from further studies at colleges or universities, a new institutional type of ‘community colleges’ is envisaged, which is expected “to facilitate a cycle of lifelong learning in communities by enabling the development of skills (including literacy, numeracy and vocational skills) to enhance personal, social, family and employment experiences” (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013c: 22). Moreover, the previous further education and training (FET) colleges are to be rebranded Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges on the grounds that this name “better reflects their nature and better defines their main role in the diversified post-school education and training system”, as DHET argues (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013c: 12). Turning TVET colleges into “institutions of choice” which constitute “the cornerstone of the country’s skills development system” (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013c: 12) is a prime endeavour of the government which sets itself ambitious targets: by 2013, it wants to have 2.5 million students enrolled in TVET colleges (as compared to 500 000 in 2011), 1 million in community colleges (from 265 000 in public adult learning centres in 2011), and about 1.6 million students in universities (from just over 937 000 in 2011). At the time of writing, it is too early to assess the likelihood of success.

Conclusion

When assessing the impact of foreign aid on education and training in post-apartheid South Africa, the judgement has to be differentiated: certainly, financial and technical assistance significantly helped to revamp structures at a
pace which would not have been possible had the government relied on its own resources. Also, study tours sponsored and/or facilitated by donors conveyed models and ideas from abroad which inspired the thinking of key protagonists involved in shaping a new system for the country. Despite extensive foreign support, however, “the overall negotiation for a new skills architecture has firmly been in South African hands” (Carton & King 2004: 31). That policymakers, while drawing on external expertise and resources, managed to retain their decision-making autonomy appears to rest on at least four reasons. First, the sector was not financially dependent on donors. This is not to say that additional funding was not needed; yet, aid did not make up a substantial part of the budget. This allowed negotiators to tell international financiers:

Either you support it but we can assure you that we will do it either way. It’s just going to take a slightly longer because we’ll have to wait, but we will do this. (Interview 21)

Second, education in the broadest sense was a prime topic on the aid agenda; given that bi- and multilateral organisations competed to be part of South Africa’s education transition, government officials could select those which were most responsive to local needs and priorities. Third, policy-making authorities concerned with education and training seem to have adopted a careful approach towards advice and assistance from outside which is reflected by the following statement of a DHET (and former DoE) official:

The experts that we had, that we used, were very few. And (...) they were coming in towards (...) the end (...) of the process to advise and give support and so forth. But (...) they were never sent through to the conceptualization of the direction. (Interview 21)

Finally, it seems that the participation of various stakeholders with strong voices in the South African education and training landscape has mitigated the scope of direct influence from outside. While the vested and sometimes contradictory interests of education and training providers, trade unions and employers may have decelerated the pace or even blocked processes, such frictions enforced national negotiation about concepts developed internally or adopted from elsewhere. The academic community played a distinct role therein.

All in all, in the field of education, the South African government was able to create its own vision and system, although it resorted to aid for both expertise and money. The fact that many institutions and structures were repeatedly revised in the course of reform indicates that the system put in place was not
‘perfect’ and entailed flaws which became evident in implementation. A DHET official, however, stated:

\[\text{We’ve made mistakes; some of them were really unintended consequences of our policies. But those were our own mistakes. It’s worse what has happened in Tanzania because of the Bank’s and other agencies’ interference. (Interview 21)}\]

**Tanzania health: The normality of foreign involvement**

**Sectoral context**

The health situation in Tanzania has improved significantly in recent years. Life expectancy at birth rose from 51 years in 2002 to 61 years in 2012 (World Bank 2014c).\(^{208}\) Within the same period, infant and under-five mortality substantially declined; according to UN estimates, the rate of children dying between birth and five years of age decreased from 114 to 54 per thousand live births (UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation 2013). These positive trends are largely attributed to a high coverage of immunisation, expanded vitamin A distribution, and an increased use of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria which helped to reduce the prevalence among children under five from 18% in 2008 to 9% in 2012 (UNICEF Tanzania 2010; TACAIDS et al. 2013).

Whereas much progress has been achieved in terms of child survival, maternal health remains an unresolved challenge. Tanzania’s maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world: in 2010, an estimated 8,500 women died while being pregnant or giving birth (UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group 2010).\(^{209}\) While most of these deaths are caused by obstetric complications, the poor quality of health services and the existence of infectious diseases – most notably malaria and HIV/AIDS – indirectly contribute to the persistent high number of cases (Shija et al. 2012).

As one of the most perilous health problems in Tanzania, malaria continues to be the country’s major cause of morbidity and mortality. Although interventions in malaria control show signs of success, the tropical disease still

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\(^{208}\) According to the World Bank’s World Development Indicators database, the average life expectancy at birth in developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa was 56.4 in 2012 (World Bank 2014c).

\(^{209}\) In 2010, the maternal mortality rate was estimated to be 460 per 100,000 live births (UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group 2010).
leads to about 60 000 deaths per year, of which 80% are children under five years (Massero 2013). The fight against HIV/AIDS seems similarly challenging. Despite huge efforts undertaken since the disease was declared a ‘national disaster’ in 1999, the HI virus continues to spread in Tanzania. Even though knowledge about how to prevent transmission is relatively common, it is estimated that more than 100 000 Tanzanians are newly infected each year (Interview 62; UNICEF Tanzania 2014). The prevalence of HIV among the population has only marginally dropped in recent years (TACAIDS et al. 2013); as of 2011/2012, 1.6 million people were living with HIV/AIDS (United Republic of Tanzania 2012a).

An impediment to scaling up interventions to combat the multiple epidemics is the massive shortage of health professionals in the country. As estimated in the Health Sector Strategic Plan (2009–2015), there is a lack of more than 90 000 health workers which amounts to a deficit of 65% (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 2009). The ongoing human resource crisis is seen as one of the greatest obstacles hampering the implementation of Tanzania’s ambitious health sector reforms (Kwesigabo et al. 2012).

**Governance structures**

At the national level, the two main authorities dealing with health issues in Tanzania are the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) and the Prime Minister’s Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG). While the former is mandated to provide overall policy guidance and quality control, the latter is responsible for overseeing the delivery of district health services which form the centrepiece of the system and are managed by local government authorities (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 2009).

For the fight against HIV/AIDS, the government set up the Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS) in 2001. Established as an independent department under the Prime Minister’s Office, TACAIDS has been mandated to provide strategic leadership, formulate policy guidelines, advise the government, and coordinate the implementation of the national response to the epidemic (TACAIDS 2014a). As the central institution for policy-making and resource mobilisation in the field of HIV/AIDS, TACAIDS has become the focal point for donors engaged in HIV/AIDS-related activities.

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210 The first three AIDS cases on Tanzania mainland occurred in 1983. By the end of 1999, it was estimated that more than 2 million people were infected with HIV. At that point in time, then President Mkapa called the epidemic “an extraordinary crisis that requires extra-ordinary measures to deal with it” (TACAIDS 2014c).
Donor presence in the health sector

Health and HIV/Aids are policy fields which are both characterised by a high ‘donor density’ in Tanzania. As of 2014, the ‘Development Partners Groups’ in the two areas – DPG-Health and DPG-AIDS – each comprised more than 15 members, including major bilateral funders such as the United States, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark, as well as multilateral bodies such as the World Bank and UN agencies (Development Partners Group Tanzania 2014a). Experts from these organisations interact with senior government officials through various Technical Working Groups (TWGs) which were established when a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) was introduced (see later in this chapter). TWGs in health focus on issues such as district and regional health services, health financing, and public private partnerships; in the field of HIV/Aids, they concentrate on prevention, care and treatment, impact mitigation, and evaluation, amongst others (interviews 32, 61, 62). Aid representatives also take part in higher-level forums concerned with policy-making and resource allocation, for example, the SWAp Technical Committee, the Health Basket Financing Committee or Tanzania’s National Coordinating Mechanism for the Global Fund (see Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 2009; TACAIDS 2014b). As will be shown, donors exert significant influence on decision-making through such structures and beyond, both in health and HIV/Aids.

Tanzania’s health system after independence

When Tanzania became independent in 1961, the country’s health system consisted of only a few hospitals and private doctors accessible to a small elite living in urban areas; the majority of the population relied on traditional healers and missionary centres (McIntyre et al. 2008). Providing essential health services for all became a major endeavour of the first post-colonial leader, Julius K Nyerere. Following the Arusha Declaration of 1967, the government made public healthcare free of charge, and invested in building health facilities in rural areas. Between 1969 and 1978, the number of state-operated rural health centres more than tripled, and as a result of increased training, the health workforce grew significantly (Wangwe & Rweyemamu 2001). The government financed the system through tax and donor funding; private for-profit practice was limited and later even prohibited by law on the grounds that health was seen as the sole responsibility of the state, assisted by faith-based organisations (McIntyre et al. 2008).

When in the course of the economic crisis during the 1980s, Tanzania was forced to adopt structural adjustment policies as required by international
finance institutions, the health sector experienced a sharp decline in government spending, “with real per capita expenditure falling by 46% in the decade to 1988/89” (Kumaranayake et al. 2000: 360). In order to maintain the system, user fees were re-introduced, and the ban on private services was lifted, which “led to a rapid increase in the number of private health providers, many of them informal and unregistered” (McIntyre et al. 2008: 872). By the early 1990s, Tanzania’s health system was fragmented, underfunded and hardly functioning; while the country had a relatively wide network of facilities, these often lacked basic equipment, personnel and essential drugs to care for patients (Wangwe & Rweyemamu 2001).

The road to reforms

Tanzania was not the only African country which experienced a deterioration in health services at that time. In its 1993 ‘World Development Report’, the World Bank highlighted the poor performance of health systems in developing countries with low cost-effectiveness, inefficiency and mismanagement, and called on governments and the aid community to invest in health sector reforms (World Bank 1993). In the same year, donors held a consultative meeting in Paris where the need for reform in Tanzania was discussed. Shortly after, a joint workshop with officials from the Ministry of Health was organised, following which a working group was established (Semali 2003). With funding from the World Bank and Danida, the group produced the ‘Proposals for Health Sector Reform’ (1994), the Strategic Health Plan for 1995–1998 and the Health Sector Reform Plan of Action 1996–1999, which sketched out major problems and suggested interventions to tackle them. In the process of developing these pivotal documents, officials regularly consulted with aid representatives whose support was deemed crucial for realising the reforms.

Aside from being involved in revising and adjusting reform plans, donors in parallel began to test the feasibility of new tools and financing mechanisms through aid initiatives: the World Bank, for instance, carried out a pilot project introducing a community health fund in Igunga District, and the GTZ conducted a study on district planning and management in Tanga Region (Semali 2003). Following a series of ‘joint missions’, the government and donors eventually agreed on a final ‘Programme of Work’ (PoW) for the period 1999–2002 which outlined eight priority areas of reform: the decentralisation

211 As of 1985, an estimated 90% of the Tanzanian population lived within a 10km distance of a health facility which indicates a relatively wide coverage at that time (Hingora n.d.).
212 The Proposals for Health Sector Reform were approved by the cabinet in March 1996 (Burki 2001).
213 For a detailed description of the various projects and studies carried out to test different reform proposals, see Semali (2003).
of authority to the districts which should be given full responsibility for the organisation and delivery of health services; the establishment of a referral system with back-up secondary and tertiary hospitals to support primary healthcare; the transformation of the national Ministry of Health into a facilitative policy organisation with a normative and standard-setting role; addressing the human resource shortage; ensuring central support systems are in place; diversifying health financing through insurance systems, cost-sharing mechanisms and user fees; providing for an ‘appropriate’ mix of public and private healthcare services; and ‘restructuring’ the relationship between the Ministry of Health and donors (Ministry of Health 1999).

Regarding the last point, donors and the ministry had finally arrived at the decision to move towards a ‘Sector-Wide Approach’ (SWAp) with the aim “to dilute the administrative and planning burden of multiple systems imposed through the various donor-led approaches, and to promote coordinated planning and resource management” (Burki 2001: 13). The basic idea behind this was that stakeholders in health would collaborate to back the implementation of a shared programme under government leadership. After tedious negotiations, some of the ‘development partners’ – namely Danida, DFID, Swiss Development Cooperation, Ireland Aid, Norway, and the World Bank, later on joined by Germany, the Netherlands and Canada214 – also embarked on pooling resources in a basket fund which would be used for agreed priority areas and disbursed through the government system (Mapunda 2003).215

With the introduction of the new modalities, a range of ‘dialogue’ mechanisms were set up, including a SWAp Committee which would meet biannually to review the overall reform process, a Basket Financing Committee to approve disbursements and review budget execution on a quarterly basis, and various technical working groups to discuss specific topics such as hospital reforms, human resources for health, and performance monitoring (Burki 2001). The establishment of these multiple forums implied an institutionalisation of external engagement in health policy-making which enhanced rather than reduced donor interference.

214 The number and composition of basket fund contributors changed over time; as of 2014, these comprised Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Switzerland, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank (Development Partners Group on Health 2014).

215 Donors staying outside the basket justified their decision in terms of internal rules and regulations which would prevent them from merging funds, whereby the loss of ‘control’ and ‘visibility’ was considered a major barrier (Hobbs 2001).
CHAPTER 7 The Impact of Expert Advice on Policy-making in Young Democracies: Sector Studies

The role of donors in the sector-wide approach

Introducing the SWAp and the health basket at around the turn of the millennium, Tanzania was seen as a forerunner in experimenting with new, ‘harmonised’ aid modalities which became popular with the donor community at that time. In cross-country studies, the arrangements adopted in the health sector were deemed ‘most advanced’ and highly commended for increasing government ‘ownership’ (Brown 2000: v). Protagonists involved in donor–government interaction also perceived a positive shift in relations. A retired official who then served as chief medical officer in the Ministry of Health remembered:

> With the new thinking of the health sector reform, one of the big changes was from thinking in terms of ‘a donor and a project’ to ‘donors agreeing and putting the money in one budget’ and getting also the government budget together to say ‘ok we have this money, what shall we do’? What shall we do? Not what shall I do? Big difference! (Interview 53)

Similarly, a GTZ representative who at that time strongly championed the new approach remarked:

> During the good years of the SWAp, we talked to each other, like ‘what are you doing, what are we doing, how do we put that into the overall strategy’ – there was no ‘donor agenda’, but a national programme. It was a mutual process, we had a certain model in mind, we were kind of a ‘dream team’ which advocated for comprehensive primary health care, district health services, so the overall direction was fairly clear. (Interview 73, translated by authors)

The ‘dream team’ in that context comprised a number of like-minded aid experts and key figures in the health ministry who, sharing the same vision and convictions, pushed forward reforms in the following years. The same group also worked out the subsequent Health Sector Strategic Plan 2003–2008 which more or less set out to follow up on the PoW priority areas, though with a greater focus on ensuring the delivery of essential health packages at district level, sharpening the role of the central ministry, and tackling the human

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216 This was emphasised by a research report commissioned by the WHO which investigated the status of SWAp arrangements in Cambodia, Vietnam, Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania in early 2000. In the case study on Tanzania, the author noted that “despite high aid dependency, government ownership of the programme is growing and national commitment to sector programmes and public expenditure reform create a positive environment for health SWAp expansion” (Brown 2000: v).
resource shortage (Ministry of Health 2003). Moreover, the fight against HIV/AIDS which had become a “serious problem on the country’s economy and development” (Ministry of Health 2003: viii) was for the first time taken up as a ‘special’ strategy.

Overall, there seemed little dispute about the ‘rightness’ of reforms within the Ministry of Health, but they were considered as being driven by a rather small cadre of senior officials in the Health Sector Reform Secretariat who closely collaborated with donor experts, particularly from those organisations that contributed to the health basket (Hobbs 2001; Holtom 2002). Through the newly established forums, the latter were closely involved in developing policies and plans, doing situational analyses and ‘helping’ to think about what should be done; a health specialist in the Netherlands Embassy described his and other donor colleagues’ contribution as follows:

*We definitely assisted and facilitated the whole process around a new policy, a new strategic Health Sector Strategy Plan, which – I don’t want to say that those are seen as the most important documents by the Tanzanian ministry, but they’re definitely key documents.*

*And for example, we, a number of DPs [development partners], helped to analyse (...): There are good gains in infant and child mortality, how do we sustain that? We do not see these gains yet in maternal health, why is there way too slow progress in that area? Has it to do with family planning, new diseases, non-communicable diseases... (...).* 

*In that case a small group of donors helped to formulate strategic plans, and made sure that at all levels monitoring and evaluation became more important, that evidence-informed decisions became more important.*

(Interview 38)

The regular encounter with government officials through the various technical working groups and other forums enabled donor experts not only to impact on how issues were discussed (e.g. by promoting ‘evidence-based’ decision-making), but also which issues were put on the agenda. In particular, the so-called ‘Troika’ of the DPG-Health, a body comprising three elected officials from member organisations commissioned to advocate donor positions, had direct access to key figures in the Ministry of Health which could be used

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217 In contrast to donors, national stakeholders such as research communities, faith-based organisations, the private sector or civil society were only marginally or not at all involved in the early stages of the reform process (Semali 2003).
to turn the spotlight on issues of (donor) concern. A Dutch Embassy official reported:

As the Troika, initially, we had a monthly meeting with senior management at the ministry, with the PS [Permanent Secretary], the chief medical officer and the directors. And they started then a monthly meeting – maybe it was then forced by us that they had that meeting – where they started the first half hour with us and then they went on with their own meeting. Even at that meeting, you would constantly raise priorities how you perceived them. Are they always taking and act upon that? No. But often, you will find that they act. (Interview 38)

As the statements above indicate, the SWAp dialogue mechanisms provided aid experts with the opportunity to become legitimate participants in the policy discourse and shape the agenda through formal discussions. At the same time, however, informal negotiations continued, with a lot of “side-meetings” (Interview 61) taking place behind the scenes. The entry of global health initiatives with massive financial power eventually depleted the potential for concerted action under Tanzanian guidance, particularly, but not only, in the field of HIV/Aids.

The rise of global HIV initiatives and their impact on HIV and health governance

At around the turn of the millennium, HIV/Aids in Tanzania had become a massive “social and economic problem with devastating impact on national development” (TACAIDS 2014c). Although the creation of TACAIDS in 2001 helped to shift HIV/Aids onto the political agenda as reflected by a considerable increase in domestic and foreign funding (Foster & Mwinyimvua 2003: 4), Tanzania remained far from reaching budget levels required to finance the national response outlined by the country’s first National HIV/Aids Policy (Prime Minister’s Office 2001) and the related National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Framework on HIV/Aids 2003–2007 (NMSF) (TACAIDS 2003).

218 Reliable and comprehensive information on HIV/Aids spending before 2004/2005 is hardly available; only then, HIV/Aids was given a separate code in the Tanzanian budget. In their Public Expenditure Review: HIV/Aids Multi-Sectoral Update for 2004, Foster and Mwinyimvua (2003) emphasised that both government and donor reports lacked complete and accurate figures on HIV-related expenditures. The data they were able to compile indicated an increase of TSh 4.75 billion in government spending from 2001/02 to 2002/03, almost entirely accounted for by the establishment of TACAIDS. Moreover, the authors estimated that HIV/Aids-related aid channelled through government agencies increased by 107%, and aid directed to NGOs by 326%. Although the total amount of HIV/Aids resources which could be traced had almost doubled, it was considered “still less than half of the levels that have been estimated to be needed” (Foster & Mwinyimvua 2003: 15).
Bank was the first donor to come up with the prospect of additional money, offering a loan of USD 70 million to be used over a period of five years (2003–2008) under the umbrella of its Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Programme (World Bank 2003). Given the massive financing gap, the government accepted the project, yielding to the Bank’s pressure, despite reluctance among its own ranks and resentment on the part of the remaining donor group which feared losing influence (Holtom 2002). The then chairman of TACAIDS remembered the situation he found himself in as follows:

When the World Bank was coming in, they came in with a lot of funds. And so I was having a meeting predominantly with the donor group. And they began complaining that since the World Bank is stepping in, you are paying attention to the World Bank and forgetting us and you follow World Bank dictation, etc. So I was quick to point out to them that this is a Tanzanian programme and I’m head of this programme and therefore it’s going to be, you know, home-based. I don’t care where the money comes from, but we are going to make sure that it is Tanzanian-led and -oriented. (Interview 64)

Whether enforced by Tanzanian negotiators or for other reasons, the World Bank indeed broadly catered the Tanzania Multi-sectoral AIDS Programme (T-MAP) to the government’s priorities. The focus was on prevention and mitigation measures, and institutional support for TACAIDS which was charged with coordinating project-funded activities and submitting annual work plans and progress reports (World Bank 2003).

The Bank undoubtedly made itself the lead agency in the field of HIV/AIDS by providing by far the largest share of resources, but it did not keep this position for very long. Shortly after T-MAP started in 2003, a range of global players entered the scene: the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM), the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the Clinton HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI), all together large-scale, vertical funding schemes offering enormous amounts of money. The Global Fund in its third round awarded Tanzania a total of USD 87 million for 2004–2008, PEPFAR held out the prospect of disbursing up to USD 100 million annually, and CHAI promised to raise a sum of USD 539 million over a period of five years (Barry et al. 2003). The hitch in these offers, however, was that resources were tightly earmarked; large shares – in the case of PEPFAR 55% – were destined to scale-up care and treatment, irrespective of the government’s actual prioritisation of HIV prevention and AIDS control. The fact that both local and foreign experts deemed the provision of life-long antiretroviral drugs neither
feasible at that point in time\textsuperscript{219} nor affordable in the long run did not prevent US representatives from advancing their agenda – a stance which outraged the remaining aid community, as a former GTZ representative recalled:

\begin{quote}
Interviewee: The Americans had written a programme stating: ‘We have realised that HIV/AIDS is a problem in Tanzania. We Americans know how to fight HIV/AIDS, and we will fight HIV/AIDS in Tanzania.’ No mention of Tanzanians or other actors. Nothing. It caused a scandal – at that time I was the acting chair of the donor group and there was a meeting where all non-US donors left, saying this is unacceptable (…).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Interviewer: How did the Tanzanian side react to that?
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Interviewee: Well, there you encounter the actual problem and the limits of rational advice: When big money is on the horizon, there is a decision of the president or the minister and all the experts – Tanzanians, Europeans, Chinese, WHO, whoever else – stand in the corner with no say anymore. (Interview 73, translated by authors)
\end{quote}

Being confronted with an increasing number of people dying of Aids, the government decided to accept the funding offers and to accommodate the requirements of the respective donators. The Clinton Foundation, for instance, demanded a new National Care and Treatment Plan (NCTP), although the Ministry of Health in March 2003 had produced a Health Sector HIV/AIDS Strategy which entailed a detailed care and treatment section. Drafted by experts from the Clinton Foundation, together with Tanzanian officials and approved by the Cabinet in October 2003, the NCTP set highly ambitious goals: whereas the MoH strategy had proposed to put 13,000 patients on treatment until the end of 2006, the ‘Clinton’ plan increased this number to 151,000 (United Republic of Tanzania 2003; Hutton 2004).\textsuperscript{220} While the authors pointed out that the plan neither implied “a radical redirection of policy” nor replaced any “of the careful planning and wide-ranging action which the United Republic of Tanzania has taken” (United Republic of Tanzania 2003: 1–2), it did throw

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{219} A Tanzanian expert who then worked for the US government at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention commented: “We were advising: ‘yes, we should start care and treatment, but the focus should also be to strengthen the systems, because you cannot throw the ARVs [antiretroviral drugs] in the air and then they go and look for the mouth where to go into’. That is exactly an example I gave in the same way. But it was a push that we want ART [antiretroviral treatment] (…) and the budget was: more than 50% should go to the drugs. And the remaining should go to prevention, the agency costs and whatever. So it remained very little…” (Interview 68)

\textsuperscript{220} The actual number of patients put on treatment fell far behind this ambitious target; according to TACAIDS information, 54,264 were on ART by end of October 2006 (TACAIDS 2014d).
\end{footnotesize}
Not only the Clinton Foundation imposed rigid conditions to its funding. PEPFAR in its early phase had a strict rule that only ARVs approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) could be procured with the programme’s funds, which excluded the purchase of most low-cost generic drugs (Dietrich 2007). Tanzania’s policy, however, was to give preference to generic alternatives which were ten to 40 times cheaper than the brand-name drugs provided by the US pharmaceutical industry (Venkatesh et al. 2012). The conflict led to difficult negotiations, as the then chief medical officer remembered:

Interviewee: USAID just said ‘no’ to generics and we said ‘no’ to non-generics because this would have been against the drug policy. But at the end we agreed.

Interviewer: You agreed?

Interviewee: Yes, we agreed. We had to come to a compromise.

(Interview 53)

In late 2004, Tanzania started a nation-wide care and treatment programme financed mainly with money from the new HIV/AIDS initiatives. Overshadowing the government and the remaining donors all together in terms of funding volumes, PEPFAR and the Global Fund in a short space of time became the main sponsors of the overall AIDS response: by 2007, both together accounted for almost 80% of total expenditures on HIV/AIDS (cf. TACAIDS’ 2010 Public Expenditure Review, Table 18).
Table 18: HIV/Aids expenditures in Tanzania in 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures on HIV/Aids</th>
<th>in TSh billion</th>
<th>as share of total in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic expenditures</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid</td>
<td>380.0</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thereof United States Government (PEPFAR)</td>
<td>230.3</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thereof Global Fund</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditures</td>
<td>402.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While the entry of new donors meant a stark increase in funding available for HIV/Aids interventions, it did not give the government a greater scope of action insofar as the money was channelled outside Tanzania’s budgetary system. The bulk of Global Fund and PEPFAR money was disbursed through NGOs and US agencies, leaving the government with little control over resource flows and clarity on what was being done in the country (TACAIDS 2010), as the Director of Finance at TACAIDS remarked:

_In the first phase when they started in 2004, nobody knew what the US government was doing (...). It was like when they come to the meeting, people will ask them and they will not be able to explain._ (Interview 61)

For the government, the lack of information on how the money was spent and where it went created problems not only with respect to resource allocation and planning, but also in terms of accountability. The TACAIDS’ director of finance commented:

_When USAID funds Non-Governmental Organizations, that money goes outside the system. And the way the government operates, you cannot capture that unless the money is passing through the government (...). But we’ve also discussed with US government that it’s very important for us to be accountable; and for them as well. Because if the money does not pass through the government machinery, it means it is not being reflected in the books of parliament and parliament passes the budget though the money is outside, and therefore they cannot follow how it was worked on and how it is accounted._ (Interview 61)

Although TACAIDS officials reported that as a result of tedious negotiations information sharing on the part of US representatives has improved the problem of insufficient public oversight over large proportions of HIV/Aids funding still has not been solved. From fiscal years 2006/07 to 2010/11, the share of off-
budget expenditures (i.e. expenditures which are not captured by the national exchequer system) actually increased from 78% to over 85% (TACAIDS 2010, 2012). The fact that the Tanzanian government lacks discretionary authority over the larger share of financial resources spent on HIV/Aids makes it impossible to use budget allocation as a steering tool (United Republic of Tanzania 2012a). It also explains the discrepancy between policy statements and resource flows: although prevention was again prioritised by the Second National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Framework on HIV and Aids covering the years 2008 to 2012 (TACAIDS 2007) and further pushed onto the agenda by the formulation of a National HIV Prevention Strategy (Prime Minister’s Office 2009),\textsuperscript{224} it received less than a quarter of the overall HIV/Aids funding (23%) in the period 2008 to 2010 (TACAIDS 2012). The TACAIDS chairperson commented:

\textit{It shouldn’t be like that. The priority is HIV prevention. And HIV prevention should be allocated more money than treatment. We know that treatment is prevention, but at the end of the day, we’ll continue treating more people if we do not prevent! (Interview 63)\textsuperscript{225}}

That more than half (59%) of HIV/Aids funding was spent on treatment, care and support can be attributed particularly to the United States’ strong emphasis on this. The government’s recent attempts to obtain a shift in PEPFAR spending patterns had only a limited effect. The TACAIDS director of finance described the difficulty in prevailing against the US agenda:

\textit{I know when we were designing PEPFAR 2 which started around 2009/2010, they wanted to fund more treatment and we wanted to fund more prevention (...). It was hard – it was hard, because for them it’s easy to account for how many test kits and how many drugs you have sent to Tanzania, because you can physically count them. But on prevention programmes, actually for any donor it’s hard, because you just educate people and you cannot measure it easily, you know. (Interview 61)}

The explanation that the US as well as other donors preferred to support treatment due to their internal legitimation pressure was also used by TACAIDS’ director for policy and planning who remarked:

\textsuperscript{224} For a detailed analysis of the formulation process of the HIV Prevention Strategy and related interests, see Hunsmann (2013: 146–175).

\textsuperscript{225} The ‘treatment as prevention’ agenda the interviewee refers to was pushed when a clinical study funded by the US National Institutes of Health found that treatment of a person living with HIV reduced the risk of transmission to partners by 96% (The Lancet 2011). The United States in particular strongly promoted the finding and highlighted the idea of ‘treatment as prevention’ in its PEPFAR II Blueprint released in 2012 (United States of America, Department of State 2012).
CHAPTER 7 The Impact of Expert Advice on Policy-making in Young Democracies: Sector Studies

Any external support, they operate result-based. Prevention—whether based on condoms, whatever intervention, STIs and alike, these interventions are becoming very unpopular because the impact you don't see now, you will see later. It takes longer to see the results. But if you put someone on ART, you monitor for one year, he or she recovers— that is the outcome. You can say now they are healthy living, doing her or his duty. So that's the result. (Interview 62)

As a result of the massive amounts of aid provided for the scale-up of treatment, the number of people receiving antiretroviral drugs increased from 23,951 in 2005 to 432,293 in 2012 which corresponds to 61% of those eligible for ART (World Health Organization et al. 2013; TACAIDS 2014d). While the rapid expansion of ART coverage was judged a notable achievement which saved the lives of many, it implied a substantive absorption of financial and human resources in a system which already faced a severe shortage of health workers, money and equipment for the supply of basic services. Health officials found it highly problematic that the roll-out of HIV care and treatment negatively affected other areas in terms of staff and budget availability. The head of Health Care Financing in the MoHSW remarked:

When you focus your money on HIV, you know the impact: attraction of staff from other programmes to HIV, because you have money here. But again, the problem cannot be really solved because HIV patients should go to the labs which are not functioning. So you are focusing on an area which also depends on other areas (...). So the challenges are there. (Interview 54)

This statement hints at one of the most problematic issues related to the entry of global health initiatives in Tanzania: they not only shifted the bulk of the HIV budget to treatment but also skewed the overall resource allocation in health towards HIV/AIDS at the expense of other crucial areas and prevalent diseases (Hutton 2004). Imposing conditions and their own agendas, the new HIV players undermined the efforts and main goal of the newly established SWAp mechanism, namely to achieve a more harmonised form of health governance under which all stakeholders would act in concert. As in other recipient countries, the emergence and dominance of these actors in Tanzania profoundly impacted on both policy-making and aid relationships in the way of distorting national priorities and distracting the government from assuming leadership (Biesma et al. 2009).
The current state of aid relations in health and HIV/AIDS

The reforms in the early 2000s were meant to increase national ‘ownership’ and to establish a new kind of partnership between the government and donors. However, the state of affairs ten years after seems far from ideal. The sophisticated dialogue structure which has repeatedly been refined and revised over the years exists primarily on paper. A Danida advisor placed in the MoHSW expressed her frustration about constant delays of meetings:

*The actual policy dialogue between the partners and the ministry has been very weak. It’s been very poor. I mean the Troika has had to fight to meet with the management to discuss how things are going. And meetings are barely kept on schedule – meetings that are supposed to happen within the SWAp all of which are kind of conditions for the basket funding (...). And it’s not very much as an advisor that you can do other than kind of remind people that now there is a commitment to have a meeting, that it’s important.* (Interview 34)

The meetings referred to in the statement above include, amongst others, the various technical working groups and the Technical Committee of the SWAp (TC-SWAp) which was meant to serve as a joint monitoring and advisory body of the health sector (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare et al. 2009). Commenting on the functioning of these forums, the first secretary for health and HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands Embassy stated:

*Some of them work relatively well – MoE [Monitoring and Evaluation] because we have an initiative there, HR [Human Resources] is working relatively well, not so effective though. There’re other ones who hardly meet (...). Officially we still have four TC-SWAp meetings a year. Now if you have two, it’s much.* (Interview 38)

Both interviewees attributed the lack of adherence to meeting schedules first and foremost to management challenges in the Ministry of Health, pointing to unfilled positions, a high staff turn-over and an ‘ad hoc’ way of working which kept their counterparts ‘constantly running’. These problems were explained primarily in terms of inappropriate organisational structures, poor human resource management and a general lack of administrative capacity in the MoHSW. But the first secretary in the Netherlands Embassy also blamed the aid community for exacerbating the situation:
It’s also partly caused by the various partners who are coming in and out, etc. Because if you now look at the dialogue structure, the idea was that we would not as partners bother the government too much beyond those structures. That was the idea. If you had interest in HR, then you would be active in the HR group. [But] of course development partners still have their own direct lines. And strong governments, they would say more often ‘sorry, but…’ You don’t have to be too Stalinist on that, but it shouldn’t be that you are constantly busy. (Interview 38)

The fact that donors on their part do not comply with the agreed working arrangements and principles – such as to limit their interaction with decision-makers to the formal dialogue in order to reduce ‘transaction’ costs and to increase transparency – was confirmed by various officials. The TACAIDS director of finance and administration, for instance, referring to the Finance and Auditing Technical Working Committee for HIV/Aids, reported:

> Apart from that committee, we have side meetings with bilaterals, for example, to discuss their funding and some of the issues they want. Because sometimes some of the development partners (…), they still want to do some of the things separately. So we accommodate them and we have these meetings and agree on various issues. (Interview 61)

The continuation of bilateral ‘backdoor’ meetings and the persisting endeavour by donors to push individual interventions not only absorb immense staff time from the Tanzanian administration, but subvert transparent negotiation and concerted action as envisaged by the SWAp code of conduct and the respective terms of references for the DPG sub-groups Health and AIDS (see Development Partners Group on Health 2006; Government of Tanzania & Development Partners 2007; Development Partners Group on HIV/Aids 2013). Although ‘development partners’ themselves have set up and signed these rules, they seem little committed to adhere to them. Commenting on the deficient compliance and the difficulty of ‘speaking with one voice’, the head of the German health programme and then chair of DPG Health remarked:

> Harmonisation is partly an arduous process since naturally each organisation, each country is driven by its headquarters, by the capital where political processes take place; and a change of minister can have quite an effect. This applies for Germany as well as for other countries – when governments and ministers change, foci and priorities are likely to shift. (Interview 37, translated by authors)
Both Tanzania’s health reforms and its Aids response are highly vulnerable to the shifting priorities and preferences of external funders, given the considerable dependency on aid money. This has been particularly palpable in recent years when three of the largest contributors to the health basket, together accounting for about one third of the estimated budget pledged for 2011/2012 (Government of Tanzania & Health Basket Partners 2011), almost simultaneously announced a reduction or termination of their support. The Netherlands decided to cut the number of its recipient countries from 33 to 15. Tanzania was informed that Dutch aid would phase out (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011). Norway decided to withdraw from health in order to focus on five other priority areas (environment, climate and forest, management of natural resources, fiscal issues and illegal capital flight, human rights and democracy) (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation 2014). Germany informed the government that it would scale back the overall financial volume of support to the sector and pull out from the health basket (GIZ Tanzanian German Programme to Support Health 2011). Approached upon this decision – which seems remarkable insofar as Germany had been instrumental in setting up this mechanism – the head of the German health programme responded with noticeable unease:

Yes, in fact there has been a change of tack which indicates that political decision-making processes are not always coherent with technical advisory approaches (…) And quite recently, indeed, Germany in bilateral governmental consultations made clear its position that we pull out of basket funding. The partner was sitting on the other side and emphasised the importance of this contribution, asking ‘please do not withdraw, it is important for the health reform programme which runs until 2015 and we thought Germany would stay and provide support’. But there was a political decision (…) towards which we now have to orientate ourselves. (Interview 37, translated by authors)

For policy-makers and senior officials in the MoHSW, Germany’s and other donors’ decision to terminate support was more than untimely insofar as it severely threatens the implementation of the Health Sector Strategic Plan III (2009–2015) which calculated on increased rather than reduced contributions

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226 The health basket side-agreement for fiscal year 2011/2012 estimated that partners would pledge an amount of USD 115.81 million; thereof, the Netherlands was expected to contribute USD 21.29 million (EUR 15.00 million), Germany USD 9.93 million (EUR 7.00 million) and Norway USD 5.40 million (NOK 30.00 million) (Government of Tanzania & Health Basket Partners 2011).
from foreign funders, particularly through the health basket (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 2009). In the view of the chief medical officer, the withdrawal of major funders jeopardises the progress under way:

In the reduction in childhood deaths, there has been a downward trend very fast. There is also a downward trend in maternal deaths, though it is not as fast. But we believe that with all these developments, the speed will definitely pick up. And this is where we will start now showing the countries, our partners, there is the impact or the outcome of their support (...). [If the partners] pull out now, then definitely they will be doing a great disservice to all these efforts and the processes and the achievements that are starting now to emerge. (Interview 52)

Not only decision-makers in the MoHSW fear a setback through a decrease in foreign funding. Officials at TACAIDS face a similarly worrisome situation with respect to shifting aid priorities, as the chairperson of the organisation noted when interviewed:

The reality is right now, funds are getting less (...). When I joined TACAIDS in January 2007, there were lots of resources, particularly from the World Bank, very flexible resources so that we could say ‘NGO so and so, you’re just starting and your work is on orphans, I think this is very good because nobody has gone to that area. Please take this money, this is how you report, this is how you will be audited, go ahead.’ Right now you cannot do that anymore. So the writing is on the wall that the shape is different, the interest is different and people have other priorities. (Interview 63)

Since 2011, TACAIDS has been confronted with budget cuts from several key donors: The United States and Germany decided to reduce financial aid for HIV/Aids-related activities, and Denmark and Canada announced they would terminate their support for the Aids response (i.e. the National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Framework) by 2015 (GIZ Tanzanian German Programme to Support Health 2011; Tanzania Daily News 2013). Moreover, the Global Fund cancelled its next round of funding due to insufficient pledges of its members, informing recipients that no new grants could be financed until 2014 (IRIN News 2011b). In response to decreasing aid volumes and the imminent phase-out of long-standing partners, the chairperson of TACAIDS has repeatedly called for increased efforts to raise domestic resources, warning that a failure to get prompt replacement for the funding would result in a ‘heavy blow’ affecting
the achievements made in the fight against HIV/AIDS within the last 20 years (Tanzania Daily News 2013).

Aid dependency and its implications

The centrality of aid for the implementation of health reforms and the national AIDS response seems widely internalised among leadership ranks in the responsible organisations. Given that about 97% of the health ministry’s development budget and the overall budget for HIV/AIDS is financed from outside (see Chapter 6), programmes and initiatives which do not conform to donors’ expectations are unlikely to be realised. As a consequence of this experience, government officials appear to have accepted that policy-making and planning is done in close consultation with experts from the respective funding agencies. This is reflected by statements from the finance directors of TACAIDS and the MoHSW, respectively, who commented:

_HIV/AIDS in Tanzania is heavily funded by donors and therefore it’s very important to have that relationship (…) – I would say that we have a very, very close relationship in everything that we do._ (Interview 61)

_The way we have built our dialogue structures – we discuss technically with partners, we plan technically together with them, that’s how it has been meant to be; we don’t just go up while we have not shared with the working groups. That’s how we work._ (Interview 54)

Aid representatives were outspoken about the fact that despite all rhetoric of ‘partnership’ the whole dialogue is based on the government’s financial needs. A Tanzanian World Bank specialist bluntly stated:

_It is inevitable that the government has a dialogue with the donors because there is a gap. If there wasn’t a gap, if the government was self-sufficient, then probably it would not need any that kind of discussion._ (Interview 47)

The dependency relationship underlying the dialogue latently shapes the outcomes of discussions insofar as government officials are forced to reach some sort of agreement with donor representatives in order to maintain room

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227 As an attempt to mitigate its donor dependency in the field of HIV/AIDS, the government is in the process of establishing an AIDS Trust Fund through which it hopes to mobilise more local resources (Lamtey 2012; Kassim 2014). At the time of writing, however, the fund was still not effective.
for manoeuvre. Faced with extreme resource scarcity, rejecting ‘advice’ of ‘development partners’ is hardly an option for decision-makers. That money is openly used as a lever to give ‘technical’ arguments more clout was bluntly confirmed by a Tanzanian health expert working for WHO:

_External experts would normally use the muscle of their financial support – ‘if you don’t do this, then I think I would advise my government not to give more money’. So the national experts will not win that war although they might have reasons behind it (...). So we have seen sometimes the agenda of external experts prevails simply because of the financial side of it._ (Interview 44)

This statement suggests that the mechanisms established in the context of the SWAp reform with the aim to strengthen Tanzanian leadership have not been particularly effective. Even in the case of the health basket fund which was set up to increase the government’s steering capacity and control over resources, donors are said to strongly determine what the money is used for, depriving the MoHSW of its discretionary authority. The WHO officer, himself a former ministry member, alleged the following examples:

_In terms of diagnostics, what is important in the hospitals [is that] there are x-rays. In its policies, the ministry says we want to rehabilitate x-rays – and we [the development partners] say ‘no, that one, we are not buying it’. (...) And then we go to the health basket fund and we say, you forgot to put iodine (...), we will give you money for that. The minister has not even requested that!_ (Interview 44)

In both the health sector and the field of HIV/Aids, the government’s capacity to exercise leadership in terms of defining its own priorities seems strongly limited, with donors still earmarking aid for specific purposes even though this contravenes the agreed principles of cooperation. Assessing the government’s options in terms of reacting against the dominance of external funders, aid officials acknowledged that in the current setting it seems to have little choice. The health programme manager of GIZ rhetorically asked:

_There is a health system which is utterly underfinanced (...). So don’t you take what comes along to at least support some of the most essential pillars?_ (Interview 37)

In a similar vein, a Danida consultant placed in the MoHSW remarked:
It has to be a very confident ministry that will kind of turn down money – even if it’s contrary to its own policies. (Interview 34)

Yet, not all interviewees agreed with the ‘no choice’ narrative. Contrary to the aid officials quoted above, a Tanzanian health specialist with ten years of work experience in the MoHSW argued:

You can say no! It does not always send the money away. But many people are worried that if you say no, then the support will go away. (Interview 68)

There is an additional factor that further weakens the government’s stance towards donors: senior officials in the administration seem to encounter aid experts with a sort of resignation based on the experience or mere assumption that they are eventually dependent on the donor community’s consent. This sort of pre-emptive submissiveness was observed by the former executive chairman of TACAIDS who criticised:

The natives are not sufficiently strong to impress upon the donor organisations that ‘this is what we want and this is how we want it’ (...). I notice that some of the people, some of the officials who get their assistance, they sort of say ‘well, he has the money, he wants to do this and that, well, why don’t we cut a long story short, and let’s agree with him’. That’s where things go wrong. (Interview 64)

Given the perceived precedence of securing aid, officials in the MoHSW and TACAIDS appear to have internalised a conduct of compliance towards the donor community. The fact that ‘advice’ from aid experts is seldom contested would also explain why there are rather few occurrences of serious disputes in policy discussions, as interviewees from both sides noted. While in the official narrative, the lack of conflict is represented as an indication of the harmonious relationship of ‘partners’ in health and HIV/AIDS, it can also be interpreted as a sign that aid dependency has eroded recipients’ resistance.

Conclusion

Analysing Aids policy-making by investigating the formulation process of the HIV prevention strategy, Hunsmann (2013: 169) came to the conclusion that “international donors are not merely ‘influencing’ AIDS policy in Tanzania; they are co-constitutive of its very existence”. The observations of this case study not only support the finding that there is no sphere of independent,
endogenous policy-making in HIV/AIDS, but suggest that this also applies to the health sector in general. A retired official, previously director of policy and planning at TACAIDS, stated:

*I don’t think we have policies really that are purely national (…) because it’s a process and this process always involves the partners. They have a say there, they do have a say.* (Interview 65)

With the introduction of the SWAp and related mechanisms, aid experts have become legitimate participants in the policy discourse with a strong voice in defining priorities and setting the agenda – as opposed to national stakeholders from civil society, the private sector or the research community whose role therein seems if at all marginal. While the dialogue forums in health and HIV/AIDS were actually established to reduce donor influence and induce “a more distant form of advice” (Interview 73) it de facto brought aid actors closer to decision-making insofar as it entrenched their participation in policy development, analysis and evaluation. Given the intense engagement of donors in decision-making processes, it is questionable whether the new partnership approach has increased national leadership in health and HIV/AIDS governance as claimed by its proponents, or rather weakened it by institutionalising external interference.

**South Africa health: Rebuilding relationships with local and external experts**

*Sectoral context*

With an estimate of 5.26 million people living with AIDS (roughly 10% of the population) as of 2013, South Africa counts the highest number of HIV infections in the world (Statistics South Africa 2013). At the same time, the country faces a high incidence rate of tuberculosis (TB) which has more than doubled since 2001 (The Lancet South Africa Series Executive Summary Core Group 2009). While the large numbers of HIV and TB cases would be enough to put any nation under stress, three other ‘colliding epidemics’ – chronic illness and mental health disorders, injury and violence-related deaths, and maternal, neonatal and child mortality – exacerbate the situation; the fact that the ‘quadruple burden of disease’ falls on a system which is still characterised by inequity and fragmentation makes matters worse (The Lancet South Africa Series Executive Summary Core Group 2009). The persistent inequality caused by apartheid is manifested in the huge discrepancy between the ‘first-
class’ health services provided by private suppliers financed through medical schemes and out-of-pocket payments, and the dismal conditions in tax-funded public facilities which the vast majority of the population relies on. It is also reflected by a skewed distribution of health workforce between the private and the public sector, as well as between urban and rural areas (McIntyre et al. 2008). In the latter, the chronic shortage of qualified staff is particularly severe.\textsuperscript{228} Overall, the Department of Health identified a deficit of about 83 000 health professionals in 2011 (Department of Health 2011b).\textsuperscript{229} Despite the challenge of multiple epidemics, systemic flaws and a severe workforce crisis, the government has achieved notable successes since Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi assumed office in 2009. Life expectancy at birth increased from 54 years in 2005 to 60 years in 2011, and the under-5 mortality rate per 1 000 live births significantly declined from 56 in 2009 to 42 in 2011; both developments are attributed to the extensive roll-out of antiretroviral treatment and massive efforts in the prevention of HIV mother-to-child transmission undertaken by the new administration (Bradshaw et al. 2012; Mayosi et al. 2012). Although immense problems remain, the health improvements brought about in recent years give rise to positive outlooks. In an article published by The Lancet in late 2012, authors assessing the changing health conditions in South Africa came to the conclusion that “for the first time in two decades, this progress instils a basis for hope” (Mayosi et al. 2012: 2040).

\textit{Governance structures}

The structures of health governance in South Africa are outlined by the National Health Act of 2003 which provides the framework for a uniform system encompassing public and private health establishments (Republic of South Africa 2004b). According to the Act, the overall responsibility for healthcare in the country lies with the Department of Health (DoH) which as the national line ministry provides strategic guidance to the sector by setting norms and standards, developing policies and plans, and monitoring their implementation. The provinces in turn are directly responsible for delivering and overseeing most health services from primary care level to specialised

\textsuperscript{228} McIntyre et al. (2008) provide numbers which reflect the huge disparity: in the public sector, there are 4 200 people per general doctor, 10 800 people per specialist, and 620 people per nurse; the private sector, in contrast, counts only 590 people per general doctor, 470 people per specialist, and 100 per nurse. Overall, “the majority of health care professionals work in the private sector, despite serving the minority of the population” (McIntyre et al. 2008: c).

\textsuperscript{229} The human resources situation in health is exacerbated by the brain drain of health professionals to foreign countries, with an estimated attrition rate of about 25\% per year (Department of Health 2011b: 31). As of 2003, there were more South African medical practitioners working abroad (8 921 in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) than counted in the public sector (7 517) (Department of Health 2011b: 22/32).
hospitals; each provincial government has its own health department with considerable autonomy in terms of resource allocation and programme implementation (Mills et al. 2012).

The health departments at the national and provincial levels are supported by health councils which are assigned to provide advice on health policy matters; the Act further established consultative forums comprising representatives of key stakeholders from the public and the private sector, civil society, academia and donors (Republic of South Africa 2004b).

The highest advisory and coordinating body on HIV/AIDS is the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) which was formed in 2002 to strengthen the country’s multi-sectoral response to the epidemic. After a decade in which SANAC existed in name but was more or less dysfunctional, the organisation underwent a major reform process initiated in 2012, through which its mandate was expanded and its structures were radically revamped. As an independent entity, SANAC brings together ministerial leaders, provincial government members and civil society actors from nineteen sectors who are represented in the decision-making plenary chaired by the deputy president. A small secretariat is supposed to facilitate and coordinate the work of the different SANAC institutions such as the Programme Review Committee which monitors implementation, technical task teams which process scientific findings and the Civil Society Forum which was established to foster dialogue and information sharing. The secretariat is also expected to support provincial and district AIDS councils and to help mobilise domestic and international resources. This makes it a focal point for the aid community.

**Donor presence in the health sector**

As a focus area and ‘cross-cutting issue’ of many aid organisations, HIV/AIDS receives by far the largest amount of external resources provided for health in South Africa, “often in conjunction with support related to other sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis or primary health care in general” (Fölscher et al. 2010: 59).

According to a spending assessment covering the years 2007/08–2009/10, aid for HIV/AIDS and TB interventions amounted to ZAR 5.57 billion (approximately USD 693 million) almost half of which was sourced from the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) programme (see data cited in Republic of South Africa 2012: 92 and SANAC 2013: 3). Hence, considering the scope of financial contribution, the US government stood out as the preeminent player in the field, followed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom through DFID and the European Commission. All together, these five organisations
accounted for 82% of external funding. The list of donors which contributed smaller amounts and technical assistance is extensive, comprising more than 14 bilateral and seven multilateral agencies (see Republic of South Africa 2012: 93/95).

Given the significant number of foreign actors engaged, it is remarkable that only two of them, namely DFID and the EU, support the health sector beyond HIV/TB, and that aside from informal information-sharing there has been little coordination until recently. In order to improve the harmonisation and alignment of donor activities with the national agenda, the DoH in 2011 launched an ‘Aid Effectiveness Framework for Health in South Africa’ which provided for the establishment of joint planning and coordination forums (Department of Health 2011e). At the time of our interviews, these institutions did not yet fully work as expected; both DoH officials and donor representatives, however, expressed the sentiment that communication had already improved, pointing to a renewed political leadership and cooperative spirit emerging after an era in which donor–government relationships had broken down.

**HIV and health governance in post-apartheid South Africa**

From today’s viewpoint, the history of health governance in post-apartheid South Africa can be told in three chapters structured along the respective response to the country’s most perilous disease: the first is about the initial years of democracy in which the rapid spread of HIV urged the government to take the issue onto the political agenda; the second covers the era of Aids denialism under the Mbeki administration resulting in a deep crisis of government legitimacy and break up of relations with the science and the donor communities; the third starts with the change of leadership in 2009 which paved the way for a radical policy shift initiated by a “passionate” (Interview 11) new health minister with a “powerful presence” (Interview 27) in the DoH and beyond.

Motsoaledi’s coming into office is widely regarded as the crucial turning point for HIV and health governance in South Africa. In order to provide the background for conceiving the paradigm shift he brought about, pivotal

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230 These included the governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, as well as IOM, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNHRC, UNODC, WHO and the World Bank (Republic of South Africa 2012). In addition, various international foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Caritas, Red Cross, Médecins sans Frontières, Open Society Institute and the Ford Foundation provided funding and assistance (SANAC 2013).

231 The only informal arrangement which has existed since around 2009 was the so-called EU Plus Working Group in which donors from European member states shared information about their activities, but without any government participation (Interview 5).
developments prior to his term are briefly sketched out before focusing on recent policy processes and the involvement of aid experts therein.

*An epidemic on the rise: The spread of HIV in an era of health system transformation*

When the first democratic government took over power in 1994 a central endeavour was to overcome the “racially discriminatory, fragmented, and poorly coordinated” (Benatar 1997: 1537) health system inherited from the apartheid regime. The *White Paper for the Transformation of the Health System in South Africa* released in 1997 envisaged a unified national system centred on comprehensive primary healthcare (PHC) at the district level. In order to redress past inequalities, emphasis “should be placed on reaching the poor, the under-served, the aged, women and children, who are amongst the most vulnerable” (Department of Health 1997). The realisation of reform, however, was hampered, first and foremost by the vast lack of human resources and managerial capacity in the public sector (Coovadia et al. 2009). As in other ministries, the new cadre of civil servants in the health department comprised often highly engaged but inexperienced officials “with little knowledge of large bureaucracies, let alone how to achieve innovation through these bureaucracies” (Schneider & Stein 2001: 726).

Such institutional constraints also impaired the implementation of the first National AIDS Plan (NAP) which was developed by the National AIDS Committee of South Africa (NACOSA) and adopted by the Department of Health in 1994 (Schneider & Stein 2001). With its emphasis on the need to adopt a multi-sectoral response and human-rights centred approach, the document represented to many an ideal policy, combining “the technical with the political” and being “comprehensive, practical and carefully costed” (Schneider & Stein 2001: 725). The fact that the fight against Aids was declared a ‘Presidential Lead Project’ signalled high-level commitment to combat the epidemic and granted preferential access to resources from the government’s Reconstruction and Development Programme for related activities (Schneider & Stein 2001).

Yet, the plan did not materialise as expected; in hindsight, many observers attributed the failure to achieve the ambitious aims to the fact that the human resources at the government’s disposal in the throes of transition had been greatly over-estimated (Schneider & Stein 2001; Butler 2005; Wouters et al. 2010). Lacking skilled and experienced personnel, the administration struggled to translate the plan into action and to effectively use the resources set aside by the government and donors. Of the ZAR 53 million allocated by the EU for the implementation period 1995–1996 only ZAR 7 million (equivalent to
13%) had been disbursed by May 1997 (Schneider & Gilson 1999; Schneider & Stein 2001).

Due to the inability to put intentions into practice and emerging policy contestation among Aids players, HIV rapidly spread during Mandela’s presidency, with prevalence among adults aged 20–64 rising from 1.5% in 1994 to 9.7% by 1999 (ASSA AIDS Committee 2011).

Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang: The era of Aids denialism

When after South Africa’s second general elections in 1999 Thabo Mbeki took over power, “the HIV/AIDS epidemic had already taken on horrifying proportions: approximately 4.2 million South Africans were living with HIV, and an additional 1600 people were infected daily” (Wouters et al. 2010: 176). Right after assuming office, Mbeki directed the development of a new five-year HIV/AIDS & STD Strategic Plan which was finalised in January 2000 (Department of Health 2000). While the pace of its formulation seemed to signal the new leadership’s commitment to tackle the increasing Aids problem, the plan lacked clear activities, timeframes and budgets, and thus remained “somewhat generalised in terms of what is to be done and how resources are to be prioritised” (Grimwood et al. 2000: 292); most notably, it kept quiet about concrete treatment options. A novelty put forward was the establishment of a multi-sectoral South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) with the mandate to advise the government on HIV/Aids and STD policy and to oversee and enforce implementation (Wouters et al. 2010). That the institution was to be formed by representatives from government and civil society was widely commended; yet, when it came to the appointment of members, lead activists and renowned academics were excluded (Schneider 2002; Fourie & Meyer 2010).

Mbeki’s relationship with the Aids and biomedical community had already been strained by his key role in the Virodene affair and his publicly articulated claims about ‘toxic side-effects’ of antiretroviral drugs (Baleta 1999).

Tensions culminated when Mbeki convened a Presidential Aids Advisory

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232 Serious disputes in the Aids context emerged about the Sarafina 2 awareness play project (1996), the quack remedy Virodene (1997), Aids notification plans (1997) and antiretroviral therapy for pregnant women (1998). For details on these controversies, see Schneider (2002).


234 In 1997, researchers from the University of Pretoria presented Virodene as an allegedly ‘breakthrough’ treatment to cure Aids. Mbeki as deputy president was a key actor supporting the group despite strong scepticism on the part of the South African biomedical community which he accused of retarding access to life-saving therapy. Due to insufficient evidence and toxic risks, Virodene was eventually rejected by South Africa’s Medicines Control Council (Schneider 2002).
Panel to re-examine causes and solutions to the epidemic, inviting a group of ‘dissidents’ who denied the link between HIV and Aids. Mbeki’s championing of the latter evoked massive critique on the part of the local and international science community. Internal pressure led the president to withdraw from the debate, but not to reverse his stance (Schneider 2002).

Mbeki’s agenda was pushed forward by his Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang who persistently rejected the roll-out of antiretroviral treatment, portraying it as ‘poison’ and promoting unproven alternative remedies instead (Nattrass 2008). Even after being forced by the Constitutional Court to make ARVs nationally available to pregnant women as means to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) and being pressurised by the Cabinet to introduce highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) for Aids-sick people, the minister continued to promote alternative remedies and preached the alleged benefits of garlic, olive oil and lemon juice for curing the disease (see Heywood 2003; Wines 2004; Nattrass 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Comparing the number of persons who received ARVs between 2000 and 2005 with an alternative of what would have been reasonably feasible in the country during that period, a study later estimated that more than 330 000 lives were lost due to the government’s reluctance to provide antiretroviral treatment (Chigwedere et al. 2008).

During the era of Mbeki/Tshabalala-Msimang, the Department of Health’s relationships with other actors in the Aids field broke down completely. The local science community and civil society formed alliances internally and internationally to push forward PMTCT and ART programmes on the ground, supported by foreign donors who channelled their aid to NGOs and research projects, bypassing the ministry. The cleavage between the central leadership and lower levels of the system became apparent in that doctors backed by medical associations and provincial governments openly defied the national policy by supplying ARVs to patients (IRIN News 2002; Stoppard 2002).

235 For a detailed analysis of the public discourse on the matter and its implications for the relationship between politics and science, see Weingart (2002).

236 The government was taken to court by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) which launched a constitutional challenge when the government restricted the provision of the antiretroviral drug Nevirapine to pregnant women for the purpose of preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. TAC alleged a violation of the right to healthcare services as granted by the South African Constitution. In 2002, the Court ordered the Minister of Health and the nine Health Members of the provincial Executive Committees to extend the availability of Nevirapine to state hospitals and clinics and to launch a national programme ‘without delay’. A detailed summary of the case is provided by Heywood (2003); all official documents related to the litigation are provided on the website of the International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (http://www.escr-net.org/docs/i/403050, last accessed on 18 January 2015).

In the light of increasing domestic and international pressure following the health minister’s speech at the Toronto Aids conference where she reaffirmed her renitent stance, the Cabinet eventually transferred the responsibility for Aids policy to Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (Nattrass 2008). This shift of authority and the sick leave of Tshabalala-Msimang in late 2006 opened up a ‘window of opportunity’ (Kingdon 1984) to overcome the impasse. As chairwoman of SANAC and the inter-ministerial Aids committee, Mlambo-Ngcuka drove forward the development of a new strategic plan, incorporating Aids specialists who had previously been excluded from the policy terrain (Timberg 2006).\footnote{Another key protagonist in that process was the Deputy Health Minister Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge who during Tshabalala-Msimang’s sick leave in late 2006 spoke out against her own government, admitting Aids “denial at the very highest level” (Bevan 2006). Together with the deputy president (allegedly an old friend of hers) she pushed for policy change, reaching out to civil society and scientists whom her absent superior had refused to consult. In August 2007, Madlala-Routledge was sacked by President Mbeki on the grounds of an unauthorised trip to the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative Conference in Madrid and “her inability to work as part of the ‘collective’” (Sosibo 2007).} After extensive consultations with health professionals, scientists, activists and officials from various sectors, the HIV&Aids and STI Strategic Plan for South Africa 2007–2011 (commonly abbreviated as NSP standing for National Strategic Plan) was finalised by an expert task team and approved by the Cabinet in May 2007 (Venter 2007). In contrast to the preceding document, the NSP set clear targets, such as halving the rate of new HIV infections and providing treatment, care and support to 80% of all HIV-positive people and their families by 2011 (SANAC 2007). The plan was praised by health experts, donor representatives and activists alike for its ambitious goals and vigorous commitments which signalled a clear policy shift (IRIN News 2007a; Sapa & AFP 2007). A key actor involved in drafting the document was more critical about the actual soundness of the strategy and expressed the importance of the NSP for civil society at that time:

\textit{I don’t think it was a perfect policy paper – people say that, but it wasn’t. The current five-year plan was something we forced as a way to give us power to shape the policy and implementation agenda. So with that plan at the beginning of 2007, we just threw everything into it, because in 2007 Manto Tshabalala-Msimang was still the Minister of Health, Thabo Mbeki was still the president – they’ve been forced to back down, but they were still there. So we didn’t have strong grounds. So the new strategic plan came along and we said, ok, ARVs, male circumcision, prevention of mother-to-child transmission – let’s just put everything in, because if it’s in there (…) it would strengthen our hand if we had to litigate, if we could go to the courts and say, look, the Cabinet has agreed to this as a matter
of policy, why is it that they are not prepared to do it when it comes to implementation? (Interview 27)

The NSP was a strong symbol of policy change, but realising it with still reluctant protagonists in key positions proved challenging. Implementation was also hampered by the fact that expertise had “fled from the system” (Interview 27), as a civil society leader put it. Under Tshabalala-Msimang, experienced officials had left the health department on the grounds that they felt unable to justify the institution’s policy against their own conviction. A former official who had worked in the Aids unit quit public service in 2003 for this reason:

I found myself apologising for where I worked and when I caught myself I realised I can’t do this anymore. (Interview 5)

The era of Tshabalala-Msimang as head of the department ended in September 2008 when Mbeki resigned after losing support of his own party. Interim President Kgalema Motlanthe immediately dismissed Tshabalala-Msimang and replaced her with Barbara Hogan, one of the few ANC members of parliament who had spoken out openly against the Aids denialism of the Mbeki government (Gilbert & Cherry 2008).

Shortly after taking office, the new health minister in a landmark speech before leading scientists, clinicians and activists explicitly acknowledged the causal link between HIV and Aids and commended the contribution of science and civil society in the fight against the epidemic (Treatment Action Campaign 2008). She also actively approached the donor community which over years had been ‘chased away’ by her predecessor, as an official in the Swedish Embassy put it, requesting for the renewal of cooperation:

She asked us to do a lot of things, because she realized that we put ourselves in order and we knew what was going on. And one of the things she asked us was to do a mapping to see what money was going where, which we did, and she also asked us to assist with technical assistance and to assist with money. (Interview 5)

Hogan’s cooperative stance and commitment to a decisive response to the Aids epidemic evoked much enthusiasm among donors, activists, and health professionals; after her first 100 days in office, the head of the Southern African AIDS Clinicians Society assessed her as “absolutely superb”, stating that “she hasn’t put a foot wrong” (Kapp 2009: 291).

Despite such praise and to the disappointment of many, Hogan’s term as health minister ended after only nine months. In the course of a cabinet
shuffle in May 2009, the newly elected President Zuma moved Hogan to the less influential public enterprises portfolio, replacing her with the largely unknown medical doctor and previous provincial education minister Aaron Motsoaledi (Smith 2009; Wouters et al. 2010). While his successor had put an end to the era of Aids denialism, the new health minister faced the dual challenge of bringing the epidemic under control and turning South Africa’s deteriorated health system around.

Paradigm shift in HIV and health governance

Given Zuma’s statement about showering after having sex with an HIV-positive woman and the fact that he removed the popular ‘hero’ Hogan from the DoH, experts raised doubts whether the course prompted by the interim administration would be pursued under this president (The Lancet 2008). Yet, there were signals that he seriously aimed to follow that direction. In a speech at the World AIDS day commemoration on 1 December 2009, Zuma proclaimed a set of changes and initiatives which signalled a radical break with past policies. Aside from pledging increased prevention efforts, he announced a massive testing campaign and a drastic expansion of access to treatment. With effect from April 2010, all children under one year would get antiretroviral drugs if tested HIV-positive; ARVs would also be made available to pregnant women and people with both tuberculosis and HIV having a CD4 count of 350 or less (The Presidency 2009).

The new criteria for ART eligibility literally mirrored the revised recommendations on treatment, prevention and infant feeding in the context of HIV which the WHO had released only one month earlier (World Health Organization 2009a). According to a British advisor in the Department of Health, officials had even arranged a conference call between the WHO and the Presidency “to make sure every single line was totally in line with the international guidance because they were so paranoid of being criticised, because they’d gotten it so wrong before” (Interview 1).

Not only the new ART guidelines, but also other decisions presented by the president were informed by analysis and advice from specialised aid agencies:

239 In 2006, Zuma was on trial for an alleged rape of an HIV-positive woman. In his cross-examination, he testified that after having ‘consensual sex’ he took a shower thinking this “would minimise the risk of contracting the disease” (BBC News 2006). Zuma was eventually cleared of the rape charge but rebuked by the judge for “totally unacceptable” behaviour (Peta 2006).

240 CD4 cells are white blood cells which are essential for the human immune system. If depleted or reduced through an HIV infection, the body is highly vulnerable to opportunistic illnesses and other infections. The CD4 count of a healthy adult ranges from 500 to 1500 cells per cubic millimetres of blood; an HIV-positive person with a CD4 count of less than 200 is diagnosed as having progressed to Aids (NAM Aidsmap 2014). Until 2009, access to treatment in South Africa was limited to those patients who had reached this stage.
shortly after taking office, the health minister had requested the UN to assist
the national department in conducting an assessment of the health sector’s
HIV/Aids response and a mid-term review of the NSP (see SANAC 2010).
Specialists from UNAIDS and WHO partnered with senior officials of DoH to
undertake these exercises which brought up a range of recommendations,
such as to integrate HIV and TB services at the primary healthcare level, shift
care and treatment tasks to nurses and auxiliary health workers, introduce a
fixed-dose combination of ARVs and modify procurement costs (World Health
Organization South Africa 2009; Interviews 6, 11). To the surprise of the
experts involved, the government demonstrated an unexpected high level of
receptiveness to their advice. A UNAIDS specialist commented:

> All the recommendations have been addressed to a large extent, so they
  were very responsive to everything (…), and it’s been very nice to see that
  responsiveness, I must say. (Interview 6)

After a decade of confrontation and disconnect from the global health
community, the South African government seemed anxious to regain
legitimacy by aligning national policies to international standards and by
revitalising cooperation with international players. The latter were now
considered key partners for realising the new health vision of the ‘10 Point
Plan’ which had been released as soon as the new administration was in
place. The plan outlined the top priorities for the sector. It emphasised the
need to provide strategic leadership, implement a National Health Insurance,
improve the quality of health services and accelerate the HIV/Aids response
(Health Systems Trust 2010).241 The commitments were later formalised in a
‘Negotiated Service Delivery Agreement’ which entailed concrete targets to be
achieved by 2014 such as increased life expectancy and reduced maternal and
child mortality (Department of Health 2010).

The new health minister’s and his director-general’s approach to the aid
community to assist in implementing the targeted initiatives was perceived as
a paradigm shift in country offices and embassies. A South African official who
at that time still worked for the US government commented:

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241 The 10 Point Plan lists the following priorities: provision of strategic leadership and creation of a social
compact for better health outcomes; the implementation of a National Health Insurance; improving
the quality of health services; overhauling the healthcare system and improving management;
 improved human resources planning, development and management; the revitalisation of physical
infrastructure; accelerated implementation of the HIV and Aids strategic plan and the increased
focus on TB and other communicable diseases; mass mobilisation for the better health of the
population; review of drug policy; strengthening research and development (see Health Systems
Trust 2010).
I remember very well during the old administration, the international donors used to have a meeting outside the department where they would discuss strategies on how to assist the department and one of the biggest barrier by that time was that they were not really welcomed (...). But when the new administration came into place, it came up with ambitious plans. We want to put everybody on treatment to get rid of the backlog, we want to improve the sites, we want to come up with new programmes. And the new administration was very open because they went outside to all these donors and said: ‘This is the challenge that we have and this is our plan, where do you fit into this, what can you do?’ That’s when all the donors came and said now ‘we can offer this, we can do this, we can do that’. (Interview 17)

This statement hints at two notable aspects pertaining to the renewal of relations. First, the way the government addressed potential partners signalled that the new decision-makers were willing to re-assume leadership and fill the void in which the health department had been deadlocked for a while.242 They ‘opened the door’ to the donor community, but at the same time made it clear that the government’s agenda would be the frame of reference for support.

Second, the fact that donors were immediately able to pledge assistance indicates that they had not been ‘passive’ while being excluded from the policy terrain and ‘waiting out’ Mbeki (Fourie et al. 2010). Instead, they had prepared themselves for leadership change by refocusing portfolios and setting aside resources which they offered as soon as new political protagonists entered the scene.243 Technical agencies such as WHO and UNAIDS had put HIV specialists in place ready to provide policy advice if requested.244

How external expertise and money was utilised in the course of subsequent reforms is illustrated by two exemplary processes outlined in the following section, namely the development of the National Strategic Plan 2012–2016 and the introduction of the National Health Insurance system.

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242 A DFID advisor who entered the health department in 2009 remarked: “When I first arrived (...), things were quite messy here, it was very difficult. The previous minister had left, there was a big vacuum, the director-general had been moved out, it was almost anarchic. There was no sense of who was in control” (Interview 1).

243 DFID and GIZ, for instance, came up with new Aids and health-related programmes which were agreed in 2009/2010, namely the SARRAH programme (Strengthening South Africa’s Revitalised Response to AIDS and Health) and a Multi-sector HIV and Aids Prevention Programme (MHIVP).

244 Both the medical officer for HIV/Aids in the WHO country office as well as the UNAIDS senior policy & programme adviser interviewed for this research started their work in South Africa in 2009.
As indicated, the coming in of Motsoaledi meant a complete about-turn not only of politics, but also of donor–government relations in the field of health and HIV. A DoH official illustrated this by saying:

*Immediately all the donors came into the department again, you could see the faces of people whom you couldn’t see during the old administration. You couldn’t see them. But now they are all in the building, they are welcomed and there is continuous working together and collaboration.*

(Interview 17)

Within a short period of time, external experts particularly from UN bodies such as WHO, UNAIDS or UNICEF established close working relationships with key officials in the DoH and SANAC whom they immediately assisted in setting up initiatives such as the mass HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) campaign launched in 2010 (SANAC Secretariat 2010).

When the term of the NSP 2007–2011 for South Africa’s Aids response was coming to an end, a pending task on the agenda was the development of a succeeding document. Preparations for the process of policy formulation began in early 2011, though not in a very coordinated way, as a DFID advisor remarked:

*SANAC was approaching people for bits of work and it was very, very messy and not sustainable, and no one knew who was doing what. So we agreed to form a group of development partners that had funds or resources, and together with SANAC and UNAIDS – UNAIDS took on quite a strong role earlier on in helping to coordinate that – we formed a group and created a matrix of who would support what. So SANAC said they wanted consultants in these provinces and they wanted someone working on the national desk, and then we provided expertise as part of that.* (Interview 1)

In the following period, SANAC received technical assistance at various levels, with experts being deployed and funded by a range of donors including DFID, Sida and specialised UN organisations. A senior policy & programme advisor of

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245 The government launched the national HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) campaign in April 2010 aiming at encouraging citizens to know their HIV status and access counselling and treatment. While the ambitious goal of getting 15 million people tested by June 2010 was not reached, the initiative was still praised as the largest scale-up of HCT world-wide, with over 13 million being tested and 400 000 people initiated in ARVs within one year (Bodibe 2011; Mbengashe 2012).
UNAIDS was commissioned to assist the SANAC CEO in drafting a first road map for the whole NSP process which was taken to the Programme Implementation Committee for approval and subsequently presented to the plenary to be endorsed. The first key activity organised was a two-day think tank meeting in April 2011 where representatives from government departments, civil society and donors met to deliberate “what should be in the NSP, what’s the evidence showing us, what’s the guidance, where should we be going” (Interview 6), as a UNAIDS advisor put it. The discussions were informed by findings from a range of analyses which had been conducted since 2009, such as the mid-term review of the first NSP for 2007–2011, the review of the health sector response, a national Aids-spending assessment, and comprehensive technical reports on the status of the epidemic, current policies and prevention efforts (see Fraser-Hurt et al. 2011; SANAC 2011a, 2011b). All of these studies had been realised with external funding and immense technical support, most notably from UNAIDS, WHO and the World Bank which had provided experts to coordinate and compile the evidence gathered.

This brought to light that since the development of the first NSP, approximately 1.5 million people had become newly infected with HIV, and despite massive expansion of treatment an estimated 2 million had died of Aids-related causes. It was strongly suggested that the only way to overcome the epidemic was “to rapidly intensify HIV prevention efforts so as to virtually halt all new infections” (SANAC 2011a: 5). The latter recommendation matched well with the new UNAIDS global strategy ‘Getting to Zero’ which the UNAIDS country director presented to participants of the think tank meeting. Aside from setting the target of zero Aids-related deaths and discrimination by 2015, it advocated for high-quality, cost-effective HIV prevention programmes to reach zero new infections (UNAIDS 2010).

After two days of consultation, delegates arrived at some basic decisions. The three ‘zeros’ should be adopted as long-term vision of the NSP which for the first time should explicitly integrate tuberculosis, given the outstanding high co-infection rate of HIV and TB; moreover, prevention should become a prime pillar of the response. In August 2011, a first draft NSP was disseminated for public comment. In the following months, the editorial team received more than 100 written submissions from a broad range of organisations and individuals with diverse interests. Key issues of contestation which emerged in the process of consolidation related to the nature and scope of the policy document – how broad or specific it should become, what kind of concrete targets it should include (and how many), and to what extent it should or must be costed (Treatment Action Campaign & Section27 2011: 14). Some civil society organisations such as Section27 strongly pushed for costing and budgeting the plan to ensure implementation and be able to hold the state
accountable in terms of resource allocation (Section27 2011). In their view, the new NSP would need to serve as “a plan that people actually refer to rather than just (…) a symbol” (Interview 27), as a lead Section27 member put it, arguing:

_A symbol was good for a point. But that’s not what we need now. Now we need a plan that will actually guide implementation._ (Interview 27)

Other stakeholders, however, had a different conception of what the document should be, envisaging a framework strategy with overall goals and objectives rather than a detailed plan. A senior advisor representing the EU on the SANAC Programme Implementation Committee which oversaw the writing process commented:

_This is something that we found with working through the document time and time again, bringing people back again and again that this is not a plan, it’s a strategy! Because people want to go further every time. And I think the consultants that we have – they’ve chopped down every time and said no, this is not a plan, this is a strategy. The provinces and the people who are going to execute this, they will make this a plan._ (Interview 5)

The final version, approved by the SANAC Council in mid-November 2011, comprised a chapter on costing which estimated financial requirements at ZAR 131 billion (equivalent to USD 16 billion) for the whole period (SANAC 2011c). However, it was explicitly emphasised that the amount should be indicative, “with detailed implementation plans being developed separately by the sectors and provinces” (SANAC 2011c: 76) by March 2012.

On World AIDS Day in December 2012, the ‘National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB 2012–2016’ was officially launched by the president (IRIN News 2011a). The four key objectives forming the basis of the response were to address social and structural barriers to HIV, STI and TB prevention, care and impact; to prevent new HIV, STI and TB infections; to sustain health and wellness; and to increase the protection of human rights and improve access to justice (SANAC 2011c).

Despite some criticism on specific aspects, the new NSP was widely commended by actors from the government, civil society and donors who

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246 The Treatment Action Campaign and Section27, for instance, criticised insufficient attention to tuberculosis throughout the document, claiming that “TB has been integrated more deeply into each successive draft of the NSP, but often still seems overwhelmed by HIV” (Treatment Action Campaign & Section27 2011: 7).
particularly lauded the process through which the policy was produced. A South African HIV specialist in the Swedish Embassy commented:

> All of us pitched in, and we all supported this and we all funded this (...). I think a lot of people have worked really hard to get this together in a year’s time. It was a consultative effort, which has never really in the past been so much consultative like this time, and I think this was under the leadership of the minister and the new DG and other role players in the Department. I think it was really, really positive. (Interview 5)

Even the usually highly critical Treatment Action Campaign (formerly attacked as a ‘disgrace’ by Tshablala-Msimang) stated that the “NSP 2012–2016 has been developed through an unprecedented degree of collaboration between civil society and the Department of Health, under the auspices of SANAC”, and proclaimed that it marked “the beginning of a new era in the response to HIV, TB and the social drivers of these epidemics” (Treatment Action Campaign & Section27 2011: 1). After a decade in which the cooperation between government and other players had completely broken off due to the leadership’s counteraction to international consensus on HIV/Aids, the NSP process signalled that South Africa was coming ‘back on track’.

**Creating a South African National Health Insurance system**

A second undertaking which marked Motsoaledi’s first term in office was the establishment of a National Health Insurance (NHI) system. That process has so far significantly been informed by expert analysis and international ‘evidence’.

The idea of introducing some form of mandatory health insurance had been taken up several times in South African history, even long before its democratic transition. During the 1990s, several policy proposals were brought forward, but not followed up further (McIntyre 2010). At its 2007 policy conference in Polokwane, the ruling African National Congress passed a resolution which called for the realisation of a National Health Insurance system (African National Congress 2007). Yet, only two years later, the NHI emerged as an explicit priority on the government’s agenda. In his first budget speech as health minister, Motsoaledi justified the envisaged reform as follows:

> The present system of healthcare financing can no longer be allowed to go on, because it is simply unsustainable. No way can we perpetuate a

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247 The different proposals over time are outlined in the *Green Paper* on the NHI; see Department of Health (2011d: 12–14).
system whereby we spend 8.5% of the GDP whereas 5% caters for 14% of the population or 7 million people, on the remaining 3.5% caters for a whopping 84% of the population or 41 million people. Nowhere in the civilised world can you find that state of affairs; the present model of healthcare financing is just outright primitive, and we are going to abandon it. (…)

Hon Chairperson, what is NHI? – it [sic] is a system of universal healthcare coverage where every citizen is covered by healthcare insurance, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, young or old, sick or very healthy, black, white, yellow or people of whatever [persuasion]. (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2009)

In late 2009, Motsoaledi established a Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) made up of 25 individuals with a cross-section of skills and expertise, including lead South African scientists, health practitioners, government officials, representatives from the pharmaceutical and medical schemes (health insurance) industries, and ‘international’ (i.e. foreign) health experts. Led by the CEO of the Human Sciences Research Council, the committee was given the task to compile recommendations regarding the NHI design and relevant health system reforms.

After one-and-a-half years of preparation (and considerable public speculation), the government presented a first policy paper on the NHI. Issued in August 2011, it outlined the vision of an integrated healthcare system in which everyone would have access to appropriate, efficient and quality health services provided through appropriately accredited and contracted public and private providers. Financial risk protection for the whole population was to be ensured through a mechanism of cross-subsidisation, whereby funding contributions would be linked to an individual’s ability-to-pay and benefits would be in line with an individual’s need (Department of Health 2011d). In view of the need for a “complete transformation of healthcare service provision and delivery” and a “radical change of administration and management”, it was proposed to phase in the NHI over a period of 14 years, whereby the first five years would be used to establish core institutions and to introduce core features at selected pilot sites (Department of Health 2011d: 5).

The launch of the Green Paper on the NHI was followed by immediate action on the part of DoH, such as entering stakeholder discussions and setting key interventions scheduled for the first phase of implementation. Thereby, it received substantial assistance delivered through the DFID-funded ‘SARRAH’ (Strengthening South Africa’s Revitalised Response to Aids And Health) programme. Negotiated in 2009, SARRAH was set up as a programme
channelling technical and financial support to strategic initiatives related to South Africa’s health sector reforms. The budget of GBP 25 million was placed at the disposal of the national health department for selected priorities agreed with DFID. A central role in this flexible arrangement was given to a senior advisor from the UK who was seconded to the DoH with the dual mandate of advising high-ranking decision-makers and overseeing SARRAH-funded activities. HLSP, a UK-based, internationally operating firm specialised in consultancy, project management and policy advice in the health sector, was contracted to supply expertise and administrative support as requested by DoH leaders.

The NHI became a key area for which these services were used. The range of tasks carried out by contracted specialists in the course of conceptualisation and implementation is comprehensive. The compilation of technical support and consultancies specifically addressing NHI matters was provided in the first four years of the SARRAH programme (2010–2013). The information was drawn from project briefs available on the programme’s website as of 1 August 2014. Since not all activities might have been documented in this form, the list should be understood as indicative rather than fully comprehensive:

Table 19: Expert support to the NHI process through SARRAH 2010–2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description / Purpose</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support for the Ministerial Advisory Committee on NHI</td>
<td>01/2010–12/2012</td>
<td>HLSP, N James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy for the provision of support services for the NHI communications strategy</td>
<td>03/2010–05/2012</td>
<td>Meropa Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical support for the purchasing sub-committee of the NHI Ministerial Advisory Committee</td>
<td>09/2010–11/2010</td>
<td>Team of consultants led by L Gilson &amp; K Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy services for the purchasing sub-committee of the Ministerial Advisory Committee</td>
<td>09/2010–08/2011</td>
<td>J Miot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project planning and management support to the DoH project team</td>
<td>12/2010–12/2011</td>
<td>J Katzke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance to district specialist task team</td>
<td>04/2011–10/2011</td>
<td>K Jacobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy on development of packages of services to be provided on NHI pilot sites</td>
<td>03/2011–12/2011</td>
<td>L Ngubane, K Grant, D Whittaker, J Katzke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project manager to coordinate work related to district clinical specialist teams</td>
<td>08/2011–01/2012</td>
<td>N Bandezi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert advice to the Office of the DG in developing NHI health-purchasing implementation steps</td>
<td>09/2012–09/2013</td>
<td>S O’Dougherty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project manager to the Office of the DG in coordinating the national community outreach programme</td>
<td>10/2012–03/2013</td>
<td>E Paulus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical support for General Practitioners initiative</td>
<td>2012–2014 (sic)</td>
<td>SARRAH team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Categorising the assignments listed above, one can broadly differentiate between facilitating activities and analytical work, which was assigned to experts outside the DoH. They provided either administrative support or technical input. The former mainly helped to drive forward the NHI process insofar as consultants were commissioned to organise meetings and events, to ensure that timetables were adhered to, or that written documentation was distributed to all stakeholders. Such tasks were the main components of the logistical support for the Ministerial Advisory Committee, technical assistance to the district specialist task team or the project management support to the DoH project team. In the latter case, for instance, the consultant was expected to “develop and maintain a planning process and secure timely contributions and revisions from team members and stakeholders; monitor and report on project implementation plans with timelines, critical path and risk management; facilitate all Project Workgroup forums and record deliberations and findings for the Project Leader” (SARRAH 2011a).

While these kinds of assignments required strong administrative/managerial skills, the second type presupposed specialist knowledge of a highly technical nature and analytical abilities. Experts were commissioned to generate ‘evidence’ in the form of reports, analyses and assessments to be used for refining NHI components. The range of documents produced includes six technical papers on resource allocations and purchasing strategies distributed to the Ministerial Advisory Committee; a report for the director-general on the proposed packages of services to be available under the NHI with details on how these services could be delivered through a purchaser/provider split; a study to determine frameworks and modalities for contracting private sector general practitioners in public clinics; a revised national costing of the NHI; an assessment of ‘ideal’ primary healthcare facilities; a rapid appraisal of the 11

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The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

NHI pilot districts after 12 months, covering their status in terms of quality, hospital reforms, primary healthcare (PHC) re-engineering, infrastructure, human resources, management performance, referral systems, and cooperation with private doctors. The list could be further continued. Notably, most of the analyses supplied through the SARRAH programme were done by renowned health experts from South African academic institutions such as the University of Witwatersrand or the University of Cape Town. Hence, while the expertise was mobilised by external agencies (i.e. DFID/HLSP), it was largely provided from ‘locals’ with national and international research experience contracted to serve as consultants to the DoH.

Nevertheless, external health system ideas did play a significant role as points of reference in the development of the NHI. Many of the commissioned studies delineated ‘lessons learned’ outside South Africa, pointing out how models worked or did not work in other countries. The Green Paper on the NHI explicitly refers to international evidence and experience. Following the release of the Green Paper, DFID organised three study tours to the UK where high-level decision-makers such as the minister and DoH’s director-general met with their counterparts and visited health institutions to gain an understanding of the British system (SARRAH 2011b, 2012a, 2012b). Together with the EU, DFID also co-sponsored and facilitated an international conference held in Johannesburg where experts from aid organisations, foreign universities and health ministries presented experiences from a range of developing and developed countries, including South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Ghana, Germany, Australia, France and the United States. The event was attended by high-level decision-makers including the minister and the director-general, senior government officials, experts from academic institutions and private sector representatives (see Department of Health 2011c). In her concluding speech, DG Matsoso highlighted that the “lessons shared were eye-opening” (Department of Health 2011c: 43), and that insights gained would be considered in the process of refining the South African NHI system.

The conference took place in early December 2011 and was a key event in the phase of public consultation on the Green Paper which formally ended on 30 December 2011. By then, the DoH had received over a hundred submissions from various stakeholders; main points of criticism were a lack of public deliberation in the initial stage of policy development, and vagueness with respect to crucial aspects of the reform, such as cost implications and the future role of private schemes (see, for instance, Helen Suzman Foundation 2011; South African Private Practitioner Forum 2011; Van den Heever 2011). In early 2014, the minister announced that the release of an NHI White Paper

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249 See, for instance, Department of Health (2011d: 27/3).
which would shed light on such details was ‘imminent’ (Kahn 2014a; at the
time of writing, the much anticipated document had not yet been disclosed,
but was said to be ‘in the final stages’, Jadoo 2014; Kahn 2014b).

Patterns of current health governance

The processes of NSP and NHI development were described in sufficient detail
to illustrate the paradigm shift within the DoH which represents a radically
changed stance towards the use of scientific knowledge and expert advice.
In contrast to the preceding administration, the new leadership extensively
draws on local and external expertise, adopting a governance approach which
bears a number of characteristics.

First of all, it strongly features scientific knowledge as the point of departure
for policy development. Documents such as the National Strategic Plan for HIV/
Aids and the Green Paper on the NHI entail numerous references to studies and
analyses whose findings are used to justify decisions. The following extracts
are exemplary for the prevailing pattern of argumentation:

The NSP’s goals and strategic objectives are guided by evidence from
various reports, including the Know Your Epidemic (KYE) report, a
situation analysis of TB in the country and other epidemiological studies.
These studies identified key populations that are most likely to be exposed
to or to transmit HIV and/or TB (...). Within each strategic objective, these
key populations will be targeted with different, but specific interventions,
to achieve maximum impact. (SANAC 2011c: 13)

Evidence has demonstrated that those who are not adequately covered
by any form of health insurance are among others women; children; the
elderly; low income groups etc. It is for this reason that coverage should be
extended to all these populations. (Department of Health 2011d: 12)

Whereas the previous government had openly questioned the robustness
of evidence put forward by the mainstream science community, it is now
used as the main means of legitimation for policy decisions. The importance
of underpinning decisions with consensual scientific knowledge was also
emphasised by the chief director of the HIV/Aids unit in the DoH who stated:

We pursue evidence – evidence that’s relevant, that’s closer to the issues.
We understand evidence is not sufficient; it has to deal with values and
other issues. So we’re not ideological about what we’re trying to do. Our
starting point because of the burden of disease that we need to fix [is that]
there are some things that we know that work and we want people to help us to do that. (Interview 19)

Although the DoH director seemed wary of conveying the impression that the government blindly followed evidence without scrutinising it for its relevance and embedding it into the social context, his statement affirms the significance of scientific knowledge as a reference point in policy-making.

A second feature which was manifest in both the NSP and NHI processes is the strong orientation towards international guidance; the uptake of WHO’s ART guidelines and of universal coverage as an overall objective of the health system (promoted by the WHO since 2005) illustrates efforts to realign policies with the international agenda. After an era in which the government deliberately ignored recommendations from global health players, decision-makers in the DoH seemed eager to demonstrate that this has changed with the new leadership, as a DFID advisor pointed out:

_They went out of their way to make sure absolutely everything that they did was totally in line with international policy (…). HIV/AIDS is the most obvious one but in other areas as well. And they are at pains to point out that they stick to international guidance. So when WHO suggests changing the CD4 count, the level at which you start treatment, South Africa takes it on immediately and they’ve been very proactive in keeping up with international best practice because they have this terrible history together. So they’ve gone to the other extreme now, they can’t now do enough in line with international guidance._ (Interview 1)

The fact that alignment with international guidance has become an imperative in the health department is reflected by the statement of a director who emphasised:

_Whatever we are doing has got to be internationally accepted (…); we need to make sure that we meet the international standards._ (Interview 18)

The new orientation towards scientific knowledge and international guidance has come along with an openness towards external assistance and receptiveness to advice which can be seen as the third characteristic of the current governance approach. In both the NSP and the NHI processes, the DoH extensively drew on advisors and consultants to realise the envisaged reforms. In seeking facilitative and analytical support, however, decision-makers seem selective in terms of
whom to approach for what kind of tasks and on which terms. Commenting on the consultants coming into the DoH, a senior official emphasised:

> Whatever work they are doing, it’s work that is a directive of the Director-General or the minister. So they don’t come here and want to do their own things. (Interview 18)

The statement points at what can be seen as the fourth outstanding feature of current health governance, namely the strong guidance executed by DoH leadership ranks, both in terms of setting the agenda and directing experts in supporting the department’s policy work. Various advisors engaging with the DoH reported on the firm stance of their South African counterparts. A UNAIDS specialist commented in this regard:

> They do close the doors if they don’t think you’re useful. And they don’t miss their words, they say it clearly – they fire the consultant on the night. (Interview 6)

Since the DoH has been severely weakened in its capacity through the brain drain of specialists, it now depends on the support of outside experts to manage the massive reforms envisaged. Yet, it seems as if decision-makers use external assistance in a deliberate way, namely as a means to get things done quickly and to figure out how to achieve objectives rather than which objectives to achieve. This is reflected by a statement of the health department’s chief director for HIV/AIDS who explained:

> You find that when the problem is quite substantial, you tend to spend your time on the things that need to be fixed today. So, what do experts and technical advisors do? My sense is that what they do is really look in the manner how we’re doing things and say: ‘Look, there is one aspect, if you would do this, this will release many of those things that you need to do.’ So, it’s like finding the disconnect between the things that we really want to do, the capacity that we have and the thing that’s holding us back not do it (…).

> They can do the analysis of the composition of my finance, they can tell, look, you know, if you’re saying this where you want to go, in the manner how your budget is right now, it is unlikely you get there (…). When we

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250 A review of the SARRAH programme, for instance, reports that in many cases the DoH took over responsibility for the appointment of consultants, “and instructed DFID and HLSP accordingly” (Wright 2012: 13).
hit bottlenecks on quality – when we’re not achieving our coverage, when we’re not being able to actually attract the right people and reach the right people, then there is some analysis that needs to be done (...) – that’s the role that they can actually play. (Interview 19)

In this narrative it becomes clear that external experts are ascribed a facilitative function, rather than a determining role in policy development and implementation. The chief director of the HIV/Aids unit used a fitting metaphor to illustrate this approach in a nutshell:

*These people for me, when they come in, they are co-pilots; they’re not driving the plane.* (Interview 19)

**Re-building relationships: Government interaction with the local science community**

As mentioned earlier, decision-makers in the DoH increasingly resort to members of the South African science community when seeking assistance, which indicates that after almost a decade of schism between government and academia, relationships are slowly building up. Yet, the lack of ‘histories of trust’ and of institutionalised dialogue still hamper the full utilisation of local knowledge resources. Various interviewees raised the issue that policy-makers tended to request support from donor organisations although expertise was locally available. A WHO representative in the Pretoria country office reported on her experience:

*South Africa is asking us for expertise when we use their South Africans to send elsewhere. So it’s like the proverbial biblical saying ‘the prophet is not known in his own home’ acts here.* (Interview 12)

Aside from the still existing disconnects between the political system and academia, another problem lies in the fact that the South African knowledge community in health is strong with respect to scientific performance, but small in terms of numbers (see Chapter 6). Given multiple obligations, the capacity of scientists to serve as advisors in policy processes is severely limited, as a professor at the University of the Western Cape stated:

*South African knowledge communities have an absolute place – there’s just not always enough of it and enough time. You know, I mean in a place like this, a) it’s quite difficult to travel to Pretoria for a meeting, b) we’re*
training people and the universities have loads of other things to do, so the ability to provide the very kind of flexible, immediate expertise when it’s needed in very short time frames – the donors do that and mobilise it from international consulting communities. (Interview 28)

The local knowledge base is too small to cope with the burden of disease in South Africa. The lack in capacity of expertise is thus filled by aid organisations which source specialists from their country offices and from global expert networks.

**Conclusion**

As shown by using the examples of the Aids plan and the National Health Insurance reforms, external experts do have a presence in the current era of South African health governance. Providing advice, analysis and administrative support, they impact on policy development and implementation in various ways. Yet, they do so at the request of leaders who demonstrate a high level of steering capacity both in terms of setting the agenda and dealing with donors. Not being dependent on aid money, decision-makers are able to determine the conditions of support and to be selective with regard to whom to approach for assistance. At the same time, a strong local science community and vocal civil society limit the risk of external interference.

The fact that South Africa’s HIV and health policies have been radically revised and adjusted to international standards is less the result of outside pressure than of the government’s attempt to regain credibility in the global health arena and to redress the failures of past policies. In the reform of the health system, UN bodies such as WHO and UNAIDS have gained considerable influence, “not so much because they’ve come in and sought to be influential, but because what they have produced has been picked up internally and used to develop policy” (Interview 27), as a civil society leader put it. In a similar vein, a professor at the University of the Western Cape remarked:

> I would say (...) it’s not a kind of very overt and forceful colonisation of ideas; it’s a process of harmonization and emulation. (Interview 28)

The policy shifts of recent years can thus be interpreted as a process of deliberate alignment pursued by a health administration which is characterised by both a high degree of receptiveness to expert advice and science and a considerable degree of autonomy in setting its own agenda.
The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

Tanzania environment: Opportunistic adaption

Sectoral context

Tanzania is by comparison a rich country in terms of environmental wealth with respect to its natural ecosystems of forests, grasslands, savannah, wetlands, rivers, lakes and the Ocean (United Republic of Tanzania 2012c). The world-famous Serengeti National Park is only one of several biodiversity hotspot areas. Tanzania’s territory is home to numerous endemic animal and plant species (United Republic of Tanzania 2009): by 2003, 10 008 plant species, 316 mammals, 229 breeding birds, 335 reptiles, 116 amphibians and 331 fish species had been counted in the country (UNEP 2014). Although almost 30% of the terrestrial area and around 10% of territorial waters are protected (IUCN & UNEP-WCMC 2011), large parts of the natural habitat are at risk: many biosphere reserves such as Mount Kilimanjaro are severely affected by land degradation (Temba 2012). Coastal and marine areas are suffering from pollution and erosion that have led to a decline in living resources (United Republic of Tanzania 2009). To this is added over-harvesting, illegal logging, bush fires, and detrimental cultivation practices leading to rapid deforestation (United Republic of Tanzania 2009). According to the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010, Tanzania is among the top ten countries that had the largest annual net loss of forest area world-wide between 2000 and 2010. (FAO 2010b). Poverty is seen as the main cause driving the persistent exploitation. The former director of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division sketched the linkage between poverty and deforestation as follows:

People are heavily depending on [forests] for their livelihood. They don’t have another support. They don’t have another alternative, they need to survive. Sometimes climate change is causing havoc here. Crops don’t produce when they are about to produce. Drought at flowering stage or at the fruiting stage, maize and everything collapses, what do you do? And you need to see your children surviving. So the alternative is to harvest a tree (…).

251 Other areas that are known as biodiversity hotspots are the Eastern Arc old Block-Mountain Forests (Usambara, Nguru, Uluguru, Ukaguru and Udzungwa Mountains); the coastal forests (e.g. Pugu, Rondo); the Great Lakes for Cichlid fishes (lakes Victoria, Tanganyika and Nyasa); the marine coral reef ecosystems; and the ecosystems of the alkaline Rift-Valley Lakes (e.g. Natron and Eyasi) (United Republic of Tanzania 2009).

252 From 2005 to 2010, Tanzania lost 403 000 hectares per year, equivalent to 1.16% of the total forest area (FAO 2010a).
In Dar es Salaam and other cities, 90% of the household energy is charcoal. You can’t use electricity, it is very expensive. You can’t use gas, it is very expensive. And sometimes availability of gas is a problem, acquisition of the gadgets, they are very expensive. So for a normal person, middle income and others – they use charcoal. Then those guys in the rural areas, they know there’s a big demand for charcoal. Some business people are going in the rural areas looking for charcoal. So if you cut more trees for charcoal making, you earn something. (Interview 58)

Forest and nature degradation is a huge problem in Tanzania, threatening not only more than 700 plant and animal species, but also the livelihoods of large parts of the human population.253

**Governance structures**

The structures of environmental governance in Tanzania are laid down by the Environmental Management Act (EMA) of 2004, which frames environment as a horizontal policy issue cutting across various sectors. Line ministries such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, which is also responsible for forests, are required to manage environmental matters in their respective areas. The Act, however, established the director of environment and his unit – the Division of Environment in the Vice-President’s Office (VPO-DoE) – as the focal body in charge of policy-making, coordination and oversight under the overall leadership of the minister of environment. EMA also specified the mandate of the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) which serves as the leading technical advisory and regulatory agency. Aside from conducting and coordinating research, its main functions are to enforce compliance with environmental quality standards by reviewing and monitoring environmental impact assessments. As in other policy areas, the actual implementation of policies and legislation falls under the responsibility of local government authorities (United Republic of Tanzania 2004).

**Donor presence in environment**

Since 2004, donors supporting and carrying out environmental activities in Tanzania have collaborated in the so-called ‘Development Partners Group on Environment’, or DPG-E in short. As of 2014, it comprised ten bilateral funders, namely Belgium, Canada, Denmark, DFID (UK), the European

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253 According to the IUCN Red Lists 2012, 302 plant species and 408 animal species are currently threatened, including species classified as critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable (IUCN 2012a, 2012b).
Union, Finland, France, Germany (and GIZ), Norway and USAID, as well as five multilaterals, namely UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. Depending on their focus, these aid providers are related to sub-groups on climate change, natural resource management or environment in general. The members of these groups are supposed to interact with their main counterparts in government, that is, the Vice-President’s Office – Division of Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, through the established dialogue structure including meetings on thematic areas, cluster working groups, and discussions related to general budget support (Development Partners Group Tanzania 2014b). Yet, at the time of research, participants admitted that these forums did not work as they should. Government officials complained about being unduly occupied with aid meetings, and donor representatives were upset about the absence of policy-makers in the same and the consequent slow pace of decision-making. Overall, relationships seemed tense, with both sides accusing the other for not adhering to the agreed conditions of dialogue and cooperation.

The making of environmental policies in Tanzania

Environment conservation has always been a playground for external actors in Tanzania. Under colonial rule, the British imposed preservation policies which restricted human activities in designated game parks and nature reserves. After independence, a range of external organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the German GTZ took over and divided up the funding and management of national parks, while Tanzania’s first President Nyerere supported the expansion of protected areas primarily in order to boost the country’s tourist industry (Levine 2002).

With the Brundlandt Report ‘Our Common Future’ published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, the notion of ‘sustainable development’ ascended to the international agenda, and environment gained centre stage as an issue of global concern (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). For Tanzania, this translated into generous funding offers arising in the run-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, as the former Director of Environment remembered:

When at that time, in 1991 January, these negotiations for the Earth Summit were going on, it gave rise to several meetings at the global level, at the regional level within Africa, at the sub-regional level, and at national level (…). And in order to be able to understand the process and to contribute meaningfully, you simply had to get time to participate, to travel – and that’s expensive. So in Tanzania, I put up together a team
of – at that time, I think it was twelve technical people from various ministries, and also representations from NGOs. And you couldn’t have the government to support these travels because per diems and flight tickets are expensive. I was simply fortunate that there was such a climate of giving from the donors – it was basically the donors who were just covering everything. They simply wanted me to produce the list of people that were going. So I wrote a letter, ‘this is what I want’. They were just happy to support. (Interview 66)

Amongst the major aid providers sponsoring the participation were UNDP, the Netherlands, and Nordic countries such as Sweden. According to the former director of environment, their support enabled his delegation to take part in the summit’s preparation as well as in negotiations on the three Rio Conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification. From his perception, Tanzania was thereby given a voice in the global discourse.

The increased donor interest in environment not only yielded new programmes and funding mechanisms (e.g. the Global Environment Facility), but also brought forth new conditions. The World Bank, for instance, made environmental impact assessments of varying depth obligatory for the approval of projects, and it required IDA borrowers to formulate ‘National Environmental Action Plans’ which Tanzania endorsed in 1994. As in many other recipient countries, this donor-initiated document led to the foundation of the subsequent national environmental policy. Aside from identifying six urgent problems – land degradation; lack of accessible, good quality water; environmental pollution; a loss of wildlife habitats and biodiversity; deterioration of aquatic systems and deforestation – it framed environment as a cross-sectoral issue and set overall policy objectives (United Republic of Tanzania 1997). The role of the lead organisation in the process of policy development was given to the Division of Environment in the Vice-President’s Office, which received substantial assistance from the Danish government.254

Although, according to the former director of environment, the Danes did not set any conditions related to the policy content, it is remarkable that their financial support justified the presence of Danida representatives in policy discussions, as the following statement reflects:

They supported the process. And I don’t remember any incident where we had any preconditions given by the Danish on what we should say in our policy. There was nothing like that. Of course, because they provided

254 The Division of Environment was established in 1991 under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. It was transferred to the Vice-President’s Office in 1995 to give it more political clout (Death 2012).
funding, they would be interested in the process to ensure that the money they are giving is being put to good use. And so we would bring them on board in terms of the meetings we’d hold for our discussions and they would be giving their views. (Interview 66)

The policy was primarily shaped by national consultations and a range of workshops attended mainly by government officials, donor spokespersons and a few NGO activists. Despite

a clear bias toward an elite understanding of the problems of the environment and their solutions, (...) there was little public or private controversy over the guidelines and plans of the National Environmental Policy when it was finally adopted by the Cabinet in 1997. (Elliott-Teague 2011: 849)

In the subsequent years, environment as a policy issue came to the fore on Tanzania’s agenda; the increasing importance can partly be attributed to the active lobbying of intellectuals with influence in political circles (Assey et al. 2007), but also to an enhanced engagement of international organisations which supported environmental champions “to express their views” (Interview 66) and financed government activities. According to the then director of environment, donors accounted for over 90% of the funding for environmental programmes and projects undertaken by his unit.

The Division of Environment also received external assistance in the course of two policy processes which took place in parallel in the early years of the new millennium: the development of the Environmental Management Act (EMA) and the poverty reduction strategy known as MKUKUTA. Donors backed up these processes through two major initiatives: the ‘Institutional and Legal Framework for Environmental Management Project (ILFEMP)’ designed to prepare environmental legislation, and the ‘Integrating Environment Programme’ aimed at ‘mainstreaming’ environmental issues into MKUKUTA. The former was primarily sponsored by the World Bank, USAID, Sida and the WWF; the latter was supported by UNDP, UNEP, Danida, DFID and the Norwegian government (Assey et al. 2007; Elliott-Teague 2011). Both initiatives were officially housed in the Vice-President’s Office, and included the use of national and foreign experts for various tasks.

The ILFEMP project started in 1998 with a team comprising an American technical advisor and three Tanzanian specialists from different research institutes commissioned to review the institutional framework of environmental management, and, in the second phase, to draft a respective
CHAPTER 7 The Impact of Expert Advice on Policy-making in Young Democracies: Sector Studies

The process involved consultative meetings with representatives from government ministries, non-governmental organisations and donors. Supporting studies and background papers were produced by individually hired scholars (Elliott-Teague 2011). After two years of analysis and discussion, the team published a report outlining viable options for institutional arrangements. Interestingly, they rejected initial donor concerns over institutional structures as unjustified (Elliott-Teague 2011). Taking up the report’s recommendations on future legislation, an expert group paid by the World Bank and made up of two members of the University of Dar es Salaam, the executive director of the Tanzanian law organisation LEAT (Lawyers’ Environmental Action Team) and the chief parliamentary draftsman in the Attorney General’s Office, developed a Bill which went for Cabinet approval. After a brief public hearing, the Environmental Management Act was finally passed by parliament in 2004 (Elliott-Teague 2007).

The use of local expertise, the wide range of stakeholder workshops held and the fact that the final drafting team consisted of solely Tanzanian actors suggest that the act indeed reflects a national perspective on how environmental management should be organised. There is no evidence that international assistance for the preparation and formulation of the law presupposed any concrete policy demands (Elliott-Teague 2011). Yet, donors were intensely engaged in the process, pushing for the development of environmental legislation. It is questionable whether, without their sponsoring of the review and drafting process, EMA would have been developed in this form and at that pace.

A similar ‘pushing effect’ of external assistance was attained through the ‘Integrating Environment Programme’ related to the process of developing Tanzania’s National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA). Initiated in 2003, the aim of the programme was to make sure that the policy considered environment as a key component in poverty reduction efforts.

The idea of ‘mainstreaming environment’ internationally came up at around the turn of the millennium when a number of influential World

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255 According to Elliott-Teague (2011), the Tanzanian experts consisted of Dr PJ Kabudi, a member of the Faculty of Law at the University of Dar es Salaam as well as the chair of the board of directors of a non-governmental organisation called the Lawyers’ Environmental Action Team (LEAT) who was brought in as the legal expert and project coordinator; Dr Suma Kaare who at that time was affiliated with the Economic and Social Research Foundation and served as the institution’s specialist, and Mr Deo-Gratias Gamassa, an ecologist at the College of Wildlife Management, who was hired as natural resources expert. The foreign member of the ILFEMP team changed. Finally, the position was filled by an international consultant from Great Britain.

256 The final team preparing the EMA draft consisted of two members of the Faculty of Law at the University of Dar es Salaam, the acting executive director of the Lawyers’ Environmental Action Team LEAT and the chief parliamentary draftsman in the Attorney General’s Office (Elliott-Teague 2007).
Bank publications such as the environmental strategy ‘Making Sustainable Commitments’ (World Bank 2001) established linkages between environment, poverty and growth, and made the claim that these needed to be better addressed in developing countries policies (see also World Bank 1996; Bojö & Reddy 2002; Dale 2005). The aid community broadly adopted this agenda, and UNDP together with UNEP launched a global ‘Poverty-Environment Initiative’ through which governments in developing countries would be assisted to include environmental objectives into national plans and budgets (Bass & Renard 2009). Tanzania was one of the pilot countries receiving financial and technical assistance for this purpose. The Vice-President’s Office, which was assigned to coordinate the mainstreaming efforts, got a full-time advisor from the UK who played a central role by disseminating environmental information and analyses, keeping the process on track and assisting the MKUKUTA drafting team (Assey et al. 2007). Donors’ technical leads provided input through their participation in the Environment Working Group which was established “to improve consensus amongst environmental stakeholders” (Assey et al. 2007: 18), bringing together representatives from government, the private sector, civil society and aid organisations. Moreover, the programme funded a range of analyses which substantially informed the MKUKUTA document, such as a review of expenditures on environment (Vice-President’s Office 2004) and the development of indicators of poverty-environment linkages (Vice-President’s Office 2005). Ultimately, the MKUKUTA entailed at least 15 environment-related targets (Rutasitara et al. 2010: 12), ranging from ‘reduced land degradation and loss of biodiversity’ to ‘improved access to clean and safe water’ and ‘reduction in harmful industrial and agricultural effluents’ (United Republic of Tanzania 2005: 37, 33, 46). Progress in achieving these targets was to be measured against mostly quantitative indicators as specified in the MKUKUTA log-frame and monitoring master plan (United Republic of Tanzania 2005; Ministry of Planning, Economy and Empowerment 2006).

257 The World Bank’s publication list on the environment-poverty nexus has become too vast to be reflected here. Amongst others, the Bank has issued a range of ‘Environment Strategy Notes’ as well as an ‘Environment Matters’ series with annual reviews, all of which are accessible on its website. In 2012, the Bank launched its new environment strategy for the next decade (2012–2022) (World Bank 2012e).

258 The post of the ‘Poverty-Environment adviser’ was filled by David Howlett, a DFID specialist on food and climate change policies who during 2002–2005 had been seconded to UNDP (Assey et al. 2007).

259 The report on the poverty-environment indicators was contracted to two UK-based and one Tanzanian institution, namely the Environmental Resources Management (ERM) London, the Institute of Resource Assessment (IRA) Dar es Salaam and Oxford Policy Management Limited (OPML) Oxford (Vice-President’s Office 2005). The public expenditure review was contracted to NORPLAN Tanzania Branch, a consulting company linked to the Norwegian firm Multiconsult (Vice-President’s Office 2004).
UNDP/UNEP assistance continued during the implementation of MKUKUTA with a focus on reporting and generating statistics on environmental conditions (UNDP & UNEP 2014). Through the Development Partners Group on Environment, experts from various agencies and embassies substantially contributed to developing the subsequent strategy MKUKUTA II for the period 2011–2015, as a UNDP environmental specialist in the Dar es Salaam office sketched out:

“At the point where you are doing sector reviews, partners are invited to provide their input. At the point where they are harmonizing and (...) finalizing the final document, donors are also invited – the entire plan is presented to stakeholders and you input in it. So we are mainly involved and we provide the input. And sometimes they may ask for even writing, so you provide that writing.” (Interview 41)

Concrete ‘input’ was provided, for example, in the form of comments on priority results areas which strongly proposed including climate change and sustainability aspects into operational targets (DPG 2010). In the final document, various references to these matters can be found. One strategy to reduce income poverty (goal 2), for instance, foresees “integrating, harmonizing and coordinating environmentally sustainable policies and strategies for growth in key growth sectors, including climate change adaptation and mitigation” (United Republic of Tanzania 2010: 42).

Tanzania’s ‘environmental mainstreaming’ work has been widely praised as a success and has been promoted as a ‘best practice’ case in various reports (see, for instance, Assey et al. 2007 and Dalal-Clayton et al. 2009). All in all, Tanzania’s environmental policies, legislation and programmes are regarded as “very advanced” (Interview 36) by the international community.

A look beyond intentions and official narratives

Looking at government action related to environmental management as opposed to intentions, however, reveals a picture that starkly contradicts the success story told about Tanzania in aid publications. A review assessing the progress made during MKUKUTA I found persistent problems “relating mainly to knowledge gaps and change in mind-set on the importance of environment. Lack of accurate data, capacity limitations in terms of requisite professional skills to suit the different sector situations as well as financial resources still remain major setbacks” (Rutasitara et al. 2010: v). Several interviewees from donor organisations pointed to an appalling discrepancy between policy statements and (perceived) government action; some bluntly conceded that
this divergence may partly derive from their organisations’ interference in environmental governance. A natural resources specialist in the Finnish Embassy was outspoken about the obviously divergent agendas of local and external players:

Many of the policies and legislations that exist have been pushed by development partners. And the government has put a minimum of interest on that because they have another kind of agenda and another kind of economy where they work. (Interview 36)

For officials concerned with environmental issues in ministries and parastatal bodies, the lack of interest and support on the part of the government is manifested in deficient resources allocated for environmental interventions. A senior officer working at the National Environment Management Council stated:

The integration of environment in most of the development plans is there. But in the budgetary process, that’s not happening. It is just in the documents, but we don’t see really the commitment. (…) So that’s the problem. It is acknowledged that environment is very important for the poverty reduction efforts, but whenever it comes to the resource allocation, it is not one of the priority sectors. (Interview 59)

A retired director who had led the Forestry and Beekeeping Division in the Ministry of Natural Resources summarised his experience:

The government has so many other priorities. Environment, forestry is not among the priorities. The priority here it is agriculture, it is energy, it is education and water, infrastructure. So those are the sectors heavily covered by the government, but forestry is not among them. So, you see, you get more money from donors, from workshops, consultancies. You analyse the situation through the consultant, you get the reports – but you can’t put those reports into action, simply you don’t have that ability. So that is the difference. (Interview 58)

Given financial constraints and insufficient staffing levels in public entities, environmental policies and legislation are hardly put into practice. A case in point in this regard is the Environmental Management Act.
CHAPTER 7 The Impact of Expert Advice on Policy-making in Young Democracies: Sector Studies

The Environmental Management Act: “Great”, but “ineffective”

The Environmental Management Act – according to a World Bank employee a “great act” that “is fantastic” – became operational in 2005. Yet, the progress in implementing institutional reforms prescribed by the Act is slow. By 2007, only a few ministries had established environmental sections as required, and none had prepared environmental action plans (Government of Tanzania & Danida 2007). Compliance with the environmental impact assessment system, a central component of the Act, remains poor, which partly derives from a low awareness of regulatory requirements among local government bodies and the fact that violations are rarely penalised (Sosovele 2011). Public authorities seem unable to fulfil the functions assigned to them by the environmental law, given the lack of a “clear and proper mandate to institutions and personnel with autonomous positions” (Pallangyo 2011: 517) as well as insufficient human and financial resources. An NEMC officer told us:

Our institution, it has the mandate to oversee that the act is being enforced (...). But if we don’t have the funds to actually implement it on the ground, then really you find that we have a problem. Because I think there was the expectation that the government would provide support in terms of implementation of the act, but that is not the case. (Interview 59)

In order to boost the execution of the new legislation, the Vice-President’s Office in 2006 proposed an ‘Environmental Management Act Implementation Support Programme’, in short EMA-ISP. The idea of the programme was to establish a basket fund which would increase financial resources. The anticipated ‘medium-term outcome’ of the programme was to create an “enabling framework for EMA implementation – i.e. through policy harmonisation, planning, environmental assessments, enforcement, reporting, and awareness creation – (...) that significantly improves environmental management in Tanzania” (Government of Tanzania & Danida 2007: 54). In light of the broad assistance received from technical and financing agencies for the development

260 According to EMA, public and private investors are obliged to commission an analysis of potential environmental effects in the process of planning development projects. Only registered experts are authorised to conduct such environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and the National Environment Management Council is mandated to review and oversee compliance with the EIA requirements. The legislation for this system is in place, but it is not yet working in practice. A recent study found that “even the central government was implementing construction projects that fell under mandatory EIA list, without subjecting them to the EIA process” (Sosovele 2011: 129). The author of the study found a low degree of awareness of the EIA requirements among decision-makers in Dar es Salaam municipalities, stating that “up to 40% of those interviewed admitted to have no basic knowledge of the act and EIA regulations” (Sosovele 2011: 129).
of EMA, decision-makers in the Vice-President’s Office anticipated various ‘partners’ to sponsor the programme.

The interest on the donor side, however, was unexpectedly low. Only Denmark joined in 2007, pledging assistance in the amount of 35 million Danish kroner (around USD 6 million at that time) over a period of five years and thereby covering 15% of the estimated programme costs. In 2011, Canada came on board, with a contribution of USD 2.75 million approved until 2013. A retired high-ranking official who had initiated the programme in the Vice-President’s Office surmised shifting agendas of donor governments as a major reason for the meagre support:

*In the development of the programme, we had all the donors together and the Canadians were looking at it. The Embassy here was for it, they had to convince their bosses in the centre in Canada; and that depends on the politics in the centre, and depends on which priorities they have. Sometimes priorities change, sometimes an initiative begins well – and then there are things called elections (...). You have a change of government and this change of government comes with different policies saying now we are getting out of environment, now I think we are looking at gender, you know. Those kinds of things can actually happen.* (Interview 66)

At the time of our interviews, frustration was high on all sides – government officials were disappointed about the lack of funding and donor staff at Danida despaired about poor progress. A mid-term review conducted in 2010 recommended a ‘refocus’ of Danish support in order to achieve visible results until the end of the programme:

*Given the lack of success in establishing a functioning basket fund for support to EMA-ISP, the slow pace of implementation of on-going activities, the rapid development in some sectors (i.e.: the increased focus on agricultural productivity) and possible new needs in these sectors as a result, the ASR [Annual Sector Review] team strongly recommends a “refocusing” exercise. The ASR finds it urgent to look for the most appropriate modality to ensure that there will be documented results/ outcomes in the last three years of Danida’s support to EMA implementation.* (Danida et al. 2010: 9)

Notably, government and donor actors concerned with EMA-ISP stated different root causes for the strained situation. An official at NEMC underlined the lack of financial resources as the major obstacle in implementing the Act and the programme, whereas the Danida officer in charge pointed to the lack
of capacity in the Tanzanian counterpart institutions. Her narrative on the problem is cited at length, since it entails a number of implications which are discussed below the quotation:

*Interviewee:* Things have not been smoothly, because the capacity is very weak there. We did a capacity assessment for the Vice-President’s Office and NEMC. The report just said their staff is overstretched, they need a support, technical support. And still they couldn’t accept that.

*Interviewer:* In which field of knowledge do they have the greatest needs where you would say that should be something that has to come from outside?

*Interviewee:* We are not there to monitor day-to-day activities because that would be micro managing from the mission point of view. We are assessing the type of reports we receive, the quarterly reports, the annual reports, the work plans and budgets that we get. If you submit to us your annual work plan and we review it three or four times – what would your judgement be? There is a problem here. Because here is an individual coordinating for ten ministries to prepare everything – and you get various different reports with a different format, though they have a standard format.

Then you look at the type of activities people are planning to implement – at times they are out of scope. Then you look at the person that is coordinating the programme, you look at his work, at his knowledge, and the skills and the capacity, is he a team leader? A real team leader, because a team leader has to be flexible and tolerant. How is he coordinating the crew? How are the people that he is coordinating responding to the issues that he is raising? Those are the things that we look at in general. And we find that maybe they need someone else to assist. And then, as the time goes, he’s trying to pull back and assist them to have that ownership. So you feel also the ownership is not there, you just get the ownership when they want the disbursement of funds.

And now at the coming in of Canadian CIDA, the review team felt that no, the programme is suffering. There is very slow implementation; we get very low quality reports. And so we feel there is need for someone to come in and assist you in various areas. Especially they didn’t have a standard monitoring and evaluation system. If someone could come in and help them with that, maybe things would move. (Interview 33)
In her statement, the Danida programme officer indicates some important aspects pertaining to the understanding of ‘capacity’ and the nature of bureaucracy on the donor side. The fact that the capacity of government bodies is assessed on the basis of reporting, planning and management performance implies a strong technical perspective on public administration. The problematic framing of incongruent reporting formats and the missing monitoring and evaluation system confirms this notion. Adopting such a technical view – no reference to the content of the reports was made – it logically follows that if someone helped to settle administrative deficiencies, ‘things would move’. Consequently, the mid-term review urged the Danish Embassy to draw on the expertise of an international technical assistant, suggesting to contract a “process consultant, expert in results-based programming (...) with immediate effect” (Danida et al. 2010: 7, italics in original).

This kind of argumentation implies that the main reason for the poor implementation of the programme is insufficient administrative capacity. What it seems to ignore, however, is the political nature of the issues at stake. Given that environmental management is handled as a cross-cutting issue involving various ministries which often pursue conflicting objectives (e.g. an increase in agricultural production or industrial investment vs. environment conservation), it is obvious that institutional reforms entail difficult negotiation processes. The constant delays in planning and approval procedures and the absence of key actors in decision-making meetings support what can be seen as an indication of a low priority of the EMA implementation on the Tanzanian agenda, or simply as a sign of the complexity of cross-sectoral governance.

Through the technical lens of aid providers, however, such political intricacies seem to be blanked out. Danida’s and CIDA’s joint response to the lack of progress was to strongly push for an advisor to be embedded in the Vice-President’s Office who should drive forth the process and ‘assist them to have that ownership’. The negotiations about technical assistance turned out tediously, given that VPO officers in charge did not see a need for external support. Danida’s programme manager described the situation as follows:

*The Vice-President’s Office – in principle, they don’t want advisors. They feel that they have the capacity to implement activities on their own. And later on, they said ‘No, we don’t want an international advisor, we want a local advisor. But still, if you want to bring in an advisor, the funds to support the advisor’s role should not come from the programme. You should outsource somewhere, but not use the same funds (...)’.*

*And so they have accepted now to have an advisor, but not long term, they want a short term advisor. We have just received the draft terms of*
reference. We are now in the process of reviewing and seeing how we can bring in an advisor, because we would like the advisor to start in July. (Interview 33)

Donors seemed unhappy with this arrangement, which might also have resulted from the experience that the ‘contextual analysis’ delivered by a short-term advisor in the inception phase of the programme passed unheeded:

After the advisor left, the report was kept on the shelf, it was never revised. And so you find now, the start of the programme had a lot of challenges. From the beginning, they did not want to have a technical advisor. So for that case, the programme has also been affected by not having a technical advisor to assist them, also how the report should look like. (Interview 33)

In 2014, Danida and CIDA funding for EMA-ISP was about to be phased out. At the time of writing, there was no final report publicly accessible which assessed the impact of technical assistance and the progress of the programme until external support ended. In light of the extensive donor engagement in the development of the Environmental Management Act and its international promotion when it was adopted, it is remarkable that the aid community’s interest in the actual implementation of the Act seems to have faded away. In line with the changing global agenda, the focus of donors in Dar es Salaam appears to have shifted towards a new prime topic on the rise, namely climate change mitigation and the related REDD+ process. Once again, Tanzania is among the pilot countries in which the feasibility of a new international approach is being tested.

The emergence of REDD+ and the spread of related aid programmes in Tanzania

REDD+ is the commonly used term for an envisaged global mechanism of channelling payments to developing countries which effectively contribute to climate change mitigation. REDD stands for ‘Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation’; the plus indicates that aside from a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, conservation, the sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks are considered as rewarding mitigation efforts.

REDD+ evolved in the course of various high-level meetings related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). While the role of forests as greenhouse gas reservoirs has long been recognised, halting and reversing forest loss as an approach of the global climate change regime was formalised in the Bali Road Map agreed by the 13th Conference
of the Parties in 2007 (UNFCCC Conference of the Parties 2008). Although details of REDD+ continue to be negotiated and a financing mechanism is not yet in place, the concept has been taken up by the aid community which promptly designed a range of programmes in order to ‘prepare’ the potential beneficiaries.

Norway was at the forefront of donor countries incorporating REDD+ into its development work through the ‘International Climate and Forest Initiative’ which the government established in 2008. According to the environment counsellor in the Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Norway had a great interest in getting Tanzania to participate:

_Tanzania was already chosen as one of the countries that we wanted to try this out. And why Tanzania was chosen was because we wanted to have African countries and also wanted to have countries with dry forests. So Congo Basin is part of this initiative, but also then Tanzania and Zambia. It was in the beginning three countries on each continent. So very early the Embassy here, the ambassador started dialogue with the government in this country to see if there was an interest. And it was._ (Interview 39)

In April 2008, the governments of Norway and Tanzania signed a letter of intent on climate change collaboration for which Norway pledged 500 million Norwegian Kroner (equivalent to USD 83 million at that time) over a period of five years, with the money being destined for policy development, pilot projects, and research related to REDD+. Shortly after, Tanzania was also selected to join the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility through which financial and technical assistance is channelled to countries preparing for REDD+. In 2009, the United Nations came in with the UN-REDD programme, a collaborative partnership of FAO, UNDP and UNEP launched with the objective “to assist developing countries to build capacity to reduce emissions and to participate in a future REDD+ mechanism” (UN-REDD Programme 2011: 1). Other REDD+ related aid projects which started at around the same time included Finland’s support to the first comprehensive forest inventory in Tanzania, the so-called National Forest Monitoring and Assessment, and the Clinton Foundation’s Clinton Climate Initiative with a focus on the development of social and environmental standards for the implementation of REDD+ activities. In sum, donor commitments for REDD+ efforts in the period 2009–2012 amounted to USD 93.5 million (Kaijage & Kuhanwa 2013).

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261 Already the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 referred to the “promotion of sustainable forest management practices, afforestation and reforestation” (United Nations (1997), Article 2) as a measure to achieve quantified emission limitation and reduction commitments.
The generous supply of assistance fostering REDD+ processes in Tanzania can be explained by the fact that the country serves as an ideal field of experimentation for this new approach: with 35.3 million hectares, the country is endowed with vast forest resources which cover almost 40% of the mainland area (United Republic of Tanzania 2012d: 5). Given an annual deforestation rate of 1.16%, forests are at a high risk (FAO 2010a). Aside from the ‘appropriate’ natural conditions which make Tanzania predestined for the new international approach, the preceding involvement of various donors in the country’s forestry sector might have been a factor boosting the prominence of Tanzania as a forerunner of the REDD+ regime.

External influences on forest governance in Tanzania

The history of foreign engagement in Tanzania’s forestry sector dates back to the early 1970s. Since forestry and related industries played an important role in their own economies at that time, Scandinavian countries which favoured Nyerere’s socialist vision of ujamaa were among the first to provide assistance by first sending experts and later on channelling money to Tanzania’s forestry administration, research and training institutes.262 Until the 1990s, their support focused on the expansion of village forestry and the commercialisation of forest plantation and logging activities, emphasising the potential of forestry for economic development. With the rise of ‘sustainable development’ on the international agenda, donors such as Sweden and Finland reframed their aid towards environmental aspects of forestry. At the programmatic level, this meant that support to state-led forestry industries was gradually phased out, being replaced by initiatives promoting community-based approaches and privatisation, and their incorporation into policies and law. In the course of this paradigm shift, ‘Participatory Forest Management’ evolved as the favourite theme of forestry-related aid in Tanzania.

The notion of Participatory Forest Management (or PFM in short) subsumes a range of different concepts and arrangements varying from country to country.263 The basic idea of the approach is that local communities should be involved in the management and utilisation of natural forests and woodland, which in Tanzania, as in many other states, has historically been an exclusive domain of the central government. During the 1990s, various

262 By 1972, ten Swedish forestry experts to Tanzania worked for the government’s Forest Division and the Tanzania Wood Industries Corporation (TWICO) paid by Sida; in the mid-1970s, Sweden accounted for almost 90% of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division’s and TWICO’s combined budget (Katila et al. 2003).

263 In the understanding of the FAO, “participatory forestry refers to processes and mechanisms which enable people with a direct stake in forest resources to be part of decision-making in all aspects of forest management, including policy formulation processes” (FAO 2012).
donors, including Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, UNDP and the World Bank started to pilot participatory management through a range of projects in different districts, while at the same time advocating and providing support for a comprehensive reform of policies and legislation. In 1998, the old forest policy which had been carried over from colonial rule was revised and a new version approved (United Republic of Tanzania 1998). This was followed by a new Forest Act passed by parliament in 2002 (United Republic of Tanzania 2002). Together, the new policy and legal framework meant a substantial change in forest governance in that it decentralised authority and formally allowed communities to own and (co-) manage forests under a set of arrangements. The Act notably encourages private sector involvement, and embraces the principle of subsidiarity, stating that the responsibility of forest management should be delegated to the lowest possible level. The reforms were widely praised by the donor community which lauded Tanzania for having “one of the most advanced community forestry jurisdictions in Africa as reflected in policy, law and practice” (Blomley & Ramadhani 2006: 94).

In the years following the policy change, Participatory Forest Management spread from a couple of pilot sites to being implemented in various districts across Tanzania. By 2008, around 2,300 villages engaged in PFM under joint or community-based forest management arrangements covering almost 4 million hectares equivalent to 11% of the total forest land (Blomley & Iddi 2009). Research conducted in recent years has found slight signs of improved forest conditions in PFM sites as reflected by increased basal areas and declined forest disturbance by human activities, and pointed to a few examples where villages have begun to see economic potential from forest management (Blomley & Ramadhani 2006; Blomley et al. 2008; Ngaga et al. 2014; Treue et al. 2014). Yet, the same studies also document a wide range of constraints and problems which seem to overshadow the improvements gained, ranging from persistent exploitation, illegal logging and elite capturing of benefits to massive governance shortfalls and pervasive corruption at all levels.

Officials commenting on the situation referred to the lack of financial and human resources for controlling what is happening on the ground. Donor staff, in contrast, expressed that the government has little incentive to enforce compliance with its own legislation, given the vested interests of individuals and collusive networks in forest activities. A counsellor in the Finnish Embassy commented in this regard:

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264 Under Joint Forest Management agreements, ownership remains with the government while communities co-manage a designated forest area and in turn get shared benefits and user rights. Under Community-Based Forest Management arrangements, “villagers take full ownership and management responsibility for an area of forest within their jurisdiction and declared by village and district government as a Village Forest Reserve” (Blomley & Ramadhani 2006: 94).
There are politicians who interfere in the affairs of the ministry all the time. And the only person that could make any changes is the Minister for Natural Resources, not the others because they are more or less administrating, they are technicians. And as much as they want to change the things – even the director of FBD [Forestry and Beekeeping Division] when he was there or the CEO of TFS [Tanzania Forest Services Agency] – as much as they want to change things, there are limits to that. Because you always have somebody, a politician coming there and asking for favours and make sure that this functions like this, and this, and this. (...) There are lots of people who are looking for their own good. So the policy, the legislation and programmes are very good in Tanzania, very advanced. But they cannot function properly because of political interference – they cannot, absolutely. (Interview 36)

A donor-financed report authorised by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism in fact found evidence of “self-dealing, nepotism and cronyism involving timber trade” (Milledge et al. 2007: 11) permeating all government levels, as well as “high levels of collusion, organisation and protection between different government institutions and the private sector” (Milledge et al. 2007: 12); the authors of the study concluded that “current policy, as set out in the formal laws and regulations governing the management of these resources, was systematically being manipulated by domestic and foreign private sector interests in concert with senior Tanzanian and foreign government officials” (Milledge et al. 2007: 2).

The outcomes of aid to the forestry sector: Discontent and frictions

Having spent around USD 30 million on introducing PFM in Tanzania (Treue et al. 2014), donors were rather dissatisfied with the state of forest governance at the time of our research and perceived the government as insufficiently committed to put any effort in changing the situation. A counsellor at the Finnish Embassy expressed the common discontent on the donor side as follows:

All the funding for the community based forest management has been coming from the development partners. The government has not funded it as such at all. So I mean it’s very clear that they have the policy and the legislation on this. But it’s a clear sign if there is no funding from the government for this type of activity – they don’t see it as a priority. (Interview 36)
Budgetary figures do not confirm the claim that the government did not fund Participatory Forest Management “at all”, but they do show a significant imbalance between local and external resources: during 2005–2008, the government allocated around USD 16.8 million for development programmes of the forestry sector, while donors provided more than twice as much, namely USD 35.6 million which accounted for 68% of the total budget (Akida et al. 2012).

Aside from the small financial contribution from the government, the slow progress in implementing activities seriously disgruntled staff in country offices and embassies under pressure to deliver results and disburse appropriated funds. As indicated by the following statements, their explanations for the various deadlocks ranged from capacity constraints to disinterest and deliberate jamming on the part of their Tanzanian counterparts. With regard to the first of these obstacles, a Danida officer commented:

At the PMO-RALG, it’s one officer responsible with forest activities. And it is not only one donor who is supporting participatory forest management. For instance, you have Finland, you have Denmark, you have the World Bank. It’s over 60 districts in the country implementing Participatory Forest Management. But in the sector coordination, you have one component leader. Can this one person manage three different donors with three different headquarter demands? Those are the challenges that you see in terms of capacity. (Interview 33)

Whilst acknowledging the additional burden donors put on already overstrained government units, the interviewee still complained about the lack of engagement as reflected by the absence of leading officials in environment working group meetings:

You expect the people who should come to these technical meetings are directors, but they send in junior officers who are not decision makers or policy-makers. Then you have the steering committees, where you expect the permanent secretaries will be there for you to discuss the policy implementation. Then they bring in junior officers, not directors. But this is the meeting where decisions have to be made. So there is also that

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265 In the Tanzanian Five-Year Development Plan 2011–2016, the discrepancy between projected local and external resources is even wider, with the government being expected to provide USD 1 million (TSh 1 548 million) against USD 8 million (TSh 13 131 million) from development partners. According to the plan, the forestry sector would require an amount of TSh 71 563 million for the fiscal years 2011/12–2015/16; the open balance is to be covered by other sources such as the private sector whose contribution is not reflected in the figures (President’s Office 2012).
From donor experience, the only way to get their counterparts in government engaged is to provide tangible incentives in the form of individual payments to those attending the meetings and events. This practice, however, seems to have got out of control, resulting in a situation where the pace of programmes has become solely dependent on the extra amounts paid. Yet, it proves difficult for donors to abolish the incentive system they have created, as the Danida officer spelled out:

_We have reached a point where developing partners say ‘no, we will not give you top up allowances, we’re not giving you seating allowances, we’re not giving you honorarium. Now, here’s a project that does not support that’. But this is an officer who is not only responsible for this project; he also has to look at this project. Now this project pays more. Do you expect him to assist you in this? He is paid less. But there is a five days meeting where he will be paid 400 000 in the end of the week. Where will he go?_ (Interview 33)

The sentiment that the ‘per diem’ culture has seriously affected programmes in the forestry sector in a detrimental way was not only expressed by the Danida officer. Her colleague in the Finnish Embassy also raised the issue, reporting on the support for Tanzania’s National Forest Programme which had been developed with Finnish assistance a decade ago. In order to boost its implementation, Finland set up a project which was supposed to run from 2009 to 2011 and included a grant of EUR 6 million to be channelled through the MNRT. By 2012, however, only EUR 3 million had been used, with the result that the project was extended until 2014. Commenting on the disbursement difficulties and the poor financial management on the part of her counterparts, the counsellor in the Finnish Embassy stated:

_With the Ministry of Natural Resources, it’s not very easy to have a good relationship because things are not moving. (...) And there are reasons for that. And I can only guess because I am not in the ministry. But for me, it’s very much a deliberate thing. I mean people – it’s not rocket science. They could make those systems work. They know how to work them. But there is a lot of mismanagement of funds. Funds are directed to different directions where they shouldn’t go. And then I also think it’s deliberate that they were only able to use half of the money that we were giving them for two years – they used it in three and a half years. And you know, somehow in_
my mind the idea is that if it lasts for six, seven years, it’s easier to get more daily allowances, all these per diems, discussion workshops organized and so on. So it kind of dilutes the whole thing. (Interview 36)

The fact that the use of funds in the context of the National Forest Programme lacks transparency had already been attested by a review conducted in 2010. It found that documentations for training sessions, workshops and meetings were missing, funds had not been audited and procurement procedures had not been followed (Karani 2010). The on-going problems with regard to the financial management of MNRT and PMO-RALG finally led the Finnish Embassy to re-allocate the remaining project resources towards service providers and private sector companies in the forestry sector, arguing that:

This is the only way to support something that works instead of continuing this very confrontational relationship with them [the ministries]. (…) It doesn’t take us anywhere if we just continue doing audits. I mean, it’s difficult to give them money and see all the time that the audit reports are bad and their financial management is not in place and so on. So we try to find those alternatives where can we work. (Interview 36)

Finland was not the only donor that withdrew funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism due to concerns of financial accountability and deficient progress. The World Bank had a similar experience with its Forest Conservation and Management Project starting in 2002 with the objectives to scale up participatory forest management, to get an endowment fund in place and to improve service delivery by establishing the Tanzanian Forest Services Agency, amongst others. With the MNRT as ‘implementing agency’ on the government side, the World Bank disbursed almost USD 35 million until the project ended in 2009. The ‘Implementation Completion and Results Report’ rated outcomes as ‘moderately unsatisfactory’, indicating significant shortcomings in the operation’s achievement of objectives (World Bank 2010c). Asked for the Bank’s reaction to the negative assessment, the senior environmental specialist in the Dar es Salaam country office commented:

Well, I can tell you with regards to that, we stopped financing MNRT. I mean right now there are no programmes or whatsoever with MNRT through the World Bank. So I think for a variety of reasons, because they weren’t able to deliver, because there were all kinds of corruption problems, I mean there was serious mismanagement of funds and – walk down the street and you’ll hear the same answer. (Interview 46)
As most aid agencies and embassies suspended funding or terminated cooperation with MNRT in the aftermath of corruption cases and allegations, the ministry faced a serious crisis at the time of research. The withdrawal of external assistance substantially weakened the MNRT not only in financial terms, but also with regard to its political influence in the evolving REDD+ regime.

The changing nature of aid to the forestry sector under the REDD+ regime

The aid community’s turning away from ministries towards other players in the forestry sector, notably NGOs, private industry and academia, had significant implications for both the direction of resource flows and the power relations in the context of the REDD+. Norway as the most instrumental donor driving the process determined not to channel any funds of its REDD+ portfolio through the government, justifying the decision in terms of the misuse of aid money in its previous natural resources support programme. Instead, the available resources were transferred directly to NGOs implementing pilot projects, universities carrying out research and the secretariat of the National REDD+ Task Force. That the latter was established at the Institute of Resource Assessment of the University of Dar es Salaam and not in one of the key ministries assigned with the political authority to deal with climate change and forestry (i.e. the VPO-DoE and the MNRT) was to a significant extent the result of Norway’s objection to placing this central institution in one of the government ministries. Commenting on this arrangement, the counsellor in the Norwegian Embassy stated:

Interviewee: This current process, of course, is part of government responsibility. But instead of having the secretariat within any of the ministries, it’s at the university. So that is also kind of giving the authorities support without channelling funds directly to the ministry.

Interviewer: Is this a unique case due to this corruption case?

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266 From 1994 to 2006, Norway financed the so-called ‘Management of Natural Resources Programme’ in Tanzania, spending around USD 60 million, about USD 5 million per year. After 12 years of support, a final evaluation raised doubts about the use of funds; subsequent audit reports of a Danish consultancy firm found evidence of massive mismanagement and corrupt practices, such as (double) payments of per diems and allowances for workshops which did not take place as indicated, the coverage of undocumented travel expenses, and the purchase of over-priced or non-existent goods and services, amongst others (Jansen 2009). As a consequence, Norway stopped funding to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism which was responsible for the programme.
Interviewee: Yes, as far as I know from the Norwegian side, it is, this kind of set up. Because usually they work much closer with the relevant sector ministry.

Interviewer: And does that harm your processes?

Interviewee: Of course some will think that we have a closer cooperation when the money is following the dialogue, so it might be. I mean, we know that the Ministry of Natural Resources very much would like also to have funds, of course. I also know that in some meetings, the ministry has not met. I should not say that they are boycotting, but almost...that's suspicion. That might be because of this arrangement, but also I think it's mainly because it's an on-going competition between the Ministry of Natural Resources and VPO about who should be in charge. It's forestry and climate change. Forestry, it's within MNRT, climate change in VPO. So they are competing all the time. And for that reason, actually it is nice to have a body outside both of them. I think several times that it is not so bad, it's a solution. Actually it might be very good. And also, now having this direct support to NGOs has secured the kind of bottom up process for the development of the REDD strategy. We feel that now the NGOs also have strong voice into the process. (Interview 39)

In fact, NGOs such as the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group were strongly bolstered by the piloting role given to them by the aid community. Through implementing projects on the ground, they have gained sufficient strategic power to substantially influence REDD+ processes at both the local and national levels (Manyika et al. 2013). Already in the early phases of REDD+, it has become evident that their policy preferences are not necessarily congruent with those of the government-focused task force.267 In view of the vested interests of local actors seeking to profit from future forest carbon trading and the external influence of foreign financers, one can assume that “both strategic behaviour and power struggles may lead to political legitimacy concerns and subsequently affect the effectiveness of the chosen governance structures” (Manyika et al. 2013: 77). Another indication for struggles behind the stage is the fact that despite a long, consultative process, Tanzania’s REDD+ strategy approved in 2013 did not clarify “many unresolved and thorny issues such

267 This is drawn from Manyika et al. (2013: 76) who found that governance structures proposed by NGOs “contradict what has been proposed at national led REDD+ governance process”. According to the authors, the case studies analysed reflect that “pilot projects envisage selling Carbon credits directly to the international markets, and thus propose establishment of their own local/project level Carbon credit marketing strategy, which does not necessarily link with the NRTF [National REDD+ Trust Fund] proposed at national level”.

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as legal gaps, tree/carbon tenure, benefit sharing and financial mechanisms” (Nordeco & Arcacia 2013: v).

All in all, it seems that the REDD+ process in Tanzania is heavily driven and orchestrated by the aid community which during 2009–2012 accounted for 95% of the funding for related activities (Kaijage & Kuhanwa 2013). Donor-financed expert engagement ranged from delivering studies and providing administrative support to preparing strategies and commenting on drafts. Preparing Tanzania for the REDD+ regime was primarily a concern of the developed countries – the potential buyers of carbon credits – rather than a national request.

Considering that Tanzania would potentially benefit from a future carbon trading market under the REDD+ regime, it is certainly true that the government was interested in getting engaged with donors on that matter. A retired official from the Forestry and Beekeeping Division delineated the decision-makers’ stance as follows:

*Donors are part and parcel of the REDD development process, globally and nationally. (…) REDD is not a one-sided business. We are talking of selling carbon and where are the markets for carbon? They are not in Tanzania; if they were in Tanzania, they would be very limited. So much of it will be a global market and at a particular point in time, we’ll need to negotiate with those. (Interview 58)*

Whether aside from the prospect of additional financing, the Tanzanian government sees the overall objective of REDD+ (i.e. mitigating climate change by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) as a national priority, is another question. A high-ranking director in the VPO-DoE gave a very clear answer in this regard:

*For us, for the government, our priority is on poverty reduction. But donors may want to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by implementing some projects here. They will say, ‘why don’t you say climate change?’ But they’re not giving us a room to say what the priority issue is. Although they may say: ‘You guys, you don’t see people are affected by drought and you are facing a lot of floods in some parts, why don’t you consider climate change as a priority issue’. That’s an imposed priority issue! It’s not an intrinsic priority issue. A genuine priority issue in our country, a genuine one is the one which is thought to come from the government. And that’s why I was saying: For the government, poverty reduction is a priority issue and the means to reduce poverty or to ensure food security*
and nutrition. If it involves climate change, fine, then let’s address climate change. (Interview 67)

“Tell me what you have money for, and I’ll tell you what my priorities are”

As this account indicates, the evolvement of REDD+ put Tanzania under significant pressure to adjust its policies to the new paradigm (i.e. to reframe forest management as a matter of climate change mitigation). That aid is used by the international community to leverage such policy shifts is evident in respective changes to the funding portfolio. A Tanzanian environmental specialist at NEMC reported on the current situation:

Every donor now is running with climate change. Even now here in Tanzania there are other things, we have a lot of problems here – like the desertification, we have land degradation, we have a lot of erosion, but that ones are not receiving attention. (…) It’s climate change now on top of the agenda, even if you go to the UN organizations, what is being supported is climate change now. It’s the order of the day. (Interview 59)

In response to the ever-shifting aid agenda, Tanzanian decision-makers concerned with environment and natural resources appear to have adopted what could be called a ‘chameleon’ strategy, strategically framing their priorities according to the respective donor preferences in order to access money. A director in the VPO-DoE commented on this:

You see, donors have their own political propagandas. If you can come up with a strong statement that climate change is a priority issue – for them, it is an advantage that now they can give you a lot of money. Maybe you can use that to address poverty – where in principle they won’t be happy, if you direct the big share to address poverty issues, because if you talk of poverty issues, it has its own parameters which may not tally with the climate change parameters. (Interview 67)

While at the surface, it may seem as if the government does not set clear priorities, various narratives of government officials indicate that for strategic reasons these are not openly communicated to the aid community. The tactical manoeuvring of decision-makers seems to have evolved from their experience that national requests are neglected by donors pursuing their own agenda, as a previous director of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division pointed out:
They come with already predetermined activities to be done – we can support this, we can support this, regardless of its impact on whatever you want to achieve on the ground. (...) On the issue of climate change, we said like in Dar es Salam here, it is the question of access to affordable energy. They made a study here in Dar es Salam to be able to network the use of natural gas which we already have here. Five years ago, they would have needed USD 35 million to be able to do that. And if they had connected maybe 70% of the households here in Dar es Salam, our demand for charcoal would have gone significantly down. But who is giving that money? You go to the government which says oh, we don’t have that, sorry, our budget, we have so many issues to respond to. You go to the donors who say: ‘Ah no, this is not my priority or I don’t have that money’. (...) They may have the money but if that money does not fit into their programme of work which has been already agreed through the parliament and the other decision-making machinery – to change it, it’s not so easy. (Interview 58)

Learning from the recurrent neglect of their actual demands, decision-makers in Tanzania’s environmental authorities have adopted a stance of ‘take what you can get’ which is clearly recognised by staff in country offices and embassies. An interviewee in the Norwegian Embassy resignedly stated:

I think here you can ask them for anything. Are you interested in? And they will say yes. (Interview 39)

The environmental specialist in the World Bank’s Dar es Salaam office put this notion even more bluntly:

If you ask here, give me what your priorities are, they say ‘well, you tell me what you have money for and I’ll tell you what my priorities are’.

(Interview 46)

Conclusion

As the detailed description of previous and current policy processes has shown, aid has been an essential driver of environmental policy-making in Tanzania: the majority of environmental policies and laws have been stipulated and financed by the donor community whose experts were substantially involved in its development. The immense external engagement helped to shift the issue on the country’s political agenda, but it has also narrowed down the decision-makers’ autonomy in the policy space, with aid providers using their
relevance as financiers to push priorities in line with their own portfolios. A professor at the University of Dar es Salaam commented:

*On the forest management part, you see in some areas the forests are being well managed, so I wouldn’t totally say that the support that is given from the foreign countries is useless. But I think the only thing is that we would wish to see that, okay, you give resources, but you allow for the locals or rather the nation to set priorities – what they think is a priority; even within the forest sector, how one would like to be supported, for example. There should be a leeway for the respective nations to dictate on what needs to be done.* (Interview 69)

As they have experienced that their agenda-setting authority is constrained by the dominance of foreign funders, Tanzanian decision-makers have adopted a strategic stance in dealing with them: the alignment of priorities to the prevailing aid agenda enables them to secure resources which are direly needed in the underfunded sector. What then happens on the ground is another story. The appalling gap between policies and implementation may thus be seen not only as a result of deficient capacity and budget constraints (as it is usually explained and certainly true to some extent) but also one of tactical manoeuvring on the part of recipients who thereby aim to preserve discretion, while being dependent on aid.

**South Africa environment: On top of the game**

*Sectoral context*

Occupying only 2% of the earth’s land surface, South Africa is one of the world’s richest countries in terms of natural habitat, home to 10% of the planet’s plant species and 7% of all reptile, bird and mammal species (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2009). Exceptionally high levels of biodiversity can be found in three hotspots: the Succulent Karoo, the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany hotspot, and the Cape Floristic Region. The latter is unique insofar as it is the only floral kingdom world-wide that falls entirely within the borders of a single country (Conservation International 2013).

Yet, Red List assessments indicate alarming figures: around 20% of freshwater fish and mammals and 15% of birds face a high risk of becoming extinct in the near future. Already under threat are 2 500 (12% of all) domestic plant species. Nearly half of the country’s wetland ecosystem types
which are vital for ensuring water quality and regulating water supplies are critically endangered (Driver et al. 2012). While nature degradation, invasive alien species, pollution and waste, over-exploitation of resources and climate change are seen as the main drivers of habitat loss, the tension between conservation measures and conflicting interests evolving from an emerging economy is a core problem in the country (Driver et al. 2012). A director in the Department of Environmental Affairs described the major challenges with regard to preserving biodiversity as follows:

*I think the biggest one is probably covered under the broad term sustainable development where the biggest threat is the economy – the question how do we protect and enhance and reap a benefit from sustained ecosystems (...). We’re grappling with rhinos, with species management, and that is the one thing that is keeping us all running a lot in the biodiversity space. We are grappling with issues of land use and land use change and what that then means; with issues of mining and protected areas, and how to make a case for conservation versus the extractive use. (Interview 14)*

Reconciling environmental protection with economic growth is a challenge many emerging countries are confronted with. Yet, it is a particularly sensitive issue in South Africa, given its long, but problematic history of conservation. Under colonial and apartheid rule, racial policies led to the forcible removal of thousands of South Africans from their ancestral land. Black communities were ‘re-settled’ to make way for game parks open exclusively to whites, while the majority of the population was deprived of access to desperately needed natural resources (Crane et al. 2009). The fact that “billions of rands were spent on preserving wildlife and protecting wild flowers while people in ‘townships’ and ‘homelands’ lived without adequate food, shelter, and clean water” (McDonald 2002: 1) reflects the perverse politics of that time. As a result, “the environment was seen to be a white, suburban issue of little relevance to the anti-apartheid struggle. At worst, environmental policy was seen as an explicit tool of racially based oppression” (McDonald 2002: 1, emphasis in original).

When the new democratic government came into power in 1994, it made huge efforts to replace the destructive approach of the apartheid regime with a re-framed notion of environment as a human rights and development issue. This is reflected by the South African Constitution of 1996 which in section 24 grants all South Africans the right:

(a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and
(b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that
(i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
(ii) promote conservation; and
(iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development. (Republic of South Africa 1996)

This paradigm shift went along with the development of a whole set of environmental policies and laws. Following an extensive process that comprised widespread national consultation, the White Paper on Conservation and the Sustainable Use of South Africa’s Biological Diversity (1997) and the National Environmental Management Act (1998) outlining the principles of environmental governance in the new democratic South Africa were formulated.

Governance structures

The National Environmental Management Act of 1998 (or NEMA in short) is internationally regarded as one of the most progressive legal frameworks for environmental management. It articulates the idea of environmental justice and emphasises the principle of public participation in section 2(4) where it states:

*Environmental justice must be pursued so that adverse environmental impacts shall not be distributed in such a manner as to unfairly discriminate against any person, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged persons; (...)*

*The participation of all interested and affected parties in environmental governance must be promoted, and all people must have the opportunity to develop the understanding, skills and capacity necessary for achieving equitable and effective participation, and participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged persons must be ensured.* (Republic of South Africa 1998a)

The Act defines environment as an area of cooperative governance which means that legislative and executive powers are allocated to various line functionaries at the national level (e.g. the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Water Affairs, the Department of Mineral Resources or the Department of Energy) as well as to provincial and local authorities.
In order to ensure alignment of governance efforts, NEMA stipulates that all spheres of government and state organs concerned with environmental issues “must co-operate with, consult and support one another” (Republic of South Africa 1998a).

The lead authority mandated to formulate, coordinate and monitor the implementation of national environmental policies, programmes and legislation is the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) which since 2009 has operated under the newly established Ministry of Water and Environmental Affairs. The work of the department is supported by statutory bodies such as the South African National Parks (SANParks), which is charged with overseeing and managing conservation in South Africa’s national parks, and by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), which plays a crucial role as a consultative body. SANBI was established through the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004. It has been given a broad mandate, which aside from maintaining botanical gardens, includes carrying out and coordinating research, reporting on the status of biodiversity and providing science-based policy advice to environmental stakeholders at all tiers of government (see Republic of South Africa 2004a, section 11). Hence, SANBI also closely works with environmental departments and conservation authorities in the provinces (e.g. CapeNature in the Western Cape), particularly in the context of bioregional plans and programmes, which will be illustrated in the case of CAPE.

Donor presence in environment

The circle of donors providing aid to environmental issues in South Africa has – compared to other sectors – always been rather small. The limited extent of external support in the first years of democracy was not necessarily caused by a lack of donor interest but by the fact that the lead agency on the government side, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (now Department of Environmental Affairs), was in a state of institutional flux and officials were “initially cautious and reluctant to engage” (Albertyn & Fakir 2000: 45). An evaluation of ODA conducted in 2000 identified ten donor agencies which had invested in environmental projects by then, namely DFID, Finida, Norad, USAID, GTZ, the Netherlands, and the Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED), the most active bilateral aid provider. Multilateral players engaged were the European Union, UNDP and the Global

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268 Although the principles of cooperative environmental governance are widely endorsed, various scholars have shown that the current environmental governance and policy regime in practice is highly fragmented which hampers effective service delivery (see, for instance, Kotze 2006; Du Plessis 2008).
Environment Facility which has been the largest source of international funding for environmental activities over the past two decades (Albertyn & Fakir 2000). From 1994 to 2012, South Africa received GEF grants amounting to USD 108.1 million for national projects, plus USD 2.7 million for smaller programmes executed by civil society and community-based organisations. USD 288.7 million were spent on regional and global projects in which South Africa participated (Global Environment Facility 2012).

By 2012, the group of donors active in environment had been significantly reduced. Most of them had phased out their conventional ODA to environment in South Africa, having shifted the focus to other topics and new forms of partnerships. The major players remaining are the World Bank and UNDP as implementing agencies for GEF-financed programmes. The nature of cooperation and the contribution of experts in this setting may be illustrated with the example of what is seen as South Africa’s most influential undertaking in the field of environment, the CAPE programme.

The making and implementation of the CAPE programme

Following the policy change in the early years of the democratic transition, South Africa was granted USD 12.3 million by the Global Environment Facility in support of the ‘Cape Peninsula Biodiversity Conservation Project’. Running from 1998 to 2005, the project was mainly carried out by SANParks and WWF-South Africa who were assisted and supervised by the World Bank. The bulk of the funding was directed at the creation of the Table Mountain National Park and the expansion of the Table Mountain Fund. USD 1 million was assigned for preparing a long-term strategy and action plan to protect the biodiversity in the Cape Floristic Region (CFR). The process began with a phase of stock-taking and analysis. During the initial phase, scientists from the University of Cape Town were commissioned to assess the current state of biodiversity in the terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems of the CFR. Experts of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research reviewed the legal, policy, institutional, financial, social and economic aspects affecting conservation

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269 The Global Environment Facility has been set up as an independent financing mechanism providing grants and concessional funding to cover incremental costs of measures targeting global environmental benefits in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, ozone layer depletion, and persistent organic pollutants. As of 2014, the organisation comprised 183 member states. South Africa joined the GEF when it became a democracy in 1994.

270 The GEF term ‘implementing agencies’ is to some extent misleading insofar as the role of the IAs (as, for instance, the World Bank, UNDP or UNEP) is focused on assisting and overseeing the actual implementers which are usually government bodies or NGOs. In GEF terminology, the latter are called ‘executing agencies’.

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in this area (Younge & Fowkes 2003).\textsuperscript{271} The recommendations contained in these studies were taken up by a team comprising consultants and technical staff of executing agencies such as the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board (today known as CapeNature), DEAT and SANParks who formulated a first draft strategy. Their preliminary version was scrutinised and refined by representatives from government, the private sector, civil society and the local science community during a three-day workshop held in early 2000 (Lochner et al. 2003). The revised draft was then circulated to around 1 500 individuals before its final release as the ‘Cape Action Plan for the Environment’ (CAPE) which comprised the following main objectives:

\begin{quote}
To establish an effective reserve network, enhance off-reserve conservation and support bio-regional planning;

To develop methods to ensure sustainable yields, promote compliance with laws, integrate biodiversity concerns into catchment management and promote sustainable nature-based tourism;

To strengthen institutions, policies and laws, enhance co-operative governance and community participation, and support continued research (CAPE Project Team 2000: 3)
\end{quote}

Nationally and internationally, the CAPE strategy was seen as the outcome of a successful regional planning exercise. Part of the success was ascribed to the extensive public consultation with a large number of disparate stakeholders whose commitment was deemed crucial to ensure that the strategy would be financed and internalised in the long term. In order to achieve the necessary ‘ownership’ of local actors, it was attempted to keep external players at the sidelines of the process. According to members of the organising team, outcomes “were consequently only translated into a log frame format and presented to international role-players once local buy-in was secured” (Lochner et al. 2003: 31).

Hence, although the development of the CAPE strategy was substantially funded from outside, the involvement of donor experts – for example, the World Bank task team leader or consultants funded through GEF resources – was limited to administrative backing and supervision. A CapeNature official described their part as follows:

\textsuperscript{271} For a detailed list of the reports and their respective recommendations, see Younge and Fowkes (2003).
The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

They did bring in some expertise but it was more expertise in terms of funding, project management and that kind of thing, and they did make use of local expertise or local scientists in terms of developing the original strategy. And so we went through a whole process within which we agreed on what we want to do with this funding. So it wasn’t forced on us, it was part of a broadly negotiated process. There were lots of arguments at that stage between the scientists locally, you know, the one group saying no we must go in this direction, the other one saying we must go in that direction. And so the GEF experts played a facilitating role in trying to find a common ground. (Interview 13)

Although the outcomes were broadly accepted and the parties involved pledged to realign existing resources around agreed priorities, it was clear that turning the strategy into action would require external funding, at least in the first phase of implementation. The action plan designed for the initial five years called for an investment of ZAR 812 million (equivalent to around USD 107 million at that time), of which ZAR 487 million (ca. USD 64 million) needed to be sourced from outside (Cape Action Plan for the Environment 2000). In order to attract financiers, an international conference was held in September 2000 where core projects related to priority areas outlined in the strategy were presented. All proposals had been developed by or in close collaboration with the respective South African institutions that would execute them (Cape Action Plan for the Environment 2000; Younge & Fowkes 2003).

Amongst the largest aid providers responding to this request was the GEF which in subsequent years approved a range of supporting activities, such as the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative, the CAPE Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project as well as investment through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The World Bank and UNDP were commissioned to oversee the interventions and ensure compliance with GEF requirements. According to the programme developer of the CAPE Coordination Unit, experts of both organisations particularly assisted in hooking up proposals with the international agenda to make projects ‘sellable’ to the GEF:

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272 Rand was converted into USD using the exchange rate on 31 December 2000 (7.595:1).
273 The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund was launched in 2000 as a partnership between the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank, the John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, and the government of Japan with the aim to provide grants to NGOs and the private sector for undertaking conservation activities in biodiversity hotspots. As of today, it is also supported by Conservation International, L’Agence Française de Développement and the European Union.
CHAPTER 7 The Impact of Expert Advice on Policy-making in Young Democracies: Sector Studies

C [...] from the World Bank and N [...] from UNDP were very involved in putting together the application to the GEF, so they helped us frame it and package it, you know, ‘the GEF’s not interested in this, but they might be interested in that’, ‘frame it like a programmatic approach’, ‘build on another phase here’ – that sort of thing. Having said that, it did come on the back of this twenty-year strategy that we had already. So it wasn’t like they were coming in fresh with their own new ideas. (Interview 25)

One of the biggest policy changes leveraged through donor-funded CAPE initiatives was the introduction of ‘biodiversity stewardship’ as a new tool of managing South Africa’s protected areas network. Evolving on a few pilot sites in the Western Cape Province, the concept was rapidly taken up into national policies and legislation.

The evolvement of ‘biodiversity stewardship’

Analyses conducted in the context of CAPE found that while 80% of priority conservation areas in the Western Cape region were in private and communal hands, few mechanisms were in place to secure the conservation of threatened species and ecosystems outside the formal reserves managed by the state. It was recognised that especially in view of the fragmentation of landscapes, government authorities would not be able to link the sites flagged as critically endangered and build conservation corridors without bringing private and communal landowners on board (Ashwell et al. 2006). In 2002, the Botanical Society in collaboration with CapeNature initiated a small pilot project in order to develop and refine workable stewardship arrangements with farmers owning land of high biodiversity importance. The stewardship concept rests on the idea that instead of buying up land to protect threatened habitat, conservation authorities offer a range of cooperation agreements to land owners who are willing to conserve biodiversity through sustainable land use for which they are rewarded with tangible benefits.274 Central to the concept is that land owners do not cede any ownership rights, but remain the custodians and key users of their properties. They voluntarily decide whether to enter an agreement and which of the available options to take, with categories ranging from informal, flexible agreements to legally binding, long-term contracts which demand a higher degree of commitment but qualify for more substantial incentives.

274 CapeNature has defined stewardship as follows: “Stewardship refers to the wise use, management and protection of that which has been entrusted to you or is rightfully yours. Within the context of conservation, stewardship means protecting important ecosystems, effectively managing invasive alien species and fires, and grazing or harvesting without damaging the veld” (Cape Nature Conservation 2003). This definition has been widely adopted throughout the country.
such as tax deductions and advanced management assistance (Cadman et al. 2010).

While landowner engagement initiatives existed before – with little success due to cumbersome procedures and a lack of legal security – the Conservation Stewardship Pilot Project helped to simplify and sharpen the stewardship concept by exploring feasible models on three pilot sites in the Cape Floristic Region (Ashwell et al. 2006). Although the project closed in 2004 without having contracts signed, it had a substantial effect insofar as it informed subsequent bioregional programmes concerned with the creation of conservation corridors by involving the private sector and communities (e.g. the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative or the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme). Several of these activities were greatly driven forward by external funding, in particular from GEF and CEPF. For international investors, South Africa’s stewardship approach fitted neatly with the globally emerging paradigm of ‘mainstreaming’ biodiversity into production sectors and development planning (see, for instance, Petersen & Huntley 2005; Global Environment Facility 2010a; Huntley & Redford 2014). Hence, the concept was promoted by the aid community as an efficient tool to ‘establish the foundations of the biodiversity economy’ (World Bank 2011b).

In fact, the stewardship programmes carried out in the context of CAPE have leveraged significant changes in land-use planning and helped to expand protected areas. Through contracts with private landowners and communities, the area of (critically) endangered ecosystems under conservation in the Cape Floristic Region increased from 16 115 hectares in 2004 to 61 603 hectares in 2011 (World Bank 2011b: 31). The models and guidelines developed in the Western Cape were adopted by other provinces such as the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Gauteng, and they were taken up by the Department of Environmental Affairs which set up a ‘Biodiversity Stewardship South Africa’ programme to establish and strengthen provincial stewardship initiatives.

275 Aside from the landowner’s willingness to put effort into conservation and accept land-use limitations, the biodiversity value of the land is a determining factor for which types of arrangement are being offered by authorities. The highest stewardship category under which land is declared a nature reserve requires that the site contains ecosystems, habitats and species which are critically important and endangered.

276 The pilot sites of the Conservation Stewardship Pilot Project were the Agtergroenberg near Wellington, the Bot River Valley near Grabouw and the Lower Breede River area near Swellendam (Ashwell et al. 2006).

277 According to the Project Completion Report compiled by the Botanical Society, no actual agreements had been signed at project completion, but several were pending for final legal processing (Botha 2004).

278 This term was used in the World Bank’s final report on the GEF-funded ‘Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project’ which targeted the expansion of stewardship arrangements and the development of financial incentives for environmental services, amongst others (World Bank 2011b).
(Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2009b). Having been tested and proved on the ground, the concept was gradually incorporated into South Africa’s environmental policy and legal frameworks. While the Protected Areas Act of 2003 and the Biodiversity Act of 2004 laid out enabling provisions for piloting the approach, biodiversity stewardship was featured as a key conservation mechanism in strategic documents such as the National Biodiversity Framework (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2009b) and the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy (Department of Environmental Affairs 2010b). Moreover, the government developed a national Biodiversity Stewardship Policy and Guideline Document as well as a framework for fiscal incentives encouraging conservation through the custodianship of land (Republic of South Africa 2009a). By 2014, biodiversity stewardship has taken hold as a strategy to secure South Africa’s threatened ecosystems. The experiences and results achieved so far have received much attention from the international community which promotes the Western Cape as a pioneer of innovative conservation approaches (Cadman et al. 2010; Müller & Fourie 2011).

The role of donors in the CAPE process

Biodiversity stewardship is just one example of a concept which in the course of CAPE implementation triggered a step-by-step change in the country’s conservation regime. In both government and donor publications, CAPE is praised for its achievements with regard to policy reform. A UNDP expert engaged in the process from the beginning explained its effect as follows:

> What happened with the CAPE programme is that it tested things, it was an early starter, which then progressively got injected into the national policy process. Prior to the CAPE programme starting, all there was in terms of policy for biodiversity was a White Paper. We then subsequently had two Acts, the Biodiversity Act and the Protected Area Bill and then we have the National Biodiversity Framework. All of this was sort of infused into that. (Interview 7)

**279** The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 2003 creates a legal framework for the management of South Africa’s protected areas network and outlines a range of conservation categories and related governance options. The crucial provision it entails with regard to the stewardship concept is that it allows private and communal land to be declared as protected areas, given the consent of the owner (Republic of South Africa 2003). The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 2004 provides an array of planning tools for assessing the state of biodiversity such as the National Biodiversity Framework; the categorisation of threatened ecosystems helps to focus interventions on priority areas to be conserved and to identify sites for biodiversity stewardship (Republic of South Africa 2004a).
International bodies attribute part of CAPE’s success to the ‘catalytic support’ they provided to the process. In its Country Portfolio Evaluation for South Africa, the GEF emphasises that

*key policy, strategy, and legislation changes such as SANBI’s expanded mandate, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act, and the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act have been funded directly or catalyzed or informed by GEF investment and projects.* (Global Environment Facility Evaluation Office 2008: 62)

Promoting its contribution through the ‘Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project’, the World Bank on its website reports that aside from channelling grants it supplied “the expertise and technical knowledge of several experts” (World Bank 2013a). While such statements remain at a very general level, a closer look reveals that the role of donors in implementing the CAPE strategy has in fact been very specific and limited, both with respect to financial and advisory support.

In terms of funding, the initiatives carried out in the context of CAPE mainly stemmed from local sources. The share of foreign contributions in major projects did not exceed 40%, while the remaining budget was provided by government authorities, the private sector, South African NGOs and academic bodies (cf. Table 20).

**Table 20: Local and foreign resources in GEF-supported CAPE projects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Local sources</th>
<th>Foreign sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in USD m</td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>in USD m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Peninsula Biodiversity Conservation Project</td>
<td>1998–2005</td>
<td>92.02</td>
<td>13.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative</td>
<td>2003–2010</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project</td>
<td>2004–2010</td>
<td>51.40</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although external funding appears relatively modest, it had a significant effect from the perspective of the actors involved, insofar as it enabled them to experiment with ideas – e.g. the stewardship concept – for which they did not have allocations from the state (Cadman et al. 2010). The establishment of a
shared, publicly accessible database (the Biodiversity Geographical Information System) and a facility disseminating biodiversity information to underpin land-use planning, for instance, was primarily made possible through foreign money and support, as a leading official at SANBI acknowledged:

_We would not have been able to win the case with our government in terms of our funds to say actually the way forward is to have an information facility that can be accessible to researchers, to the public, to the citizens, unleashing this information and bringing it in the public eye. We wouldn’t have been able to make the case to our government at the time – and they [the donors] were able to pioneer that kind of idea._ (Interview 24)

International funding coming in through CAPE helped both national and provincial authorities to pilot initiatives, but it also entailed bureaucratic burdens. Referring particularly to the World Bank, interviewees from DEA, SANBI and CapeNature criticised the cumbersome requirements related to financial management and procurement which partly blocked implementation and made processes overly complex. Yet, since their institutions are generally underfunded, officials nonetheless weighed the value of accessing additional financing higher than the administrative challenges related to it, as the statement of a SANBI director reflects:

_We have learnt how to overcome those [challenges], so I would play those down rather than play those up. We’re wiser now, we won’t go into another GEF grant without setting up a coordination unit that’s big enough to really do it – whereas the other way around we did that, and our team ended up being stretched beyond, so were all of our other partners. So, you know, now there are great benefits to show, and as time passes the bitterness of being so under the hammer all the time by the donors sort of evaporates a bit and you can see the positive impact._ (Interview 25)

Similarly, a leading official at CapeNature commented:

_We did benefit a lot from being part of international funding and we feel we’re now getting to the stage where we know how to play the game, so to speak. You’ve got to understand how it works, you have to be able to know how to play the game to get the benefits and I think that applies both sides, for the funder but also for the recipient. And we’re definitely more mature now in terms of how to deal with these kinds of things than we were ten years ago, without any doubt._ (Interview 13)
According to interviewees, South African authorities went through a ‘steep learning curve’ in terms of handling the different requirements associated with grants channelled through the World Bank and UNDP. While the main role of the latter was to function as a conduit for GEF money, they also served as a source of expertise, particularly with regard to innovative approaches tested and adopted in other countries. One example mentioned by officials was the provision of best practice cases and international experiences around ‘payments for environmental services’ (PES) schemes which compensate land users for maintaining and enhancing the flow of ecosystem services. Since SANBI and CapeNature considered including such a scheme in a future financial incentive system targeting sustainable land management, there was an interest in how PES mechanisms were set up elsewhere. Given their links to PES programmes carried out in Costa Rica and other Latin America countries, the World Bank and UNDP were able to present examples and facilitate exchange with experts and practitioners from abroad who shared their lessons learned. Such kind of input was perceived as very useful on the South African side, with officials appreciating the “global perspective” (Interview 24) their international partners brought in.

While in the course of CAPE and related initiatives a range of workshops and study tours on specific topics took place, technical assistance was used to a rather limited extent, and if so in many cases provided by South African experts affiliated with public and private research institutes. To give just one example, when SANBI required a consultant to develop a feasible PES model, the six-month assignment was given to an internationally renowned resource economist from the University of Pretoria. Experts from abroad were mainly used for progress reviews and evaluations because they “require an outsider’s perspective” (Interview 7), as a UNDP representative argued. In the case of the ‘Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project’, for instance, final reports were compiled by an expert from New Zealand and a British consultant (see Tortell 2010; World Bank 2011b).

The most regular collaboration throughout the lifespan of CAPE initiatives took place between members of the CAPE Coordination Unit housed at SANBI and permanent staff in the UNDP country office, with the latter acting as interlocutors for both managerial and technical issues related to GEF-funded programmes. Despite challenges in terms of ensuring compliance with reporting and management requirements which put all actors under pressure, interviewees from both sides spoke in high terms of the quality of cooperation and the relationship that has evolved. A SANBI official summarised her experience as follows:
I think it’s a very complementary relationship. I think they bring us insight into what the international agenda is, and they bring us some clues as to what’s happening in other places of the world. They’re able to help frame funding applications – for example, there’s a big project on the Agulhas Plain that has received climate change adaptation funding. And if it were not for N and his colleagues at UNDP, we wouldn’t have even figured out that we could frame our work in that way. At the same time, what we give the UNDP and the World Bank is practice of this international agenda wish list. So they came up with a concept of mainstreaming – and a couple of years ago, I presented on mainstreaming at a GEF meeting and we were the only project at that stage that was putting these policies into practice. (…) So we bring them that nice hook into a developing paradigm but with all the capacity and all the experience and all the skills of the teams of people that work on these projects. (Interview 25)

The high capacity of government officials particularly within SANBI was in fact highlighted by UNDP representatives in the Pretoria country office. A programme officer concerned with UNDP’s environment and energy portfolio in South Africa commented:

*When you run the projects through them, you can see these guys are in full control. You have less stress, they deliver, they know what they want, they know where they are going, they are pretty at the play, you know. They are on top of the game.* (Interview 8)

As these statements indicate, both government and donor representatives perceived the cooperation as taking place at eye level, with South Africans taking the lead. Summarising the role of international players in CAPE, it can be stated that aside from providing and channelling funds their main contribution was to mobilise expertise and to facilitate knowledge exchange by using the global networks of their organisations. External actors did give technical input in designing and implementing initiatives, but they did not play a decisive part in decision-making and policy processes. The priorities of CAPE and the policy changes it brought about were largely an outcome of local negotiation informed by national science and practice. This is not to say that findings and experiences from outside were disregarded. In fact, South African actors expressly appreciated advice provided by foreign specialists and scholars, but apparently external expertise was only taken up at a stage when the broad agenda was already agreed upon. This ensured that despite the use of foreign aid CAPE remained a locally driven process. The fact that CAPE
partnerships and initiatives persist while major donor projects have ended can be seen as an indication supporting this view.

**Entering the second phase of CAPE**

It should not be concealed, however, that the gradual phasing out of international financiers did entail problems for authorities who struggled to find alternative sources of funding and to retain staff recruited in the course of CAPE projects. A leading official of CapeNature described his organisation’s situation during this phase of transition as follows:

> We could take up, I would say, about 50% of the people that were part of the CAPE project in terms of project managers and so on but we couldn’t take all of them and absorb them as part of the process. I think SANParks were even worse off, you know, they took a very small percentage on. So I think the goal there was to create this kind of workforce of expertise and make it part of the organisational structures, but it didn’t in all cases work out like that. (Interview 13)

Such challenges, however, did not bring an end to the partnerships established in the course of CAPE. At the end of the first ten-year phase, most participants signalled a willingness to continue the cooperation, as a member of the coordination unit at SANBI reported:

> Early this year [2011], we asked everybody, do you want CAPE to carry on or should we just close it because the project is done now, and all of the partners said they wanted it to carry on. They’re all engaged, they still come to the meetings, it’s no longer about implementing a project, it’s about all of the other things that we need to do to get alignment around conservation and development in the Cape Floristic Region. (Interview 25)

At the beginning of the second phase of implementation, 23 government entities and NGOs were signatories to the CAPE Memorandum of Understanding (Cape Action for People and the Environment 2011). Although this does not give evidence of proceedings on the ground, it indicates at least formal commitment and can be seen as a sign that the strategy has gained a high degree of legitimacy across environmental stakeholders.
Harnessing external ideas for the local agenda

While CAPE originally emerged as a regional programme, national authorities such as the Department of Environmental Affairs and SANBI played a crucial part in the process. Both authorities are known for taking a strong stance in dealing with donors. A UNDP programme officer exemplified this:

We recently had a project for which the EU was proposing to give between USD 500 000 and USD 700 000, and USD 30 000 for the preparation of a small concept about the project. It was on climate change mitigation. The government said, ‘no, we don’t want it’. We wrote so many letters and they said no (...). We’ve got a couple of ideas which we pushed, which we thought they were good and innovative – the government just said ‘we’re not interested’. (...) they say ‘you can go back with your money’, and that’s it. So it’s an interesting dynamic. (Interview 8)

The fact that aid offers are rejected by government officials is noticeable insofar as environmental authorities do face financial constraints, with many relying on external resources to fulfil their mandate (see Chapter 6). CapeNature, for instance, needs to source 40% of its budget externally. Yet, in the course of CAPE, decision-makers have come to the point where donor support comes at a high cost to their organisation if not aligned to its core business. A high-ranking director stated:

In the early stages of CAPE, (...) some of the projects were not entirely what we needed, they were a bit off the mark. But through the process we learnt, and nowadays, for example, we wouldn’t take on international funding projects unless it speaks directly to our research needs or our capacity-building needs or protected area expansion objectives, whatever the funders aim at, so we’ve become much more choosy in terms of what we accept as a funding. (Interview 13)

The policy not to engage with foreign funders unless their support fits South African priorities is also promoted at the national level. A leading official at SANBI strongly emphasised the importance of setting and defending the local agenda against donors irrespective of financial imbalances:

If you understand what your agenda is, what you want to achieve and you say this is your agenda then you can engage with donors on a more equal footing. But if you don’t have that understanding and you haven’t got the confidence to put it on the table, then of course people who are
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cleverer than you can come and tell you what to do (....). It’s a two-way thing, it’s not – you’re not a victim here, you know, victim, victim, victim... And somebody comes along and we just take the money. So it’s a two-way street. We have to have more confidence in what we see are our solutions. We must have the confidence to also absorb other best practices in the world but not take it holus-bolus. We must have the confidence and ability to say to donors, ‘there you are, let’s work together’. (Interview 24)

That environmental agents in South Africa do in fact adopt such a firm attitude towards donors and advance their own proposals for cooperation rather than accept external suggestions was repeatedly confirmed by staff in country offices and embassies. An environmental specialist who previously worked as a first secretary for the Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria reported about her former South African counterparts:

They know what they want, and then they know also which country they want to use for support. At least it’s the picture of what I experienced. For instance, they approached the Norwegian Embassy to have some support for pollution control in Durban where they have refineries and so on. And Norway was not so much into pollution control. So we said, ‘oh, Denmark is doing this, so why do you come to Norway’? And they said ‘No. First, Denmark is coming in with too many experts. We don’t want these to overtake our ministry. And we have been on the internet, talking with a Norwegian institution that has this kind of instrument that we want to use. That’s why we are coming to you’. So, I have many stories like that. They are doing their homework to see where to find the best technical advice or solutions or at least what they think has to be done, then they start a dialogue. (Interview 39)

This account points to a salient feature of environmental agents’ dealings with aid: they define not only the need and area of support, but also whom to approach, what to request and which conditions to set. The ability to show this kind of leadership seems to rest to a large extent on the highly capacitated cadre of experts in environmental authorities.

Negotiating expertise: The absorptive capacity of experts in environmental authorities

Assessing the capacity of environmental entities such as DEA and SANBI, a UNDP expert pointed out:
Some of these guys who are managing various sectors of government are now well capacitated. It’s been 15 years now and we’re starting to see an emergence of young, assertive people, who when you come and say we are gonna do a workshop or do this, they say, no, that’s not capacity-building. We only like your idea (...). So in that context I think they are forcing organisations like ours to become innovative and to come up with good approaches. We can’t just sell anything anymore. You can’t just say something and everybody says it’s good, it’s good. No. Now there are people who can say, no, this is not good. (Interview 8)

From a donor perspective, the strength of environmental authorities in terms of in-house expertise and capacity is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it simplifies the cooperation if aid projects are administrated by capable counterparts in recipient institutions. On the other hand, the pace of interventions is often slowed down due to lengthy negotiation processes which a director in the biodiversity unit of DEA explained as follows:

It’s because we are adding some value to the process. We just don’t accept it, we question it, we will say ‘what are the implications for this’ and ‘it’s a duplication’, this and that. And so that’s why we take long and it’s often perceived as if we are delaying processes or not being proactive enough to harness opportunity. But I think it’s about questioning why this is done. (Interview 15)

The frictions emerging in the joint preparation of projects are not necessarily caused by contradicting objectives but are sparked off by the divergent use of concepts and terminologies, with government and donor experts trying to frame interventions in line with their own agendas and paradigms. Conflicts of this sort have recently emerged in the context of designing applications for the fifth GEF replenishment. For the period 2010–2014, South Africa was offered an indicative resource envelope of USD 52.65 million accessible for interventions in the fields of biodiversity, climate change and land degradation (Global Environment Facility 2010b). Preparing project proposals, experts from DEA and international partners had different conceptions about both approaches and issues to be prioritised, as the following narrative of a ministry official reflects:

Interviewee: There was a lot of pressure for us to make decisions about how we want these projects to run as a programme approach or as an individual project approach. And the country’s position is that we need to use these GEF resources to empower smaller organisations so that they
can build capacity. And then UNDP came with their approach to say ‘no, we want to be the big player in this whole process, we want to take on a programmatic approach rather than a project, or a smaller project approach’. So there was much conflict in that respect because we didn’t see the merit in actually taking on a programmatic approach as opposed to a project approach. But eventually, I don’t know whether we saw the light, but we gave in in the sense that we took the programme approach because some of the implementing agencies in the country supported it. (…)

Interviewer: But there wasn’t a struggle about the content or the priorities?

Interviewee: There was a conflict of interest in terms of the content as well. Certain things were duplication and belonged to other branches within the country or within the department, so then we had to start channelling, choking and changing things. For example, green economy: Green economy is a concept and a project that is driven by a different branch and not the biodiversity branch. So we had to change things to make them aligned with our priorities. Say, we need to remove green economy from the concept and maybe include it under some other way, like valuation of biodiversity for example – which is one and the same thing, but again, it’s aligning with the national priorities. And also terminology, you know, to include the priority areas – for example, GMO [Genetically Modified Organisms] that is one of our priorities. From the outside perspective that wasn’t a priority, so we had to fight for the space for GMOs in the project.

‘Protected areas’ and ‘stewardship’ as well: Those are two concepts that are very often interchangeable. But ‘stewardship’ means something different in South Africa. It’s about voluntary participation of land owners and it’s outside the protected areas, and ‘protected areas’ is a formal designation of protected areas [owned by the state]. So those content issues did emerge. (Interview 15)

Frictions around divergent terminologies for ‘one and the same thing’ might seem trivial at first glance. Yet, since wording conveys meaning, it has significant implications for the nature and legitimacy of activities, particularly in the realm of environmental governance. Recognising the nuances of technical language and paradigmatic underpinnings is thus crucial in the context of setting up policy-related government programmes, even more so if they are prepared with the assistance of aid experts who bring in their own organisations’ interests.

How easily initiatives can be infused with ‘external’ concepts from outside becomes evident in the case of the Grasslands Programme. South Africa’s
grasslands biome has been identified as one of the spatial priorities for conservation action that is particularly threatened by productive activities such as agriculture, coal mining and forestry (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2005). In response to this finding, SANBI requested GEF funding for the design and implementation phase of a programme targeting the integration of biodiversity objectives into the major production sectors operating on South Africa’s grasslands biome. A South African official involved in the process remembered how the notion of ‘mainstreaming’ was pushed into the proposal:

> So we developed the concept and then the UNDP came in and said ‘no, we need to make this concept more sexy’, that were the words that they used. So they added some terminology of ‘mainstreaming in production sectors’ and all sorts of things. And it didn’t go down well in the initial stages.

(Interview 15)

While the programme was launched in 2008 to run until 2013, the ‘mainstreaming’ notion only slowly gained acceptance in both environmental policy circles and production sectors. A mid-term review conducted in 2011 remarked that benefits were achieved on a very limited scale and criticised that some targets were so unrealistic that it was recommended to drop them altogether (Tortell 2011). Still, the experiences gained from the Grasslands Programme were presented at several international conferences and workshops, amongst others at a side-event of COP 11 in Hyderabad where – according to a participating DEA official – the initial insubstantiality of the concept was acknowledged:

> The UNDP people (...) admitted that when they did take the concept note of the Grasslands Programme, they actually didn’t know what they were doing and it was a major risk to actually take this approach. So if the government knew that it was something that was uncharted territory, they wouldn’t have bought into it at all, because it’s a major risk: How do you ensure that such a programme is actually going to provide tangible benefits for our grassland conservation? And so it was just a concept, a pie in the sky that they actually sold to us. And again, it comes back to officials like myself trying to make sense of some of those abstract concepts. And we make sense of it with the knowledge that we know – and sometimes we’re not convinced, but then we try to pull it together. (Interview 15)

That such kinds of experiments do not result in major failures can to a significant extent be ascribed to SANBI’s and DEA’s institutional strength. The presence
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of civil servants possessing a high level of technical knowledge, together with a sound understanding of national and international agendas, seems to make environmental authorities in South Africa less prone to being “swayed off the path” (Interview 25) while being advised and assisted from outside. Having learned from experience, government officials indicated a high awareness for the need to scrutinise and adjust external models and approaches, as a DEA director commented:

*UNDP comes in with this concept – but it needs to be shaped and aligned with the national processes. (...) And sometimes those concepts are too bizarre to actually be adopted by the South African people. So if it can’t be adopted, it’s not going to be a success.* (Interview 15)

**The targeted use of external expertise and the impact of local consultation**

Given that national authorities can revert to a cadre of highly skilled specialists, one can hardly find technical assistants embedded within the organisations. Asked whether there are any advisors deployed to DEA, an official responded:

*In the ministry itself, there is very limited [use] of those (...). And I think we don’t have a permanent person that would be sitting here. Actually I think once the concept paper and everything is developed, then they move away from the project and the rest is us that implement it (...). So we don’t have them constantly influencing what is happening.* (Interview 16)

If external experts are requested, they are contracted for a rather short time period and to carry out a specific task outlined by the recipient authority. According to a UNDP officer the recipient authority is adamant that they are the ones setting the conditions for support:

*In some instances you find that we do the contracting for them. But they will formulate everything you need like what they want this person to do and then they will also be responsible for monitoring the performance of this particular person. Immediately once you say you are going to supervise this person, and you put the money, they say ‘oh, even if the money is yours, no, we have control of the person’.* (Interview 8)

Foreign specialists brought in for consultancies are in most cases paired with local experts from government or research institutes. The policy drafts or studies produced usually pass through an internal discussion and public
consultation process before being taken up to the political decision-making level for approval.

The National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) explicitly provides for public participation in policy development, and various structures have been set up to integrate stakeholders from the national and provincial governments, communities, the private sector and science. Platforms which enable the articulation of interests and views on environmental issues include the national Wildlife Forum, which brings together the government and the wildlife industry, the Peoples and Parks conferences, which deal with community concerns, or the ‘Rhino Dialogues’, which were initiated in 2012 in response to the deteriorating rhino poaching crisis. Although the scope of influence stakeholders are able to exert through such structures varies, it is clear “that public participation has become a basic feature of environmental decision-making” (University of Cape Town 2007: 78). A director at DEA commented on the required consultation processes:

In the case of biodiversity, to a large extent your stakeholders are polarized, so you actually never get them all on the same page and agreeing. But we do have an extensive process prescribed within the Act of what constitutes public consultation and that would need to be taken into account. So our stakeholders are the public, the users, fellow government departments where we need mandate’s clarity sometimes, industry if there are impacts of an industry, communities. So we try to ensure that we’ve got really as many voices as possible. (…) So, when we present the report to our minister to take a decision, she can safely say that we have really consulted and have on record the views of all these constituencies. (Interview 14)

Public involvement, in a way, counter-balances the impact of external expertise. An example is South Africa’s green economy modelling report. Following a first national summit on the issue held in 2010, DEA requested a scoping study which would outline potential opportunities and options for a transition to a green economy in South Africa. On behalf of DEA, UNEP commissioned two policy analysts from the US-based Millennium Institute and two researchers affiliated with the South African Sustainability Institute and the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies of Stellenbosch University for technical assistance. This team finally conducted the modelling exercise and prepared the report, but the priority sectors, targets and scenarios to be included in the analysis were defined in the course of a workshop attended by South African policy-makers, economists and researchers. Moreover, various government departments contributed to data collection (UNEP 2013). Hence, although the assessment process was co-financed and supported by UNEP,
UNDP and the European Commission, the ‘South African Green Economy Modelling Report’ launched in 2013 was substantially shaped and informed by local actors.

**Conclusion**

All in all, a fairly clear picture emerges with regard to environmental policy processes in South Africa: although being financially supported through aid, these processes are firmly led and driven by local actors. Environmental authorities rely to some extent on external financiers, at least in emerging areas which are not (yet) established enough to receive budgetary allocations. The strength of recipients in defending their agenda-setting and decision-making autonomy despite this dependency derives from different sources. First, there is the comparatively high level of in-house expertise within government bodies which are staffed with a cadre of civil servants able to scrutinise and adjust policy concepts suggested from outside. If necessary, they are able to defend decisions against external pressure. Second, there are established internal advisory and public consultation mechanisms which mitigate external influence insofar as they ensure national deliberation. Due to the strong voice and interaction of local stakeholders from government branches, the private sector, civil society and not least the science community, the impact of donors in environmental policy-making is fairly limited.

**It’s not all about the money: Synthesis of findings**

In the preceding six case studies, we explored the impact of aid-related expert advice on policy-making in South Africa and Tanzania. ‘Impact’ is used here (and can only be used) in its qualitative meaning, that is, in terms of the effects of external engagement on the agenda-setting and steering capability of recipient bureaucracies. The key question addressed was: what enables young democratic governments to retain their agenda-setting autonomy, that is, to define and defend own priorities, while relying on aid, notably expert advice? Against a background of previous findings and theoretical considerations three structural conditions were assumed to be decisive in this regard: the recipient’s financial status; its administrative capacity, especially to absorb advice from external experts; and the local knowledge base (i.e. the strength of the internal science community). The assessment of South Africa’s and Tanzania’s relative strength with respect to these indicators revealed variance not only between the two countries but also across the three sectors: education, health and environment (see Chapter 6).
There are, as the case studies showed, remarkable differences in the way countries that receive aid and advice from outside deal with donors. This may not be surprising, given that each area of governance has its own history of aid relationships and experiences which impact on the way recipients position themselves towards the aid community. Although the cases are distinct, their comparison allows the identification of fairly clear patterns in which certain structural conditions are responsible for strengthening or weakening governments’ ability to remain sovereign in their policy-making while dealing with donors. It is instructive to highlight the effects of these conditions with empirical findings before we conclude, glancing at the role of recipient agency in a given context.

Financial strength

Financial strength or, the opposite, financial dependency is certainly the dimension which is used most often to explain donor–recipient relationships. It is argued that governments which rely heavily on foreign funding have little power to defy policy pressures exerted by the aid community (see, for instance, Bräutigam 2000; Gould 2005a; Mkandawire 2010). The case studies provide indications that this thesis partly applies, but also suggest that finances are neither the only nor necessarily the decisive condition for recipients’ bargaining positions.

In Tanzania, empirical evidence which supports the dependency narrative is found across all sectors. The fact that aid accounts for the bulk of ministerial development budgets and for more than 97% of HIV/AIDS expenditures inevitably coerces authorities to reach consensus with funders if they want to maintain some scope of action. Policies and programmes which are not ‘endorsed’ by donors become irrelevant if they cannot be implemented due to lack of money. The stark dependence on aid lends itself as explanation why decision-makers feel forced to consult with aid experts and usually follow their ‘advice’ – which tends to be an implicit requirement for cash disbursement – even if this means the need to adjust priorities and plans according to external funders’ priorities. The uptake of climate change as a priority issue, the formulation of a new HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment Plan, or the repeated revision of the Primary Education Development Programme III are just three examples of this kind of alignment which appears to be driven by the necessity to secure foreign funding, rather than by actual conviction on government side.

In South Africa, one finds a very different setting. This is not too surprising given that aid as a share of budgets is much lower, currently around 1% of national departments’ expenditures. Decision-makers particularly in education
and health showed themselves quite aware of the fact that their scope of action is not delimited by donor money, although that is valued as an additional source of finance. The relative independence from aid enables them to take a strong stance towards potential funders when it comes to defining priorities and setting the conditions of cooperation. If donors do not agree and withhold support, it may affect the pace of policy implementation but not compromise implementation as such.

While this applies to the health and education sector (or at least to major reforms carried out in these fields) the situation is different in the environment sector where national bodies and provincial authorities do face financial constraints and often rely on external funding to realise important programmes. However, this does not seem to affect the sovereignty of environmental actors: despite requiring resources from outside, they take a firm stand towards international players. Although environmental entities have received substantial grants particularly from the GEF and have closely collaborated with experts from the World Bank and UNDP, they have been able to retain control over the agenda and keep external actors out of decision-making spheres; the CAPE process delineated in this study can be seen as a case in point.

The examples of the South African environment sector and to some extent also of HIV/AIDS, an area where financial and technical assistance continues to play a role, challenge the thesis that the recourse to aid inevitably results in a loss of policy autonomy. They also refute what seems like an irrevocable fact in Tanzania, namely that recipients need to accept external involvement in the policy space in return for money. Various statements of government officials indicate that this corollary is taken as given and is internalised across leadership ranks in Tanzanian authorities (cf. Interview 49, Chapter 7; Interview 54, see Chapter 7; Interview 61, see Chapter 7; Interview 66, see Chapter 7).

Although the sectoral variance regarding the level of dependence is considerable, the similarity of statements from ministerial representatives is notable. One could have expected that leaders in education where aid amounts to ‘only’ 8.5% of total and 60% of development expenditures (considering MoEVT figures in 2010/11) might have a different position than decision-makers in HIV/AIDS whose programmes are almost entirely financed by the aid community. However, this does not seem to be the case. Quite contrary to the assumption that due to their relatively high domestic budget the Tanzanian educational actors would take the strongest stance towards donors, they clearly showed signs of resignation with respect to defending a local agenda. Whereas officials in HIV/AIDS at least tried to convince donors to support national policy priorities (as exemplified by the treatment/prevention struggle), officials in education seem to have lost confidence in raising objections due to the perception of being at the mercy of external funders.
The observations that (a) South African environmental actors successfully retain their policy autonomy despite relying on aid and (b) the Tanzanian education sector seems particularly weak in agenda-setting, although being ‘better off’ than others in terms of finances, suggest that financial strength is not necessarily the (only) determining factor of recipients’ ability to maintain the lead in policy-making while being advised from outside.

**Administrative capacity**

Looking at the South African environmental sector, a feature which obviously plays a crucial role in policy processes is the outstanding administrative strength of authorities dealing with donors. Whether it is the national Department of Environmental Affairs, the South African National Biodiversity Institute as an advisory body or the provincial agency CapeNature, all of them are known for being staffed with highly knowledgeable and skilled officials who encounter experts from the aid community at eye-level in terms of environmental expertise. Given that these actors possess both specialist knowledge and a sound understanding of national and international agendas, they are able to scrutinise and challenge policy ideas presented to their organisations by international funders – as a UNDP officer remarked, “there are people who can say ‘no, this is not good” (Interview 8). This kind of ‘absorptive capacity’ of the administration – that is, the capacity to receive, competently interpret, adapt to local circumstances and implement advice from outside – is based on the quality of internal expertise and has been a major factor why the policy changes leveraged through CAPE were an outcome of exploration and negotiation by local stakeholders, although the programme was heavily co-financed from outside. The ability of environmental authorities to guide such processes and to keep control over the engagement of external actors, including the rejection of proposals which do not support the South African agenda, rests to a significant extent on the capacity of their own expert cadres.

A notable point is that administrative strength does not necessarily mean to have in-house expertise for all spheres of responsibility on hand. Particularly in emerging knowledge areas entities such as DEA or SANBI face ‘capacity gaps’ which require assistance from outside. But these organisations determine the tasks assigned to consultants themselves (e.g. the compilation and interpretation of data or the development of planning tools required), and clearly delimit the scope of assistance. While external experts are commissioned to carry out analytical work or prepare recommendations, they do not get engaged in decision-making processes. Instead, their deliverables are validated by officials who deduce policy implications and put them forward for discussion. Absorption capacity, in other words, appears to be a major
factor why environmental agents in South Africa remain firmly in control of their agenda, despite resorting to financial and technical support; the risk of being swayed by foreign actors is mitigated by a strong administration in the environmental sector.

In other fields of governance, the scope of influence for external experts tends to be greater. Due to their limited in-house capacity, line departments in health and education rely much more on sourcing policy advice (as opposed to mere technical assistance) from outside. Advisors and consultants supplied by aid organisations have played a significant role in past and recent reform processes in these sectors. In the course of establishing a new skills development system or preparing the National Health Insurance, for instance, they were not only used to elaborate technicalities of implementation, but also to provide expertise and advice in early stages of policy exploration. The ideas and concepts conveyed through experts from outside markedly shaped the policies and schemes adopted by the South African administration.

Yet, it needs to be emphasised that despite using advice at various stages, authorities in health and education have held the upper hand in making policy choices. While strategic decisions taken in the course of reforms were certainly informed by external expertise, they remained nonetheless locally ‘driven’ for at least two reasons. First, decision-makers were not burdened with substantial financial needs and could thus pick or reject recommendations without being concerned about funders’ reaction. Second, despite limited in-house capacity, recipient authorities were strong enough to determine general policy objectives and direct advisors accordingly.

This kind of steering capability often appears to be missing on the part of the administration in Tanzania. Due to the immense shortfalls of qualified staff in national ministries (with deficits being even worse at lower levels), the latter are struggling to carry out intellectual work without financial and technical assistance. This does not mean that policy and planning units are void of skilled officials; one can find highly knowledgeable individuals with an impressive training background and years of experience who are able to undertake the analytical exercises and studies required. Yet, the number of such specialists is just insufficient. The fact that at the time of research the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare had only three health economists at its disposal (with one of them being the permanent secretary) indicates the dimension of the problem. The scarcity of specialists has two implications for recipient organisations: their ability to develop an endogenous policy vision which is essential to direct the aid community and its experts is severely constrained, and they are also hardly capable of thoroughly investigating the advice put forward by external actors and – where appropriate – to disprove their arguments with own analyses.
The lack of steering and absorption capacity opens up a wide space for external experts to affect sectoral agendas and decision-making, as the examples in the case studies illustrate. Health sector strategic plans and educational programmes have been strongly shaped by advisors and consultants who provided ‘evidence’ in the form of situational assessments, statistics, expenditure reviews or evaluations. In many cases, policy recommendations were taken up almost unfiltered in the sense that they were included one-to-one into policies and strategic frameworks. One explanation as to why decisive documents (e.g. the Education Sector Development Programme) frequently mirror external concepts and priorities is that the contribution of ministry staff in the course of their preparation is often more nominal than substantial, and that internal processes of critical validation are non-existent.

As the comparison of cases in South Africa and Tanzania shows, it is not the use of aid-funded experts per se which allows external influence but the absence of absorptive and steering capacity in recipient authorities. The latter seems even more problematic if there are no vocal stakeholders who are able to challenge external policy proposals, thereby supporting their own administration to defend its agenda.

Local knowledge base

The availability of a local science community which is able to play a critical part in policy discourses and to serve as a source of alternative expertise was suggested as a third factor determining the recipients’ strength to set their own agendas. Sector studies from both countries confirm the relevance of this dimension through both positive and negative examples. Again, the CAPE process which has brought about significant policy changes in South Africa lends itself as case in point: aside from participating in public consultations, scientists from local academic institutions were involved by carrying out research required to understand the state of biodiversity and socio-political conditions affecting conservation. Their results were crucial for developing policies and approaches fitting the particular context in which they were meant to be applied. Many of the analyses conducted in the course of CAPE were financed with grant money from the GEF or other external financiers; yet, they were contracted out to South African researchers holding knowledge of both environmental issues and country-specific peculiarities. The utilisation of local scientists as producers of policy-relevant expertise clearly limited the ‘import’ of external views into the process.

The example of CAPE thus suggests a more general conclusion: the availability of local expert communities potentially helps recipient authorities to keep foreign actors out of decision-making spheres and thus to preserve
their agenda-setting authority, even if they rely on donor funding. While the environmental sector in South Africa serves best to illustrate this finding, it is also supported by other cases: the fact that the South African health administration invited the HIV community to participate in developing the second National Strategic Plan for AIDS, and used academics from within the country to provide advice and consultancies in the process of preparing a National Health Insurance system seems to have strengthened its ability to re-assume leadership in policy-making. Various donors supported these processes with financial and technical assistance, but their impact on decision-making remained limited.

The Tanzanian environmental sector serves as a third example. The National Environmental Policy and the Environmental Management Act – despite being funded from outside – were drafted by local experts from government and academia. These documents, therefore, clearly reflect a national perspective on how the environment in Tanzania should be conserved and managed. Although there are a number of reasons for the failure of implementation, including conflicting interests in the political realm, deficient budgets and staff constraints, it is not a matter of ‘imposed’ priorities which hinders execution. On the contrary, environmental authorities, most notably the Division of Environment in the Vice-President’s Office, have repeatedly been trying to get support for implementing its policy and legal frameworks. In this case the cause of failure was that the aid community had shifted its attention to new issues.

The significance of local expert communities manifests itself not only where they have contributed to policy processes, but also where they are either non-existent or simply not utilised. The former applies to the Tanzanian education sector, the latter to health. In both areas, foreign experts commissioned by aid agencies have taken over the function of feeding decision-making bodies with ‘facts’ which suggest certain policy choices – for example, to introduce ‘treatment as prevention’ or to focus educational investment on the primary level due to its high ‘rate of return’. Under the rule of the current imperative of ‘evidence-based’ policy-making, recipients have little to argue against such recommendations if they cannot present ‘counter-expertise’ to support a dissenting position. The lack of local explanations for social problems such as the current quality crisis in education or a lack of sexual behaviour change despite widespread HIV awareness opens up room for donors to give reasons and provide solutions which fit the paradigms prevailing in their headquarters. If their reasoning is not scrutinised by actors within or outside the administration, recipients risk becoming fields of experimentation for the aid community’s newest ideas and approaches – USAID’s ICT project in primary education is a case in point.
Overall, the investigation of educational and health policy-making in Tanzania indicates that the absence or non-involvement of local science communities tends to weaken policy-makers’ ability to contest advice put forward by the aid community. Since they are, in principle, able to play a crucial role as knowledge producers and critical examiners of outside expertise – as observed in the policy fields of environment or health in South Africa – it is even more questionable why expert cadres available (e.g. in the field of health) are not used more effectively.

The effects of structural conditions and recipient agency

Taking a comparative perspective on the six case studies from South Africa and Tanzania, a general conclusion can be drawn: all of the conditions we focused on – financial strength, administrative capacity and the local knowledge base – do in fact appear to have a determining impact on recipients’ control over sectoral agendas. What needs to be emphasised here is that it is not one of these conditions but – as Whitfield and Fraser (2010) have concluded from similar research (see Chapter 1) – their ‘intersection’ which seems to be decisive. A higher degree of financial dependency does not necessarily result in a loss of control but can to a certain degree be compensated by a strong administration which uses the local science community to define and defend its policy choices against outside advice. Equally, being better off in terms of finances does not prevent external influence if authorities are unable to scrutinise donor recommendations for their responsiveness to the local agenda, and/or continue to rely on foreign advisors and consultants who provide evidence for policy decisions.

In other words: it follows from these observations that it is insufficient to explain external influence on policy-making with a single factor since there is no one-dimensional causality. Using only aid dependency as a justification for weak recipient leadership would thus mean to disregard other conditions from which governments could potentially gain strength to keep control over their policy space. That some senior officials in Tanzania nonetheless tend to do so, hints at an important aspect pertaining to the effect of structural conditions, namely the significance of subjective interpretation and consequent agency on the recipient side. As Whitfield and Fraser (2009: 39) have pointed out, “conditions do not determine the outcome of any negotiation in a mechanistic sense”. While they do provide resources or constraints which delimit the bargaining power of decision makers, it also matters how the latter react to them.

The case studies from Tanzania have shown that recipients confronted with largely similar conditions choose different strategies of dealing with donors.
In education, officials seem to have adopted an attitude of submissiveness towards aid experts whereby resistance is expressed through deliberate postponing of decision-making; in health, leaders rhetorically keep promoting national priorities while at the same time accommodating funders’ demands; in environment, decision-makers embark on tactical manoeuvring, framing priorities to the aid agenda while following their own route in implementation. All these strategies primarily aim at maximising aid which in the light of the existing budget deficits is a justifiable objective. The downside of executing such strategies is that to a greater or lesser extent policy autonomy gets lost.

The question is whether this is an inevitable consequence of receiving aid – the cases from South Africa indicate that it is not. As delineated in the sector studies, all three fields at times faced unfavourable conditions. Particularly during the early years of transition, authorities were short of money and experienced officials, and thus they relied on funding and expertise from outside. Nonetheless, decision-makers took an assertive attitude towards donors, maintaining their sovereignty in agenda-setting. While other factors (e.g. diplomatic interests) also came into play, the aplomb demonstrated by South African leaders led external actors to accept and support national policy visions. This observation supports Whitfield and Fraser’s finding that while structural conditions largely explain variation in recipients’ ability to retain control over the agenda, “a significant degree of variation is due to the confidence of recipient governments to turn their conditions into negotiating capital” (Whitfield & Fraser 2009: 364).

Individual decision-makers in Tanzania, too, possess this kind of confidence which enables them to interact with aid experts on a par, although they have few resources to draw on. Yet, here an attitude of resignation among decision-makers in government is pervasive. Senior officials are more likely to cede policy-making and planning to aid experts who feed ‘national’ strategies with their own ‘solutions’ for development. Overcoming the acquiescence prevailing among leadership ranks may be a first step in constraining external actors’ scope of influence, despite adverse structural conditions.