

resources do play a significant role in the quality of governance: Political, institutional and other incentives are largely ineffective amidst poverty. Indeed, it is the lack of resources that prevents African leaders from governing well. Chris Brown (Carleton University) said that the experience in Botswana demonstrates this point well. When institutions with adequate incentive structures are built, governance improves. However, institution building is a long-term endeavour (ten years or longer). Many reform programmes have only a short-term focus.

Some participants said that governance conditionality is instrumental to removing dictatorships and stopping the “brain drain.” Governance conditionality could be tied to resource allocation. Others warned that externally imposed conditionality failed before and has been used by international organisations for their own purposes on many occasions.

Participants discussed the role of advocacy NGOs in the democratisation process. Flora MacDonald (Partnership Africa Canada) described the operations of Health Age International in advocating for the rights of elderly people in Africa. A point was made that while supporting advocacy groups in developing countries is important, it is also tricky because it could be perceived as a “new cultural imperialism.” Many participants, including Osabu-Kle said that local ownership of the advocacy process is key. Moreover, advocating on universal issues – common to all humanity, such as ageing, rarely provokes charges of cultural imperialism. Supporting non-confrontational, locally owned advocacy strategies on universal issues is a worthy endeavour.

Opa Kapijimpanga (AFRODAD) added that there are African NGOs advocating for policy change. Institutional linkages through which Canada could help these NGOs to do their work also exist, including networks such as Partnership Africa Canada.

Canada could enhance and support horizontal synergies between Canadian and African NGOs working on advocacy and policy issues.

4. Policy Options for Canada and Questions for the National Forum

The priorities for Canadian engagement in Africa include:

- Canada could help build capacity at the local level to enable mass participation in the reform process and beyond. For instance, Canadians could draw on our experience with Information and Communications Technologies (ITCs), mass media, and local governance, to help local media outlets better inform constituents and help them hold national leaders accountable.
- Canada could help civil society in Africa develop capacity to cope with decentralisation (downloading of responsibilities to local governments) in the area of health care, elderly care, and other social issues.