

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



**EVALUATION OF THE JOINT AFRICAN
INSTITUTE (JAI)**

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

**OPERATIONS EVALUATION DEPARTMENT
(OPEV)**

2008

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION OF THE JOINT AFRICAN INSTITUTE (JAI)

Introduction

1. In its recommendation to the Boards of Directors for continued support to the Joint Africa Institute (JAI), Management had indicated that it would carry out a thorough evaluation of the JAI and the results of the evaluation would form the basis of a proposal on the future of the Institute. The evaluation of the JAI has been carried out by a team of independent consultants under the supervision of the OPEV Department. After a careful study of the report of the evaluation, Management would like to provide its response particularly with regard to lessons learned and recommendations. Management's response focuses broadly on: objectives of JAI, its organizational and pedagogical efficiency, relevance of its training programs, effectiveness and impact of its training, lessons learned and the future of the JAI. The response concludes with some observations on the methodology of the consultants.

Objectives of the JAI

2. One of the important findings of the evaluation of the JAI is that it confirmed Management's concern that the Institute has not been operating in the way and manner that could enhance complementarities and synergy. As the report rightly states, each institution has a different perception as to the role of the JAI in capacity development in Africa. These divergent perceptions have been borne out of the fact that although the original Memorandum of Understanding stated that the three institutions would cooperate in such a way as to take "full advantage of the synergies and complementarities of the three institutions", it ironically provided that each partner institution would be responsible for "preparing and delivering its or their respective courses/seminars and for selecting the participants". As the report noted, Management has consistently stressed the need for an approach that capitalizes on the "regional expertise of the AfDB coupled with the global development experience of the other two partners" – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

3. All the three partner institutions are committed to the mission and continued operation of the JAI. What they need to do will be to review the current individual approaches to the achievement of the joint and mutually agreed goals of the Institute. They would explore the possibility of having relatively more permanent cadre of training experts who will monitor the quality and effectiveness of training events, and work with partner institutions to create a common framework of the capacity development needs of African countries within which training events would be determine. The next review of the MOU would take into account any existing handicap in fostering synergy through JAI.

Organizational Efficiency of the JAI

4. Management is at one with the consultants that JAI has demonstrated high level of efficiency in the organization of the various learning events conducted by the three partner institutions. Its staff has demonstrated immense organizational skills in planning and organizing the events. Undoubtedly, its administrative independence, flexibility of operations, as well as support and cooperation from organizational units in the Bank has contributed to its efficiency.

5. The consultant's view that the state of record keeping is not satisfactory is rather surprising. The financial data are recorded and maintained meticulously and provide the basis for comprehensive reports to the JAI partners twice a year. The data base on participants includes all the relevant data needed for monitoring the activities. These data have been continuously improved, despite the lack of an information technology technician on the staff of the JAI. JAI staff have, in the past few months, not only developed a program for managing data on training but compiled relevant data on previous training programs.

Pedagogical Efficiency

6. The report states that JAI has employed efficient pedagogical methods in delivering training. However, overall, its pedagogical efficiency is limited due to the following factors. First, JAI had little input into the pedagogic approaches in the courses and events which were delivered through it. Second, JAI has no history of developing and applying strategic approaches to the delivery of its programs. Finally, in its current mode of operation, JAI does not do needs assessment, determine the content or curriculum of courses, develop training materials, select course participants and deliver at learning events. This is because it does not have adequate professional staff with pedagogical expertise to play these roles. These factors can hardly be attributed to the failure of the JAI or the OC. The Memorandum of Understanding clearly states that each institution will prepare, design and deliver its own courses and seminars. It is difficult to expect JAI to influence the institutions in terms of design, delivery, monitoring or evaluation of the effectiveness of its programs as each institution has autonomy in those spheres.

7. As noted above, JAI professional staff will have to be relatively permanent to ensure that they can effectively adopt and participate in a typical training cycle, which consists of training needs assessment, design, delivery of events, and evaluation of training effectiveness. Each institution would need to work more closely with JAI and allow it to manage quality into every stage of the training event.

Relevance of Training

8. On the one hand the report states that training events supported by the IMF are relevant to the needs and contexts of the beneficiaries, and those conducted by AfDB and WB showed an awareness of recent changes in the development environment. On the other hand, it claims that there is no evidence that JAI Oversight Committee ensure the development and delivery of a

more “focused and responsive” portfolio of courses and events. It is difficult to reconcile this claim with the preceding assertion. Training events that reflect awareness of recent changes in the development environment and that meet the needs of beneficiaries demonstrate a pragmatic, focused and flexible approach to responding to the needs of clients.

Effectiveness and Impact of Training

9. The report states that the training activities of the World Bank and African Development Bank, unlike those of the IMF, were not based on training needs assessment; specific outcomes of training were not determined and were not driven by a results-chain approach. It then concluded that the “ADB and WB training events have had little institutional impact”. In the view of the consultants, the training conducted by IMF made greater impact than those conducted by the WB and AfDB. According to them the difference in impact was due to the fact that while IMF carried out a needs assessment or creates a “virtuous circle” the other two partner institutions did not. This conclusion appears tenuous in the light of the statement in the report which indicates that “given the problems faced by the evaluation team in assessing effectiveness and impact through interviews with ex-participants and their supervisors, the approach adopted in this evaluation focuses on process rather than impacts.” It is hard to comprehend the fact that while the evaluation focused on process rather than impact, conclusions could still be reached about the impact of training!

10. None of the three partner institutions ever undertook a continent-wide structured needs assessment. The training programs proposed and conducted in JAI by the AfDB are usually based on the information provided by country operations and sector departments who have close collaboration with the RMCs and are therefore in a position to know what individual countries consider each year to be their individual capacity development needs. Such information is collated from the relevant departments and constitutes a valid basis for determining training events that would be relevant, owned by and beneficial to the clients.

11. Furthermore, if indeed there were any differential impacts of the training conducted by the respective partner institutions, the reason appears to be due more to the kind of training rather than the failure to adopt results-chain approach. IMF provides training in specific skills oriented towards the financial sector and repeats it for the same group of participants. As the training is skills-based, it emphasizes changes in individual behaviors, and therefore easy to monitor and evaluate. In contra-distinction, the training events provided by the WB and AfDB aim, as the report also confirmed, at providing knowledge for policy making, and a forum for policy dialogue and sensitization to development challenges. Their impact is more difficult to evaluate because they tend to involve institutional changes which sometimes take years to implement. JAI would establish a mechanism for systematically monitoring and evaluating how effective all its training events are in the RMCs.

12. More importantly, plans are underway by the African Development Institute to undertake a comprehensive and holistic needs assessment of the RMCs. The results will provide a framework for the capacity development programs that ADI and JAI will offer to the RMCs in the future.

Lessons Learned

13. Management accepts the recommendation that there is need to include in the results-chain approach a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the training events delivered by JAI. This is to ensure that the JAI is able to ascertain whether or not it is making any impact in the development of capacity in Africa.

14. Management also accepts the recommendation that JAI should diversify its methodology of delivering training events by adopting new technologies and methods in training. It would have to expand its distance learning program. In that way the Institute would be able to transmit knowledge to a larger pool of beneficiaries and there would be a reduction in the current heavy reliance on the traditional face-to-face class room approach.

Management agrees with the view that training should be seen as only one component in JAI's approach to capacity development and attention should be paid to the wider institutional context in which trainees operate when they return to their jobs where they are required to transfer their learning and make an impact on their organization. To that extent JAI would seek to establish a monitoring system to ascertain factors that affect the transfer of learning so that appropriate safeguards could be included in the design and delivery of learning events.

15. Management will take the necessary action to endow the JAI with adequate human and financial resources to carry out the activities mentioned above.

The Future of the JAI

16. After presenting three scenarios of the possible future of the JAI the report recommended that the Institute should be "closed down at the end of 2009". The rationale is that only two partners are "now effectively" involved, and funds would be freed up to support other forms of capacity building and training activities in ADI. The reasons adduced for the "close down" of the JAI are not empirically valid and are inconsistent with the commitment of the partner institutions. The World Bank might have appeared less active in 2007 than it had been in previous years. This was due to the fact that its training institute was putting in place a new strategy on capacity development. The strategy is now in place and the WB has renewed its commitment to the JAI.

17. At a recent meeting of the Oversight Committee of the JAI members agreed not only on the continued existence of the JAI but also on ways of strengthening it and funding more training activities of the Institute. For instance, the IMF is recruiting a new Director to replace the

current incumbent who is leaving on retirement at the end of the year. The World Bank is recruiting for the position of Chief Training Economist and plans to increase the number of its annual training courses through JAI because of its new shift in strategy from country focus to global and regional partnership in capacity development.

18. The commitment of the three institutions is to model the JAI on the Joint Vienna Institute or the Singapore Training Institute. In this regard, the Oversight Committee is exploring the possibility of sourcing for funds from different agencies, including private sector organizations that are committed to capacity development in specific areas in Africa. The idea of a Trust Fund could also be explored with a view to furthering the autonomy of the JAI and ensuring that there are adequate resources to implement its mandate without total dependence reliance on funding from partner institutions.

Conclusion

19. The Oversight Committee will look into some of the concerns raised in the report with a view to removing any impediments to the achievement of complementarity and synergy in working together.

20. Management notes with concern that the report has tended to evaluate individual institutions rather than the JAI, and in the process has made recommendations that appear to be outside its terms of reference. For instance, not only did it criticize the Bank for not having a capacity building policy but it also made recommendations on what the institution should do in this regard. Secondly, certain conclusions about the Bank or the ADI do not have any basis except that a previous Director of JAI expressed his/her personal opinion. For instance, the report claims that JAI could not be merged with ADI because the latter lacks sufficient organizational capacity to support the logistical and other requirements for mounting successful training events on a significant scale. The ADI conducts no less than 20 training events, (excluding those with JAI) every year and has been solely responsible for the planning and organization of all the Bank Group's Annual Meetings Ministerial Roundtable discussions and High Level Seminars. This is a huge event in which the ADI has consistently demonstrated strong organizational abilities.