
CASE STUDY – SCIENCE ADVICE WORKSHOP

KASSEMBLÉ

Integrating traditional techniques into curricula to address unemployment and poverty

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Note: The elements presented in this case study are fictitious and must not be interpreted as real people, locations or events.

Background

Kassemblé is a country in sub-Saharan Africa. Its gross domestic product per capita totals US\$470, and its particularly young population has a median age of 25 years old. Kassemblé's wealth is driven by cotton, coffee and cacao exports. Citizens rely on items derived from their traditional knowledge: jewelry, bags, baskets and ceramics. A number of constructions, including official government buildings, incorporate techniques and elements from the nation's traditional architecture. Kassemblé supports a number of artisan cooperatives to foster tourism and sustainable development.

Since it declared its independence 60 years ago, Kassemblé has focused on education. Elementary and high school education is free. There is at least one university in each of the country's five major cities. The enrolment rate is therefore high: 80% at the elementary level, including rural areas, 70% in high school and 60% in university. Still, despite their university education, young people struggle to find proper employment. The economic structure is not diverse enough to enable the creation of value-added jobs in services or industry. Deemed to be too theory oriented, the academic programs do not adequately prepare students to enter the job market. In Kassemblé, the unemployment rate is 20% overall and 50% in people under the age of 30. Young people are therefore often underemployed and hold precarious, undeclared and underpaying jobs, making it difficult for them to start family.

Once recognized for the quality of its fabrics, Kassemblé is struggling to develop a sustainable textile industry. It remains the region's largest cotton producer and continues to export cotton and import low-priced garments and textiles. For several years, global corporation SOTEX has been manufacturing clothing featuring traditional regional motifs worn in Kassemblé. It has been seeking to enter into an exclusive partnership to market its products across the country. Groups in northern Kassemblé that have been using the motifs for thousands of years are very concerned about the impending partnership. Indeed, among the measures implemented to curb unemployment is a pilot project involving the History of Textile Techniques Laboratory at the University of Sountongo and local artisans. Together, they aim to develop a production cooperative extending from the rural areas that produce raw materials to the urban centres in which the processing industries are established.

The prime minister of Kassemblé has made actions to reduce unemployment his key focus and is working to establish large-scale policies involving a number of government departments to stabilize economic growth and lower the unemployment rate. He turns to you, his scientific advisor, for advice on the current situation and initiatives to lower unemployment rates.

Discussion

- Ability to access knowledge and compelling data
 - What are the needs of the council of ministers in terms of knowledge and data in the short, medium and long terms?
 - How will you position your role as a scientific advisor with regard to those of research departments and international organizations? Of other government departments? How will you use their data?
 - What support could allies in neighbouring countries provide? (similar cases, comparative studies, advice on best practices, etc.)
- Multidisciplinary scientific advice and advice outside your field of expertise
 - Because you do not possess sufficient expertise in this particular area, who will you work with? How will you select these resources? What status will they have? How can you maintain your credibility and remain at the interface between the council and the scientific community?
 - What challenges will you face when processing knowledge from a number of disciplines?
 - What are the key phases in your work plan to formulate your opinion?
- Gender and social acceptability
 - What perspectives should be accounted for to foster the use of traditional techniques in the enterprise economy?
 - What challenges does or could Kassemble face as it develops a productive economy driven by ancestral practices? What are the ways to support this evolution?

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- strengthening capacities in science advice to train qualified individuals and institutions at local, regional, national and transnational levels;
- ensuring thought leadership and new knowledge to improve practices at the crossroads of science and public policy;
- putting forward tailored analyses and roadmaps for different countries and regions in scientific areas related to sustainable development objectives;
- creating a platform for policy makers and scientists to work together to address specific issues.



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