

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and COMESA have signed a funding agreement totaling to US \$3 million to assist Member States build the capacities of the research based institutions. While signing the agreement with the African Capacity Building Foundation in Lusaka at the Secretariat on 21 February 2013, Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, said the funding will go a long way in complementing the already existing funds at the Secretariat, as it looks at building capacity among Member States involved in research.

“It is unfortunate that most programmes do not address policy research and dissemination. I am, however, very optimistic that this fund will go a long way in making sure that research findings are disseminated for the benefit of various programmes in the region,” he said.

“The officers engaged in research need a lot of capacity building because they need to come up with very accurate data which will help decision makers to come up with informed policies for further implementation,” Mr Ngwenya added.

He indicated that once the officers are facilitated through capacity building in research techniques, they will find easier mechanisms to disseminate their data.

He challenged the governments of all Member states to expedite the process of implementation once the programmes are underway.

“There is a challenge mostly in implementation and governments should play their role and ensure that they provide policy guidelines for the various programmes. There is also the need to separate this fund from other ongoing programmes but allow it to be leveraged so that once implemented, the impact can be felt as soon as possible amongst the people in the region and beyond.”

Mr Ngwenya also said that the governments should involve the private sector in the implementation of the programmes as they are the economic drivers in the region.

“Governments are there to create policies but the implementers of these programmes and projects are the private sector and so there is no need to push them away. They are key to regional integration,” he said.

The ACBF Senior Programme Officer, Franklin Mutahakana pointed out that the signing of the grant agreement was a sign of the continued good relations between COMESA and his organization.

“This grant, which is to cover a four-year period, should help COMESA achieve some key milestones in the areas of research. We are pleased to note that COMESA is sticking to its mandate of deepening regional integration and this money will go towards policy analysis and research, strengthening national accounts management in the region and facilitating trade negotiations,” Mr Mutahakana said.