

**Elements of SMEs Policy Implementation in Sub-Sahara Africa:  
The Case of Botswana**

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## **Promoting Policy Implementation in Sub-Sahara Africa: The Case of Botswana**

### **Abstract**

Nations in the Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) already recognized the pivotal role of SMEs in the process of achieving economic diversification and sustainable development. They addressed this in their core development agendas and introduced SMEs' promotional policies to bolster the contribution of SMEs for economic development. However, a wide spread policies' implementation failures have been observed. This emanates from the failure to design effective policy implementation framework consisting of appropriate actions programs, schemes and regulatory acts. Policies should be complemented by effective and operational policy implementation strategies to provide fruitful results. This paper focuses on proposing schemes, action programs and regulatory acts as elements of policy implementation framework for SSA nations in general and for Botswana in particular. As a supplement, salient factors SMEs development at *Meta, Macro, Meso and Micro* levels are presented.

***Key Terms:*** *SMEs, Sub-Sahara Africa , SMEs Policy, Policy Implementation Strategies, Botswana, SMEs Development Factors, Sustainable Economic Development*

***Type of Paper:*** *Conceptual*

## Promoting Policy Implementation in Sub-Sahara Africa: The Case of Botswana

### I. Introduction

During the last 10 years, the resurgence of development policies and strategies for Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) nations has dominated the themes of world conferences and the headlines of major media networks. SSA nations themselves and world institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank in part, have recognized the need to reformulate and adjust the adopted development policies and strategies in the manner to alleviate poverty, mass employment generation, and advancement of the social fabric. In fact, considering the seriousness of the scenario, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) put out its press release, entitled *Economic Development in Africa: Performance, Prospects and Policy Issues*, (2001). SSA nations are now attempting to critically appraise and reformulate their national economic development policies and strategies. The objective is to pull themselves out of the quagmire of poverty, backwardness and enhance growth and sustainability.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are the major deriving forces of growth and prosperity, and the core elements of national economic development policies in both developed and developing nations (Tesfayohannes, 1998). To highlight their importance, the behavioral guru, Maslow (1968) said, "The most valuable 100 people to bring into a deteriorating economy are not politicians, economists, scientists, engineers but self-motivated, talented and forceful entrepreneurs. This indicates that SSA nations need to redirect their socio-economic development policies and strategies towards this trend to achieve: economic diversification, universal basic-needs fulfillment and minimizes vulnerability in the current turbulent and uncertain global business environment. Innovation and entrepreneurship predominantly linked with the promotion SMEs that are recognized as the Engine of Sustainable Economic Growth. SMEs' vitality is more prevalent in the developing economies as they constitute a significant part of the national economic productivity. They are also known for creating employment for a large segment of the productive population. SSA nations are aware of the potential contribution of SMEs to sustainable economic development and their role as means of livelihood for millions of young and innovative Africans (Briscoe, 1995). Most importantly, SMEs play a pivotal role in accelerating the evolutionary transition from agrarian dominated to industrial society (Briscoe, 1995). Although many of the SSA nations have already formulated and adopted SMEs' promotional policies as part of their national economic development agenda, the changing world economy calls for more articulated policies to extend facilitative support through the joint collaboration of government, the private sector and other stakeholders. This is especially true for SSA nations (Visagie, 1997). It is easier to formulate sound policies on papers, but policy implementation is the most challenging task. Formulating effective and savvy policy implementation strategies is instrumental for the realization of development goals. Hence, policy makers in each country are required to

initiate and design appropriate schemes and programs of policy implementation as the deriving forces of policy implementation endeavours.

This paper proposes schemes, action programs and regulatory acts as elements of SMEs' promotional policy implementation framework. The paper is limited in its scope. The proposed elements are hypothetical and solely for brain storming purpose. Although the proposed elements are useful for SSA countries in general, Botswana is selected as an example for a closer look.

## **II. Botswana's Developing Agenda**

Botswana is a small country located in Southern Africa. Its socio-economic growth is remarkable during the last 40 years. The country is one of the few countries in the SSA who have achieved a sustained social-economic growth and established a solid democratic governance system. Botswana was one of the 25 poorest countries in the world in 1966, but graduated to a middle income country, with an income per head of over \$4,000 in 2004 (Botswana Statistical Report, 2004). The country already formulated comprehensive development vision in line with the Millennium Development Goals through a self-reliant approach to development (Budget Speech, 2005; Vision 2016, 1997; National Development Plan 8, 1997, and National Development Plan 9, 2001).

The core development agenda of Botswana is to: enhance gender-equity-based economic empowerment of citizens and foster private-sector-led and diversified sustainable economic development. This is evidenced by the goals of its national development macro policies (National Development Plan 8, 1997; Vision 2016, 1997). The country's goal in 2016 is to reduce the current level of poverty and backwardness by half, through fostering gender-equity-based indigenous managerial and technical expertise, innovational capacity and entrepreneurial acumen (UNDP, 2000). The Government of Botswana (GoB) has attempted to strengthen its institutional capacity to facilitate conducive environment for private initiatives and innovations. Sectoral development policies and the national development plans of the country gave substantial attention to the promotion of SMEs as promoters of innovation, entrepreneurship and business skills (National Development Plan 9, 2001; National Policy on the Promotion SMEs, 1999). About 10% of the development budget of the country is earmarked for this purpose every year (Budget Speech, 2003; National Economic Development Report, 2000).

## **III. The Need for SMEs Promotional Policies Formulation and Successful Implementation**

### ***SMEs Contribution Towards Botswana's Economy and Corporate Citizenship***

The pivotal role of SMEs to the building of indigenous based and developed national economies and advancing technological innovations has created the scenario that SMEs

collectively have a greater stake in promoting corporate citizenship in general ( IISD, 2004; Taylor, 2004; Luetkenhorst, 2004; Coskun, 2004; Liedholm and Mead, 1999). They are known for generating mass employment, promoting indigenous entrepreneurship and meeting broad local demands for goods and services. Due to the important contribution they make, they are recognized as the *deriving forces of* economic growth and social development as pillars of corporate citizenship (De Gobbi and Maria, 2003; Owualah, 1988; Luetkenhorst, 2004). They are also instrumental in accelerating the process of transforming traditional industry into a modern one whose supporting props or pillars are deeply rooted in the culture and ethics of the indigenous people (Owualah, 1988; Robertson, 2003; Yumkella and Jebamalai, 2003; Trulsson, 2002; Liedholm, 2002). Unfortunately, this noteworthy contribution of SMEs towards promoting corporate citizenship has so far received nominal recognition by the national development policy makers and stake holders of the private sector development (World Economic Forum, 2005).

SMEs in Botswana are not well documented. Figures are only estimations based on some previous studies and crudely aggregated official statistical data. Some previous studies expressed that their potential contribution to Botswana's economic development is enormous. As a result, the Government of Botswana (GoB) has attempted to improve their current precarious position (Task Force Survey Report, 1998; BIDPA Briefing, 2000, Chandrasekar, 2000; Chengeta, 2003). The definition of SMEs varies from country to country as it should reflect the existing socio-economic objective realities and suitable parameters of promoting SMEs in each country. The defining process should consider macro and micro related issues such as: socio-cultural tradition; the general economic standard; legal decrees and other regulations; and nationally adopted development policies and strategies (Tsfayohannes, 1998; Chandrasekar, 2000; Rempel, 1994). Therefore, enterprises employing fewer than 100 workers are generally defined as SMEs in Botswana (BIDPA Briefing, 2000; National Policy on the Promotion SMEs, 1999). There are currently approximately 70,000 SMEs engaged in all economic activities of the country. They account for 50% of private sector employment which is more than 150,000 in absolute figure and their contribution to GDP is about 25% (Botswana Statistical Report, 2004). The current SMEs' contribution to the national economic development of Botswana is low in comparison with other emerging middle- income countries in the developing world at large (IMF Reports, 2002; BIDPA Briefing, 2000; UN Countries Development Report, 2002). This scenario has led the GoB to initiate various programs fostering the development of SMEs in the country (BIDPA Briefings, 2000).

### ***The Need for Introducing a National SMEs Policy***

The GoB issued SMEs' promotional policy to enhance the development and outreach activities of SMEs and solve their infrastructural, organizational and technical problems (BIDPA Briefings, 2000; Briscoe, 1995; SMEs Taskforce Report, 1998). The following brief evidences clarify why introducing a comprehensive national SMEs' policy was necessary: More than 50% of annual total imports of the country for the last six years were consumer goods such as food, beverages and tobacco, textiles and footwear, wood and paper products, metals and metal products, leather products, chemical and rubber

products and related others (Botswana Statistical Report, 2002). The country spends a large amount of hard currency to import goods that could have been easily produced and sold locally. For example, Botswana is known for its livestock, but almost 80% its dairy and milk products are imported from South Africa (Botswana Statistical Report, 2003). On the other hand, more than 90% of the annual exports during the same period were predominantly prime products such as Diamonds, Copper-Nickel-Matte, and Beef (Botswana Statistical Report, 2003). Botswana's SMEs have the potential to substitute many of the currently imported consumer goods by producing them locally. This can help the country to divert its resources to finance vital development projects including empowerment of SMEs. Many firms suffered from debilitating debt burdens and financial liquidity risks as a result of unwise resources utilization attributed to improper planning and lack of knowledge in adaptation of appropriate technology. More than 90% of SMEs are currently affected by the lack of finance. This is one of the major hindering factors for the successful start-up and competitive sustenance of SMEs. The financing problem is aggravated by the lack of information on available sources of finance and the reluctance of financial institutions to grant loans to SMEs due to the perception of high risk of defaults (Briscoe, 1995; Daniels and Fisseha, 1992; SMEs Taskforce Report, 1998). Socio-cultural attributes have strong impact on the entrepreneurial development of a given environment. One can express the socio-cultural attributes in terms of the following attitudes and norms: work and work ethics, self confidence, creativity, the ability to face challenges, efficiency and effectiveness in time usage, spending habits, individualism versus collectivism, knowledge seeking mentality, risk taking attitudes, decision making approaches, managerial style and bureaucracy, degree of affiliation and loyalty to ethnic group, power distance, political environment, etc (Briscoe, 1995; SMEs Taskforce Report, 1998). Unfortunately, the negative impacts of socio-cultural attributes have played a regressive role in socio-economic development process of Botswana and other SSA nations. The GoB has taken measures to dismantle the socio-culturally instigated obstacles and advance human development and citizen empowerment, and the country has so far scored remarkable achievements in this respect, but more should be done. Another sad reality is the lack of interest of young citizens for entrepreneurship and self-employment but eagerness and preference to work in the public sector. This colonial legacy instigated collective attitude has been aggravated by the absence of viable education system that can create a fertile ground for self-employment and entrepreneurial innovation (BIDPA Briefing, 2000; SMEs' Taskforce Report, 1998). Many handicraft related professions, such as blacksmithing, have been considered inferior and many people have not been enticed into them. Women entrepreneurs are still the prime victims of the prevailing socio-cultural influences (Maini, 2002). The general impression asserting that: "Women should stay at home taking care of their children and fulfill family responsibility", is still alive in its detrimental shape in the minds of many people particularly in the rural and semi-urban areas. In many localities, husbands are deliberately hostile to the entrepreneurial successfulness of their wives. Most of them think that they may lose their control and supremacy at home if the wife is successful economically. SMEs in Botswana are also not active in establishing viable networks and partnerships with local and foreign ventures. Many of them produce and sell their products without bothering about the impacts of current market trends and competition. Even they may not be aware of the available government assistance programs (Chengeta,

2003). This is partially due to the lack of adequate technical assistance and training service facilities in the country (SMEs' Taskforce Report, 1998). The dearth of appropriately qualified and experienced professionals in this area is also another cause for concern.

To improve this unfavorable situation, the GoB introduced SMEs' promotional national policy in 1999. The policy was comprehensive in its content and contained policy goals and provisions specifying the role of SMEs in the process of: developing an export led national economy; encouraging the development of a competitive and sustainable SMEs' sector in line with the fundamental dynamism of competitive market economy; creating sustainable employment opportunities for the local populace; promoting the development of vertical integration and horizontal linkages between SMEs and primary industries in agriculture, mining and tourism; improving efficiency in the delivery of services such as training, business promotions to SMEs (Chengeta, 2003; SMEs' Task Force Report, 1998; National Policy on the Promotion SMEs, 1999). Strategic policy considerations were also issued under five major categories. These are: Institutional Arrangements and Regulatory Environment; Education, Training and Entrepreneurship Development; Access to Finance; Market Opportunities; Technology Support. The proposed elements of policy implementation framework in the form of schemes, regulatory action and actions programs are categorized based on the above mentioned five strategic policy considerations. Some years have been passed since the issuance of the SMEs' policy. However, the government and other stakeholders have repeatedly revealed that the policy so far largely remained on paper and failed to give the desired outcome (Chengeta, 2003; Duncombe, 1999; Budget Speeches, 2002, 2003, 2004). As reported, this was happened due to the lack of proper policy implementation initiatives.

#### **IV. Recommended Conceptual Elements of SMEs Policy Implementation Framework**

##### ***Complementarity of Policy Formulation and Implementation Strategies***

Policy formulation and implementation processes are complementary. Effective SMEs' policy can give a solid foundation for successful policy implementation endeavours. Consideration of the objective realities and cultural values of the local environment is vital in the policy formulation process. To emphasize this, Sunkel, (1972), has said long time ago: A nation must use its traditions, culture, values, institutions and history to create and achieve its own process of development and national realization. Appropriate and locally initiated development policies can pave the avenue for designing successful policy implementation strategies. SSA nations so far confronted with policy implementation problems due to the absence of coordinated policy implementation strategies (Temtime, Chinyoka, Shunda, 2004; Nwankwo and Richards, 2004; Wolgin, 1997). Previous studies have acknowledged that if a policy is not supported by details of implementation modalities and appropriate institutional arrangement, realization of policy can be very challenging if not impossible (Nugent and Seung, 2002; Lebre La Rovere,

1996). Therefore, the design of articulated and logically synchronized conceptual schemes, action programs and regulatory acts is instrumental for successful policy implementation endeavours in Botswana and other SSA nations (Temtime, Chinyoka, Shunda, 2004). The implementation process of the Botswana's SMEs policy can then be appraised against these ideal elements for taking corrective actions .

### ***Foundations for the Elements of Policy Implementation Framework***

For almost four decades SSA nations were on the spotlight as to how to design lasting and meaningful development policies and overhaul their economies. However, none of the grand policies and strategies came for fruition except some strategies that were materialized temporarily but vanished like a phantasmagoria due to lack of sound and operable economic policy which ought to have been holistic (Araia, 2001). In fact, it has become more difficult for them to achieve the desired progress by strictly adopting the conventional paradigms of development advocating pure economic growth merely from input-output rationality point of view. These are, in most cases, inappropriate to the realities on the ground. We have seen that the adoption of this trend has become responsible for unjustified economic and social inequalities and depressing realities of dualism in the economies of SSA nations (Todaro, 2000; Hussein, 2000; Nwankw and Richards, 2004). This depressing situation has left a solid syndrome of self-confidence deficiency and a stark fact of economic life for the majority of these nations. Furthermore, the SSA nations should skillfully confront the current rapid globalization of the techno-economic system and internationalization of the financial markets to secure their mere Spartan survival. This formidable task demands the design of strategies that are instrumental to achieving sustainable economic development goals. Nurturing the business sector should be the prime agenda in all SSA nations. In line with this basic concept, we need to link the SMEs promotional policy with the macro economic development structural map as shown in Figure 1.

SMEs promotion policy is part of the overall national economic development structure, and we should realize the establishment of forward and backward linkages with the other macro-economic and sectoral policies and strategies of the national economic structure. This linkage is important for the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation tasks. The consequence of failing to understand this vital link doesn't guarantee the effective realization of policy goals.

SMEs' policies are required to ensure their complementarity with the other vital sectors of the national economic development structure (Chandrasekar, 2000; Government White Paper No. 1, 1999). This means we have to ensure that SMEs' policy formulation process should reflect the determinants of SMEs' development at Meta, Macro, Meso and Micro levels (see Figure 2). The failure or success of SMEs in any SSA nations in general and in Botswana in particular is directly and indirectly depends on these determinants. Therefore, SMEs' development policies and implementation strategies should be evaluated in the light of these determinants. They are crucial for creating conducive environment for firms to sustain and eventually grow. Governments and all other stakeholders should make them conducive to SMEs development. Therefore, we need to understand how the major

determinants of SMEs' development are structured, and know the responsible executers (or performers) at all levels.

Organizing SMEs' policy goals in the form of Super and Base structures to facilitate effective implementation. The elements of the super structure are required to regulate the economic motive forces as the prime push factors of socio-economic development and capacity building. The economic motive forces are elements of base structure of the mode of socio-economic development of a society. This categorization is essential to synthesize and recommend appropriate implementation action programs. As shown in Figure 3, the institutional capacity and regulatory framework related policy objectives are categorized as elements of the super structure. Training and entrepreneurship development, access to finance, market opportunities and technological support are also categorized as elements of base structure. This classification is a prerequisite for priority settings in the process of designing specific schemes and action programs as the principal elements of policy implementation.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

## **V. Recommended Schemes, Action Programs and Regulatory Acts as Elements of SMEs' Policy Implementation Framework**

In this section, numerous schemes, action programs and regulatory acts are recommended. The author believes that these elements can serve as references for the policy implementation endeavours. Policy implementation is an important task that should be performed with care and prudence. Many of the schemes, action programs and regulatory guidelines are self-explaining and some others need interpretations. The purpose of this paper is to introduce them for Botswana and SSA Policy makers. The author recognizes that each proposed act and scheme should be supplemented by technical details necessary for successful implementation, and those need interpretations should be interpreted. This task is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the author will deal with this challenge in the next phase (in another paper). The author fully realizes that Botswana and other SSA nations have their own SMEs' policy implementation initiatives. But the proposed elements of policy implementation framework shown below can serve as a supplemental help in the process of designing effective SMEs' policy implementation strategies reflecting the objective realities and peculiarities of their environment. Botswana and other SSA nations can then adopt many of those elements shown in *Figures 4, 5 and 6*. Implementation strategies are country specific, but well crafted conceptual elements of implementation framework with the necessary interpretations and technical modalities and details can help to foster innovativeness and trigger the initiativeness in the process of SMEs' policy implementation.

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

## **VI. Conclusion**

The issue of SMEs' development has continued to occupy a center stage in the core development agendas of SSA nations. This shows that SMEs are regarded as the vital motive forces of development in SSA nations in particular and in all countries in general. If SSA nations are able to formulate suitable SMEs' policies and strategies, SMEs' can beef up their contribution to economic development and corporate social responsibility. However SMEs' promotional policies should be effective and result oriented. The author hopes that the recommended elements of policy implementation framework in the paper will help Botswana and other SSA nations in their developmental endeavours. Effective and appropriate implementation strategies can help to bring a radical improvement in the activities of SMEs in SSA nations. SMEs in Botswana have continued to perform poorly despite government efforts (Budget Speech, 2003 and 2004). This was due to weaknesses in designing policy implementation strategies (Budget Speech, 2004). Telling failure only doesn't help, but taking corrective action is vital to make sure that policy objectives are complemented with the appropriate policy implementation strategies. Therefore, the proposed elements (or ideal scenarios) of policy implementation can be instrumental for effective realization of policy objectives. Concerned government organs and other stakeholders should re-visit their policy implementation strategies for further improvement. The sky is the limit and this is a foundation paper. Other researchers are invited to propose numerous other SMEs' policy implementation elements. The vital point is that if policies and implementation strategies are formulated in congruence with the existing and forthcoming social and economic situations at national and global levels, the expected result will be undoubtedly fruitful. In sum, policy objectives should be achievable and through that SMEs should play their expected role in the socio-economic development of Botswana and other SSA nations. Towards this end, concerned

governmental organizations; commercial associations; public institutions; mass media; bilateral and international agencies; academic institutions; the financial sector and the business community representative agencies should play their expected role.

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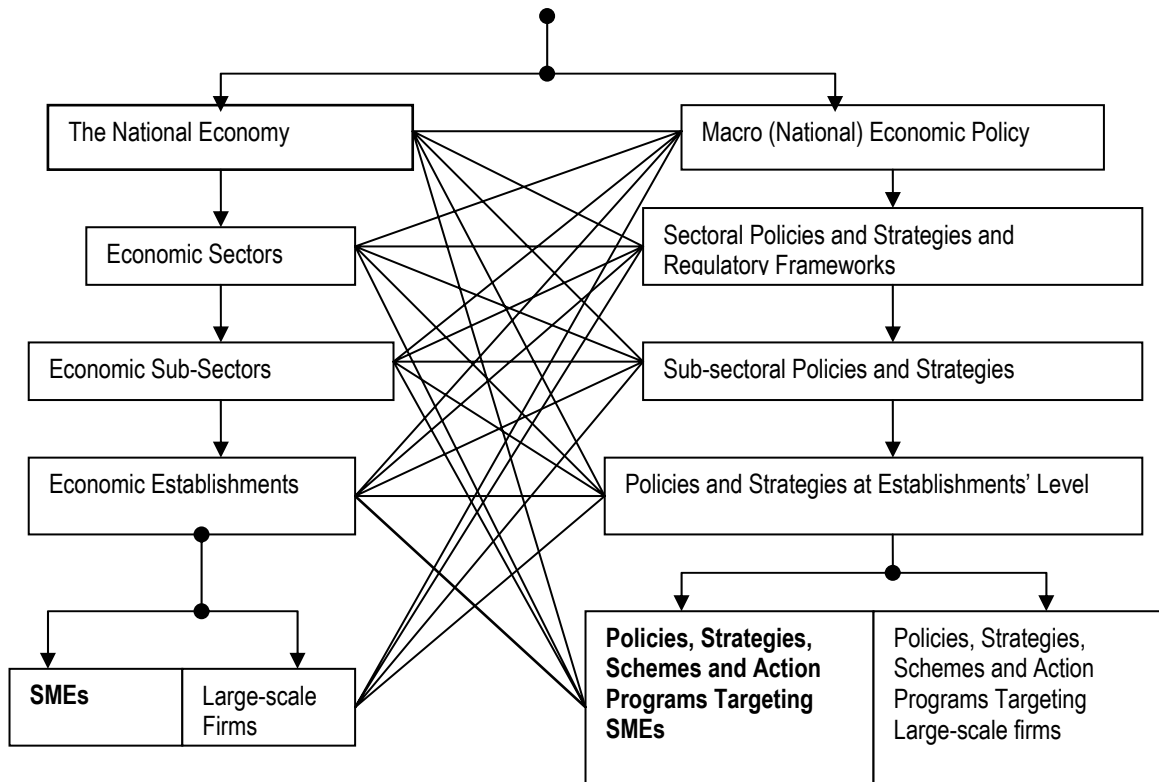
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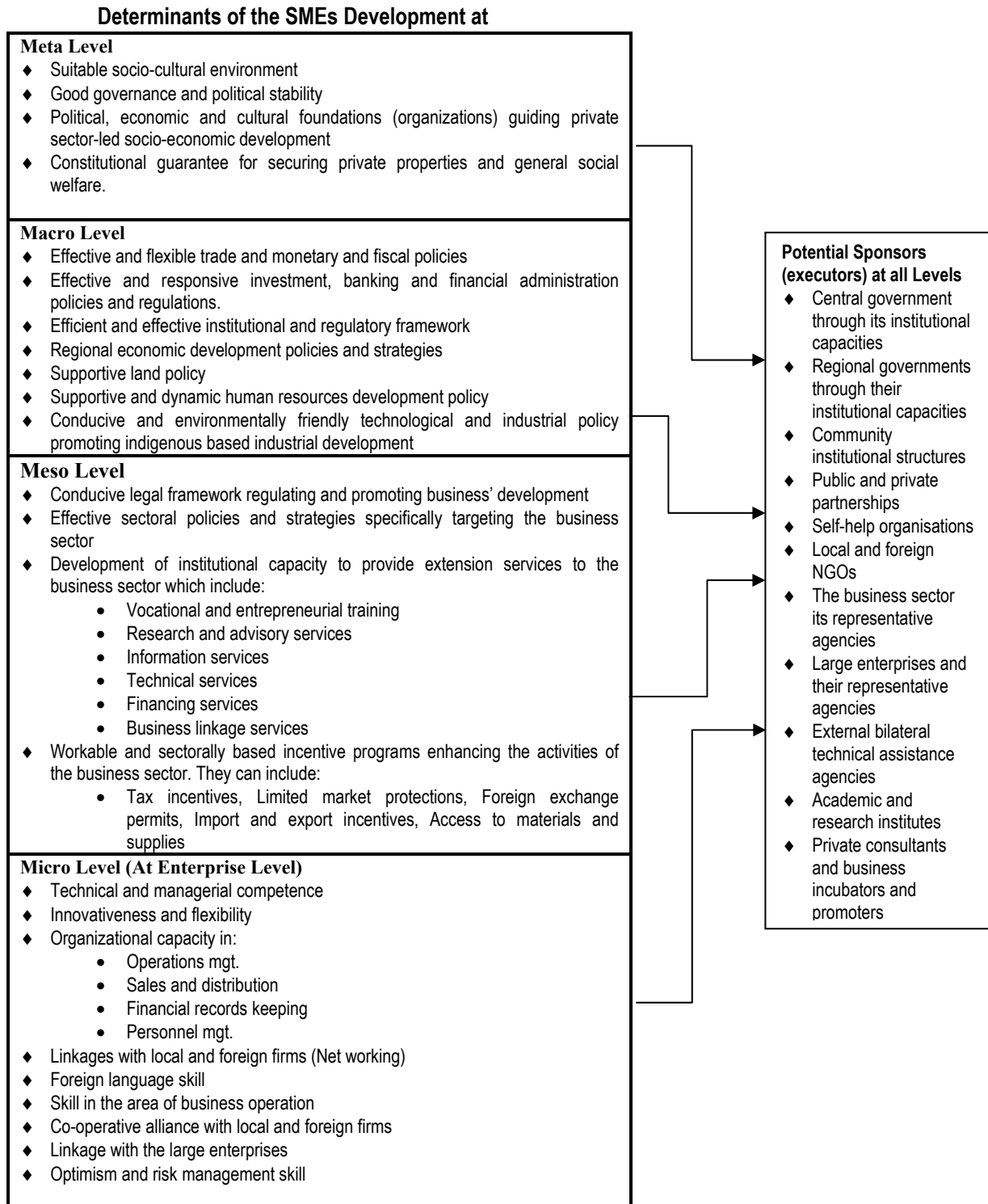
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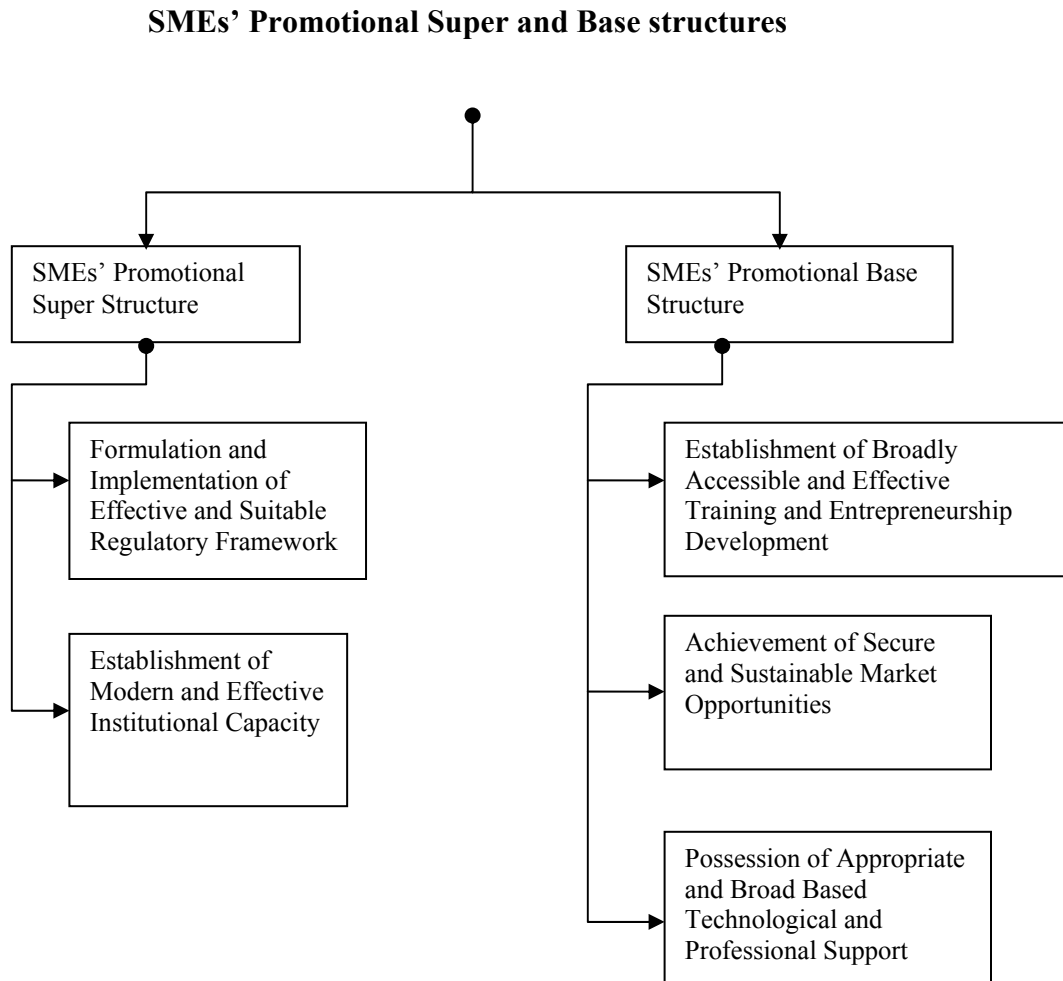
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**Figure 1**

**The Dynamics of Policies and Strategies at Different Levels of Economic Structures and their relationships**

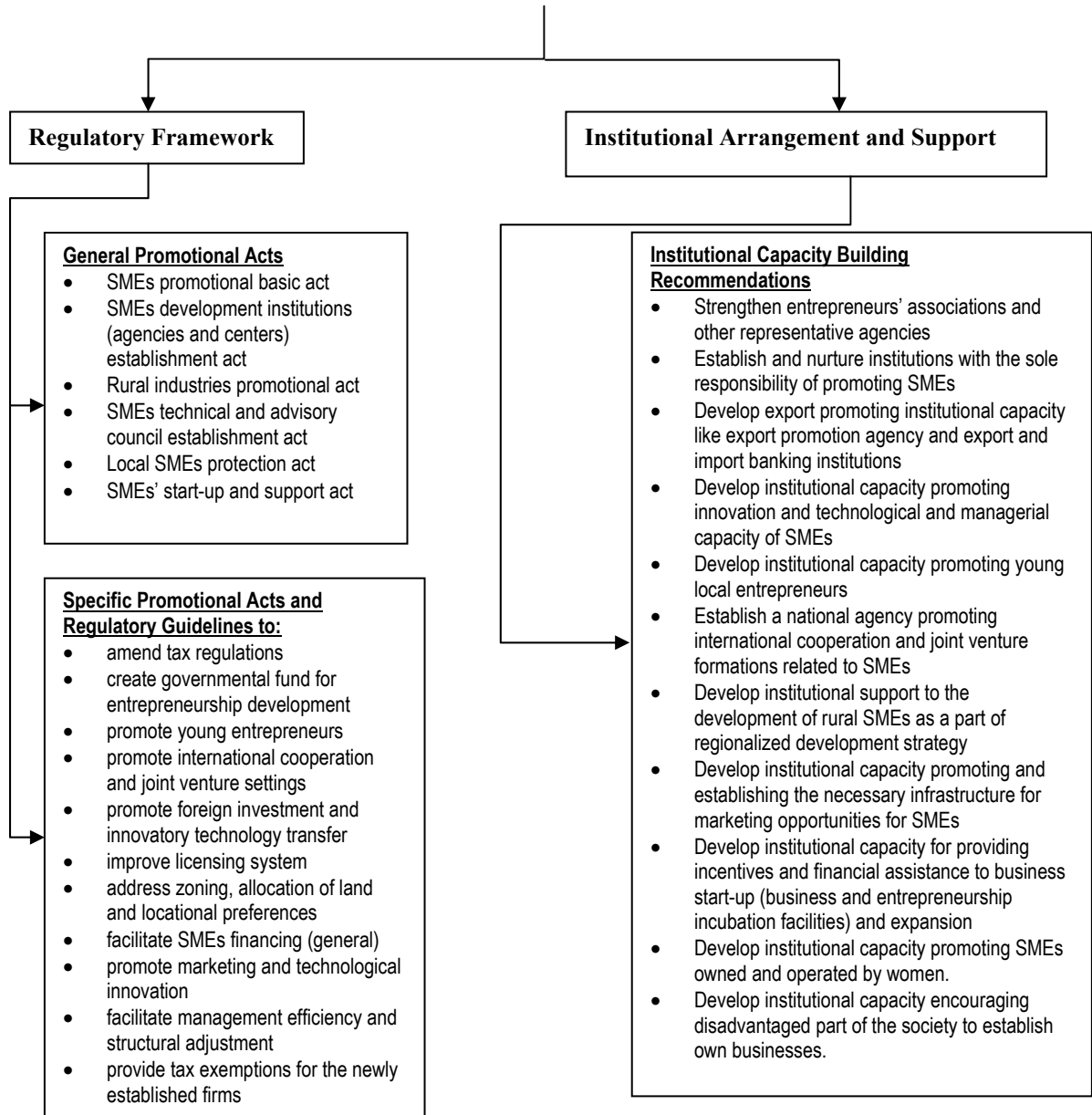


**Figure 2**

**Figure 3**

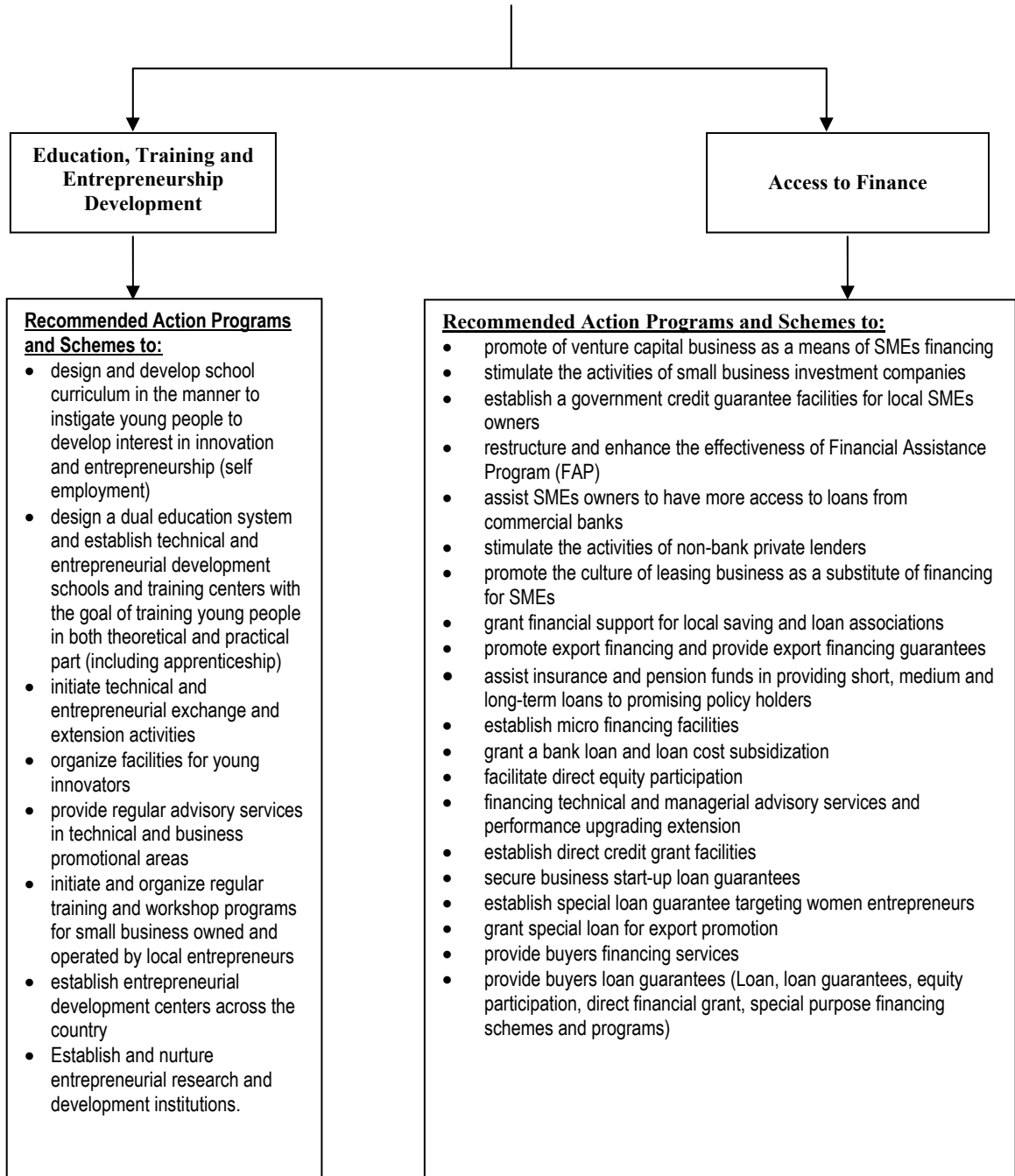
**Figure 4**

**Proposed Acts, Regulatory Guidelines, Schemes and Action Programs Targeting the Promotional Super Structure Elements**



**Figure 5**

**Proposed Schemes and Action Programs  
Targeting Base Structure Elements  
(First Part)**



**Figure 6**

**Proposed Schemes and Action Programs  
Targeting the Base structure Elements (Second)**

