

AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

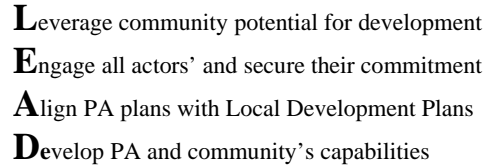
32ND AAPAM ANNUAL ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE,
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA
15 – 19 NOVEMBER 2010

THEME: "REPOSITIONING THE AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICES
FOR THE REALIZATION OF NATIONAL VISIONS



TOPIC: ENHANCING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
EFFECTIVENESS IN AFRICA THROUGH STRENGTHENING
LOCAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

DR. JOHN-MARY KAUZYA (PhD)
CHIEF OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CAPACITY BRANCH
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK



- L**everage community potential for development
- E**ngage all actors' and secure their commitment
- A**lign PA plans with Local Development Plans
- D**evelop PA and community's capabilities

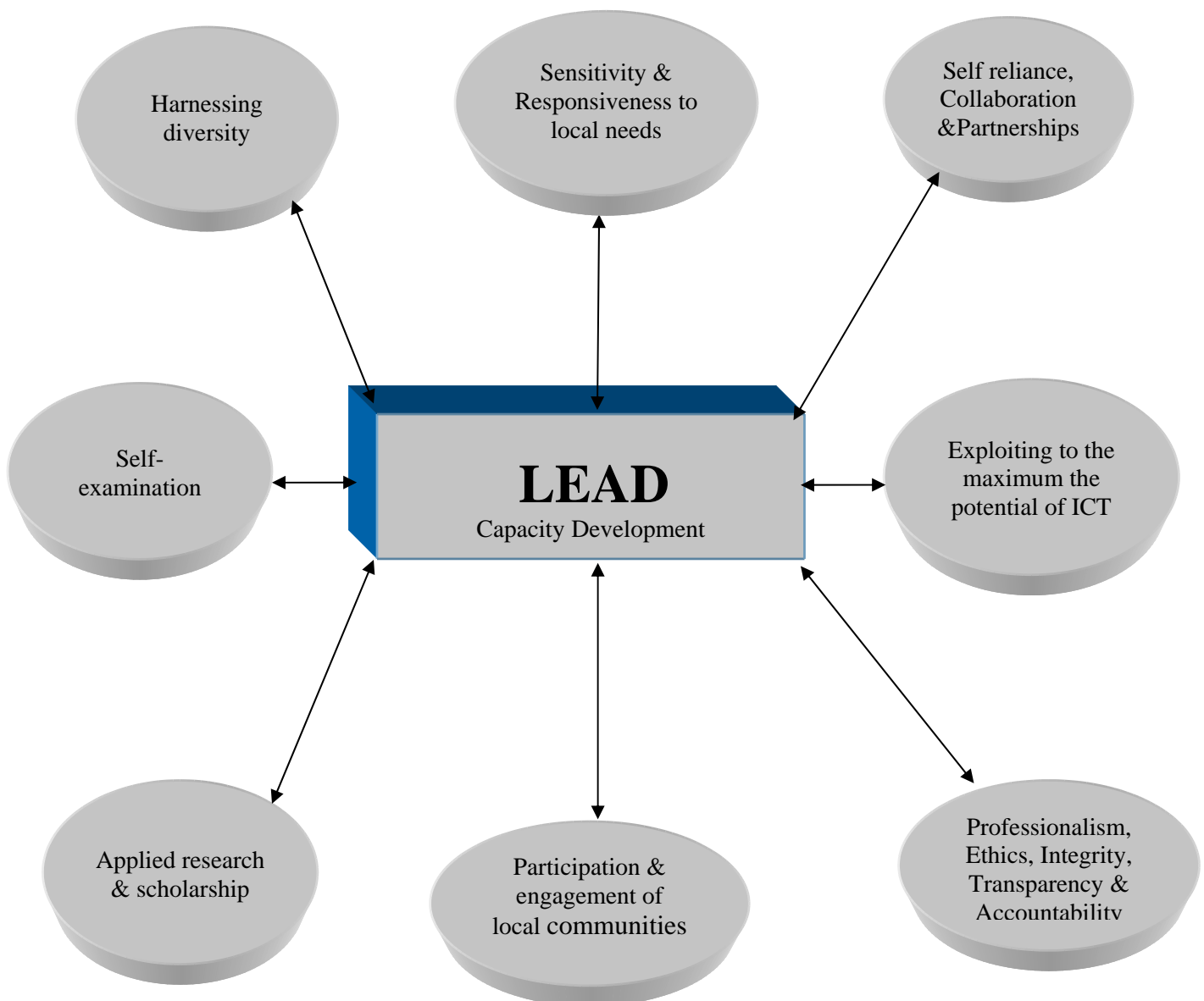
Abstract:

The presentation departs from the stand point that whereas decentralization has been going on in many African countries strengthening public administration leadership capacities in local governments has not moved at the same pace. There is initial research by the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa (MDP-ESA) pointing out that public administration capacity in local governments is generally very weak. The presentation outlines what the author considers as some of the aspects that could guide governance and public administration leadership capacity development in local governments in Africa. It then examines the challenges facing local level leadership in Africa and argues that in local governance, within the context of globalization, leadership transcends local governments to become a partnership activity in which central government, local governments, civil society, private sector at local, national, regional and international levels are all engaged. It examines the issues related to the symbiotic linkages between decentralized governance and the development of public administration leadership capacity at national and local levels. It discusses the extent to which the decentralization drive in Africa can help countries build people-focused leadership capacities for local and national level socio-politico-economic development. It argues that decentralized governance holds potential to promote development of leadership capabilities at local level and to spread leadership capacity across the whole spectrum of the society up to grass-roots level. Finally, it explores the measures that can be taken by central government authorities, local governments, and all development partners engaged in decentralized governance to harness local governance and develop the various leadership capacities at local level for effective grass-roots development and poverty reduction. It emphasizes that local governance leadership capacity includes human aspects and institutional aspects where the human aspect include entrepreneurial, integrative, administrative/managerial and operative abilities. The last part of the presentation touches on the debate that is on-going in some countries about the multiplication of local governments concluding that irrespective of the arguments that can be advanced for and against the increase in local governments, what needs not be lost is that local governments provide a structural and institutional arrangements through which local public administration and governance leadership capacities can be development to manage the development process at grass-roots and ultimately national levels. The challenge which faces governments and development partners is how to develop the public administration leadership capacities of these local governments to enable them execute their mandated functions, serve the people and sustain development.

Elements of a Guide on Local Public Administration and Leadership Capacity Development: A Snapshot

The planning, programming, prioritising, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and activities for public administration and leadership capacity development for effective local governance in Africa ought to be guided by the following:

Diagram one: Guide for Local public administration and Leadership Capacity Development



Sensitivity and responsiveness to contemporary and unfolding needs and challenges facing Africa's leadership and people, especially at local community level.

Developing local public administration and leadership in Africa should not be an academic exercise but a conscious effort that takes into consideration the topical needs and challenges confronting the development process on the continent at local, national, regional, and global levels as well as the challenges that are likely to confront Africa's future generations. "If you want to move people, it has to be toward a vision that's positive for them, that taps important values, that gets them something they desire, and it has to be presented in a compelling way that they feel inspired to follow".(Martin Luther King Jr.). The question that needs to be answered here is the following: To what extent is the background, outlook, knowledge, skills, attitude network, etc of public administration official at local level aligned with the needs of the local communities the Public Administrators are expected to develop?

Respect for and harnessing the potential of diversity

Among the challenges requiring visionary leadership especially at local level are those triggered by the growing and insistent demands for popular participation and good governance, for the accommodation of ethnic, cultural, gender, political, economic, and religious diversity. Leaders that are not particularly aware of and sensitive to issues of diversity will not only miss the opportunities provided by the socio-cultural and even politico-economic diversity of Africa, but will also fail to pay particular attention to and creatively mediate the demands that are created by this diversity. Such a failure would fuel unnecessary conflict. Most conflicts start at local level and their disastrous effects are felt mostly by local communities. Managing diversity should therefore be central to the competency of local public administrators as well as political, managerial and technical leaders. Again it may be interesting to discover the extent to which public administrators at local level are tuned to manage diversity for development.

Critical self-examination

The visionary leadership in Africa will continue to develop as Africa continues embracing further the process of critical self-examination and desists from evading responsibility for its choices and consequences. Local governance and public administration leaders need to lead their local communities in examining their socio-

politico-economic conditions including the resources they have in their midst in order to collectively design and implement programs and projects that will enable the communities to wriggle themselves out of poverty and create a better living not only for themselves but especially for their future generations as well.

Applied research and scholarship

Scholars and researchers have a major role to play in extrapolating from African traditions those values and attributes that could readily be adapted to strengthen leadership for people-centred and development-oriented policy making for meeting topical and unfolding challenges so that the African continent gets adequately placed on the road for self-sustaining growth and development. It is the belief of the author of this paper that most local governments' leaders in Africa have not mastered how to use university faculties and research centers to conduct research into ways and means of how to solve local socio-politico-economic development-related problems. Yet it is generally known that the young women and men in universities, research centers and think tanks, when well prompted, can help discover solutions to problems that encumber the work of local governments. Linking local public administration and leadership to researchers and training institutions could be one way of sustaining capacity development at local level

Professionalism, ethics, integrity, transparency, accountability, and excellence

Character, integrity, professionalism, ethics, transparency and accountability as well as commitment to excellence and unceasing search for perfection are among the defining attributes of leaders needed by Africa to conquer obstacles to growth and development. Local public administration and governance leaders ought to be able to measure up to the right level on these attributes. Issues of ensuring the rule of law, good governance, effectiveness in performance, respect for human rights, selfless service to the public, will be achieved through a leadership that embraces these attributes.

Balancing Self-reliance with Global awareness, Collaboration, Partnerships and networking

Despite the fact that Africa has its own problems and that it should essentially count on its resolve and capacity to solve these problems, it is also a sign of visionary leadership to tap the potential that is provided by partnerships and networks to supplement and support Africa's own efforts. The spirit of self-reliance is

good and commendable. However, effective self-reliance requires a clear assessment and understanding of the forces that can supplement one's own efforts. Local governance leaders must be aware of the global forces that can contribute to their success and how to mobilize and galvanize them. The combination of ever increasing expectations and needs of local communities, and the lack of the ability of individual units of local governments, central governments, or even donors and development partners alone to meet those needs compels every one at every level to collaborate with concerned stakeholders! It is certainly for this reason that Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is focused on developing partnership.

Participation and engagement of the concerned communities:

Leaders from the international community, central governments, or even local governments themselves need to develop the habit of engaging concerned communities in the identification of their problems, defining their needs, specifying their challenges, and designing solutions for the kind of development they desire. Experience over time has shown that no matter how much one wants to help local communities to develop, the task is by far easier when the communities participate in the whole process of planning, programming, prioritising, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of their development.

Exploiting the power of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)

There is a variety of tools that local governance leaders can apply to improve the lives of the people they lead. Among such tools, the most modern is information and communication technology. While leaders may not be expected to master the application of these technologies, they need to go a long way towards their understanding of the role that these new technologies can play in meeting development needs in areas such as education, health, good governance and administration, knowledge and information sharing, business, trade and much more. There is need to foster a better understanding of how ICTs can be used for social and economic development, and to equip policymakers and programme managers with a development-oriented framework for ICT-based and ICT-supported interventions in a range of socio-politico-economic sectors.

Background and Introduction: Redefining and redesigning the finality of public Administration at local government level.

The finality of public administration or precisely the basis for determining its effectiveness has been redefined since the beginning of the 2nd Century by three phenomena; (i) the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (ii) policies of decentralization and (iii) globalization. First, we will look at the objectives of decentralization and what they imply for developing the public administration leadership capacities at local level. The work of developing local communities is too big to be handled only at central government level. The necessity for people to participate in their development is partly responsible for institutional and structural re-arrangements (call it decentralization) to facilitate the engagement of local people in making and implementing decisions for their development. In addition, the concern of governments, donors and development partners to see the funds they provide causing positive change at community level requires arrangements that enable them to be assured that the lives of communities are changing visibly as a result of the funds. A casual observation shows that a number of countries in Africa are promoting decentralized governance as a measure for democratization, people empowerment and poverty reduction. While development is often envisaged in terms of impressive grandiose projects, to common grass-root people, it actually entails incremental improvements in normal day-to-day life necessities of food, shelter, and provision of services in critical areas such as education, health, water, energy, transport, etc. African countries have a huge task of getting their people out of abject poverty. And in many respects, the bigger chunk of development tasks at local community level has been passed on to local governments through decentralization. The imperative that emerges from this scenario is that the effectiveness of public administration should best be judged from the stand point of cause a positive change in the lives of grass-roots people where poverty bites hardest! A closer look at the objectives of decentralization in a number of countries (for examples, Uganda, South Africa, Rwanda, and Kenya) shows the ambitions people hope to realize thorough decentralized governance.

Uganda

- i. The transfer of real power to Local Governments with the aim of reducing the load of work on remote and under-resourced central officials
- ii. Bringing political and administrative control over services at the point where they are actually delivered, thereby improving accountability and effectiveness, and promoting people's feeling of "ownership" of programmes and projects executed in their Local Governments.
- iii. Freeing local managers from central constraints and enabling them to develop, effective and sustainable organizational structures tailored to local circumstances in the long-term

- iv. Improving financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between the payment of taxes and the provision of services they finance.
- v. Improving the capacity of local authorities to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to users

South Africa

- i. Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities
- ii. Ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner.
- iii. Promote social and economic development.
- iv. Promote a safe and healthy environment.
- v. Encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government

Rwanda

- i. To enable and reactivate local people to participate in initiating, making, implementing, and monitoring decisions and plans that concern them taking into consideration their local needs, priorities, capacities and resources by transferring power, authority and resources from central to local government and lower levels.
- ii. To strengthen accountability and transparency in Rwanda by making local leaders directly accountable to the communities they serve and by establishing a clear linkage between the taxes they pay and the services that are financed by these taxes
- iii. To enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of public administration to the local environment by placing the planning, financing, management and control of service provision at the point where services are provided and by enabling local leadership develop organization structures and capacities that take into consideration the local environment and needs
- iv. To develop sustainable economic planning and management capacity at local levels that will serve as the driving motor for planning, mobilization and implementation of social, political and economic development to alleviate poverty
- v. To enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the planning, monitoring and delivery of services by reducing the burden from central government officials who are distanced from the point where needs are felt and services delivered

Kenya: (according to the New Constitution 2010)

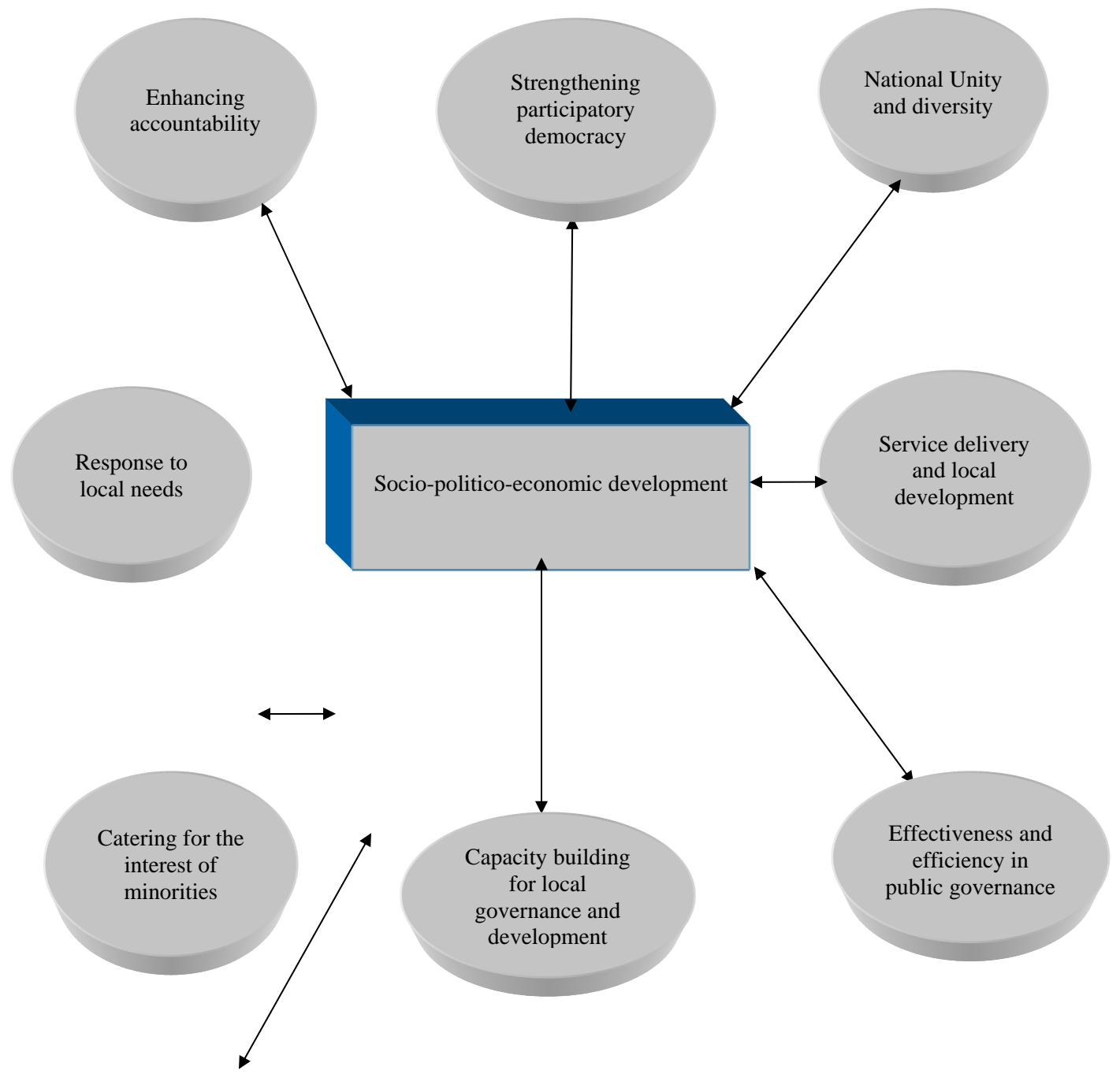
- i. To promote democratic and accountable exercise of power;
- ii. To foster national unity by recognizing diversity;
- iii. To give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them;
- iv. To recognize the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development;
- v. To protect and promote the interests and rights of minorities and marginalized communities;
- vi. To promote social and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services throughout Kenya;
- vii. To ensure equitable sharing of national and local resources throughout Kenya;
- viii. To facilitate the decentralization of State organs, their functions and services, from the capital of Kenya; and
- ix. To enhance checks and balances and the separation of powers.

The following quotation from the Decentralization policy documents of the Government of Rwanda demonstrates how governments are putting a lot of premium on decentralization as a structural vehicle for development;

“With the above objectives the government of Rwanda is taking decentralization as an instrument for people’s political empowerment, a platform for sustainable democratization, a structural arrangement for mobilization of economic development energies, initiatives, and resources, and as a weapon for people’s reconciliation social integration and well being. Overall, it is a vehicle for the promotion of a culture of good governance in the country (political, economic, civic, and managerial/administrative good governance). The hope for the development of Rwanda lies in the will and power of its people. The decentralization policy is intended to give the power to the people and enable them execute their will for self development. Decentralization will evolve institutions that are not only democratic, accountable, and transparent but also efficient and effective in service provision and community development”.

The diagram below gives a summary of the analysis of the above objectives and shows the extent of what socio-politico-economic ambitions decentralization is expected to achieve in Africa.

Diagram two: General objectives of decentralization



Linking Local Governments with MDGs

Second, we look at the way decentralization is linked to MDGs and what this means for the public administration leadership capacities in local governments. In many countries that have decentralized, local governments are critical to the achievement of MDGs because most of the areas in which the Millennium Development Goals and Targets have been set are mandates of local governments (for examples; poverty eradication, primary education, primary health care and communicable diseases, environment, maternal healthcare, HIV/AIDS and Malaria etc. The box bellow from the Commonwealth Local Governments' Forum shows how local governments are linked to the achievement of the MDGs¹

Diagram three: local governments and MDGs

Box 2 The role of local government in delivering on the MDGs									
MDG	Fire fighting and police	Solid waste management	Roads	Primary education	Water and sanitation	Primary health	Public health	Land use planning	Economic development
1 (Poverty)	■ ■	■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■		■ ■ *	■ ■ *
2 (Primary Education)			■	■ ■ ■	■	■		■	
3 (Gender Equality)	■ ■			■ ■			■ ■		
4 (Child mortality)		■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■	■	
5 (Maternal health)	■	■	■ ■	■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■		
6 (HIV/Aids malaria)		■ ■		■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■	■	
7 (Slums and Water)	■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■	■ ■ ■	■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■
8 (Partnership)									■
Key ■ ■ ■ Direct Provision ■ ■ Indirect Relationship ■ Some Relationship *In some cases LG through bad governance can influence this MDG negatively									

¹ Philip Amis; "Background Discussion Paper for the Commonwealth Local governments' Forum", (Freeport, Grand Bahamas, 11 – 14 May 2009)
http://www.clgc2009.org/userfiles/CLGC+2009/File/Improving%20Local%20Government%20the%20Commonwealth%20vision_xqp.pdf

In fact the above table is just a generalization. In some countries for example Rwanda and Uganda local governments are directly mandated to fight poverty at local level in the objectives set in the constitutive documents of local governments. Equally in the same countries and South Africa, local governments are directly mandated to do local economic development planning in collaboration with private sector and civil society. In Rwanda, creating partnerships for local economic development which is MDG 8 is part of the mandates of local governments.

What would be the Requisite Public Administration and Leadership conceptual framework and Capacity for Local Governance?

If as shown above the bigger part of the job for developing communities has descended to the lower levels of governance through decentralization, capacities for public administration and leadership must be developed at those levels. In other words, decentralization in Africa, imperfect as it may seem to some people, (in fact decentralization can only be imperfect), has generated an important shift in public administration leadership responsibilities and competences and can therefore be regarded as one of the structural arrangements that may in the long run contribute to the development of public administration leadership and governance capacity in African countries. However, this does not concern just transferring public administration capacities from central to local governments following the transfer of functions and responsibilities. That would be just a small part of task. What is needed is the transformation of the concept, outlook, competence, and operational readiness to turn public administration at local level into a sphere that adequately blends administrative professionalism, management effectiveness and efficiency, leadership acumen and governance aptitude. This certainly is an administration that goes beyond the traditional public administration professionals.

There was a time in the history of modern governance in African countries, even well after independence, when local governments were just organizational instruments for collecting taxes and administering simple peasants in rural areas or providing simple services such as garbage collection and keeping law and order in urban areas. This simplified type of public administration, in the 1960's and 70's received a lot of support from the international community. It served the purpose of replacing the departed colonial administration. But it could not address the emerging heavy tasks of mobilizing resources and engaging the local people in planning and implementing their development.

With objectives of decentralization such as those given above, local governance has become more complex. Not only does it handle the provision of a wider range of services, most importantly it addresses peoples' greater socio-politico-economic development expectations both in rural and urban areas. The population has become more complex in their understanding of what they should expect from their public administrators and local leaders, how they should express the expectations, demand accountability and improved services, and link the taxes they pay with the quality, quantity, and timeliness of the services they receive from public administration. More to this, the population has become more democracy-minded and demand for a greater say in the decisions that their public administrators and leaders take that will influence their lives. Even in the remotest of rural areas, people have progressively shifted from being followers of their leaders to being supporters and participants in the whole act of governance. This phenomenon testifies to the changed nature and even concept of public administration. This is what the presentation will touch on now.

In the recent trend of thinking and discourse on managing Public affairs there has been a cumulative paradigm movement from traditional Public Administration to Governance via Public Management². It is observable that following these trends and paradigm shifts there have been complementarities among the three concepts and practices (public administration, public management, and governance) but also losses and gains for Public Administration as an institution, a structural organization, a set of practices and a domain of values and principles through which the State prepares, makes, implements, monitors, controls, and evaluates its decisions and policies as well as its performance of the full range of its functions including the delivery of services that are critical to human development.

Public Administration as a bureaucratic organization is conceived to work within a set of rules with legitimate delegated legal rational authority, expertise, impartiality, continuity, speed and accuracy, predictability, standardization, integrity and professionalism, to satisfy the general public interest. As an instrument of State³, it is expected to be the grantor of the fundamental basis of human development and security including freedom of individuals, protection of life and property, justice, protection of basic human rights, stability, and peaceful resolution of conflict whether in allocation and distribution of resources or otherwise. In this light effective Public administration would be indispensable for the sustainability of the rule of law and accountability.

² These thoughts had been expressed by the author to the United Nations Committee of Experts in Public Administration during its meeting of March 2004.

³ See Jean-Louis Quermonne: L'appareil administrative de l'Etat, (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1991)

However, from the last part of the 1970s, Public Administration came under intensive attack from those that advocated for an elevated emphasis on the role of the private enterprise in development. Criticism highlighted public administration practices characterized by red tape, sluggishness, insensitivity to public needs, wasteful utilization of Public resources, undue focus on process and procedure rather than on results, etc. The whole instrument of the State (Public Administration) was projected negatively as a big burden on the tax payer. A school of thought emerged which believed that the functions of managing Public Affairs would best be performed through the application of private enterprise management principles and practices paying particular attention to efficiency and economy in the utilization of resources, effectiveness, customer focus and reliance on market forces especially in matters of economic decisions. Increasing the role and influence of the private sector called for rolling back the frontiers of the State in effect pushing for minimizing the size of the Public Sector and narrowing down the field of operation of Public Administration. Instead of Public Administration the common term used became Public Management.

However, in the 1990s the negative effects of undue emphasis on efficiency and economy in the running of Public affairs started to manifest themselves in the deterioration of the delivery of Public services especially those that are closely linked to the satisfaction of the general public interest or that could be referred to as public goods. Such goods and services could not be adequately provided through strict adherence to the practices and dictates of market forces. Where the Public Administrator had paid too much attention to the rules, regulations, controls, procedures, and processes at the expense of providing effective services to the Public, the Public Manager gave excessive focus on efficiency and economy in the utilization of resources, again to the detriment of the service to the citizen. Lapses in regulation and controls provided avenues for increased corruption in Public offices, private sector practices in management of Human resources (such as contracting) eroded commitment to Public service values and favored employment rather than career in many countries. Ultimately the public did not get the satisfaction expected as it became apparent that there is a great difference between market forces and public interest and that the market forces did not necessarily always decide in favor of public interest. Nor did they always call up on the public to participate in deciding, planning, monitoring and evaluation of government action to ensure that the interest of the public remains at the centre of government action.

In the search for a stronger say and role of the citizen in influencing the way Public managers planned and implemented the functioning of the State with equity, transparency and accountability, the concept of governance emerged to emphasize the participation and interest of the public as well as strong accountability of public officials at the centre of Public management. The concept of good governance introduced important elements of partnerships and shared accountability whereby various stakeholders in the public, private and civil society sectors at local, national, regional, and global levels come together and complement each other to complete the act of managing public affairs in the development process. Looking at the above synopsis of the trend and conceptual mutations the question that imposes itself concerns what strengthening Public Administration leadership for effective local governance entails and what a strengthened public administration leadership would look like. We need to adopt a critical eye and mind here.

Conceptually Public Administration constitutes the crust of Public management as well as of good governance. The historical fault in the trends outlined above was for those who advocated for New Public Management, as well as those who are advocating for good governance to perceive Public administration as something outside these two. A closer analysis shows that it forms an inner circle without which the two cannot be effective. It is this central position of Public administration that needs to be refocused and repositioned in the process of strengthening public administration at local government level. In the process of strengthening public administration capacity for effective local governance, public administration must not retract to its archaic self of exclusive regulatory control and paternalistic and monopolistic approaches to service delivery. Public administration must recognize and embrace the value and virtue of partnerships among the various sectors so that it joins hands with actors in the private and civil society sectors at local, national, regional and global levels to galvanize and leverage experiences, knowledge, skills as well as resources for effective response to public needs. Partnerships will constitute a major ingredient in giving strength to Public Administration. In other words, the strengthening of public administration will entail bringing together the best attributes of the three concepts of Public Administration, Public Management, and Good governance to construct a sharp instrument for effective, efficient, responsive, transparent, accountable and well networked functioning of the State and its subsidiary entities such as local governments.

Beyond conceptual discuss on public administration, public management, and good governance, we need to bear in mind that the shift in the concept of public administration is being imposed by the reality of demands put on public administration. Demands on local public administration leadership and governance actors have

increased in number and complexity (See Box 1). Consequently the task of public administration leadership has shifted from simple ordering and administering to leveraging development and serving as the fulcrum of good governance.

Box 1: Greater demands on local governance and public administration leadership

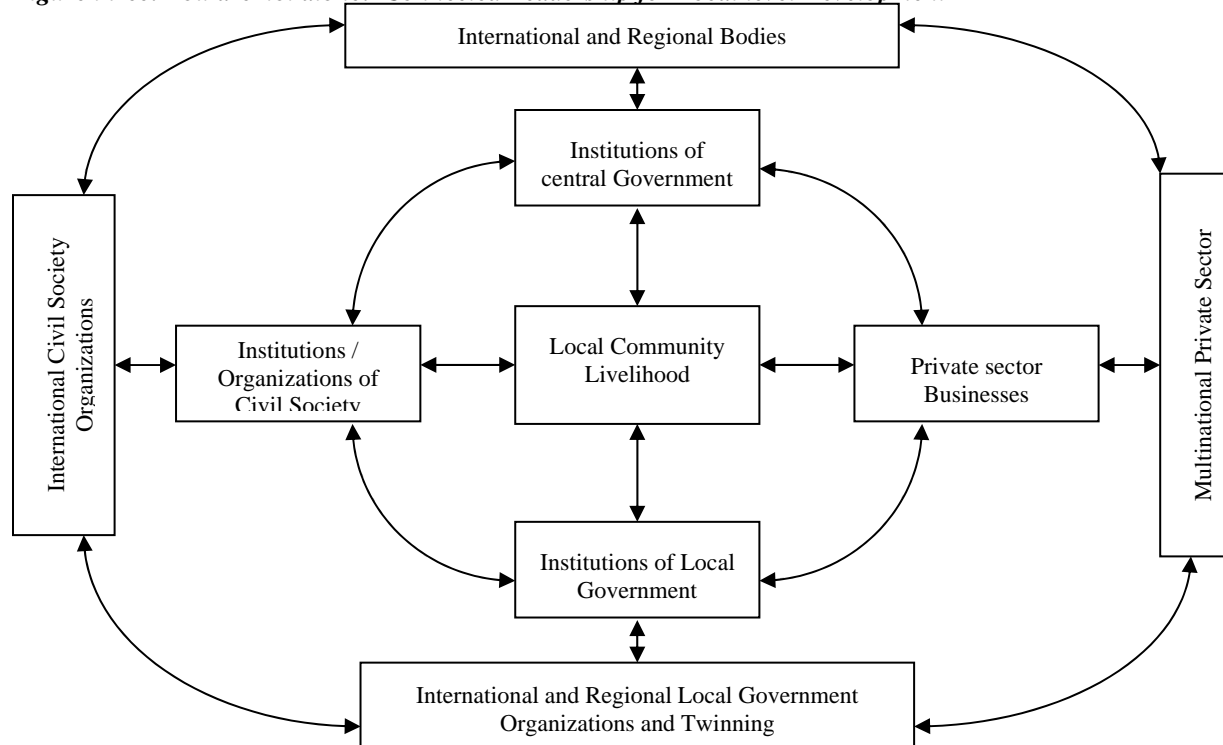
- Demand for enhanced transparency and people participation in making policies, strategies, decisions, and implementation of their development
- Demands from the local people for more, better, and timely services even in contexts of less funding
- The dire need for developmental innovation, and entrepreneurship
- The need for extensive networking including involvement of civil society and private sector in the delivery of services and aligning local governments with other development partners to leverage capacity
- Increased emphasis on accountability and responsiveness bringing to the forefront local people needs, effectiveness in achieving development including achieving MDGs and International agreed development agenda and efficiency in the utilization of resources especially funds.

Networked public administration leadership at local level:

Lastly we look at how globalization forces influence local public administration leadership to adopt approaches of networking to leverage capacities from actors outside the sphere of public administration. The shift in the tasks of local public administration leadership has dictated a change in the type of public administration and leadership in local governments and in local governance in general in terms of its knowledge, skills, competences, attitude, networks and even personal character. It takes determined, insightful, strategic, and forward looking leadership to create a thriving and prosperous local community. But the problem is that leadership, in these days of globalization, regionalization and even nationalism is no longer an issue of one or a few determined, insightful, strategic and forward looking individuals. It is a whole network of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations ranging from the global through the regional and national to the local that constitute leadership at local governance level. It is a web of what I term networked leadership bringing together central government, local governments, private sector, and civil society at local, national, regional, and global levels to work and cause change and development at local level. In other words, local governance leadership is no longer an affair of local governments and local leaders only. With globalization, the question of “who is your local leader” has become more complicated than the biblical question of “who is your neighbor”. The diagram bellow (figure three) illustrates this. This globalized outlook of public administration at local government level has incidentally made public administration literary public not only in terms of

practicing public administration with openness but also in terms of involvement of multiple stakeholders and actors. As the former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annani said, “More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together.”

Figure three: You are not alone: *Connected Leadership for Local level Development*



Linkage between decentralized governance and public administration leadership capacity development

Decentralized governance is increasingly being favored as the most suitable mode of governance through which poverty reduction interventions can be conceived, planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This is because it is hoped that the process of decentralization facilitates greater participation of communities in problems' analysis, needs identification, projects' planning and implementation, which in turn increases ownership and the likelihood of sustainability. Decentralization is taken as a high value policy. There is, in some corners, also the hope that decentralization offers opportunities for peace in situations where power sharing and shared exercise of power can mitigate violent ethnic, religious, and territorial conflicts inside a country. For all these reasons and perhaps even more, many development partners at local, national, regional,

and international levels including intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations Agencies are engaged in supporting decentralized governance in many countries. However, we need to bear in mind that the success of decentralized governance in delivering its promises hinges strongly on public administration leadership at national and local levels.

When it is implemented, decentralization puts in place structures both at central and local government levels that provide layers of leadership thus a field for public administration leadership development in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, networks, systems, institutions, and values. Decentralization and public administration leadership development are therefore symbiotic in the sense that for effective decentralized governance to take place, it requires a commitment of public administration leadership at central and local government levels, a leadership that trusts in the power of the people at local level. At the same time, local governance structures provide a training ground through which leaders are identified and trained through a hands-on process of managing local governments in all aspects (problem identification, policy and strategy design and decision-making including bye laws, ensuring transparency and accountability, and in general managing resources). Decentralized structures also provide a structural arrangement that can bring together leadership efforts from private sector, civil society at international, national, and local levels to converge and focus resources to developing local communities.

Leadership is the engine that powers local governance and service delivery. Without it, corporate governance arrangements cannot operate effectively and ultimately public services suffer. In supply driven decentralization i.e. where the central government decides to initiate and push the decentralization agenda, one could say that “in the beginning there was leadership”! For decentralised governance to spring up and thrive, it requires a strong public administration leadership that not only enjoys the trust of the people, but also trusts in the power of the people. Weak leaders who do not trust the people and who lack trust from the people fear decentralization because they mistakenly see it as further weakening their power and authority. Governments under strong (read capable) leadership tend to decentralise while governments under weak leadership tend to disintegrate. Obviously there is a huge difference between decentralization and disintegration!

On the other hand decentralized governance provides a structural arrangement for shared responsibility, exercise of power and diffused authority both vertically between central government and local governments

and horizontally among key players in civil society, private sector and grass-roots communities. This structural arrangement provides opportunity for the growth and development of leadership capacity. One can deduce that there is a symbiotic relationship between decentralized governance and public administration leadership capacity development whereby leadership is necessary for decentralized governance to flourish and decentralised governance is an ingredient that is needed for the growth and development of local leadership capacity. There are many examples of top leaders in Africa whose capacity and up-ward movement in leadership positions has been facilitated by their engagement in leadership at local governance level. The former Vice President of Uganda started her political career as a Councillor at Local Council 3 level and so did the current Prime Minister. The former Minister of local Government in Rwanda was once a Prefet. The role of leadership is to catalyze and mobilize this power into collective action to face the challenges of local level development and poverty reduction. In the African context, these challenges are numerous and enormous but not insurmountable. We explore some of them in the following paragraphs. Beyond the challenges themselves, the real issue at hand is whether public administration leadership at local governments' level is tuned to address such challenges and what needs to be done to develop its capacity to align it with the challenges.

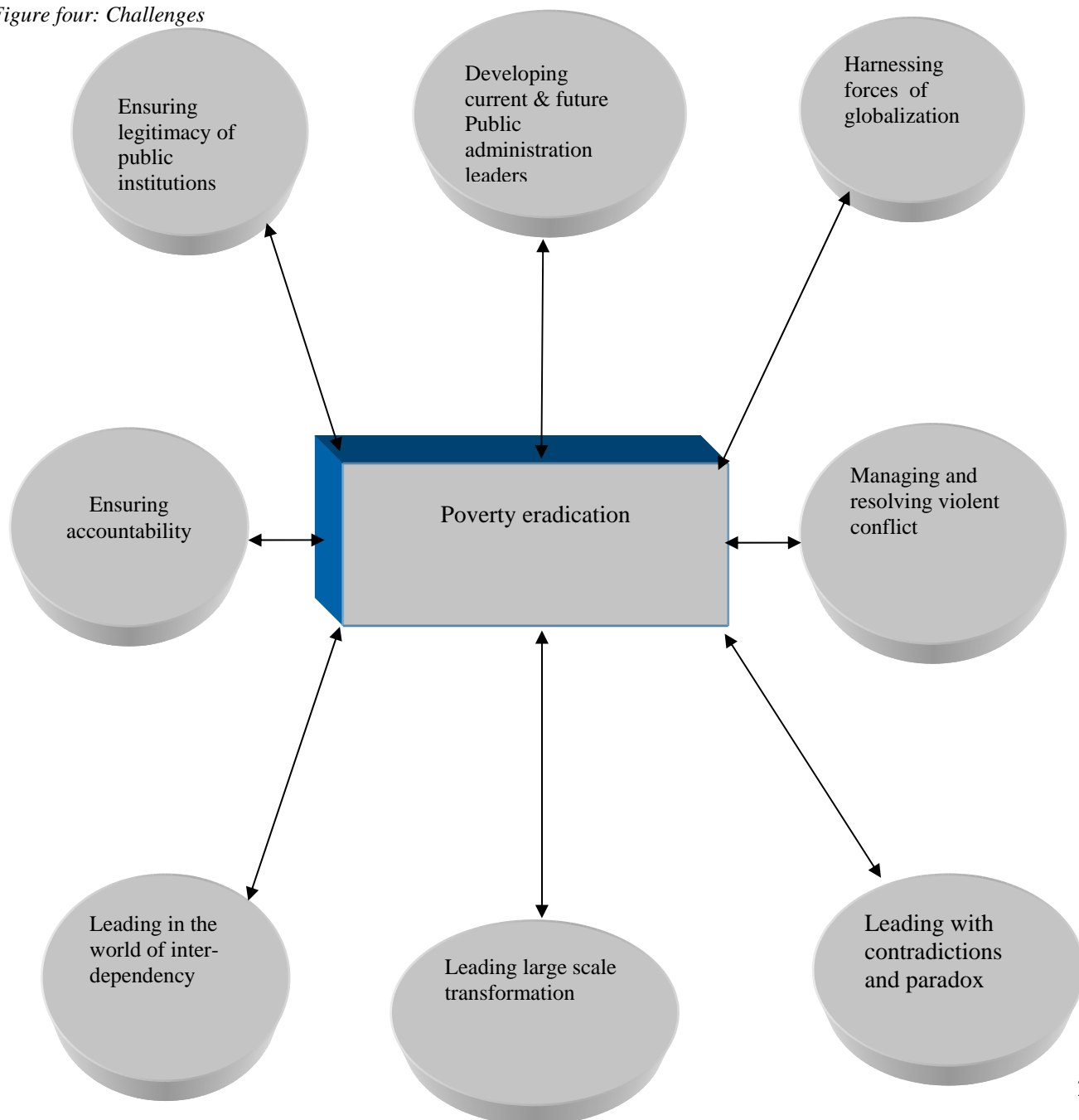
Challenges facing local level public administration leadership in Africa

Decentralized governance and public administration leadership capacity development in Africa are discussed within the context of the challenges facing the continent and its people. Both must be conceived and implemented with the aim of making leaders and people capable of effectively addressing the key challenges facing African countries today and likely to face the continent in the future, especially at community level. Their programs must be driven by constant reference to, and review of, such unique challenges and demands that the challenges continue to put on the leadership styles socially, administratively, managerially and politically. The challenges are many but the following are singled out as critical ones facing local public administration leadership particularly. They are all linked to achieving the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to the development of Africa⁴.(i)Developing capable local public administration leaders both for the present and for the future, (ii)Harnessing the forces of globalization to benefit local development, (iii) poverty alleviation, (iv)Conflict management and resolution and prevention of

⁴ The following are the millennium development goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in the Millennium Declaration September 2000. i: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, ii: Achieve universal primary education, iii: promote gender equality and empower women, iv: Reduce child mortality, v: Improve maternal health, vi: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and viii: Develop a global partnership for development

violence, (v) The legitimacy of state institutions, (vi) ensuring accountability, (vii) Leading in a world of increasing interdependency, (viii) Leading large-scale transformations, (ix) Leading with contradictions and paradox. Most of these (8 of them in fact) challenges, it can be observed are process-related. In other words they can be linked to the question of : what do we do to eradicate poverty from Africa. Reading most of the literature on the achievement of MDGs and what needs to be done to speed up this in Africa, one notices that the general answer comes as “provide funding”. In this paper we believe this is just part of the answer but not sufficient and certainly not the most critical! If the eight challenges are not addressed the central one of poverty eradication will not go away irrespective of how much funding is provided!

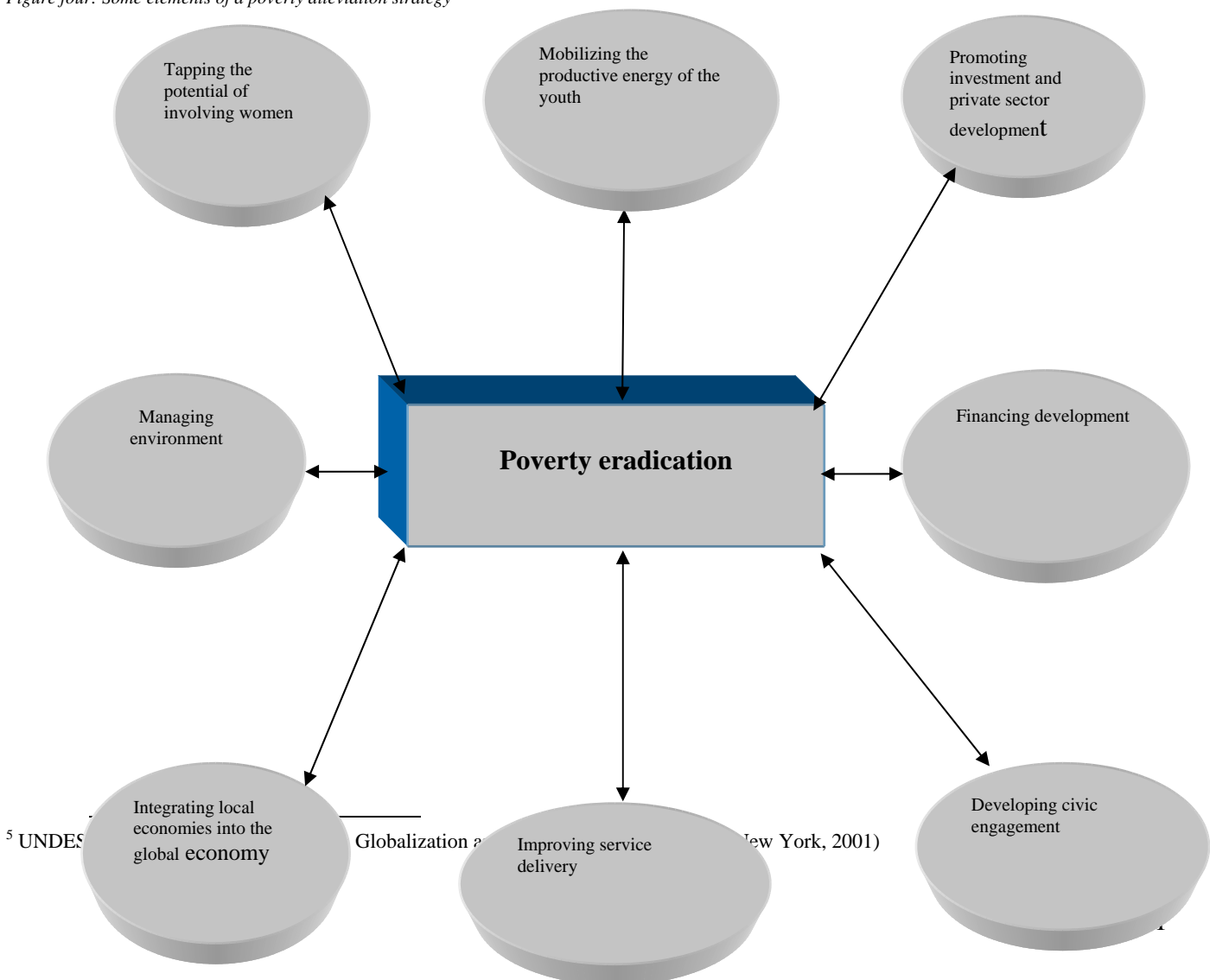
Figure four: Challenges



The Challenge of How to Eradicate Poverty among Communities

“Eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development should form the *raison d’être* of public administration”⁵. The biggest challenge facing Africa’s local public administration leadership and governance in general concerns the eradication of poverty at community level. This challenge looks squarely in the face of local level public administration leadership every day because it is at local grass-roots level that poverty is stuck naked and pinches deepest. There is nothing romantic about leading a community that is too poor to feed itself, educate its children, and secure its future! Public Administration leaders at local and central government levels must develop cross-sectoral approaches to solving problems. In particular this is critical to the reduction of poverty. The following aspects need attention: (i) Financing development, (ii) Developing civic engagement, (iii) Improving service delivery especially in water, health, HIV/AIDS, education, environment, (iv) Promoting investment and private sector development as well as integration of local economies into the global economy, (v) Managing the environment, (vi) Gender and inclusion.

Figure four: Some elements of a poverty alleviation strategy



Eradicating poverty is not going to be an easy job and that is an understatement. If the above elements of strategy for poverty alleviation have to be effectively implemented, there is need for public administration leadership in local governments which combines inspirational, integrative and entrepreneurial abilities. In addition these abilities but especially **entrepreneurial leadership** capacity will have to be developed in all sectors and at all levels to enable local governments to engage in a sustained thinking, visioning and strategizing process that constantly devises solutions to complex socio-politico-economic problems that hinder development. If development has to happen at grass-roots level the leadership at this level must have the capacity to think strategically and to mobilize communities to participate in the entire process of development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Again the teasing question is the following: Do local governments' Administrators by what ever title named possess this kind of combination of abilities? What can be done to develop this kind of capacity among public administration leaders in local governments? University faculties, management development institutes, development partners involved in local level capacity development programs, etc need to ponder this question and redesign their interventions to develop the requisite capacities for local level public administration leadership to address the challenge of poverty eradication.

The challenge of how to lead and perform effectively in the Context of globalization and in a world of increasing interdependency

In many respects the impact of globalization is often felt at the local level where unfortunately globalization is least understood. For example, the global economic and financial crisis that rocked the whole world caused severe shortages in funds for local governments, increased unemployment and misery in many communities. For many, understanding that the hardships they were feeling at community level were caused by a financial crisis that started far away on Wall street in New York was difficult. For public administration leaders in decentralized governance, this is a big challenge. Globalization needs to be understood in its nature, its impact, in the way it can be harnessed to limit its negative impact and maximize benefits from its positive effects on development. This is especially relevant to African countries which have difficulty to influence globalization. If central governments are finding it difficult to influence globalization, local level leaders must find it even harder.

Creating and maintaining effective networks and partnerships, mastering negotiation techniques and alliances, and understanding the operations of global institutions such as the United Nations system, Briton wood

institutions, and influence of regional blocks as well as the international financial and market systems are some of the critical elements to be addressed. The impact of the global economic and financial crisis from which some countries have not yet even recovered is an example of global challenges impacting on local public administration leadership. Most importantly, inspirational, integrative and entrepreneurial leadership capacity must be developed to enable local public administration leaders to marshal the strength of local communities to be effective and influential players in the global arena for the benefit of local level socio-economic development

Probably the best way to approach acting in the context of globalization is to conceptualize decentralized governance leadership as a partnership activity where leaders at international, regional, national, and local levels in the public and private sectors as well as civil society engage in shared exercise of power and responsibility for the development of the community in question engaging what we will call networked/connected leadership. The network would start from the linkages between the organizations of the private sector, civil society, central government agencies operating at local level and include national, regional and global agencies. In this way the responsibility and success or for that matter the failure of local governance would be shared among the leadership in all these sectors. Often international agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations system, and International NGOs advise governments on some policies. When such policies fail the same institutions blame only the local institutions even in cases when the policies they strongly supported were inherently wrong. Given the framework of networked/connected local governance leadership such blame would not be appropriate.

Decentralization is often wrongly taken as an activity of isolation. We believe that decentralization should be an activity that facilitates interdependency among the various development actors in the private, public and civil society sectors at local, national, regional, and global levels. Taking into account the present political environment in an increasingly globalizing world, new areas of leadership competency including management of diversity, information and knowledge management, communication technology skills, partnerships and networking, etc. need to be strengthened. The current trends in regional integration on the African continent need to be thoroughly mastered by current and future leaders especially at local governance level. Local level leaders need to have the capacity to analyze the national, regional and global trends and take collaborative opportunities for the development of their local communities. Local leaders need to know that whether for good or for worse they are not alone in local socio-politico-economic development and that their partners are

not limited to central government agencies, private sector enterprises and civil society organizations at national and local level. The international community whether intergovernmental Agencies, or private sector multilateral corporations and international civil society organizations, is very much a component of local level governance leadership.

This is even to the extent that some of the policies and strategies that set pace for development at local level are decided at global and regional levels. Such is the case with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets decided by world leaders in the United Nations General Assembly Summit of September 2000. The translation of the MDGs and their targets into national and local development strategies, programs and activities to ensure their achievement requires a local level public administration leadership that is aware and capable of interpreting the global policy making environment and its impact on local level development. Strengthening public administration leadership capacity at local government level needs to take into consideration developing abilities for handling all this networked governance for development.

The challenge how to lead large-scale transformation

There is a huge gap between Africa's development levels and the rest of the world, especially the developed world. Such a gap becomes a deep gaping hole as one moves deeper into Africa's local rural communities. Such gaps and gaping holes cannot be bridged by small slow steps in development. Local public administration and governance leaders must mobilize communities to embark on large scale and fast moving transformations in order to bridge the gaps. This cannot be accomplished by public administrators who are only conversant with administering laws, rules and regulations. The task requires knowledge, skills, attitudes, and networks that enable working with stakeholders, balancing and managing long term and short term objectives in the context of change, creating a shared vision and strategy and empowering people. Essentially local public administration and governance leadership should avoid piece meal development strategies that detach the past from the present and the present from the future. In countries where local level communities remain deprived of the basics such as primary education, primary healthcare, safe water, roads, electricity, radio and television, telephone, shelter, and even food, it is tempting and even instinctively natural to think in terms of "give us our bread today"! But local governance leadership must overcome this temptation and lead their communities into long term development visions and strategies. The world is ahead of Africa. Small changes will not make the continent catch up. Transformational leadership at local governance level must take

large scale trends by intensifying the quest for knowledge, technological applications, partnerships, and community based innovative thinking and development planning.

Programs such as the NEPAD and MDGs, need to be adopted to the realities of the localities to be owned and implemented by the communities. But first the leadership in these communities needs to have a global outlook that permits them to have a full grasp of such regional and global initiatives that can benefit their communities. Programs such as the NEPAD present opportunities and potential to mobilize development resources and engineer long term development results in the various areas of poverty reduction on the continent if their objectives are translated into action at local community level.

Support for decentralization and local governance approaches to development management is premised on the understanding that local communities have better experience and knowledge about their environment and can therefore better identify their development needs and potentials and initiate development activities that address these needs. Direct involvement of people in developmental actions at the community level is expected to greatly ease the pressure on the central governments severely constrained by inadequate manpower and financial resources. Most decentralization policies are, therefore, designed to empower local governance structures with appropriate autonomy to bring public administration closer to the people and to make local governance accountable to the electorate. This is a process that is prized to motivate free involvement and willing contributions of the members of local communities in socio-politico-economic activities that are seen to benefit them. Local public administration and governance leadership should be able to mobilize local communities to think and speak out together asking one critical question; “If things are like this, what should we do?” The answer to such a question should be participatively designed into specific local development plans, action programs, and budgets as well as their implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability. Leadership structures at local level should be of the type that facilitates this kind of participatory development planning, budgeting and management. Here we may cite the examples in South Africa’s Integrated Development Planning Process (IDP) and in Rwanda’s Community Development Committees (CDCs). Also in Latin America, the practice of participatory budgeting has taken root. Leading, managing, and administering such structures provides a conducive environment for the growth and development of public administration leadership capacity at local level.

The challenge of developing current & future public administration leaders at local level

Developing public administration leaders at local level that will ensure that Africa plays a leading role in the world is in itself a challenge for today's leaders. There is a tendency to discuss this challenge in reference to only the Central government level alone. But the challenge is critical at the local level as well. The first aspect of this challenge concerns succession planning which in effect is preparation for leadership relay in the affairs of managing a country. Every leader at any level, in any sector, or any institution has the cardinal duty of ensuring that capable leadership does not end with him or her. "In the leadership relay, it makes no difference how you run, if you drop the baton."⁶ The capacity to develop future leaders and ensure effective succession planning at all levels needs to be developed on the continent. "Succession is one of the key responsibilities of leadership. Achievement comes to someone when he is able to do great things for himself. Success comes when he empowers followers to do great things with him. Significance comes when he develops leaders to do great things for him. But a legacy is created only when a person puts his organization into the position to do great things without him."⁷ The argument in this paper is that decentralized governance, through development of local level democratic governance structures that ensure smooth succession in local government leadership may actually cushion the community level from the shocks caused by inconsistent and unpredictable succession methods at central government political leadership level. Secondly, through decentralized governance the country has opportunity to develop leadership who practice and are tested at local governance level and who can take the relay at national level. But for this to materialize, everyone involved in local governance leadership needs to contribute to the development of leaders including the way the youth and women are engaged in local level leadership.

The first time I discussed this issue with a group of local government leaders, one leader in a Municipality asked a question which was rather disturbing. Why would I take responsibility to develop the leadership capacity of a political group that is in opposition to me and aspiring to take over from me? The question sounded logical in the context of multiparty political competition. However, it worried me because such logic curtails the opportunities of creating leadership capability across the whole community. It represents a cut-throat political competition which is counter-productive in terms of leadership capacity building or even local level development. The main preoccupation of any current leader should be to ensure that the entire

⁶ James L. Garlow, *The 21 Irrefutable laws of leadership tested by time: Those who followed them... and those who didn't*. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2002, page175)

⁷ John C. Maxwell: *Leadership 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know*. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2002, page 104-205)

community has a sufficient pool of leadership potential and capability to the extent that, development-wise, it ceases to matter which political party is in power. In competitive politics for leadership positions, the loss of a political election by a group of leaders, should not translate into loss of economic development, peace, gains in other areas such as environment, gender equality, poverty reduction, law and order, rule of law, transparency and accountability, equity, human rights, networks for development etc. Looked at from this angle therefore it should be a cardinal task of each local government leader to nurture leadership capacity in the community for its development even when such a leader is no longer there.

Another critical aspect underlying this challenge is the task of rediscovering the leadership styles or qualities that may be embedded in the past, philosophy, culture, traditions, and behavior of Africa, that can be tapped to complement the current western based leadership styles to mould a leadership style that fits the African condition and environment better. There is some undeniable influence in the African mindset and value system that distinguishes it from that of a more Western or Eurocentric approach and that is relevant for thinking about public administration and hence, public sector leadership development in Africa. In this sense decentralized governance provides a field of practice at local level, especially at grass roots community level, for community leadership to exercise the leadership styles they know best. We could refer to the experience of the Gacaca, Umuganda, and Ubudehe, as have been rediscovered in Rwanda. But there are many examples of African traditional leadership that can be tapped through decentralized governance. In fact, thinking about this one wonders why western organization experts have had to teach Africa “engaged” or “participatory” governance when in fact this is the area in which African communities excelled. The examples of Gacaca, Ubudehe and Umuganda in Rwanda being just examples!

Local governance leaders must always bear in mind that to lead is to leverage potential of the people they lead, engage their own commitment as well as that of their people, align their judgement, and develop capabilities of everyone especially their own and that of the people that work with them⁸. It is often argued that leadership works and mobilises “followership” best through emotions. “Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions”.⁹ If this is true then decentralized governance provides the best structure for mobilizing the

⁸ See: Gerald A. Kraines M.D. Accountability leadership: How to strengthen productivity through managerial accountability (The Career Press INC. Franklin Lakes, NJ, USA, 2001): p11

⁹ D. Goleman, R. Boyatzis, A. McKee “*Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*”, Harvard Business School Press, 2002

emotions and energies of local communities for their own development. Emotions that are related to development are more condensed at local community level than at national level and can therefore be more easily mobilised for service and development projects related to for example water, health, schools, roads, agricultural development, culture, environment, etc.

How to ensure public administration leadership accountability

For decentralized governance to remain viable in the eyes of local people as well as central government and development actors, local government authorities, especially leadership must demonstrate sustainable accountability not only towards the local populations but also to the central government. Just like lack of accountability of central government to local people causes instability so does inadequate accountability of local government. Clear lines and modes of accountability must be designed and well understood and applied in simplified ways for the local people to engage with their leadership, demand transparency, ethical behavior, effectiveness in achieving planned activities, efficiency in the utilization of meager resources, integrity in action and inspiration. Issues of accountability these days have been politicized leading to the danger of masking what leadership accountability is all about in the strict sense of the concept. For examples, there is managerial/administrative accountability which can be analyzed into: (i) “effectiveness accountability” which requires that those who are entrusted with specific objectives, tasks, and resources to achieve them account for the achievements they have done. Effectiveness accountability is a response to a simple question: Did you achieve the objectives? Or did you accomplish the tasks? (ii) “efficiency accountability” which requires that in accounting for the achievements obtained, consideration is given to the resources (human, material, financial, time, etc) that have been utilized to get the achievements. (iii): “Process accountability” which requires that specified processes, procedures be followed in accomplishing tasks and achieving objectives. A lapse at this level is a sign that there can easily be corruption. (iv) Legal accountability which requires that in accomplishing tasks and achieving specified objectives, specific laws, rules, regulations etc are followed! This is the basis of the rule of law. To reduce accountability to only financial aspects is to oversimplify the accountability burden of leaders. The question that needs to be addressed in strengthening local governance (or decentralized governance) is that of to what extent does decentralization facilitates the practice of these different accountabilities?

How to prevent/manage conflict and violence

Too many destructive and disruptive violent conflicts have been going on for too long on the African continent. This is probably the strongest sign that Africa's leadership capacity needs to be enhanced to deal with conflict without resorting to violent means. Stability and security are key to promoting sustainable development and poverty eradication. In countries that have emerged out of violence, there is strong need for conflict management capacity to avoid a slide back effect. In countries that are in conflict there is need for conflict management capacity to ensure that lasting solutions are reached and sustained. In countries that have not yet experienced violence, there is need for conflict management capacity to ensure that the development and governance processes are planned and managed in a way that ensures peaceful development. It is critical in Africa to develop integrative leadership capacity in every sector and at every level to engineer social cohesion and avoid destructive conflict resolution mechanisms. Local governance leadership has got a crucial role to play in this. Most conflicts that are intra-state often erupt with knowledge, support and encouragement of local leadership. Some of them emanate from unresolved conflict over resources or other issues such as religion, ethnicity etc. The success of decentralized governance depends to a large extent on local governments' leadership and central governments' leadership working in partnership with all development actors in civil society and private sector. When local governments' leadership and central governments' leadership see themselves as partners rather than opponents in development, chances are that decentralized governance will be durable contributing to both peace and development.

How to Create and sustain legitimacy of public administration institutions and engineer public trust

Creating legitimacy and trust is critical. This can be done by establishing strong participation mechanisms and by defining in a transparent manner the roles and relationships of different spheres of government. It includes also the development of an administrative culture based on the rule of law and a system which ensures effective public trust and accountability and avoids impunity and arbitrariness in the management of public affairs at local level. Building adequate administrative leadership capacities around issues of not only mastery of laws, rules, regulations and procedures, but also transparency, accountability, ethics, integrity, and professionalism is critical for the sustainability of the rule of law, public trust and democratic governance in general on the continent. Leadership at local governance level is critical because it operates at a point where government and the people come into direct contact especially in policy implementation, keeping law and order, enforcing various laws, assessing, and collecting taxes and delivering various services. The visibility of government is mainly through local governance institutions. Through this contact, especially where it

concerns delivery of critical public services such as education, health, water, security, law and order, and judicial services, the trust the people have in government may be enhanced or shattered. The legitimacy (acceptability) of State institutions at local level depends squarely on the actions, behavior, and success of leadership at local level. In essence local governments, where they exist are critical in building the legitimacy of the State.

How to lead in the context of contradictions and paradox

The world is hard, complex and in many respects contradictory. This reality is likely to continue imposing itself more and more on the leadership and people especially at local level. One big challenge that African leadership must squarely face concerns leading within the context of contradiction and paradox. The world in general and Africa in particular are changing so rapidly that many contradictions keep emerging. It is incumbent on leaders at all levels to be able to deal with more ambiguity and complexity. Some of the contradictions include; economic liberalism in the context of the need for social welfare to mitigate the effects of poverty or to alleviate it. People are economically poorer while they become politically more empowered with voice through enhance democratization processes. A democratically (voice) empowered poor population is likely to put more demands and pressure on their leadership for availability of services and for welfare policies and facilities. Local governments are given more and more functions and responsibilities in the context of less funds and local leadership has to work with the local communities to figure out how to carry out the functions with little or no money. They have to figure out how to mobilize resources to finance the functions transferred to them unfunded! This becomes difficult in the context of resource constraints. They have to manage change while ensuring stability and security. One of the things that determine whether one is a successful or unsuccessful leader is the extent to which these contradictions and paradoxes are reconciled into a dynamic development process. There is, therefore, need to reflect on and develop the capacities and competencies that are required for local level leadership to be effective.

Leadership Capacities Required for Effective Local governance: Integrative, entrepreneurial, administrative/managerial operative abilities: To be competent local public administration leaders, people need to have a composite capacity of knowledge, skills, values, character and attitudes working within a facilitating cultural environment, institutions and systems. Local governance leadership needs to have deep rooted values of integrity, ethics, respect for diversity, service to the public, selflessness, and professionalism. Shortfalls in such values complicate further the difficult task of developing local communities in many

African countries. For example, lack of integrity leads to corruption and lack of accountability thus undermining development projects by diverting resources earmarked for them. Lack of respect for diversity has caused serious problems including genocide in Rwanda and marginalization of the African women whose inputs are critical for development. Inadequate focus on serving the public has translated into disrespectful and arrogant public servants and inefficiencies in the provision of public service.

Moreover when such values are lacking there is no push for creating and sharing knowledge, building skills, and networks to support the work of serving the public at local level. But it is generally recognised that effective leadership can exist only within a framework of institutions, systems, and a conducive cultural environment. Leaders at all levels and in this case at local level need to pay particular attention to building institutions and systems, as well as enhancing their knowledge skills and networks in order to be able to operate successfully. The knowledge should not be localised but globalized to enable leadership to look ahead in time and scan the environment for solutions to current and future problems.

The task of developing a local community is a heavy one especially where poverty is deep and communities resigned to poverty as a matter of fate. Poverty eradication is multi-disciplinary multi-sectoral, and needs multi-competency approach. Therefore leaders operating at local level need to have a harmonious balance of abilities composed of integrative, entrepreneurial, administrative and operative competencies. Integrative ability is required for ironing out conflicts due to diverging interests, competition for resources, cultural and religious differences, and diverging values and outlooks as well as concerns of minority groups. A local governance leader's leadership needs to be integrative to leverage the people he/she leads to achieve the development goals of the local community he/she leads. Entrepreneurial ability is required for visioning and strategizing including analysis of the past, current and future environment and situation in order to map out paths and policy alternatives for development and a better socio-politico-economic future. Administrative ability is necessary for following and respecting laws, rules, regulations, procedures, due process, and resources especially for purposes, of ethics, transparency, accountability, and equity. Finally operative ability is critical for action. "A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work" (Colin Powell). Visiting shelves in many public offices, one may find lots of documents containing policies, strategies and action plans that have gathered dust and been overtaken by time for sure never to be implemented. This should not happen at local level. What local leadership has planned and agreed with the communities must be implemented. Inaction makes leadership lose trust and legitimacy and it is certainly the

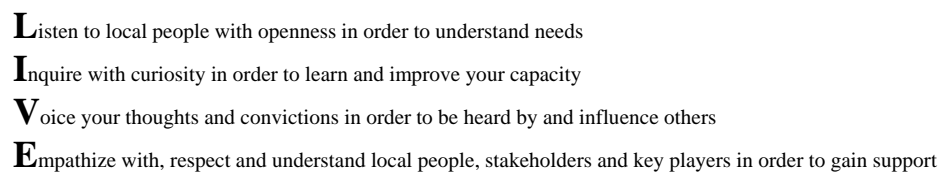
surest way of failing in the task of poverty eradication! A well balanced leader will have an appropriate mix of integrative, entrepreneurial, administrative, and operative abilities supported by adequate knowledge, skills, networks, in a character that is driven by appropriate values and attitude. Programs for developing local governance leadership capacities should take into consideration these abilities as a core framework.

Should Central government decentralize or wait for local governments' capacity? Institutional and structural set-up from Central Government to the grass-roots level: There has always been a debate on how decentralized governance can be successful within an environment where there is generalized inadequacy of various capacities at local governance level. Some times this debate paralyses initiatives in decentralization and puts local governance actors in a perpetual lack of capacity. One basic prerequisite for developing leadership capacity at local community level is to put in place decentralized structures and institutional arrangements that provide opportunity to the local actors to progressively acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in development oriented leadership through practice and interaction. It is not possible to develop comprehensive local governance capacity without instituting some form of decentralization. At local level, it is always possible to find people with integrative leadership ability, but for them to fully develop their administrative/managerial, entrepreneurial and operative capability they need to be put in institutional structures that provide opportunity for such abilities to be put into action. Such structures can be provided by local councils, committees and other management structures especially if decentralization takes the form of devolution. Local governance and leadership capacity cannot be developed in the absence of a supportive institutional infrastructure. It would be like hoping to develop a strong winning soccer team without a soccer field and soccer balls to play in the first place!

How many local governments should be created in a country?: One of the teasing issues on local governance institutional and structural set up in Africa has concerned how far governments should go in creating local governments. In effect this has generated a big debate on how many local governments need to be created for effective decentralization. Basically there are two sides of the argument. The first side is what I would call the “expenditurists” who base their argument on the fear that creating many local governments will cause unmanageable increases of expenditure especially in the context of limited financial resources to sustain decentralized governance. This argument takes local governments or decentralization as an expenditure item in the national budget. Unfortunately, it is an argument that is based on budgetary fear and can therefore be counterproductive by making decision making difficult in terms of venturing into ambitious local governance

programs. The second argument is advanced by what could be called “local empowerment advocates” whose argument is based on the objectives of decentralization especially the political ones of giving power to local people to take the destiny of their development in their own hands. But there is also the ambition of getting government closer to the people for effective delivery of services. For example, the Uganda Constitution, (Article 179(4) provides for the creation of districts and/or Administrative Units based on the necessity for effective administration; the need to bring services closer to the people; to take account of the means of communication, geographical features, population density, economic viability; and as a response to the wishes of the people concerned. As can be seen economic viability is just one of the many factors to take into account in creating local governments. This alone, expenditure burden put aside, is a strong basis for creating more local governments and indeed Uganda has of recent increased the number of districts and municipalities beyond what “expenditurists” would have even expected! Effective with 01st July 2010, the Districts in the country were increased to 112¹⁰. The number of Districts in the country has increased from just 16 in 1960, two years before the country’s independence to 128 in July 2010. If one thinks that for a small country like Uganda these are too many districts, one needs to bear in mind that districts are not the only local governments in the country. Sub-counties and Municipalities and town councils are local governments too.

A number of arguments can be advanced for and against the increase in local governments. What needs not be lost however is that local governments provide a structural and institutional arrangements through which local governance capacities can be development to manage the development process at grass-roots and ultimately national levels. The challenge which faces governments and development partners is how to develop the capacities of these local governments to enable them execute their mandated functions and serve the people.



Listen to local people with openness in order to understand needs
Inquire with curiosity in order to learn and improve your capacity
Voice your thoughts and convictions in order to be heard by and influence others
Empathize with, respect and understand local people, stakeholders and key players in order to gain support

¹⁰ From Website of the Ministry of Local Government <http://molg.go.ug>