

Local Governance Capacity Building for Full range Participation: Concepts, Frameworks, and Experiences in African Countries

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Contents:

0.0: Introduction	3
1: Working Understanding of Governance and Local Governance	3
1.1: Good governance	
1.2: Elements of good governance	
1.3: Local governance	
1.4: Vertical and horizontal decentralization for effective local governance	
2.0: Local governance capacity development	7
2.1: waiting for local governance capacity to develop?	
2.2: Whose capacity to develop for local governance?	
2.3: Local governance capacity building for full range participation	
3.0: Holistic local governance capacity building	13
3.1: Local governance capacity assessment	
3.2: Local governance capacity building to achieve what?	
3.3: Political, social, and bureaucratic will	
3.4: Institutional building and strengthening	
Conclusion	22

References

Diagrams:

- One: Vertical and horizontal decentralization
- Two: Simple framework of analysing local governance stakeholders
- Three: Grass-root local governance stakeholders' and actors' analysis framework
- Four: The four Ps plus C of effective participation
- Five: The double weakness of African countries
- Six: Framework for holistic capacity building

Boxes:

- 1: Envisaged comprehensive local governance capacity assessment and building in Rwanda
- 2: Mbombela Local Municipality Integrated Development Consultative Structure (South Africa)
- 3: Composition of District Development Committees (Rwanda)

0.0: Introduction

Local governance is being promoted in a number of African countries because it is believed that it provides a structural arrangement through which local people and communities can participate in the fight against poverty at close range. However, it is acknowledged that various capacities of a multiplicity of stakeholders and actors need to be strengthened to meet the requirements of effective and responsive local governance. In this paper, issues and challenges of related to capacity building for local governance in Africa are discussed.

The first part of the paper discusses the understanding and various elements of good governance in general and local governance in particular. In the second part, the issue of vertical and horizontal capacity weaknesses currently experienced in most African countries is discussed especially as it underpins approaches and focal points for local governance capacity building in these countries. Questions concerning global actors in local governance and the deeper meanings of participation are raised and discussed challenging the popular notion of participation, which focuses only on planning and production. The third part of the paper presents a framework for holistic capacity building going beyond training and focussing on objectives, socio-politico-bureaucratic will and commitment as well as institutional arrangements at central government level to support sustained coordinated implementation of decentralized governance policies and at local level for sustaining participation by the grass-root communities. The examples from Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda are used to illustrate the practical implications of the conceptual arguments of the paper.

1: A Working understanding of governance and "local governance"

While the quest for good governance has being on-going in Africa¹ for quite sometime now, a common understanding on what constitutes good governance is fairly illusive. To meaningfully have a focused discussion on good governance or local governance, one needs to first have a working understanding of the concept. The author benefits from advisory work conducted in various African countries designing governance programmes with various stakeholders and actors in governance to have a credible understanding of governance and good governance, at least as expressed by these stakeholders.

¹ See United nations Conference on Governance in Africa: "Governance : The Africa Experience: Working paper 1 (Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa 1998)

1.1: Good governance:

The word governance has its origin in the Greek language and it refers to steering. Steering, for example a ship, is not only a matter of keeping the ship afloat and in forward, backward, or sideways motion. It is knowing the direction and ensuring that the ship is constantly on course in that direction. Above all, for everyone in the ship and those waiting for its arrival, a captain can claim good seamanship only when the ship gets to where it is expected. As an act of steering a people's development, Governance is a multifaceted compound situation of institutions, systems, structures, processes, procedures, practices, relationships, and leadership behaviour in the exercise of social, political, economic, and managerial / administrative authority in the running of public or private affairs. Good governance is the exercise of this authority with the participation, interest, and livelihood of the governed as the driving force².

1.2: Elements of Good Governance³

A universally agreed position on what constitutes good governance is hard to come by. However, conceptually the following basic elements are found in a situation of what one would call good governance. The elements were arrived at during workshops for designing governance-strengthening programmes in Uganda, Rwanda, and Liberia. It is interesting to note that while they were proposed discussed and agreed by various stakeholders at national level, they in a general way agree with universal understanding of governance.

- Constitutionalism (guaranteeing separation of powers, checks and balances, and power sharing as well as a generalized societal attitude where both the governors and the governed refer to the constitution as the guiding law especially in the resolution of conflicting public decisions. Constitutionalism refers to the structural and procedural provisions as well as to the behavioural attitude)
- Rule of law (where every activity, every conflict and every exercise of power respects the provisions of accepted laws)
- Justice (an effective system of justice which is just, fair, and accessible to all including the poor)
- Security of person and property: (this should include security in all its aspects e.g. food security, job security, social security etc. to ensure that cosmetic peace which can erupt into violence any time is avoided)
- Electoral and participatory democracy (where the population participates in deciding on their leaders through their vote power but also participates through

² This understanding of good governance was developed by the author during the consultative workshops with stakeholders for the design of programmes for strengthening good governance in Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Liberia. It incorporates also the definition of governance by United Nations Development programme. See UNDP Governance for sustainable Development: (January 1997) page 3: "Governance can be seen as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all level" See UNDP, Reconceptualizing Governance, Discussion paper 2 of 1997.

³ Refer to the official documents of programmes for strengthening good governance in Rwanda, Liberia and Uganda. They can be viewed on www.unpan.org.

- their voice in deciding how and with what policies they are lead and in determining the direction and quality of their development)
- Respect for Human Rights and basic freedoms (of the press, expression, worship, conscience etc.)
 - Transparency, accountability, ethics and integrity in the conduct of public and private corporate affairs: (accountability from a political, managerial, legal, and moral point of view)
 - Equity (both intra and inter-generation)
 - Informed citizenry: (through an effective free media, education, and access to information)
 - Effective and efficient delivery of Public Services: (These need not be delivered directly by state agents. Other stakeholders from the private and Civil Society sectors may participate in the delivery).
 - At least the minimum of decent standard of living for all: (This should be the guiding objective of any act of governance).

1.3: Local governance:

If we remain confined within this paper's working understanding of governance as a multifaceted compound situation of institutions, systems, structures, processes, procedures, practices, relationships, and leadership behaviour in the exercise of social, political, economic, and managerial / administrative authority in the running of public or private affairs, then we will understand "local governance" to refer to the exercise of authority at local community level." We need however, to bear in mind that, not every governance practised at a local level would constitute local governance. It is possible to have central governance or even foreign governance at local level. What determines whether governance is local or not is the extent to which the local population is involved in the steering i.e. in determining the direction, according to their local needs, problems, and priorities⁴. In this sense governance ceases to be a matter of government only. It is a situation of multiple inter-linkages and relationships in which different and various actors in the public and private sectors as well as civil society at local, national and international levels play different roles sometimes mutually conflicting and sometimes mutually reinforcing and complementary focusing on satisfying the interests of the local community.

While it may be true that "local governments act more in accordance with the needs and priorities of local communities than would higher authorities"(Jeni Klugman1994), local governance on its part requires that even higher authorities in accomplishing their share

⁴ See John-Mary Kauzya: "Local governance, Health and nutrition for All: Problem Magnitude and challenges with Examples from Uganda and Rwanda" A paper presented during the Global Forum on local Governance and Social Services for All (Stockholm, Sweden, 2 to 5 May 2000). Interesting discussion is presented in the report of the Forum: Responding to Citizens' Needs: Local Governance and Social Services UNDESA and UNDP, 2001. A fairly exhaustive survey of literature concerning local governance is presented by Jeni Klugman in " Decentralization: A survey of literature from a Human Development Perspective" Occasional Papers by the Human Development Report Office New, York 1994.

of the job, work in accordance to the needs and priorities of the local community in close partnership with them.

What then is local about local governance? Local governance does not make reference to local government or local populations alone. It refers to a situation where what ever governance actor (an international NGO, a central government institution, a local government agency, or a private sector enterprise) does is planned, implemented, maintained, evaluated, and controlled with the needs, priorities, interests, participation, and well being of the local population as the central and guiding consideration. What is local about local governance need not be the actor but rather the needs, interests, priorities, participation, control and well being of the local. It is important to have this in mind otherwise we will remain in the structural constraints of equating local governance to local government. For the sake of argument we will recall that not all local governments work in the interests of the local populations. Some local governments can become dictatorial and exploit the local populations to serve the interests of local leaders.

1.4: Vertical and Horizontal Decentralization for effective local governance⁵

For effective local governance decentralization policies, strategies, legal frameworks, programmes and activities must be conceived from two planes:

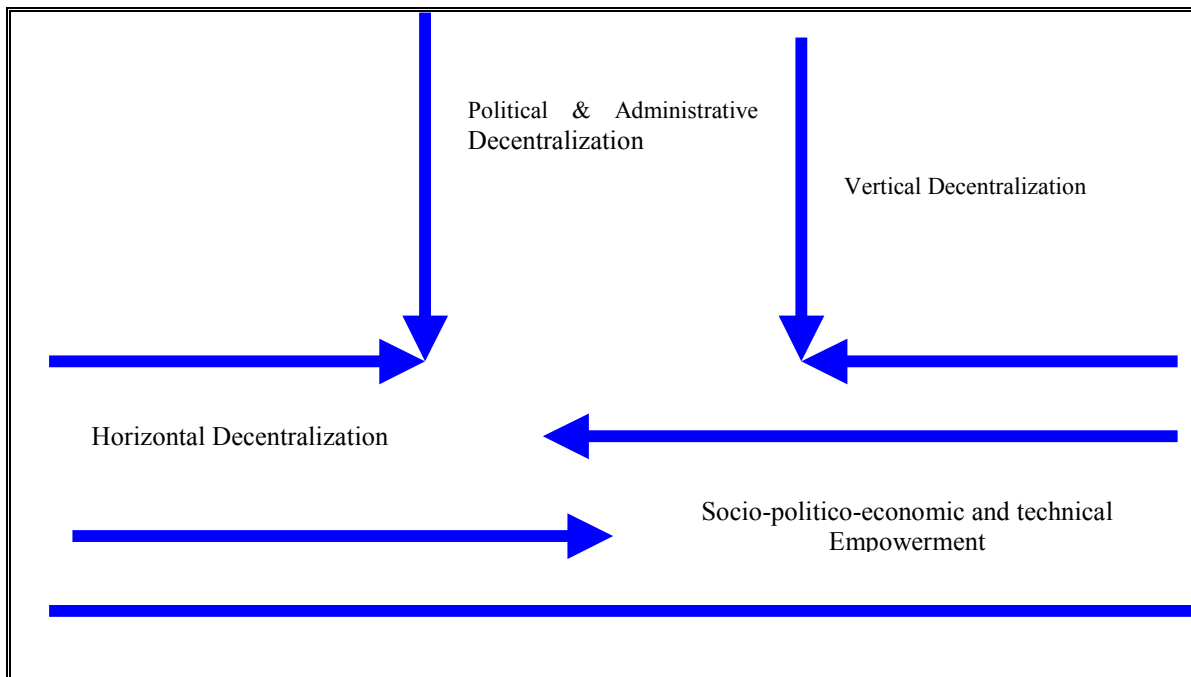
- The vertical plane involving the transfer of authority, functions, responsibilities and resources from central government to local government structures
- The horizontal plane involving the empowerment of grass-root communities to enable them determine plan, manage and implement their socio-politico-economic development.

While vertical decentralization requires shifts in central government policy, laws as well as institutional and structural arrangements to provide for the sharing of powers, authority, functions and resources and enable local governments to perform fully, horizontal decentralization may take place without necessarily making adjustments in the laws. It however requires determined mobilization and organization of local communities to participate fully in the planning and implementation of socio-economic activities that are aimed at strengthening their capacities to determine and enjoy their socio-economic livelihood. An important linkage between vertical and horizontal decentralization is that in countries used to highly centralized governments and/or dictatorships, horizontal decentralization empowers local populations and prepares them to be able to positively receive and utilize the powers, authority, and resources transferred to them via vertical decentralization. It is of great use to always engineer efforts of decentralization on the two planes involving all stakeholders. As illustrated in the diagram below, this will achieve two crucial results: (i) horizontal decentralization will empower local communities and (ii) vertical decentralization will create conducive structural

⁵ Most decentralization policies, programmes and activities in African countries are being conceived within the two planes. The cases of the decentralization policies and programmes in Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa are illustrative of this. See Apolo Nsibambi (Ed.): Decentralization and Civil Society in Uganda: The Quest for Good Governance (Fontana Publishers, Kampala, 1998), Government of Rwanda, Ministry of Local government and Social Affairs: Decentralization Policy.

arrangements and transfer of powers, functions responsibilities and resources that will supplement the empowerment created by vertical decentralization.

Diagram one: Vertical and horizontal decentralization



Conceiving the two planes of decentralization is also useful in situations where the debate and agreement on formal vertical decentralization involving the transfer of powers, authority, functions, and resources from central government to local governments for various reasons takes long. In such cases it is possible and advisable to start on programmes, projects and activities that empower local communities via for example Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Non governmental Organizations (NGOs). This is what happened in Rwanda before the current policy of decentralization.

2.0: Local Governance Capacity Building

There is often a debate on whether decentralized governance policies should wait for local capacity to be adequate before they are put in place. This debate is not necessarily misplaced but it often misses the point of answering the question as to who are the actors in local governance and therefore whose and which capacities should be developed.

2.1: Waiting for Local Governance Capacity to Develop?

The argument commonly presented is that local people do not have the requisite capacity for managing local governments and therefore functions, responsibilities and resources should not be devolved to them. In most cases such an argument stands in the way of decentralization. Admittedly, it is true that most developing countries, African countries in particular, present peculiar conditions of multiple weaknesses in capacity where their public sector, civil society, and private sector are weak. However, within the argument of capacity building for local governance, this argument carries undertones of colonialism. Since the process of development is a process of capacity building, a country cannot afford to wait for Local Governance Capacity to develop. During the 1950s when Africa started clamouring for political emancipation, the colonial powers at the time were quick to respond that Africans had no capacity to govern themselves. The response from Africa was unanimous. Capacity or no capacity they had a right to determine their destiny. “By what God given right are you the British empowered to decide the fitness or otherwise of we Africans to govern ourselves?” One of the characters in that famous Novel A Wreath for Udomo by Peter Abrahams⁶ asked. It should not be the same African leaders to reject decentralized local governance telling their compatriots that they lack capacity to govern themselves. This would be local colonialism. Development is a process of progressive and qualitative movement from inability to ability, from incapacity to capacity. Therefore it is conceptually normal to start from a point of weak local governance capacity and work towards strong local governance capacity. Without this pre-disposition decentralised governance in most developing countries may never be embarked on.

We could use an analogy of building the capacity of a soccer team. It is impossible to build the capacity of a team if the team is not constituted in the first place. It is not possible ever to build the capacity of local governments if local governance structures are not put in place within a clear policy that provides for, among other things, building local governance capacity. How would the capacity of a local council, a local executive committee, a local community development Non Governmental Organization, a local development planning committee etc, develop if such structures were not constituted in the first place?

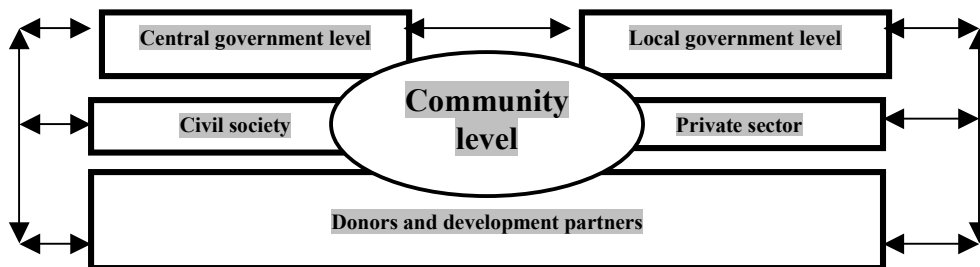
2.2: Whose capacity to develop for local governance?

In addressing issues related to capacity building for local governance the tendency is to focus on local government structures such as local government Councils, Civil servants, Local Government Executive Committees etc. However, taking the understanding of local governance we have adopted this would be inadequate for it leaves many players in

⁶ See Peter Abrahams: A wreath for Udomo, (African Writers Series)

local governance out of capacity building efforts. The appropriate way to approach addressing issues and problems of capacity building for local governance is to first conduct stakeholders' and key players' identification and analysis. This would enable us first to know who they are, and second to understand what capacity they possess as well as the capacity they lack. We would propose a stakeholders' analysis model that departs from a simple question. Who are the stakeholders and key players in local governance? The diagram below gives a simple framework for analysis of local governance actors

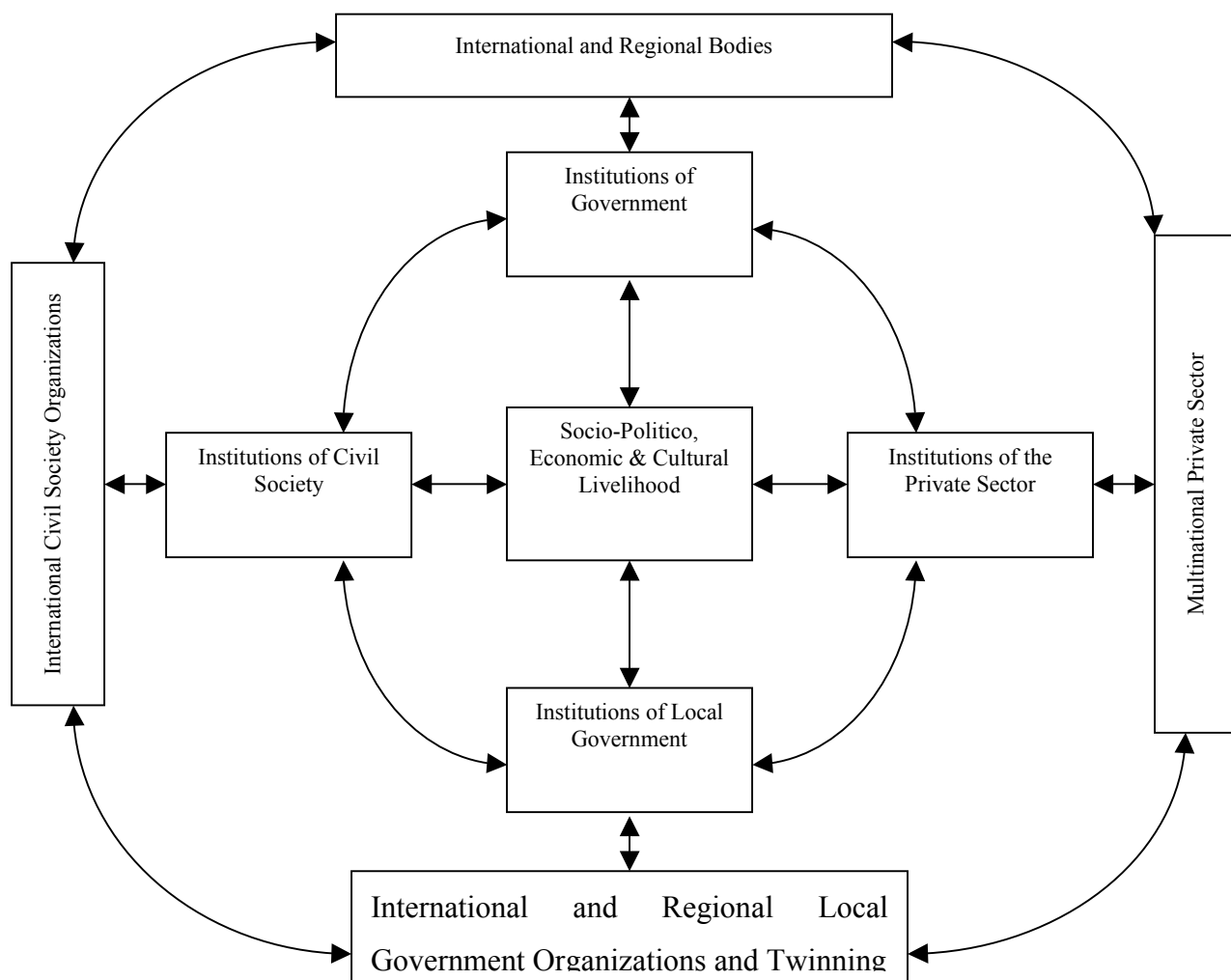
Diagram two: Simple model for analysing local governance stakeholders



When it comes to local governance there are many stakeholders and players. They are in the Public sector, in the private sector, in civil society, among donors and development partners, at local community, national, regional and international levels. The capacity or lack of it, for local governance cannot be pinned only on the community in question. The appropriate pre-disposition for capacity building for local governance is to assess each players' capacity vis avis their roles so that each one's capacity is strengthened to play that role effectively. For examples, (i) while in many countries central government authorities hesitate to embark on decentralized governance policies for reasons related to inadequate capacity at local level, it has been discovered that the same central governments do not possess adequate capacity to analyse, formulate, and effectively manage decentralized governance policies. (ii) While many Donors and Development partners have a tendency of blaming local governments of having no capacities to implement local level development projects, it is often the case that the same Donors and Development partners do not have the requisite capacity in terms of understanding and working within local community cultural and social environments to promote community sensitive development. The real situation on the ground in many developing countries is that inadequate capacity is a problem found among almost all players involved in decentralized governance. The difference is in extent and degree to which the capacity is lacking.

In the context of an increasingly globalising world, challenges and requirements of capacity building for local governance should always be analysed and diagnosed taking into account the full range of stakeholders and actors analysis at community, local, national, regional and international level. Such an analysis should always be conducted in a participative manner to make the stakeholders and actors involved in local governance to share a common understanding of one another's strengths and weakness. This would in turn facilitate the process of cooperation, harmonisation, and synergy in capacity building activities. The framework given in the diagram below was used by the author to conduct a governance capacity assessment in Uganda, Rwanda, Liberia, and Tanzania and was found to be very useful.

Diagram three: Grass-root Local Governance Stakeholders & Actors analysis framework



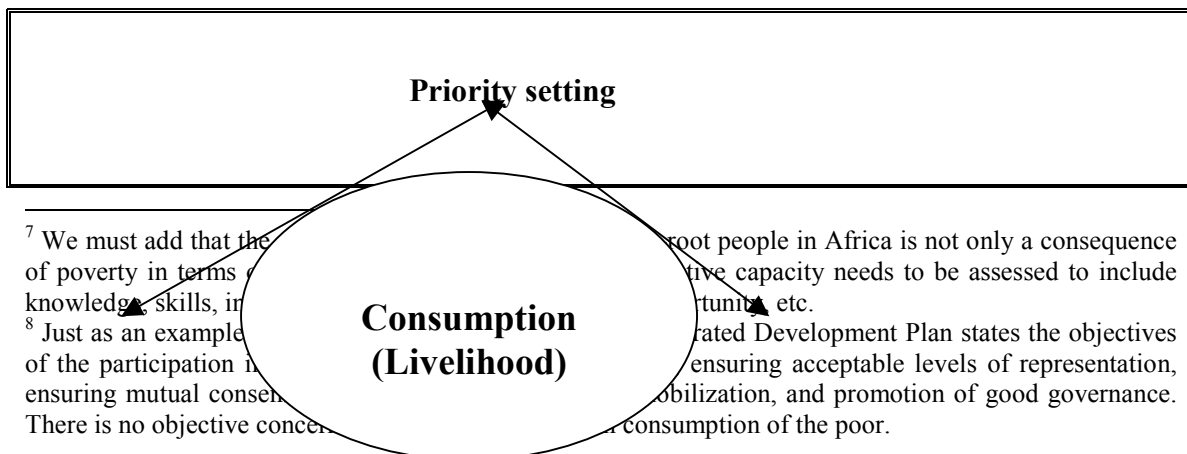
2.3: Local governance capacity building for full range participation (Four Ps +C)

We have belaboured the point on local governance as an all actors embracing situation because experience has shown that in most cases local governance capacity building programmes, projects, and activities concentrate on local governments. We need to maintain the distinction between local governments' capacity building, which would concentrate on local governments, and local governance capacity building, which would emphasize strengthening the capacities of all the actors in governance at the local level. This would set the appropriate parameters for effective participation in the development process by all actors.

Participation is not a matter of only structural arrangements. It is also a matter of will and capacity. Most advocates of local governance as a vehicle for promoting socio-politico-economic development always bank very strongly on the argument that decentralisation encourages participation of the local people in determining their development and well being. However, in the context of poor countries, the extent and nature of the participation itself needs to be understood more deeply.

We are proposing to examine it using the 4 Ps plus C of participation. If participation has to be complete it must be done at five levels: Priority setting, Planning, Producing, Paying (financing) and Consumption. It is the consumption that leads to livelihood but when it is not supported by participation in setting priorities, planning, production, paying, then it is not sustainable. The biggest problem for developing countries is that because of very low or sometimes no income, people expect to participate in consumption without participating in paying. This makes consumption unsustainable because there is no support for production⁷. On the other hand, often those in positions of authority concentrate on promoting the participation of local people in the four Ps. But do not provide for participation in consumption. The consequence is that the poor do not see any change in their livelihood even when they have participated.⁸ It should be noted that for purposes of mobilising the local people to participate an objective that points to the possible improvement in their consumption is more attractive than any other and therefore worth mentioning.

Diagram four: The four Ps plus C of effective participation

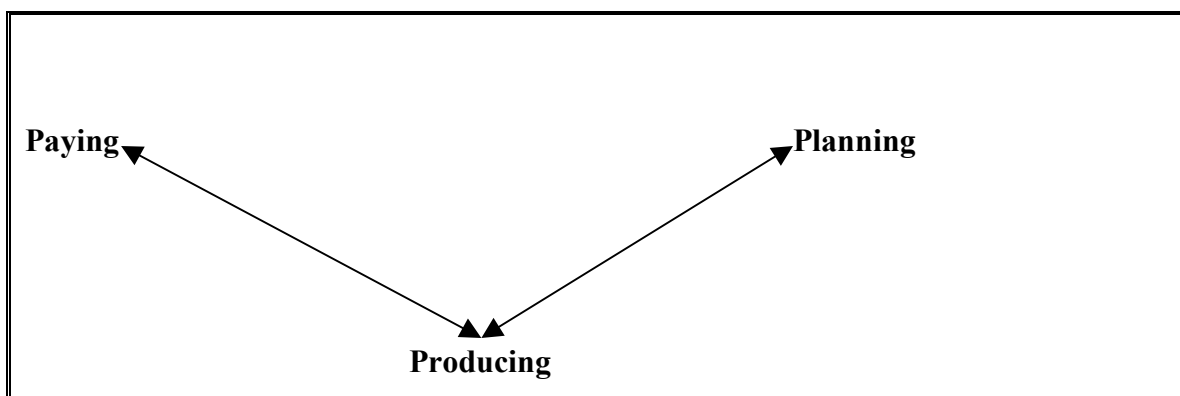


⁷ We must add that the of poverty in terms of knowledge, skills, in

⁸ Just as an example of the participation in ensuring mutual consent. There is no objective concern

root people in Africa is not only a consequence of poverty. Effective capacity needs to be assessed to include knowledge, skills, etc.

Integrated Development Plan states the objectives of ensuring acceptable levels of representation, mobilization, and promotion of good governance. The consumption of the poor.



Local governance, when well practised, more easily and more evidently encourages political participation (e.g. in taking decisions and having a say in who takes up leadership positions), production and delivery by narrowing the physical distance between the service producers / deliverers and consumers as well as by allowing the private sector and NGOs to engage in service production and provision.

However, it has to be recognised that when it comes to participation in financing the production and provision of these services the poor are at a loss. The challenge for developing countries, given their situation of extremely low incomes, is that of how to encourage the poor to participate in financing the services they need. Most poor populations are quick to agitate for participation but when it reaches the level of participating in the financing they still want some donor or central government to foot the whole bill. Central government on its part gets money from taxes paid by the people. But however efficient and effective a tax system is, if it is taxing a poor population, it will yield poor revenues. There is a limit beyond which a hungry person can milk a hungry cow. The fundamental problem with most African societies is that they suffer from double weakness. Their central and local governments are weak while at the same time their private and civil society sectors are also weak (vertical and horizontal weakness). This double weakness is not only in terms of resources (human, material and financial) it is also in terms of institutions, systems, information, networking, skills, knowledge, etc.

Conceptually all countries could be placed in four categories as follows: the strong ones where the central and local governments as well as the civil society and the private sector are all strong (A), the partly strong ones where the central and local governments are strong but with relatively weak civil society and private sector (B), the partly weak ones where central and local governments are weak but civil society and private sector are relatively strong, and the weak ones where central and local governments are weak as well as civil society and the private sector (D). Most sub-Saharan African countries, especially those that LDCs, are in category D⁹.

⁹ This idea was discussed by Ejeviome Eloho Ootobo, in his paper, "Globalization, economic governance, and African Countries" during the Expert Group Meeting organised by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 28 September 1999.

Diagram five: The double weakness of African Countries

		CIVIL SOCIETY & PRIVATE SECTOR	
		STRONG	WEAK
CENTRAL & LOCAL GOVTS.	STRONG	A	B
	WEAK	C	D (African Countries)

A fundamental component of local governance capacity building should be dedicated to strengthening the capacity of local communities to generate sustainable income. It is true that the common practice in African countries where the central government controls a lion's share of revenue at the detriment of local governments undermines local governance capacity building in respect to priority setting, planning, local capital investment, and eventually consumption. However, the point that local governments' revenue is just a component of local governance financial capacity should not be lost. Local governance financing should not be seen from the point of view of central government and local government revenue sharing alone. It should be examined in light of the finance deployment policies of all actors as well. There are many financing institutions local, regional as well as international who hastate to disburse funds to local community level either because the local levels do not provide guarantees for the funds or because the central government does not accept such disbursements, or both. This jeopardises the development of the capacities of local communities to manage programmes, projects, and funds even when they have participated in the formulation of such programmes.

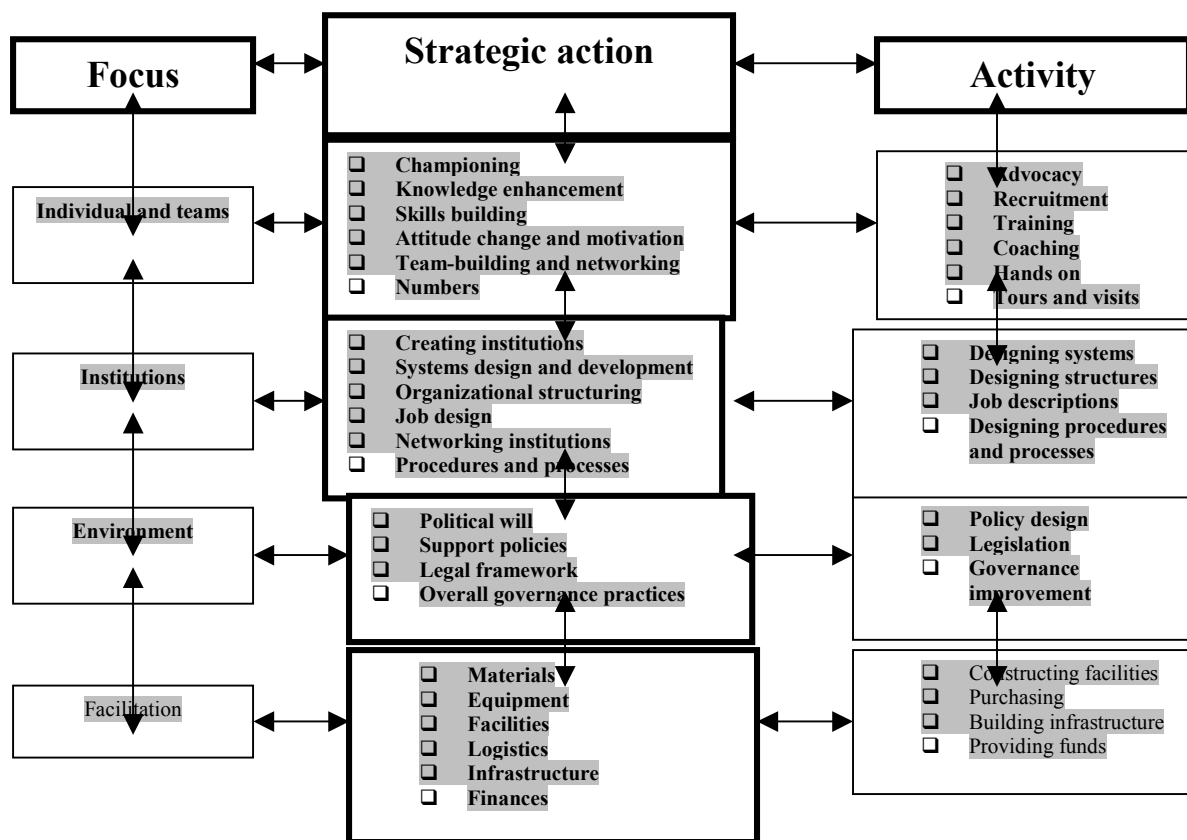
A local governance policy that is conceived with capacity building in mind should include provisions for financing systems that would put funds at the disposal of the local level so that such funds not only cater for the needs of local communities, but also provide opportunity for them to develop revenue generation and financial management capacity.¹⁰

3.0: Holistic Local Governance Capacity Building

¹⁰ The Community Development Fund in-built in the Decentralization Policy of Rwanda has such an objective. It provides that 10% of the annual revenue of Government be put in the fund for community development. The arrangement is interesting also because it minimises the administrative cost of the funds so that as little as possible of the disbursed funds get to the local level without being reduced by administrative costs.

The diagram below summarizes a framework for holistic capacity building. One of the mistakes often committed by players in local governance capacity building is to equate capacity building to training. Most capacity building activities include workshops, seminars and long or relatively short courses. Such activities constitute just a small portion of capacity building if it is taken holistically. A holistic capacity building approach would assess capacity of: the policy environment, institutions, individuals and teams, before assessing whether there are adequate facilities funds and logistics. The important point to note here is that trying to build capacity in one area without the others often wastes efforts, time and resources because in the final analysis the ultimate results can not be achieved.

Diagram six: Framework for holistic capacity building



For example no matter how much computer training and skills building is done to strengthen the capacity of a Secretary, if the same Secretary does not have computer hardware and software to do the work, the effort, the resources and the time spent on the training will have been wasted. Faced with the situation of having knowledge and skills that she/he cannot apply the Secretary will be de-motivated and if she/he finds

opportunity, she/he will leave for another job. Another example would be where the policy environment is not appropriate. If the decentralization policy is not well designed in terms of goals, objectives, institutional arrangements etc, no matter how much funds are provided for its implementation, very little will be achieved.

3.1: Local Governance capacity Assessment

A crucial element in the process of capacity building is the assessments of available and lacking capacities in all local governance actors. In Rwanda the strategy for implementing the decentralization policy was hinged on an attempt to envisage comprehensive capacity assessment and building during the entire process. The policy implementation strategy document states this as follows

Box1: Envisaged comprehensive local governance capacity assessment and building in Rwanda

Existing Capacities

“Although it is a fact that for long Rwanda has been a highly centralised State, there are aspects of the current situation that could be harnessed to support the beginning of the decentralisation process. The following are some of the strengths that will be built upon to start the decentralisation and local governance process;

- (i) **Government will and commitment to people empowerment:** The present Government of National Unity is willing and committed to decentralisation for empowering the local communities to engage in political, social, and economic development activities. This will and commitment are crucial for mobilising the entire country and development partners to support and facilitate decentralisation and good local governance.
- (ii) **An Administrative and political structure:** There was, recently, created a Ministry of Local government with the promotion of good governance including decentralisation as one of its mandates. This structural empowerment at the highest level of government will be taken advantage of to flag off, monitor, and guide the implementation of the decentralisation policy.

In addition to the ministerial establishment there are local authorities structures that will be harnessed to spearhead the implementation of the decentralisation policy. These are: the Prefectures (now named the **Intara**), the Commune (now named the **Akarere**), the sectors (now named **umurenge**), and the cells (now named **Akagari**). Though largely lacking in essential capacities these structures will serve as points of departure through which local populations and resources will be mobilised to implement local governance at the local levels. Within these structures, (for example at Akarere, Akagari, and Umurenge levels), there are already Community Development Committees with whom development activities have been going on with support from local and international NGOs and donors. The implementation of decentralisation will not only benefit from such structures but will also strengthen them further. In addition, financial resources have already been deconcentrated to the Intara level.

- (iii) **Human Resources:** The existing personnel in Ministries, Intara, and Akarere can be assessed and reoriented through appropriate training and other capacity development mechanisms to support the implementation of the decentralisation policy and the sustainability of local governance. The project will focus on training of the newly elected leaders and technicians in the area of management, human resources development, accounting, budgeting and finance, administrative procedures and methods.
- (iv) **Tools and facilities:** The existing tools and facilities such as buildings, furniture and vehicles, communication systems, and equipments at Intara and Akarere levels, though mostly inadequate, will serve as initial take off support for the decentralisation process.
- (v) **Funding:** Given the level of poverty of the country and the low levels of government revenue with an overstretched budget, funding will pose a very big challenge for decentralisation. However, the beginning of financing the decentralisation policy will be to continue with the current government policy of deconcentrating appropriate and relevant ministerial budgets to the Intara. The management of these funds will permit personnel in the Intara to master financial management, which is one of the crucial skills in decentralisation.
- (vi) **Networks:** There are existing networks among different actors (NGOs, donors, Ministry of Local Government, other ministries, government agencies, and local authorities) that will be strengthened to facilitate and support the implementation of decentralisation.

The above capacity available will be harnessed to start off decentralisation and the rest will be developed and mobilised as the process of developing local governance goes on.

Capacity shortages

A country like Rwanda, which has been governed by highly centralised and dictatorial systems inevitably, has a lot of capacity shortages to manage a decentralised and local governance system. However, the government of National Unity is committed to

installing a decentralised and good local governance system, and will implement an incremental, gradual decentralisation process that will build the capacity as it progresses.

Although a clear picture of what capacity is lacking and in what magnitude will be specified after a series of capacity assessment exercises to be conducted as part of the decentralisation implementation process, deep capacity gaps exist in the following areas:

(i) Inappropriate legal provisions: Most of the laws, including the Constitution, were constructed to support the centralised system. They will have to be reformed to be supportive to decentralisation and local governance.

(ii) Human Resources: (number, skills, knowledge, motivation, and networks). It should be born in mind that most of the personnel existing are used to managing a highly centralised system and therefore not pre-disposed to manage local governance.

(iii) Facilities: some imirenge do not have office buildings and office equipment, the Akarege will need better and more facilities if there are to attract better qualified personnel.

(iv) Organisation structures: Most of the existing structures were designed to facilitate centralisation and they are not appropriate for facilitating decentralisation.

(v) Systems, procedures, processes: The existing ones were probably suitable for centralised governance but certainly not for decentralised governance.

(vi) Data, records, information systems as well as information technology (both hard and software): Generally this is a weak area in the administrative system of Rwanda, but it is acute in local government structures which have not been using information technology.

(vii) Funds: Government revenue is very low and local revenues are even lower. As a post colonial state with a centralized system of administration, Rwanda's population is not adequately sensitised about tax payment. This is a considerable handicap for decentralisation.

(viii) Net works: (e.g.: local government associations). It is understandable that these could not have developed under a highly centralised governance system.

3.2: Local governance capacity building to achieve what? Clear decentralization policy objectives as a basic element of capacity

Any capacity building endeavour should be premised on solid and clear objectives. To use the management jargon these should be objectives that are S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound). Most developing countries, especially those in Africa have put in place decentralization measures/policies but not all of them have the same objectives. As an example, below are the objectives pursued by the decentralization policy in Rwanda, (Government of Rwanda: Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs 2000).

- 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 people 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.
- 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.

The Government of Rwanda takes decentralization as a high value policy which it using as: an instrument of people's empowerment, a platform for sustainable democratization, a structure for mobilization of economic development, a weapon for people's reconciliation, social integration and well-being, and a vehicle for the promotion of a culture of political, economic, civic, and managerial / administrative good governance

The nature and extent of the objectives pursued will determine the extent of capacity building for implementation. In the case of Rwanda the recently concluded assessment of the decentralization policy implementation, emphasizes the point. While at the beginning civil society organisations and private sector were not involved in the policy analysis, the implementation process, given the objectives, which are clearly centred on empowering the local communities, has necessitated an increasing involvement of the two.

“The availed information and discussions indicate that there has been limited involvement of the civil society in the initiation and formulation of the decentralization policies and programmes, owing to the nature of the Rwandan civil society and the way most policies have been introduced (top-down). It should, non the less, be noted that the consultation of civil society representatives has progressively improved so that increasingly, policy documents are representative of different interest groups. In this respect, the process of formulating the Fiscal and financial decentralization policy involved wide consultations and inputs from civil society organisations, the private sector, institutions of higher learning, local government councils, local government executive committees and other interest groups and individuals.”¹¹

This case shows that once the objectives are comprehensively formulated targeting all local governance actors, the implementation process is more likely to also to involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders. Therefore the very first element of building local governance capacity is to ensure that the objectives for decentralization or for supporting local governance are clear and giving room to the involvement of all the stakeholders.

3.3: Political, Social and Bureaucratic will

Political will: Most decentralization policies and programmes falter during implementation because they are introduced with political hesitation, bureaucratic resentment, and suspicion or incomprehension from the general society.

Political will and support for decentralized governance is a very crucial component of capacity for local governance. Political systems and politicians who are not pre-disposed to entrench democratic participation in local leadership as well as socio-politico-economic development do not support the kind of local governance that would empower grass-root communities in these respects. The tendency is to adopt lukewarm decentralization policies with unclear objectives or to effect policies that are geared towards simple deconcentration which only serve to make central governments agents the principle actors at local level with no local government to talk about. The fear of

¹¹ See “Rwanda decentralization Assessment” By Strategies 200 SARL Under Contract of United States Agency for International Development (USAID), July 2002.

decentralised governance is in fact just a characteristic of undemocratic leadership. But it is misguided. The deeper truth is that a regime that empowers its local communities via strong local governance is very difficult to remove because its support and power will be rooted in the grass-root. People are less inclined to agitate for the removal of a regime that has given to them socio-politico-economic power.

Bureaucratic will: Another aspect of support and will that is critical for successful local governance is from Central Government Bureaucrats. Accustomed to wielding enormous bureaucratic power, Central government bureaucrats always get the impression that decentralization will diminish their bureaucratic empire and power. Consequently they tend to oppose or quietly sabotage it. Yet they are the very ones who are supposed to plan for decentralization and coordinate its implementation. To overcome this attitudinal capacity constraint, decentralization policies must be conceived with extensive involvement of the Central Government Bureaucrats to ensure that these one comprehend the real objectives of the policy, their role in its implementation and coordination, and dispel their fears and threats about the policy by fathoming the benefits that will accrue to them from the policy.

Social will: There is a tendency to believe that local communities will accept decentralization policies automatically. This is not true. If local communities have to be involved in implementing decentralised governance, they need to understand the objectives and benefit of the decentralization policy. In countries used to highly centralized governance people are accustomed to receiving services from Central Governments and so they tend to perceive decentralization as a way of Central Governments shying away from their service provision roles and neglecting the people.

No public policy can succeed without the will and support from its formulators (in this case the central governments bureaucrats), its deciders (in this case politicians), and its beneficiaries (in this case the local communities). Therefore, the very initial capacity building activities for effective local governance should be geared towards creating awareness and sensitisation as well as mobilization of political and administrative powers and authorities to campaign for decentralized governance. While inadequacies in the other aspects of capacity may slow down the implementation of the policy, insufficient political, administrative, and social support will altogether kill the policy.

Sustained publicity and communication is a crucial element in the process of capacity building. People tend to take time to assimilate policies and new ways of doing things. In assessing the decentralization implementation in Rwanda, it was discovered that;

“The new legal and regulatory framework is not yet well known at the district levels. It is rare to find an official gazette at the district levels, despite that it is a valuable source of information and reference. For example, during training in December 2001, the District Executive Secretaries showed that they did not share the understanding of their responsibilities not because they interpreted differently what is written in the laws, but because many of them had not read the laws. The consequence is that, in many cases people act according to what they think is right and not in according with what is defined by the regulations”¹²

¹² Op cit

3.4: Institutional Building and Strengthening:

Effective local governance requires strong institutions at Central and Local Government levels as well as institutions that bring together all actors and stakeholders. For example; it is not adequate to create and strengthen local governments' councils if they are not supported by a national legislature that advocates for their work at higher levels and puts in place national legal frameworks that guide and facilitate their work at local governance levels. Institutions of Central Government and institutions of Local Governments must all be strengthened in order to work in partnership for local governance development. Needs for institutional building for local governance express themselves at several levels and in all sectors. What we wish to point out here are two crucial questions that have sparked off debate in Rwanda and in Uganda.

- What institutional arrangements should be put in place at central government level to best plan, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of decentralized governance?
- What institutional arrangements should be put in place at local governance level to best create a sustainable forum for involving local community actors into the planning of development at grass-root level?
- What institutional arrangements should be put in place to ensure sustainable adequate and equitable financing of development projects at grass-root level?

(i): What technical institutional arrangement to establish at central government level to facilitate the decentralization process: Regarding the first question the debate has been whether the planning, facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the decentralization policies should be left entirely to the bureaucrats in the ministry responsible for local government or whether it a relatively independent specialised structure should be put in place and given adequate capacity to solely do the work in collaboration with the Ministry responsible for local government.

The Uganda Decentralization Secretariat: In Uganda it was decided to establish the Decentralization Secretariat which was given adequate capacity (human resources, facilities, logistics, funds, etc) that was far beyond the capacity of the Ministry of Local Government. The decentralization secretariat did a commendable work that can be testified to by the relative success decentralization has witnessed in the country. However, recently the Uganda government and its development partners have been engaged in the discussion of what to do with the decentralization secretariat especially when donors and development partners started believing that the process of decentralised governance had reached a stage where it could most effectively be facilitated at local government level. All in all one would say that the Decentralisation Secretariat in Uganda was an appropriate technical institutional arrangement that was suitable for facilitating the implementation of the decentralization policy and it did it successfully. But in the process of the planning the establishment of the decentralisation secretariat the strategy for phasing out it was not put in place. This has made its last days look less successful

than the days when it got the policy implementation process under successful implementation.

The Rwanda Decentralization management Unit: In Rwanda, possibly having learnt of the experience of the Decentralization Secretariat in Uganda, an attempt was made to institute a structure that was less independent from the Ministry responsible for local government and give less extensive capacity. The Decentralization Management Unit as it is called started off with problems of inadequate capacity and hence made the decentralization process look like it was being started hesitantly. Given the two options; a light less independent Decentralization Management Unit and a heavy independent Decentralisation Secretariat, the author would opt for the strong more independent Decentralization Secretariat because it is necessary for pushing the decentralization process in its initial stages. However, it is necessary that in conceiving such an institution, an exit strategy be inbuilt to ensure a smooth phasing out of the secretariat once its job is done.

(ii): What institutional arrangements to put in place at local governance level to best create a sustainable forum for involving local community actors into the planning of development at grass-root level? Mostly in establishing local governments, care is only taken to create legislative institutions (Local Governments Councils), Executive institutions (Executive Committees) and Civil service institutions. It is always hoped that through the Local governments Councils which are elected representative bodies the grass-root populations will participate in deciding and planning their development and that the Executive committees and Civil Servants will spearhead the implementation. But experience has shown that there is a difference between representative structures and participative structures. Clearly the representative local governments' councils have limitations when it comes to people's participation in planning. There is need to create local governance institutions that bring together the stakeholders and actors in the private sector, in civil society and the Local governments themselves to plan for development. What approximates to this concept is in the South Africa's Integrated Development Planning Process (IDP) and in Rwanda's Community Development Committees (CDCs).

Institutional arrangements for Integrated Development Planning in South Africa's Local Governance: There are efforts in several Municipal Councils in South Africa to put in place structural arrangements to support sustained processes of participatory integrated development planning in local governance. This has more or less institutionalised the IDP process enabling effective management of the drafting of outputs envisaged, giving affected parties access to contribute to the decision-making process ND institutionalising public participation to include all residents equally. Participation has been accepted as a real interactive planning process through which a variety of stakeholders influence and share in the control over development initiatives. We have picked the example of Mombela Local Municipality and presented its structural arrangement for IDP to illustrate this important aspect of institutional capacity building for effective and sustainable participation at local governance level.

Box 2: Mombela Local Municipality Integrated Development Consultative Structure (South Africa)

- Mombela Local Municipal's goal was to involve as many people as possible by working through community structure, thereby striving for optimum participation. The following structures were established to facilitate participation:
- Council appointed a Steering Committee that involved officials, thereby ensuring that the end product will be institutionalised, as officials will understand how the outcomes were derived,
- Council engaged under-represented and un-organised social groupings such as organisations of disabled people, youth groups, women's organisations, organisations working in the field of children's rights and the rights of the elderly people, as well as the informal sector in sector specific forums;
- Community based consultation took place through interim ward and area committees where local structure could express their aspirations and provide solutions;
- The IDP Representative Forum brought together Council officials, the Mayoral Committee, Ward Councillors, Provincial Government Departments, Ehlanzeni District Council, and sectoral representatives to integrate the needs identified and assess the proposals made. Sectoral representatives were responsible for reporting back to their respective constituencies. Ward Councillors took responsibility to report back to their local communities and structures.

Institutional arrangement for local community development in Rwanda (the Community Development Committees- CDCs): The current Government and society of Rwanda has a vision of community development as a process where the local population, in collaboration with and support from its partners orients and takes charge of its own destiny in order to achieve durable, just and egalitarian development. For this purpose with in the locus of decentralised governance, there has been inbuilt an institutional and structural arrangement called the Community Development Committees at each level of local government and administration to facilitate people's participation in planning for their development. These committees have been formed and operate at cell, sector, District, and Provincial levels both in urban and rural areas.

The Global objective of putting up this institutional arrangement is stated as; "to enable the entrenchment of the national policy of decentralization by proposing the ways and means for ensuring effective and sustainable participation of the community in its development and poverty reduction". The major objectives in creating the CDCs included the following:

- Enabling the local population to acquire capacities to manage the process of participatory development
- Ensuring that the population owns the process of their development
- Ensuring proper management and co-ordinated distribution of available resources and products of decentralized community development.

The composition and responsibilities of the District Development Committee as given in the law are produced in the box below as an example. (Government of Rwanda, Law establishing the Organisation and functioning of the District, August 2000).

Box 3: Composition of the District Development Committee (Rwanda)

The Development Committee is composed of the following persons:

- (i): The secretary for Finance and Economic Affairs in the District Executive Committee who is also the Chairperson
- (ii): The Executive Secretary of the District
- (iii): Chairpersons of Sub-Committees in charge of the welfare of the population, the economy and the promotion of development in the Sectors (*a level below the District*)
- (iv): The Coordinator in charge of Women's Affairs within the District Executive Committee
- (v): The Coordinator in charge of youth welfare in the District executive Committee
- (vi): All those having development projects in the District

Responsibilities of the District development Committee include:

- (i): To prepare the District development action plan
- (ii): To make follow-up and control of activities and development projects of the district
- (iii): To supervise the administration and finances of projects in the District
- (iv): To prepare the draft of the development budget of the district
- (v): To organise the sensitisation of the population with regard to development activities

It is interesting to note the meeting point between the different levels of the local governments' structure. For example the Chairpersons of the Sub-committees in charge of the welfare of the population, the economy and the promotion of development in the Sectors which is a level lower in the structure of local governance in the country are members of the District Developments Committee. It is equally significant and a critical point of participative development planning that "all those having development projects in the district are legally members of the District development committee. This opens the CDC to NGOs, private enterprises and international donors and development partners.

Conclusion

In this paper we have proposed an understanding of local governance that is people-centred focusing on participation, interests and well being of the local community. The strengthening of capacities for effective local governance need to be holistic in nature encompassing horizontal capacity building to empower local grass-root communities, NGOs, CBOs and private sector (both formal and informal), as well as vertical capacity building to strengthen institutions at central and local government levels. We need to bear in mind that capacity building for effective and responsive local governance should include strengthening capacities of all actors in local governance. This means going beyond the local level to include global actors (especially in the context of increasing globalization) who may be operating at local level but lacking the requisite capacities to be relevant and responsive to the needs of the local people. The central pillar of good local governance is participation of the local people. Participation should be promoted in its full range to embrace participation of local people in planning, priority setting, production, paying (financing) and consumption if their livelihood has to be sustained through local governance. The real reason for building local governance capacity should be to strengthen empower local communities to engage in full range participation that is the only guarantee for their sustained livelihood.

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