UNDESA

UNDP

UNCDF

MDP

**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON LEADERSHIP CAPACITY
DEVELOPMENT FOR DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE AND POVERTY
REDUCTION IN AFRICA**

**Theme: "From Policy to Implementation: Challenges and Strategies for Effective
Implementation of Decentralized governance in Africa"**

AIDE MEMOIRE

**Venue: "Palais des Congrès", Yaoundé, Cameroon
28 - 30 May 2008**

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN AFRICA:
From Policy to Implementation: Challenges and Strategies for Effective Implementation of Decentralized Governance in Africa"

(Cameroon, 28 - 30 May 2008)

It is not sufficient to put in place policies, laws, and strategies emphasizing decentralization if these policies and strategies are not effectively implemented to make a difference in the well being of local communities, especially in terms of service delivery and development.

A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1: "Long bereft of authority and resources by highly centralized political systems, municipalities (and other local governments) throughout the world are now grappling with how to carry out routine administration, provide good quality public services, and plan for economic development of their localities"[1]. This statement is very pertinent to the challenges African governments (both central and local) are facing in implementing decentralization policies. It is also pertinent to the quest for improving the delivery of services at the local level for the achievement of development objectives including those related to the Millennium Development Goals which emerged from the United Nations Millennium Summit.

2: Following the Millennium Summit, the Secretary-General of the United Nations prepared a **Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration** outlining the potential strategies for action that are designed to meet the goals and commitments made by the Millennium Summit. Drawing on the work of governments, the entire United Nations System - including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, intergovernmental organizations, international organizations, regional organizations, and civil society - the Road Map suggests paths to follow and shares information on best practices that could be tapped to achieve the key objectives and goals of the Millennium Declaration. Highlighting issues, strategies, targets and indicators, the Road Map provides action guidelines for Member States, citizens, communities, regions and international bodies to achieve good governance poverty alleviation and sustainable development[2].

3: One of the strategies in the Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration specifically mentions local governance. "The United Nations assists governments in strengthening their legal frameworks, policies,

---

[1] Merilee S. Grindle: "Local Governments that Perform Well: Four Explanations" in G. Shabbir Cheema and Dennis A. Rondinelli (Eds): <u>Decentralizing Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices</u> (Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard University, 2007, page 56)
[2] See United Nations official Document # A/56/326 of 6th September 2001: Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration Report of the Secretary-General

mechanisms and institutions for democratic governance through support to democratic governing institutions, such as parliaments, judiciaries and electoral management bodies; building human rights institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms and skills, strengthening local government and civil society participation in decision-making processes; strengthening public sector management, transparency and accountability; combating corruption, enhancing the role of the media; and improving electoral and parliamentary systems. Strategies for moving forward include: (i) Encouraging States to develop and implement programmes that support pluralistic institutions, periodic elections and other democratic processes, in conformity with international human rights standards; (ii) Providing assistance to government efforts to involve civil society in policy-making decisions; and (iii) Supporting government efforts to strengthen local governance in urban and rural areas"[3]. All these strategies are directly linked to successful implementation of decentralization.

4: As part of efforts to structure governments to promote the participation of the people in the decision-making processes as well as the development activities as one of the tenets of 'good governance', the policy of devolution of power and authority to sub-national governments, (i.e. decentralization), is increasingly adopted and applied in African countries. In addition the decentralization trend is being supported by many aid agencies. "Decentralization is a gradual process and is expected to enhance the opportunities for participation by placing more power and resources at a closer, more familiar, and more easily influenced level of government. In environments with poor traditions of citizen participation, therefore, decentralization is perceived to be an important first step in creating regular, predictable opportunities for citizen-state interaction. Many see decentralization as a solution not only to the enhancement of the State's capacity to accelerate local development but also as a way to enhance the Poor's voice and power in the fight against poverty"[4].

5: Given adequate financial and human resources, there is sufficient reason to believe that service delivery by Local Authorities and their community level partners can be more flexible and responsive to the local needs and conditions than delivery by central government. Decentralized governance also provides structural arrangements, avenues and opportunities for the citizens to effectively participate in planning, budgeting for, and implementing the delivery of services at local level. However, there are a number of pre-requisites for local governments to provide services with more responsiveness. These pre-requisites include:

- Clear powers, roles and responsibilities, and functions for local governments.
- Financial resources including local revenues as well as financial transfers from the central government to local governments.

---

[3] See United Nations official Document # A/56/326 of 6th September 2001: Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration Report of the Secretary-General

[4]Fifth Africa Governance Forum (AGF-V): "Local Governance for Poverty Reduction in Africa" Maputo, Mozambique, 23-25 May 2002

- Autonomy over human resources management within a clear framework of national Public service human resource management.
- Committed leadership at local and national levels that can sustain ethical, transparent, and accountable management of local governance systems and resources focusing on effective and responsive service delivery and socio-economic development.
- Mechanisms of accountability through which local governments must be accountable to the people they serve as well as utilise resources from various partners including central government responsibly.
- Institutionalized mechanisms, structure, and governance practices through which the citizens, especially the poor can participate in planning, budgeting, project and resource management and control to have a firmer grasp over their socio-politico-economic destiny.

6: The above pre-requisites seem to point to the critical fact that for decentralization to promote local governance and enhance service delivery, the process must take place within the context of good governance (i.e. the exercise of authority with the interest and participation of the governed as the driving force)[5]. "Democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives"[6]. Participation of the citizens in problem analysis, priority setting, planning, and decisions concerning allocation and utilisation of resources including funds (budgeting) constitutes a critical pillar for successful decentralized governance for poverty reduction.

7: Implementing decentralization and promoting local governance in Africa is confronted with many challenges and obstacles. Ministers meeting in Maseru in August/September 2006 expressed the need to have a capacity building workshop focused on implementing decentralization. The Ministerial Conference on: Leadership Capacity Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Africa to be held in Yaoundé, Cameroon on 28 May 2008 on the theme: "From Policy to Implementation: Challenges and Strategies for Effective Implementation of Decentralized Governance in Africa" is in response to this request.

8: However, it is not a stand alone activity. It is a direct follow-up to the previous conferences, seminars, workshops, and meetings aimed at strengthening local governance in Africa. Notable among these activities are the following: the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Leadership Capacity Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa held in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho from 29 August to 1 September 2006, the 1st Ministerial Conference on Leadership Capacity Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction for Sub-Saharan Africa held in Kigali,

---

[5] See: John-Mary Kauzya: Local Governance Capacity Building for Full Range Participation: Concepts, frameworks, and Experiences in Africa, background papers for the 4th Global Forum on Re-inventing Government, Marrakech, Morocco, 2002.

[6] United Nations: Resolution adopted by the General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit (A/RES/60/1)

Rwanda (6 – 8 June 2005), the Conference on Decentralization: the New Dimension of Peace, Democracy, and Development" organized, jointly by the Regional Assembly of Tuscany, the Conference of European Regional Assemblies (CALRE) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) which was held in Florence (Italy) in September 2004, the Victoria Falls Conference in 1999, the Windhoek Africities Summit, the Yaoundé Africities 2003 Summit, the Mombassa Conference, and the Nairobi Consultative Meeting). In addition the Ministerial Conference is a direct response to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which is an African-owned development driven programme for eradicating poverty and getting on the path of sustainable development on the continent. The NEPAD has among its cardinal components, strengthening good governance which has also a sub-programme on leadership capacity development.

9: Through this Ministerial Conference UNDESA, UNCDF, UNDP, MDP, and the Government of the Republic of Cameroon have once again come together to contribute to the efforts of strengthening leadership for good governance especially at local level. During the Conference in Maseru, participants expressed concern that many countries in Africa have put in place decentralization policies but are facing challenges in implementing the policies. This is the origin of the theme of the Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon which is: "From Policy to Implementation: Challenges and Strategies for Effective Implementation of Decentralized Governance in Africa".

B: JUSTIFICATION

10: The continuing momentum of democratic decentralization and far-reaching economic reforms in Africa has substantially transformed the challenges of leadership in Africa. Increasingly, citizens have the right to democratically determine how they want to be governed and to make choices regarding the type and quality of public services they want and how resources including funds are allocated, utilized and accounted for in the production and delivery of these services. In an increasing number of African countries, "Citizens are now empowered to elect on a periodic basis persons whom they think can deliver,"[7] respect their human rights, and the rule of law. Citizens are demanding to participate and play a more visible role in decision-making especially in those areas that directly affect their livelihood. Civic organizations are demanding to play an active role in planning, budgeting, and setting priorities for their localities if they are to pay taxes voluntarily. They are searching for institutionalized means to hold those responsible accountable for their failures. Responding to all these and more demands requires adequate and effective leadership whose mind-set, knowledge, skills, attitude, and networking abilities are strongly conducive to the participation of citizens in decision-making at national and local governance levels. However, it is now acknowledged that the kind of poverty facing the African people requires action oriented leadership: a leadership that can cause positive impact on the lives of the people. Therefore, it is not sufficient to put in place policies, laws, strategies, etc emphasizing decentralization if

---

[7] Martin Onyach-Olaa The challenges of implementing decentralization: recent experiences in Uganda, Public Administration and Development <u>Volume 24, Issue 4</u> , Pages 289 - 304

these policies and strategies are not effectively implemented to make a difference in the well being of local communities, especially in terms of service delivery and development.

11: The capacities that need to be strengthened for effective implementation of decentralization are varied and diverse and they are not only at local level. They include not only leadership but also building institutions and organization structures that promote and support engagement of the citizens in the planning and delivery of services as well as strengthening human resources capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and networks in a variety of fields to facilitate the translation of policies and strategies into practice on a daily basis. The demand for democracy in Africa is moving beyond the vote to embrace issues of citizens' participation in development planning, service delivery, public accounting and budgetary management. This paradigm shift in the practice of democratic governance especially at local level has created a strong need for knowledge, skills, attitude, and networks, institutional and structural arrangements that are capable of supporting and sustaining action for local level development. But it must be emphasized that implementing decentralization can only succeed when all actors (from central government, local governments, civil society, private sector and international development partners interested in supporting local governance) have the same vision, and commitment as well as required capacities. Developing capacities of one actor will not help much. This is why the ministerial leadership capacity building workshops bring together ministers, civil servants, local government leaders, representatives of civil society organizations and development partners.

C: OVERALL OBJECTIVE

12: The principal objective of the Conference is to give an opportunity to ministers in charge of local governance, high level managers of public institutions and/or programmes related to decentralized governance, local government leaders, international development partners as well as national, continental, and international associations of local authorities, to review and exchange experiences of leadership in Africa with respect to the implementation of decentralization policies and in local level development and to discuss issues related to strengthening the relevant capacities in all sectors and all levels of governance. The exchange of knowledge, information, and experiences will contribute to the enhancement of the leadership capacity of the participants to initiate, promote, and manage local governance institutions and systems to effectively implement decentralization policies and improve service delivery at local level.

D: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

13: The specific objectives of the Conference are to:

- Examine the socio-economic and political context within which decentralization policies are designed with a view to understanding the different challenges that

affect their implementation and how socio-politico-economic contexts impact on the implementation of decentralization policies in African Countries.

- Provide an opportunity for top political leadership in local governance (from Central governments, local governments, and civil society), civil servants and technical managers, directly concerned with the implementation of decentralization and local governance, to share knowledge and experiences on how to effectively implement decentralization policies and improve the delivery of services at local level and learn from one another.
- Provide an opportunity to make focused recommendations to various stakeholders and actors in local governance on how to strengthen the various capacities of stakeholders and partners of local governance in order to contribute to the implementation of decentralization policies as one of the ways of fighting poverty at the grass-roots level in Africa.
- Follow-up on the recommendations made by the Conference of Ministers of Local Governments held in Maseru (Kingdom of Lesotho) in August/September 2006 and strengthen the coordination among central government leadership (especially ministers and senior civil servants in charge of local governments), local authorities associations as well as other partners to reinforce efforts of capacity building for implementing decentralization.
- Provide a platform for ministers and civil servants responsible for local governments as well as political and technical leaders of local governments in Africa to discuss with their partners participating in the Euro-Africa Partnerships for Decentralized Governance how to enhance the benefits from the partnerships.
- Provide an opportunity for women leaders in local governments to deliberate and specify how they can best contribute to successful implementation of decentralization policies in their countries and in partnership with their European counterparts who are participating in the Euro-Africa Partnership for Decentralized Governance.

E: TOPICS

14: Developing the capacity of leadership for effective implementation of decentralization policies is not an end in itself. Leadership skills in this respect are supposed to be developed in order to accomplish a purpose. Currently the biggest purpose any leadership development effort should pursue in Africa is related to the reduction of poverty in all its forms on the continent. Most decentralization policies in Africa have an objective of poverty reduction. Therefore it is expected that successful implementation of decentralization policies will contribute significantly to the reduction of poverty in Africa. The Conference will revolve around the following topics:

14.1: Designing and deciding decentralization policies:
Faced with difficulties in implementing decentralization, the general tendency is to put the blame on lack of resources and requisite capacities. However, it needs to be acknowledged that often the problem lies in the initial design of the decentralization policy itself. An inappropriately designed policy is most likely to face enormous difficulties during its implementation. It could be that decentralization was imposed and a

number of stakeholders are still resisting its implementation. It could be that the policy was designed without sufficient situation analysis and consequently does not fit the socio-politico-economic environment. It could be that the local grass-roots people are still very dependent in mindset and not ready to take on the challenge of being empowered for their own development. It could be that the decentralization policy is not supported by other policies or is contradicting them and therefore causing conflict in the governance sphere. Or, it could be that decentralization was not given a clear mandate, mission, and objectives when it was designed. It could also be that the decentralization functions and responsibilities were not accompanied by requisite human, material, and financial resources to support implementation. In other words a discussion on the difficulties facing the implementation of the decentralization policy must of necessity start by looking at the policy itself, the way it was designed and decided and the environment in which it is being implemented. In some cases implementing decentralization focuses on merely establishing governance institutions at the local government level and falls short of having economically viable structures that can support local economic development. Then a few years into its implementation, the promised improvements in local service delivery and development are not visible and the blame is squarely put on the failure of the decentralization policy.

Under this topic a number of questions and challenges will be discussed:
  i.   Through what processes and mechanisms is decentralization designed and decided? There is need to analyze and assess the processes and mechanisms through which the consensus on devolution can be engineered and reached. For other African countries that are still in the initial stages of introducing decentralization and are still trying to manage resistance to decentralization, this discussion will offer some lessons learned on how to engineer consensus on the transfer of decision making powers from central government to local governments and communities.
  ii. In decentralization, who are the key stakeholders and what are the interests of each and how can these be analyzed and taken into consideration during designing and deciding the decentralization policy?
  iii. What are the conditions that are conducive to successful implementation of decentralization policies and decentralized governance and how can these be identified and taken into account in designing and deciding decentralization policies?
  iv. What should be the objectives and content of the decentralization policy and how should the policy be formatted to facilitate its implementation?

14.2: Decentralization Implementation Strategies:
Even a well designed and agreed upon decentralization policy can face big difficulties in its implementation if precise, appropriate strategies for its implementation are not put in place. Many countries are facing numerous challenges in the process of implementing decentralization. Here, African countries need to learn from each other on how such challenges are being addressed. Countries will be approached to make presentations and share experiences on topics including the following:

- **Decentralized delivery of Services:** Decentralization will not be considered successful if it does not lead to improvements in the delivery of services at local level. Moreover, the delivery of services at local level does have direct impact on levels of poverty if poverty is understood in a wider sense. Which services have been decentralized? To what extent was the decentralization of services accompanied by the necessary resources (especially financial and human resources) to deliver the services? What strategies have been most helpful in facilitating the implementation of decentralized delivery of services including health and education?

- **The Human factor in implementing decentralization:** When everything is said and done, decentralization policies and strategies are made and implemented by people. Therefore the issue of the quality and willingness of the human resources in the implementation of decentralized governance is critical. What could be the strategies that would help overcome challenges related to limited human resource capacities in the implementation of decentralization?

- **Decentralized finance and wealth creation:** If decentralization and decentralized governance have to be seen to contribute to poverty reduction, the implementation of decentralization needs to significantly contribute to the creation of wealth at local level and to enhance revenue generation. Implementing decentralization therefore needs to be conceived as an investment with potential for increasing revenue both for people and government and not as only expenditure. However, there are a number of issues related to finance that can stand in the way of implementing decentralization policies:

  i. What would the strategies be to facilitate overcoming challenges related to limited central and local government revenues in the implementation of decentralization?
  ii. What strategies have been most effective in creating grass roots level wealth and increasing revenue generation?
  iii. In a general way, what can be recommended as strategies for effectively implementing financial and fiscal decentralization in the context of poverty?

F: TARGET PARTICIPANTS

15: African countries will be invited to participate in the Conference. This event is intended for ministers in charge of local governments and their senior civil servants, local government political and administrative/technical leaders, representatives from civil society, representatives of European Regional Assemblies and Municipalities participating in the Euro-African Partnership for Decentralized Governance as well as representatives of the international development partners. Each minister will be accompanied by at least four high level officials. It is proposed that the delegation accompanying each minister would comprise: the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry responsible for local government, a Mayor, a Chairperson and Secretary General of National Associations of local authorities, and at least a woman political leader from a local government council. A total of about 150 - 200 participants are expected to attend

the Conference. Other participants will be invited from Development Agencies as well as other partners who have indicated interest in supporting decentralization and local governance in Africa such as UNDP, UNHABITAT, ECA and other Agencies of the United Nations System, the World Bank, the African Union, NEPAD, the East African Community, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the United Cities and Local Government of Africa, (UCLGA), the Commonwealth Local Governments Forum, the Manu River Union, the European Union as well as European Regional Assemblies and Municipalities who are involved in the Euro-African Partnership for Decentralized Governance (see website: www.euroafricanpartnership.org).

G: PRE-CONFERENCE SEMINAR

16: On 26 - 27 May 2008 there will be a pre-Conference seminar on "Strengthening Women Leadership in Local Government for Effective Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Africa: Roles, Challenges and Strategies" to be attended by women leaders from local governments in African and European Municipalities participating in the Euro-African Partnerships for Decentralized Governance. The outputs of this seminar will be presented during the Ministerial Conference in the session where the role of women in successful implementation of decentralization policies will be discussed.

H: RESOURCE PERSONS

17: Dr. John-Mary Kauzya, Chief of Governance and Public Administration Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and Mr. George Washington Matovu, the Director of Municipal Development Program of Eastern and Southern Africa (MDP-ESA) will be the facilitators of the Conference. Other resource persons will be drawn from among African delegations attending the Conference especially those who will present country and regional specific cases. Some of the ministers attending will be requested to chair the sessions and group discussions so that the Conference becomes highly participative to tap on the knowledge and experiences of every one present.

I: TIMING, LOCATION, AND ORGANIZATION

18: Venue dates and duration: The Conference will be held at the "Palais des Congrès", Yaoundé, Cameroon for three days from 28 to 30 May 2008**. On 26 and 27 May there will be a pre-Conference seminar to be attended by women leaders from local governments in Africa and municipalities participating in the Euro-African Partnerships for Decentralized Governance. The outputs of this seminar will be presented during the Conference in the session where the role of women in successful implementation of decentralization policies will be discussed.**

J: FUNDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

19: The Conference will be organized by the Municipal Development Partnership in close collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). It will be hosted by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization of Cameroon. Other UN Agencies working at the country level in Africa in the related field will be contacted to contribute and participate so as to maximize synergies. Other bilateral agencies (such as the European Union) interested in supporting local governance in Africa will also participate in the financing of participants' attendance in the meeting.

Contact Persons:

1: Cameroon
- H. E. Mr. Emmanuel Edou
  Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, Cameroon
- Mr. Etienne Owono Owono, Director
  Tel: 237 2220 2826/9996 9682; Fax: 237 2222 9557; E-mail: etienowono@yahoo.fr

2: MDP
- Mr. George Matovu, Director
  Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa
  Tel: 263 4 774385/6; Fax: 263 4 774387; E-mail: gmatovu@mdpafrica.org.zw
- Mr. Brian Owens Ndiaye, Director
  Municipal Development Partnership for Western and Central Africa
  E-mail: bowens@pdm-net.org

3: UNDESA
- Dr. John-Mary Kauzya, Chief
  Governance and Public Administration Branch
  Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of the United Nations
  DC 2 Room 1742, Two UN PLAZA, NY, 10017, New York, USA
  Tel: 1 - 212 963 1973; Fax: 1 - 212 963 2916; E-mail: kauzya@un.org
  Website: www.unpan.org
- Ms. Valentina Resta, Governance and Public Administration Officer
  E-mail: restav@un.org
- Mr. Alphonse Mekolo, Interregional Adviser
  E-mail: mekolo@un.org