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Decentralisation in The Gambia

Report of a High-level Workshop on
'Managing Change in Local Governance'
held in Banjul, The Gambia, 7–9 April 2008

Munawwar Alam

Editor



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

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Contents

Foreword	v
Jacqueline Wilson, <i>Director, GIDD</i>	
1 Introduction	1
Dr Munawwar Alam and Oluwatoyin Job, <i>Commonwealth Secretariat</i>	
2 Background to the Workshop	8
Directorate of Local Governance, Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, Government of The Gambia in collaboration with GIDD, Commonwealth Secretariat	
3 Keynote Address	12
Alhaji Ismaila K Sambou, <i>Secretary of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, Government of The Gambia</i>	
4 Local Government in the Commonwealth	14
Dr Munawwar Alam, <i>Commonwealth Secretariat</i>	
5 Decentralisation in The Gambia in the Context of the National Development Agenda	27
Dr Munawwar Alam and Rishi Athreya	
6 The Meaning of and Different Types of Decentralisation	35
Andrew Nickson, <i>University of Birmingham</i>	
7 The New Public Management, State Reform and Changing Local Governance	42
Andrew Nickson, <i>University of Birmingham</i>	
8 The Implementation of the Decentralisation Process in The Gambia	50
Omar Khan, <i>Governor, Upper River Region</i>	
9 Recent Trends Towards Decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa	57
Dr Roger Koranteng, <i>Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration</i>	

10 Leadership for Change: How to Develop Personal Skills for Change	67
<i>Andrea Deri, LEAD International</i>	
11 Managing Change: A Local Government Perspective	75
<i>Samba Faal, Mayor of Banjul</i>	
12 How to Build Lasting Partnerships with the Private Sector	82
<i>Dr Roger Koranteng, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration</i>	
13 The Role of Traditional Authority in Managing Change in Local Governance	93
<i>Seyfo Lamin SI Jammeh</i>	
14 Understanding Strategic Planning and Management for Local Service Provision	97
<i>Dr Roger Koranteng, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration</i>	
15 Community Involvement in Local Governance	105
<i>Buba Joof, Department of Community Development, Government of The Gambia</i>	
Annex 1. Workshop Programme	114
Annex 2. Workshop Participants	117
Annex 3. About GIDD	120

Foreword

The Commonwealth Secretariat through its Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) organised a high-level workshop on decentralisation and local government reforms for the Department of State for Local Government, Government of The Gambia, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC). The workshop, on ‘Managing Change in Local Governance’, was held in Banjul, 7–9 April 2008. The deliberations of the workshop form the basis of this book.

In implementing its public sector development programme, the Secretariat pays particular attention to Africa and small states that have been threatened with marginalisation and whose share of global trade and investment has been declining. Consequently, a sizeable proportion of Commonwealth resources are allocated to the Africa region and to small states. The Secretariat, in furtherance of millennium development goal 8 on developing a global partnership for development, continues to extend assistance in the important area of local government and service delivery.

The reorientation of local government systems towards decentralisation has been at centre stage in many developing countries in Commonwealth Africa, including The Gambia, over the past few decades. The Gambia is a small state and one of the least developed countries. Its challenges are myriad and multifaceted. The Secretariat has a special focus on small states, as 32 of the 53 Commonwealth member countries are small states, six of them in Africa.

Donors and international agencies such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and World Bank are placing a higher priority on how they can assist local governments in the medium and long term. The Government of The Gambia has also made decentralisation a priority in its development strategy. It is the cornerstone of the government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme and supports a participatory approach to *Vision 2020*, which aims to achieve middle-income country status by 2020. Despite these commitments, the real challenge is to effectively transfer managerial and financial powers from centralised ministries to local authorities.

The workshop enabled senior policy-makers in The Gambia to focus on the enormous challenges involved in implementing local government reforms and to chart the way forward. Workshop participants considered country experiences, especially those in Commonwealth Africa, various reform options suitable for The Gambia and how leadership can bring about change. This book attempts to capture these aspects of learning and improvement.

I wish to thank all the authors for their valued contributions. I also deeply appreciate the efforts of the Commonwealth Secretariat team – Oluwatoyin Job and Munawwar Alam – in organising the workshop and contributing to this compilation; and of Rishi Athreya in assisting them.

Jacqueline Wilson

Director

Governance and Institutional Development Division
Commonwealth Secretariat

1

Introduction

*Dr Munawwar Alam and Oluwatoyin Job,
Commonwealth Secretariat*

Decentralisation is now taking place in most countries of the world, including the countries of the Commonwealth. Since the 1980s there has been a strong tendency to decentralise, with most countries adopting some form of decentralisation. This has been driven either by the changing role of the state, to make it sufficiently responsive to citizen needs, or by regional differences or by the failure of centralised economic planning to deliver quality services to users. Irrespective of the reason for decentralisation, new reform initiatives have given rise to numerous challenges, especially in developing countries, in terms of the design of decentralised structures and apportionment of resources and power between different tiers of sub-national governments. Decentralisation has also placed increased responsibilities on sub-national and local governments for the delivery of public services and the achievement of the millennium development goals (MDGs).

The Governance and Institutional Development Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat is the implementing arm of the Secretariat's Public Sector Development Programme under the auspices of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC). Its work covers a wide range of public sector issues, including decentralisation. GIDD's development assistance is packaged to meet the particular needs of the individual member countries. For more information about GIDD's work, see Annex 3.

This book is based on the in-country workshop on 'Managing Change in Local Governance' held in Banjul, The Gambia, 7–9 April 2008, organised by GIDD in association with the Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, Government of The Gambia.

The background of local government reform in The Gambia is not funda-

mentally different from that in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Decentralisation in The Gambia was conceived after a broad consultative process with local, national and international stakeholders. The reform of local government has several components: the institutional and legal framework, capacity building, financial decentralisation, human resource development and service delivery. Although decentralisation constitutes a key part of the government's development plans, and implementation started off relatively well, it now seems to be slowing down. But, again, this is not unusual for any country implementing a reform process with insufficient capacity at national and local levels. Another noteworthy aspect of decentralisation in The Gambia is that it could not be adequately disseminated so that it is understood among the general public.

Cohen and Peterson (1999: 167) have argued that in early stages of local government reform, national leadership is essential not only for carrying out reforms uniformly across the country, but also for laying the ground work for other task-related roles such as financing and regulation. In view of the foregoing, the workshop aimed to generate ownership of reforms by the country's senior leadership. It was attended by regional governors, National Assembly members, paramount chiefs, the secretary-general and head of the civil service, permanent secretaries, mayors, chief executive officers of local authorities and councillors. The programme presented an opportunity for the participants to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the decentralisation process in The Gambia in its application of principles, process and methodology.

This book explores a variety of themes and issues around decentralisation that were deliberated in the workshop. In the following paragraphs readers will find a summary of the chapters in the book.

Chapter 2 provides the background to the workshop and a brief history and context of decentralisation in The Gambia, as well as major milestones in the reform process. The chapter has a corporate authorship as it has been contributed by the Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs of The Gambia and GIDD. Chapter 3 presents the keynote address by Alhaji Ismaila K Sambou, Minister for Local Government. He outlined the relevance of the workshop for local government and decentralisation in the Gambian context. Recalling the enactment of the Local Government Act (2002), he expressed his appreciation of the issues and topics of the workshop that bore relevance to the

challenge of the fundamental restructuring of the framework of local administration in The Gambia.

In Chapter 4, after explaining the background and context of the workshop, Dr Munawwar Alam attempts to set the scene for local government reform in the larger Commonwealth context that touches upon all regions of the Commonwealth, including Africa. The chapter begins with the argument that 'local government' is truly 'local' in that it concerns people in their day-to-day lives. This premise provides ample rationale for transferring responsibility for service delivery to the structure that is closest to the local population. After setting out the regional differentiation of local government systems within the Commonwealth, the chapter also briefly discusses the issues and challenges faced by local governments.

Chapter 5 discusses decentralisation in The Gambia in the context of the country's national development agenda.

In Chapter 6, Andrew Nickson explains the concept and meaning of decentralisation, followed by arguments for devolution. The chapter makes reference to wider development thinking among multilateral organisations and the consequent spread of decentralisation in the past three decades. The chapter makes the important point that the involvement of citizen groups or the private sector is not sufficient in the absence of the creation of capacity in local government and effective fiscal decentralisation.

In Chapter 7, Andrew Nickson analyses local governance in the context of wider state reform and new public management. The chapter argues that mere external pressure is insufficient if there is no internal impetus to reform. The author starts his thesis by discussing the fiscal crisis of the state in the 1980s. The Mexican crisis of 1982 marks the beginning of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) that encouraged decentralisation – both horizontal, to the private sector, and vertical, to local governments. The consequent withdrawal of the state meant that public administration had to perform new tasks that were more complex than the former ones. In addition to core administration and direct service supply, it had to regulate and enable private, community and arms-length agencies, as well as undertake policy analysis and strategic planning incorporating the activities of these new actors. The reforms had many facets, including a radical change in the organisational structures of central

government and the skills and attitudes of the civil service. It is no surprise, therefore, that capacity building within public administration is now regarded as crucial to the sustainability of SAPs over the longer term.

Chapter 8 is the text of the address made by the Governor of Upper River Region, Omar Khan. He refers to donor efforts during the 1980s and to earlier studies by consultants who advised on decentralisation. Since 1994, there have been increased efforts on decentralisation. Mayor Omar Khan explains many important facets of local government in The Gambia. First, he mentions legal provisions relating to local councils, regional governors and seyfolu, the traditional authority. His address also outlines the organisational structure of the decentralisation process in The Gambia and problems in relation to decentralisation, such as:

- Issues of weak planning, budgeting, human resource management and other technical capabilities;
- Inadequate resources needed for development projects and programmes;
- Poor co-ordination of local development efforts;
- The weak participatory mechanism resulting in ill-conceived interventions that do not meet the needs of the target communities;
- Low community awareness of rights, obligations and capacity.

In Chapter 9, Dr Roger Koranteng provides case studies of decentralisation in four Commonwealth countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Swaziland. The specific issues covered include the composition of local government structures, fiscal decentralisation, local government service (staffing), the relationship between central and local government, traditional leaders and constitutional issues. The chapter also deals with constraining and facilitating factors for decentralisation in the four countries.

As mentioned above, the workshop was convened, *inter alia*, for senior officials and politicians. The workshop format included plenaries and break-out sessions, including many experiential learning exercises for the participants. 'Experiential learning' is an application-oriented learning process through which the learner creates new knowledge and skills from making sense of a direct experience. It is 'learning by doing', active learning as opposed to rote learning or learning by passive listening. The value of experiential learning lies in its ability to facilitate the application

of new information and new experiences. The focus on application makes experiential learning exceptionally suitable for training busy, high-level and high-impact decision-makers. A diverse portfolio of activities was integrated in a series of presentations and discussions in order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of learning. In the workshop, the participants – senior officials responsible for facilitating the decentralisation process in their respective countries – welcomed and appreciated the new approach. Chapter 10, by Andrea Deri, is dedicated to leadership development exercises that helped participants visualise different forces in a given situation (in this case decentralisation); the participants came up with several interesting factors enabling or hindering the reform process.

In Chapter 11, Mayor Samba Faal provides a practitioner’s perspective of decentralisation. He provides a detailed study of the constitutional and legal provisions of decentralisation in The Gambia. Mayor Faal also highlights issues such as striking a workable balance between local autonomy and central supervision, the problem of resource mobilisation and inadequate human resources in local authorities. The chapter provides a significant insight into the existing local government system and its internal dynamics.

In Chapter 12, Dr Roger Koranteng addresses the issue of public–private partnerships (PPP) for service delivery in local government. In a succinct manner, the chapter introduces a range of PPP options for local governments and identifies appropriate conditions for each. The concept of PPP is very fashionable in local government discourse today and many developing countries (including in the Commonwealth) are exploring different options for funding municipal infrastructure through non-conventional methods such as private sector participation. Dr Koranteng sets out the pros and cons of all the available options which local governments can consider to forge partnerships in service provision.

In the context of Commonwealth Africa, and of a large part of the Pacific region of the Commonwealth, the story of local governance is incomplete without reference to traditional authorities. Chapter 13, by Seyfo Lamin SI Jammeh, addresses this issue in the Gambian context. A simple definition of traditional authority is that it is a home-grown leadership handed down from one generation to another that is a part of the local governance system. In different countries, its form and range of functions and authority differ. In many countries, these co-exist with elected

structures. In The Gambia, traditional authority plays a significant role in society from the family to the clan, village and community. Traditional authority existed before colonial rule, but was relegated over the course of time. The present government has given it greater importance and is revitalising it. Seyfo Jammeh recommends that traditional structures be given a role in policy formulation and urges development practitioners to accept that their inclusion in the development process is likely to pay dividends.

Chapter 14, by Dr Roger Koranteng, outlines principles and concepts for the strategic planning of local government services. The author defines strategic planning as a process through which an organisation envisions its future and develops the necessary procedures and mechanisms to achieve its long-term objectives. He also refers to stakeholder and SWOT analysis, which are regarded as important tools for strategic planning.

In Chapter 15, Buba Joof discusses community involvement in local governance. Initially, he outlines key concepts such as participation, development, decentralisation and governance, and indicates Gambia's first five year plan (1975/76–1980/81) as the turning point for community participation. This plan introduced the philosophy of *tesito*, a Mandingo word meaning 'gird up' or 'prepare for hard work while relying on one's self'. The Government of The Gambia has since recognised that improving the governance environment is a necessary precondition for the stimulation of sustainable development and improvement of the welfare of the Gambian people. The chapter further discusses challenges in community involvement and makes recommendations on how to meet these challenges.

Reference

Cohen, JM and Peterson, SB (1999). *Administrative Decentralization: Strategies for Developing Countries*. Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, CT.

2

Background to the Workshop

Directorate of Local Governance, Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, Government of The Gambia, in collaboration with GIDD, Commonwealth Secretariat

Decentralisation in The Gambia was conceived as a countrywide structure derived from a broad consultative process that involved all local, national and international stakeholders. It was formulated in close partnership with international donors such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic Development Fund (EDF) of the European Commission and the World Bank. It is based on the 1997 Constitution, sections 193–194 and 214 (3); the Local Government Act (2002); the Local Government Amendment Acts (2004, 2006 and 2007); and the Local Government Finance and Audit Act (2004). The legislation set out to fundamentally restructure the public sector through large-scale fiscal and functional decentralisation. It established local government areas, structures and officers, prescribed the provision of central government grants to councils and gave councils the authority to provide basic services in education, health, agriculture, road maintenance, sanitation and animal husbandry, with a concomitant transfer of resources from central to local government.

Decentralisation is the cornerstone of the Gambia Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP), its *Strategy for Poverty Alleviation* (1994 and 2003) and *Vision 2020* (1996), which supports a participatory approach to development and poverty alleviation, setting out how The Gambia can become a middle-income country by 2020. *Vision 2020* states that government will pursue an intensive political and institutional decentralisation process.

In response, the Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, which was given the responsibility for formulating and co-ordinating decentralisation established the Directorate of Local Govern-

ance. In collaboration with the UNDP and EDF, the directorate has commissioned a number of consultancy studies to assess its own capacity to implement decentralisation, as well as that of other central government institutions and local councils. The findings of these studies highlighted a lack of adequate capacity in all these institutions.

The implementation of decentralisation started well, with an initial surge of donor support and government attention. In the past few years, however, donor interest has appeared to diminish and much anticipated government support has not been forthcoming. There has been a lack of adequate capacity at both national and local levels of government, so that decentralisation could not be adequately articulated and disseminated for the greater understanding and deeper engagement of the general public. The efficiency of municipal administration needs to be greatly improved in all local government authorities. Local planning and development capacity is weak and local communities have not yet begun to see the expected benefits of increased autonomy. Central government seems over-cautious in making available the grants promised in the legislation and in spite of the legislation the required funding and functional competences have not been transferred to local councils.

In view of all this, the consultative workshop held in Banjul, 7–9 April 2008, aimed to facilitate the sharing of ideas and international good practice on the implementation of effective decentralisation. It was intended to be a forum for discussion of current pertinent issues relating to good local governance and development, and to project common concerns that need to be resolved at all levels. Specifically, the programme provided an opportunity for informing participants about the strengths and weaknesses of The Gambia in its application of the principles, process and methodology of decentralisation.

The workshop was conducted over three days. Resource persons were drawn from the Commonwealth Secretariat, faculty members of the University of Birmingham and officials from the Directorate of Local Governance. The programme was co-ordinated locally by the directorate. Permanent secretaries of departments of state, senior local government leaders, including regional governors, political and administrative heads of local government authorities (mayors/chairs and chief executive officers), leaders of non-governmental and civil society organisations, and representatives of appropriate international donor organisations were all

invited. It was expected that participants would contribute their experience of the issues and their perceptions about local governance and decentralisation in The Gambia.

The programme took place shortly after The Gambia's local government elections held on 24 January 2008. It was hoped that under the existing co-operation framework the Commonwealth Secretariat's Governance and Institutional Development Division would collaborate with the Directorate of Local Governance immediately after the consultative workshop in implementing an orientation programme on local governance, poverty alleviation and the millennium development goals for the benefit of the newly elected councillors.

The workshop focused on the following areas of concern:

- The role of decentralisation in local and national development;
- Decentralisation policy and process in The Gambia;
- Gambian and developing country perspectives and experiences in:
 - Fiscal and functional decentralisation
 - Regional and local planning and development
 - Municipal administration and management
 - Public and civil society engagement in local and national development
 - Central and local government relations under decentralisation
 - Intermunicipal relations.

The aim was that by the end of the forum delegates should be able to:

- Explain the role of decentralisation in local and national development;
- Describe the policy and process of decentralisation in The Gambia;
- Explain the importance of fiscal and functional decentralisation in local governance and development;
- Describe the process of regional and local planning and development in the context of decentralisation;
- Explain the concept and process of municipal administration in the context of decentralisation;

- Explain the need for public and civil society support and engagement in decentralisation and local development;
- Describe the need for good local–local and local–central government relations under a regime of decentralisation.

It is hoped that with the successful conduct of this forum, The Gambia will go a long way towards the sharing of a common arrangement for the way forward to effective decentralisation.

3

Keynote Address

*Alhaji Ismaila K Sambou, Secretary of State for Local Government,
Lands and Religious Affairs, Government of The Gambia*

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Fatoumata Jahumpa-Ceesay, Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service, Madam Teneng Ba Jaiteh, the UNDP resident representative, National Assembly members here present, Dr Munawwar Alam and the team from the Commonwealth Secretariat, permanent secretaries here present, Lord Mayor of the Banjul City Council, Lord Mayor of the Kanifing Municipal Council, regional governors, the Paramount Chief, participants, invited guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today at the high-level national consultative workshop on ‘Managing Change in Local Governance’ in The Gambia. It is indeed my singular honour and pleasure to deliver the keynote address.

All modern countries of the world have some form of local administration of government. This brings benefits as it enhances operating ability, minimises the financial and physical costs of operating at a distance, draws on local knowledge and answers to demands from citizens for understandable and convenient government. Three broad types define this nature of relationship between government and the governed: devolution, decentralisation and deconcentration. I am sure that during your deliberations here in the next three days, you will be able to decipher the various connotations of these words. In The Gambia, we happen to have an assortment of all these types of local administration existing in our structures.

The theme of the workshop, ‘Managing Change in Local Governance’, is of immense importance to all us. We all recall that the enactment of the Local Government Act (2002) ushered in profound and fundamental face-lifting and restructuring of the framework of local administration in this country. However, for quite a long time now, the overall performance of the local government fraternity, particularly in the area of service delivery, has left a lot to be desired. In fact, this has always prompted the

Presidency to directly intervene in the affairs of local administration with the honourable desire of making sure that the peoples' voices are heard and their needs met.

Local authorities are the 'eyes and the ears' on local issues, and the government sees joint working between central and local government as crucially important. I hardly need to tell you that local authorities are uniquely placed to provide vision and leadership to local communities, raise awareness and change behaviours. People want and need easy access to quality services. The heart of the matter is a high quality local administration. We all know of examples where we can see this, and where we can't. My aim, with your help, is to banish the 'can't' bit of that last sentence.

I have had the opportunity of browsing through the programme for the workshop. It includes the sort of structural and institutional change that we had here in The Gambia with the advent of the Local Government Act (2002) and how to manage that change in order to make local government relevant to local people. I believe the topics chosen for discussion will go a long way in highlighting the way in which participants can value managing change, at any level, in local administration.

I wish to sincerely thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for funding this workshop. It is the hope of my Department of State that this is the beginning of a very fruitful collaboration between the Government of The Gambia through the Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat in advancing the course of good local governance in The Gambia. I wish to thank my able staff at the department who, together with Dr Munawwar Alam of the Commonwealth Secretariat, have made this workshop possible. I also extend a big thank you to the international resource persons who, despite their busy schedules, have generously decided to come to The Gambia and share their wealth of knowledge with us on local administration. Finally, to all participants, thank you for coming and please take as much as possible from the deliberations you will have here. On this note, Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I have the pleasure and the honourable duty to formally declare this workshop on 'Managing Change in Local Governance' open.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations and thank you all for your attention.

4

Local Government in the Commonwealth

Dr Munawwar Alam, Commonwealth Secretariat

Introduction

Local government is the lowest tier of government. It is closest to citizens and the community and therefore known as 'local'. It has an extremely important role to play as an agent of social change and development, as it represents the interests of a particular locality at the micro-level, leading to a broader concept of the welfare and happiness of its people (Alam and Nickson, 2006). The domain of local councils encompasses virtually every problem that citizens face in their day-to-day lives. It extends from birth to death, and includes water supply, sanitation, education, health, refuse disposal, roads and town planning. For the sake of brevity, suffice it to say that most of the utilities and services necessary for life in contemporary society are provided by local government. In many countries, local councils also serve as conciliation courts that resolve petty disputes at local level. Because of this universality of the basic functions performed and the responsibilities shouldered by local bodies, local government is the most important tier of government for ordinary citizens. In their daily lives, they rarely have contact with higher tiers of government.

The element of popular participation (the electoral process) at local level also provides a training ground in grassroots democracy, both for the representatives and those who are represented. Councillors find an opportunity and forum for their own political training and gain a familiarity with the legislative and administrative aspects of government that helps them to advance to political careers in higher tiers of government. On the other hand, it infuses political awareness and a sense of responsibility among ordinary citizens regarding their own rights as electors.

Today, globalisation and the information revolution have brought about a redefinition of the role of the state and an enhanced focus on local governance.

In any country, local governments are part of the overall local governance system. This includes statutory government organisations and any third sector. It includes, besides local governments, societal actors such as citizens, representatives of trade and business, community organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the media. Their dynamics determine the contours and complexion of any local governance system, depending upon interests, the relative power of the various actors and the institutional arrangements, both formal and informal, in which they interact. Certain key questions are also relevant:

- How far is participatory democracy being realised at local government level?
- To what extent is local government responsive to the needs and concerns of citizens?
- To what extent are local government politicians and officials held accountable for their decisions and actions?

To sum up, local governance is a broader concept that includes the direct, as well as the indirect, roles of state institutions (including local governments) and informal networks that define citizen–citizen and citizen–state relationships (Shah, 2006).

Local governments are specific entities at sub-national level created by national or sub-national statutes. They have political authority, but are not necessarily elected. Different countries have different systems of appointment, including direct nomination by central government. Government at local level can also be through agencies of central or sub-national government.

In many Commonwealth countries, for example in Africa and the Pacific, traditional structures co-exist with elected local governments. The role and extent of authority of these structures – chiefs, paramount chiefs, etc. – vary from country to country. In many countries, traditional chiefs are empowered under customary law. Many countries are striving to integrate chiefs into decentralised local government systems and structures.

Decentralisation

A major part of the current policy debate revolves around the decentralisation of power from central to local government. In a departure

from the old policy of state withdrawal from the provision of services, the move now is for these to be decentralised. The concept is to pass power downwards to someone ‘closer’ to the people who use the services (Turner, 1999).

Reasons for decentralisation differ from country to country and the pace of reform varies significantly. In some countries, e.g. Scotland in the UK, decentralisation has been undertaken to accommodate regional aspirations. In other cases, the rationale has been to avoid secessionist forces, e.g. in Sri Lanka and Nigeria. National reconstruction has often been the basis for creating effective local government, e.g. in Uganda and South Africa. Decentralisation has also been used in federal countries to disperse power away from the central government and create strong provincial governments, e.g. in Pakistan and India. There has been pressure from the World Bank and other donors for decentralisation, especially for better service delivery (Devas, 2006). Notwithstanding the political and social pressures for decentralisation, the underlying administrative rationale has been to improve efficiency and create better service delivery, especially when central planning has not been found to be very efficient (Ribot, 2002). It is also believed that decentralisation increases accountability and transparency and improves governance, which is not always the case because of the low level of awareness among voters of their rights and of the responsibilities of their elected representatives (Duncan, 2005).

In public administration, decentralisation is a generic term that is used in different contexts. However, the literature mentions three types of decentralisation (Devas et al., 2008):

Deconcentration or administrative decentralisation: responsibilities are assigned to agents of the central government;

Devolution (political decentralisation): responsibilities are assigned to elected bodies with some degree of autonomy;

Delegation: a government agency or sub-national government carries out a function on behalf of the central government in return for monetary compensation.

Table 4.1 depicts levels of decentralisation vis-à-vis reform indicators.

Table 4.1. Decentralisation rubric

Level	Pressure	Shared vision	Capacity building	Actions/ implementation of reforms
3 Advanced	Reform legislation approved: top level political commitment Issuance of White Paper All ministries are on board	High level of awareness and support at all levels Action plan in place, regular reviews Staff highly motivated	Resources (staff and funding) routinely committed to capacity building	Actions being taken and embedded throughout central and local government Monitoring and reporting of progress to Cabinet and Parliament
2 Developing	Reform policy proposal agreed Green Paper disseminated for wider stakeholder consultation Institutional arrangements strengthened	Representatives from all levels of government involved in planning process and drawing up action plan(s) All staff given opportunity to make an input	Staffing and funding needs identified Resources becoming available	Wide engagement across central and local government
1 Emerging	Institutional arrangements in place (e.g. decentralisation secretariat 'focal point' or 'director of decentralisation') Initial drafting of decentralisation policy Active 'change champions' emerging	Change 'champion drives' implementation strategy Low level of awareness about decentralisation	Middle management level 'focal point or co-ordinator' appointed Training and development needs assessment Sporadic capacity building initiatives	Commencement of isolated actions at some levels of central and local government
0 No attempt	Status quo or no explicit policy Lack of consistent leadership and responsibility for reforms	No communication between different levels of government	No investment in capacity building Demotivated staff kept in the dark. High stress levels in overworked and undervalued staff	Zero action or actions limited to crisis management or 'fire-fighting'

Based on Government Office for the South West, 2004, http://www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/change_matrix.doc. Adapted from A Nickson, M Alam, R Koranteng and A Deri, *Managing Change in Local Governance*, 7 April 2008.

Local government in different regions

This section gives a brief overview of local government across the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a family of diverse nations. As the state of local democracy in the Commonwealth is extremely varied, the Commonwealth Secretariat supports decentralisation policies through a range of activities. Of 53 member countries, some do not have local government systems. For understandable reasons, this is the case in some of the smaller states in the Pacific and the Caribbean, and in Asia in places like Brunei and the city-state of Singapore. Many member countries have gone so far as to provide constitutional protection for local governments, and others, such as Cyprus and Australia, have introduced compulsory voting in local government elections, showing just how highly their governments rate grassroots democracy.

In 2005, the Commonwealth Local Government Conference, held in Aberdeen, Scotland, adopted the *Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance*. Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed the Aberdeen *Principles*, which set out essential elements of local democracy, during the 2005 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Valetta, Malta (see www.clgf.org.uk).

Africa

African countries have undergone waves of decentralising reforms since their independence. There is a long history of local government and decentralisation in different traditions, starting from pre-colonial authorities, colonial administration and post-independence local government reform initiatives (Loquai and Le Bay, 2007). Various factors have motivated the decision by central governments to transfer political, financial and administrative responsibilities to sub-national governments. These include securing democratic governance and hence legitimacy at the sub-national level, managing intrastate conflicts and expediting development. However, the implementation of decentralisation policies beginning in the late 1980s has been inhibited by inadequate resources and ineffective collaboration. The failure and weakness of decentralisation reforms in African countries can also be traced to the lack of attention to the process of implementation and management of the reforms.

The past two decades have seen a significant trend towards shifting

powers to sub-national governments. In many African states, local councils are now elected by popular vote and have the power to pass by-laws with varying degrees of political autonomy. Many have elected councils with legislative powers and executive discretion. In some countries, central governments have delegated their powers to local governments, e.g. in health and education. However, there is a need to create administrative capacity and provide financial resources (UCLG, 2008). Decentralisation reforms are gaining momentum, albeit at varying paces in different countries.

Some of the major issues in local government are (UCLG, 2008):

- Local government capacity
- Financial decentralisation
- Role of traditional leaders
- Awareness amongst citizens
- Urbanisation – the average rate is 40–70 per cent; this is causing problems with infrastructure and municipal services.

Asia

In Commonwealth Asian countries, in comparative terms, countries have larger populations, e.g. India. A major challenge facing Asian countries is effective governance of mega-cities. Of 19 mega-cities (with populations over 10 million) in the world, six are in the Commonwealth and of these five are in Asia (Table 4.2). A common feature of metropolitan local governments is that they have several tiers, e.g. Karachi, Mumbai, New Delhi and Calcutta (Asian Development Bank, 2001).

Mega-cities make a substantial contribution towards the gross domestic product (GDP) of their countries. There are, however, issues of urban poverty, public health, slums, infrastructure and crime. The main weaknesses in governance are poor co-ordination, ineffective regulation and marginalisation of disadvantaged groups.

India and Pakistan have made major strides in decentralisation recently. India formalised the traditional local government institution of *panchayati raj* by a constitutional amendment in 1992. There is a three-tier system of village, intermediate and district level local government.

Certain service delivery functions, e.g. infrastructure, health and education, have been allocated to these bodies (Alok, 2004). In 2001, Pakistan introduced extensive local government reforms (Alam, 2004).

Table 4.2. Mega-cities in Commonwealth Asia

City	Population (millions)	
	2000	2007 (projected)
Mumbai	18.1	18.978
Calcutta	12.9	14.787
Dhaka	12.3	13.485
Karachi	11.8	12.130
Delhi	11.7	15.926

Source: UN Habitat and UN Dept of Economic Affairs, Population Division

The Pacific

The Pacific island countries have peculiar circumstances and vulnerabilities. Most face a set of particularly demanding development challenges due to limited geographic size, dependence on a narrow resource base, limited international trade opportunities and distance from major capital and goods markets, coupled with exposure to natural and environmental disasters. There have been significant societal changes over the past two decades in the Pacific region, involving political, economic, social and technological transformation. This dynamic environment has put pressure on governments to introduce governance reform, and decentralisation forms a major component of the reform programmes. While Pacific countries are undergoing rapid transformation, governments are also trying to cope with new challenges, albeit at their own pace and according to their own priorities (Tipu, 2006). A major part of the reform programme has been implementation of local government reforms aimed at decentralising and devolving central local government functions to the local level. Most of the countries have started reforms with mixed results and there have been a variety of problems and challenges, as in any reform process.

There is also a problem of poor capacity amongst staff, especially in rural areas. Because of economies of scale, there is a problem of service delivery. Civil servants are not keen to be posted to rural areas. Due to the small

size of populations, creating institutional mechanisms for oversight is often very difficult (Duncan, 2005). In the Pacific countries, the issue of the integration of traditional structures in the wider decision-making process is also important. In recent years, rapid urbanisation has put serious strain on urban municipal service capabilities.

The Caribbean

While the history of local government decentralisation is fairly long, not all countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean have incorporated decentralisation as a part of their development strategy (Raghoonath, 2004). In six countries, The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, the existing forms of local government bear some relation to the theoretical constructs of local government, particularly in relation to elected local government. In St Lucia, local government has been administered over the past three decades by interim councils appointed by the Minister of Local Government. The functions and responsibilities of local government have been gradually but consistently transferred to centralised authorities since 1980 (CLGF, 2007). In many states, for example Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, there is no local government system. Based on existing practices, several generalisations can be drawn about the practice of decentralisation in the Caribbean. The electoral element is not working properly, or participation is not encouraged, or the lack of financial autonomy means that local councils have no discretionary powers; in some instances local government authorities are not empowered to collect taxes (Raghoonath, 2004)

Trinidad and Tobago

Since independence in 1962 there have been increased attempts to create effective local government. In 2006 the Government issued a draft White Paper on local government reform as part of *Vision 2020*, which aimed to attain developed country status.

The key objectives of the reforms are the improvement of infrastructure, delivery of social services, environment, citizen participation, and accountability and good governance.

Issues and challenges

Within the Commonwealth, as in other parts of the world, several issues and challenges affect the sustainability of democratic, responsive and efficient local governments.

Central-local government relations: This issue is at the heart of the debate about decentralisation. There is an obvious tension between these two tiers of government. Although central government is responsible for making sure that public resources are properly used at local level, operational interference and micro-management can seriously hamper decentralisation.

Staffing: As local governments are chronically deficient in human resources in most Commonwealth countries, central government appoints its own staff, especially at senior level. This is so, for example, in India, Bangladesh, Malawi, Pakistan and Tanzania (Ahmad et al., 2005). The strong executive power of officials appointed by the centre is also seen in most African countries (UCLG, 2008). Many Commonwealth countries have established local government service commissions to appoint staff for local governments (for example, Uganda, Ghana, Mauritius, Swaziland and Lesotho).

Service delivery: The reasons for decentralisation vary, but improving service delivery is often a key motive (Ahmad et al., 2005). Delivering quality services to citizens is also a matter of striking a balance between national and local priorities. Local authorities need a supportive environment that enables them to deliver effective and efficient performance without being restrained by unnecessary regulations and inflexibility.

Urban and rural local governments: Rapid urbanisation is straining the resources of urban areas. Developing countries have a greater rate of urbanisation compared to the developing world. One problem faced by urban local government is the tendency of politicians to favour rural areas. Funds are often diverted to unviable projects in rural areas due to their large voting populations, and urban infrastructure is neglected, although these could often be self-financing (Asian Development Bank, 2001).

Local government finance

All public money is 'public' as this is contributed by taxpayers, and it is a matter of administrative convenience which level of government collects which revenues (Devas, 2006). Finance is a critical determinant of the

effective performance of local governments. There are three important issues relating to local government finance: intergovernmental transfers, councils' own ability to mobilise financial resources, and effective and efficient use of those resources.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the Commonwealth decentralisation has been a major feature of the governance agenda over recent years. Different countries are at different stage of development. What is important is that the design of local government reforms keeps service delivery, citizen voice and accountability as essential components.

Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), Kenya

LATF is a block grant that provides supplementary funds to local authority budgets. This mechanism transfers 5 per cent of the national income tax to all local authorities in Kenya. LATF transfers account for about 25 per cent of local government revenues and support local expenditures such as personnel, operations, maintenance, capital projects and debt resolution. Local authorities access LATF funds based on their meeting certain performance conditions, such as the timely preparation of budgets, financial reports and participatory service delivery action plans.

In addition to the LATF block grants, the Government also provides a portion of the Road Maintenance Levy Fund (RMLF) directly to some local authorities as earmarked grants for road maintenance. Twenty per cent of LATF must be used for rehabilitation and construction of roads. The other 80 per cent must be utilised for development projects in the wards as prioritised by the residents of the wards.

LATF allocations are formula based, providing:

- A basic minimum lump sum for all authorities;
- A fixed percentage (60–70%) allocated on a population basis;
- A fixed percentage based on relative urban population.

The allocation to each local authority has two components, a 60 per cent service delivery component and a 40 per cent performance component. An independent committee, chaired by a private sector appointee, advises the government on the operation of LATF. As well as the Local Government and Finance Ministries, the Kenya Association of Local Authorities is represented on the committee

Citizen Community Boards, Pakistan

The local government system introduced in 2001 provides for the setting up of Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) in every local area by a group of non-elected citizens to mobilise the community for improvement in service delivery through voluntary and self-help initiatives and to support the welfare of the handicapped and destitute. CCBs are being set up with diverse representation at all tiers and funds are compulsorily provided to such boards by local government. A CCB can raise funds through voluntary contributions, gifts, donations and grants for its declared purposes. It may also receive project-based cost sharing support from any local government. CCBs' accounts are subject to audit and in case of its dissolution, a CCB's assets pass to the local government that contributed them and must continue to be used for community welfare. A high level of community involvement is expected once these boards come of age.

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5

Decentralisation in The Gambia in the Context of the National Development Agenda

Dr Munawwar Alam and Rishi Athreya

This chapter provides a brief synthesis of various national development plans in The Gambia which set out priority areas for development, including decentralisation.

African countries have undergone waves of decentralisation reforms since their independence. The past two decades have seen a real trend towards shifting powers to sub-national governments. The factors motivating decentralisation include securing democratic governance and hence legitimacy at the sub-national level, managing intra-state conflicts and expediting development. The implementation of the decentralisation policies beginning in the late 1980s has been inhibited by inadequate resources and ineffective collaboration.

The weakness of decentralisation reforms in Africa is often caused by lack of attention to the process of implementation and management of the reforms. There is a need to create administrative capacity and provide financial resources. Decentralisation reforms are gaining momentum, albeit at a varying pace in different countries. Some of the major African local government issues are:

- Local government capacity;
- Financial decentralisation;
- The role of traditional leaders;
- Awareness among citizens;
- The urbanisation rate of between 40 and 70 per cent – this is causing problems with infrastructure and municipal services.

Decentralisation in The Gambia was initiated in the late 1980s in consultation with international agencies such as the UNDP, EDF, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the World Bank. However, the momentum of the reform process has waxed and waned due to domestic issues. In 1986 the Gambia Government worked together with UNECA on organising a high-level workshop. In the early 1990s the UNDP commissioned a study to make recommendations on decentralisation in the country. The UNDP report was submitted to the government in 1993. In 1994 the Ministry of Local Government, together with other concerned ministries, submitted a joint paper that was approved by the Cabinet in April 1994 (see Chapter 8.)

With the change of government in 1994 the issue of decentralisation was taken up by the new government. With momentum regained, the 1997 constitution provided for decentralisation and devolution of government functions. This was a major step forward that led to the enactment of the Local Government Act in 2002 and the Local Government Finance and Audit Act in 2004.

In the context of national development, the following programmes serve as major milestones (Box 5.1). Most of these programmes incorporate decentralisation as a priority for socio-economic development in The Gambia.

Box 5.1 Major landmarks

1985 Economic Recovery Programme (ERP)

1990 Programme for Sustainable Development (PSD)

1994 Strategy for Poverty Alleviation/National Poverty Alleviation Programme

1998 Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF)

2003–2005 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper I/SPA II

2007 PRSP II

2007–11, 2012–2016 and 2017–2021: Medium-term plans

The ERP and PSD were supported by donors, but were interrupted between 1994 and 1997 by a military take-over of the government. These two programmes did not make any specific reference to decentralisation.

However, starting with the 1994 Strategy for Poverty Alleviation, there were references to decentralisation. In June 1998, the new government entered into a three-year arrangement under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (formerly the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF)), with the objective of achieving macroeconomic stability and establishing the conditions for sustained economic growth (Republic of The Gambia, 2000).

NPAP/ Strategy for Poverty Alleviation I

The initial strategy, SPA I, comprised a response strategy to the key poverty issues diagnosed under the 1989 ILO study on poverty in The Gambia. SPA I was presented to the donor community at a round table conference in Geneva in April 1994. In this strategy paper, four priority areas, or pillars, were identified (Republic of The Gambia, 2000).

Pillar 1: Enhancing the productive capacity of the poor

Pillar 2: Improving access to and the performance of social services

Pillar 3: Capacity building at local level

Pillar 4: Promoting participatory communications processes

Pillar 3 involved not only training, but also access to resources. This included augmenting the capacity of local communities to plan and implement work programmes. Pillar 4 pertained to the dissemination of programmes and increasing awareness. The Good Governance and Public Administration Reform Programme was designed as a cross-cutting issue between Pillars 3 and 4. It had six components, including decentralisation.

In 1998 a participatory assessment of the NPAP/SPA I was conducted. One of its findings was the recognition of decentralisation as a key poverty alleviation component for the empowerment of the poor (Republic of The Gambia, 2000).

Strategy for Poverty Alleviation II

The Strategy for Poverty Alleviation II/Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper I was created as a follow-up to SPA I. Though the main focus of SPA II was on macroeconomic issues, certain priority areas were identified as vital to poverty alleviation. One of the aspects of this was Pillar 3

(capacity building at local level) and Pillar 4 (promotion of participatory communications processes).

Box 5.2 Governance policy framework

1. Reform of parliamentary structures and processes
2. Review of constitutional and electoral processes
3. Civic education
4. Decentralisation of the local government system
5. Reform of the legal and judicial processes
6. Public management and administrative reform

A common theme in these two pillars was programme area 8 – improving participation in local decision-making, which included appropriate devolution of governance functions to democratically elected councils as a part of the governance policy framework.

Besides these, programme area 4 of SPA II – social service delivery – was related to service delivery at local level. This included access to drinking water, sanitation and creating a sustainable environment (Government of the Gambia, 2000).

The first phase of the PRSP, incorporating the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation, was undertaken in 2003–2005. Excessive fiscal expansion prevented The Gambia from being eligible for the HIPC initiative; there was insufficient spending on poverty reduction. Lack of decentralisation hindered effective poverty reduction. The lack of progress on economic reform initiatives resulted in donors failing to provide all the aid that had been promised (Republic of The Gambia, 2008).

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II

The PRSP II (2007–11), elaborated in 2006, was inspired by *Vision 2020*. Its major focus was on the achievement of the millennium development goals. The unsuccessful experience of PRSP I led the government from 2004–2005 onwards to take urgent measures to restore the country's macroeconomic stability. The new MDG-based PRSP therefore paid

attention to the country's macroeconomic framework as a prerequisite of successful poverty reduction. The PRSP II identified lacunae in public sector capacity and financial resources. The Gambia faces regional disparities in poverty. Rural areas have limited access to services. These are impediments to achieving national development targets. The paper also stressed the importance of continuity of assistance from development partners (Republic of The Gambia, 2008).

Strategy

In 2006 Gambia adopted *Vision 2020*. This aims to transform The Gambia into a middle-income country. It has three medium-term plans, for 2007–2011, 2012–2016 and 2017–2021. The strategy itself is inspired by the longer-term vision, articulated in The Gambia's *Vision 2020*, whereby the country is to be transformed into a financial centre, tourist 'paradise' and trading/export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation. The plan is for the country to thrive on free-market policies and a vibrant private sector, and to be sustained by a well-educated, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population. This would guarantee a well-balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for all, under a system of government based on the consent of the country's citizens.

This PRSP was oriented towards the Paris Declaration (Republic of The Gambia, 2008).

The first five-year plan (2007–1011)

As indicated above, the PRSP II has three five-year plans. The first highlights the need for poverty reduction initiatives with certain key ingredients: continued macroeconomic reforms; improved public sector management; increased priority for human development; and enhanced participation in the development process (Republic of The Gambia, 2008). It has similar thematic goals to the previous phase. Based on the MDGs, it has the following components, grouped into pillars:

1. The creation of an enabling policy environment for economic growth and poverty reduction;
2. Increasing the capacity and output of the productive sectors: agriculture, fisheries, industry, trade and tourism (MDG 1);

3. Improving the delivery of basic social services, health (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) and education (MDG 2);
4. Enhancing local governance and decentralisation;
5. Mainstreaming issues related to gender (MDG 3), youth, population and HIV/AIDS (MDG 6), nutrition and the environment (MDG 7) into the development process.

As part of the programme, decentralisation and local governance reform will continue to be a priority area for the government (Republic of The Gambia, 2008). Certain priority areas have been identified as a part of this. One aspect is public and civil service reform. Civil service reform is an important aspect of The Gambia's PRSP. Lacunae in the capacity of government, including local government, are a major impediment to the effective implementation of administrative reforms. Hitherto there has been reform at central government level; this is now being extended to local government.

Improving the delivery of basic social services. This strategy focuses on the following issues relating to service delivery: waste management, management of landfill sites, sanitation, uncontrolled urban growth and community water supplies.

Enhancing local governance and decentralisation. Progress in decentralisation has been tardy at best. Fiscal decentralisation remains a grey area with little detail. Paucity of human and financial resources in local governments impedes decentralisation efforts.

The Brussels Programme of Action

The Gambia is also a signatory to the Brussels Programme of Action. This was agreed at the third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries convened in Brussels in May 2001. It creates an agenda for global partnership to engage with LDCs, following on from earlier summits (Republic of The Gambia, 2006).

The Gambia Government has committed itself to this forum to undertake reform initiatives in various areas, including public expenditure management, governance, local government reform and decentralisation. The government also reiterated its ownership of decentralisation, demonstrated through the enactment of the Local Government Reform and

Decentralisation Act (2002) and the Local Government Finance and Audit Act (2004).

The United Nations development assistance framework

In 2006, the Government of The Gambia and the UNDP drafted the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). This incorporates the recommendations of the Common Country Assessment. These are aligned with national development and poverty reduction policies. Further, they are intended to attain the MDGs (UN, 2006).

The UNDAF has identified three priority result areas:

1. Poverty reduction and social protection
2. Basic social services
3. Governance and human rights.

In pursuance of the UNDAF aims, the decentralisation and de-concentration of central government functions is going ahead. It is hoped that decentralisation, together with an employment strategy, will reduce poverty and improve standards of service delivery. In order to meet the same human resource and financial capacity needs in central and local government, government strategy is to pilot reforms in specific local council areas, before scaling up to national level.

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6

The Meaning of and Different Types of Decentralisation

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Conceptual definition

There is no internationally agreed definition of decentralisation. Because of this, debates about its alleged advantages and disadvantages are hindered by the fact that participants are talking about different things (Cohen and Peterson, 1997). Decentralisation is best thought of as an omnibus word describing a general process (Wettenhall, 1996). The most widely accepted definition is that of Shabbir Cheema and Rondinelli (1984). They classify decentralisation by form and type, identifying four broad forms of decentralisation on the basis of objectives:

- **Political, as used by political scientists:** the transfer of decision-making power to lower level governmental units or citizens;
- **Spatial, as used by geographers and planners:** actions that reduce excessive urban concentration by promoting regional growth poles;
- **Market, as used by economists:** actions that create conditions for public goods to be provided by market mechanisms sensitive to revealed preferences of citizens. Under it, public goods are produced by private firms, community groups, co-operatives, voluntary agencies, etc. These actions, often associated with the new public management, are sometimes called 'divestment';
- **Administrative:** actions that reform hierarchical distribution of powers between central and non-central governmental units.

It should be noted that political, spatial and administrative decentralisation are all territorial, while market decentralisation is functional (Wettenhall, 1996).

Most of the literature on decentralisation focuses on administrative decentralisation, of which the literature identifies three types:

- **Deconcentration:** the transfer of authority or responsibility for specific financial or management functions to lower levels under the jurisdictional authority of central government.
- **Delegation:** the transfer of decision-making authority and/or responsibility for specially defined tasks to other organisations that are either indirectly under its control (e.g. semi-autonomous agencies) or independent (e.g. private contractors who undertake road repairs or refuse collection). This arrangement can be periodically reviewed or revoked.
- **Devolution:** the creation or strengthening, financially or legally, of sub-national units of government, whose activities are substantially outside the control of central government, either in a federal system (through constitutional change) or a unitary system (through national legislation). Only this option involves a transfer of power. The crucial power that is transferred is the financial power to raise and control budgets.

In practice, administrative decentralisation in most developing countries is characterised by an ‘institutional pluralism’ that represents a co-existence of the three types mentioned above. In India, these are referred to as the three ‘Fs’ – functionaries, functions and funds.

Arguments for devolution

Decentralisation is often advocated as a solution to a variety of problems faced by developing countries. It is argued that devolution is beneficial because:

1. Allocative efficiency is improved, because resources can be allocated more efficiently by local government, which has a better understanding of local priorities than central government; this leads to a greater focus on human development expenditure with a higher social priority ratio and is more labour intensive.
2. Productive efficiency can be improved through lower unit costs arising from the use of locally available resources in construction (e.g. user groups can build water supply systems rather than government contractors and in maintenance (e.g. road maintenance can be carried

out through inter-municipal pooling of equipment rather than by the Ministry of Public Works). Devolution also reduces costs incurred by time lags and bureaucracy arising from the presentation of projects by municipalities to central government. Examination, negotiation and decision-making can take years. Inefficient release of funds by central government at year-end also hampers productive efficiency.

3. Equity can be improved because local government has the detailed local knowledge to enable more effective targeting to identify, implement and monitor programmes designed to benefit the very poor. This contrasts with the failure of traditional social programmes run by national agencies, the benefits of which did not accrue to those in greatest need.
4. Effectiveness will be improved because local government, through community organisations, is better able than central government to monitor the implementation and impact of public expenditure.

Underlying several of these themes is the assumption that devolution reduces corruption and patronage (clientelism) because local political leaders and senior administrators are more accountable to citizens (the so-called ‘gold-fish bowl effect’) through representative channels (the electoral process) and participative channels (citizens’ organisations). This assumption may not be true. There is evidence in some countries that, where civil society is weakly organised, devolution can actually increase corruption.

Extreme decentralisation

A common conceptual error is to assume that only political decentralisation, leading through devolution to greater democracy, will generate positive development benefits because of the accountability of local leaders to the electorate. Yet administrative deconcentration can also yield positive gains in service delivery, even without political accountability. This error derives from a widely-held ‘people-centred’ view of development that argues that strategies of political decentralisation leading to an ill-defined ‘self-governance’ are necessarily more effective in dealing with problems of poverty and inequality in urban and rural areas. This populist view derives from an anti-government position, shared by neoliberals and utopian radicals, that ‘individuals and small groups know best their own self-interest’ (Korten, 1991; Wunsch, 1991; Olowu, 2006). It is based on a critique of the failure of ‘top-down’ public bureaucracies to reach the poor. It ignores the fact that capacities and resource endowments differ

widely between social groups. In fact, central government retains an obligation to ensure the efficient use (through national standards) and territorial equity of intergovernmental financial transfers. ‘Without central leadership, adequate resources, and effective central and local government administrative co-ordination and linkages, sustainable development is unlikely’ (Cohen and Peterson, 1997: 19). So effective decentralisation requires both strong citizen organisation at the local level and strong central government.

External variables

In the real world, the impact of decentralisation policies is strongly influenced by ‘contextual’ (external) factors, as follows:

- The effectiveness of active civic organisations;
- Levels of ethnic, religious or inter-regional conflict;
- Education of local elected politicians;
- Origin, training and stability of local government officers;
- The pattern of local economic control and its relationship to the interaction between politicians, elites and citizens;
- The pattern of central government control over local revenue and expenditure.

Decentralisation in low- and middle-income countries

Interest in decentralisation has ebbed and flowed in line with fashions in development thinking. The form of decentralisation has shifted over time.

- **1960s:** The focus was primarily on administrative deconcentration during the post-colonial era, in order to reach remote segments of the population, especially in rural areas.
- **Early 1980s:** Decentralisation was seen as a strategy for increasing the grassroots participation of the rural and urban poor in the development process.
- **Early 1990s onwards:** The focus was on the political aspects of decentralisation as part of a strategy to promote democratisation and good governance.

- **Late 1990s:** The emphasis was on delegation as a means of developing alternative mechanisms for the delivery of basic services that were traditionally undertaken by bureaucratic organisations.

Reasons for decentralisation

The vast majority of decentralisation programmes have been pioneered by central government and have not been the result of pressure from local government. One of the main motives of central government for decentralisation is cost reduction. Faced with a growing fiscal crisis and continuing growth in demand for urban public services because of rapid migration from rural areas, governments were encouraged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to adopt a twin-track strategy. This involved both functional decentralisation (the transfer of responsibility for service provision ‘horizontally’ to the private sector through privatisation) and territorial decentralisation (the transfer of responsibility ‘vertically’ to local government through devolution). The principal reason for the second part of this strategy was growing recognition of the enormous untapped fiscal potential of local government. Effective yields on most local taxes, especially property taxation, had fallen to derisory levels over the previous decades because of the failure of cadastral surveys to keep up with rapid urban growth, the failure to adjust tax rates in line with high rates of inflation and widespread administrative inefficiency and corruption facilitated by the system of self-assessment for local taxation.

The coalition for change

By the mid-1980s, uneasy domestic coalitions emerged in many countries undergoing structural adjustment programmes in favour of decentralisation. The main demands of these coalitions were greater political autonomy for local government, the devolution of responsibility for service delivery to the municipal level and an associated strengthening of municipal finances. Three very different groups, with very different agendas, created this consensus because they all saw the decentralisation process as a means to advance their aims.

- Neoliberals viewed decentralisation as an essential part of a wider strategy for reducing the role of the public sector as a whole within the economy (functional decentralisation).

- Radical reformers saw decentralisation as a progressive measure designed to overcome inegalitarian and undemocratic social structures inherited from the past (devolution).
- Technocrats viewed decentralisation primarily as a means to improve the overall efficiency of service delivery through better co-ordination at the local level (deconcentration and delegation).

The active encouragement of international development agencies was as important as the domestic coalitions in promoting decentralisation. After decades during which they had sought to bypass local government in its lending programmes, the World Bank suddenly rediscovered the value of municipal endeavour. This volte-face was a reflection of its support for the harsh exigencies of IMF structural adjustment rather than an appreciation of the democratic virtues of decentralisation. The World Bank supported the neoliberal elements within the domestic coalitions and emphasised the benefits of decentralisation in terms of ‘fiscal cleansing’, rather than citizen participation. According to this interpretation, local government was intended to play a purely instrumental role as a more efficient administrator of poverty alleviation programmes. It would improve upon central government’s performance by identifying target households, by co-ordinating centrally-funded welfare programmes and by mobilising community participation in social investment projects.

Conclusion

It would be wrong to see decentralisation as a linear process with an end-product. Rather, it is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving and oscillating between greater unity and diversity, both in territorial and functional terms.

Centralisation and decentralisation can best be regarded as processes of movement in opposite directions along a continuum which has no clearly definable ends – or, perhaps more accurately, along a series of continuums representing the different criteria which can be used to measure centralisation and decentralisation. Anon.

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7

The New Public Management, State Reform and Changing Local Governance

Andrew Nickson, University of Birmingham

Introduction

The focus of this informal consultation is the process of restructuring ministries of health within central government. This paper explores the contextual factors underlying these changes – specifically, the broad pressures driving organisational reform in government in general, of which ministries of health form a part. The underlying assumption is that, for good or ill, many features of the restructuring process in central government ministries can be only fully understood by reference to this more generalised or ‘blanket’ reform process, which is not specific to any one ministry. The paper seeks to explain the thinking underpinning these broader pressures that drive organisational reform: it does not seek to evaluate their validity or effectiveness.

To an extent unparalleled in recent decades, reform of the governmental system is today firmly on the political agenda of many countries. It would be wrong to assume that external pressures alone are driving organisational change in government. Internal factors are also important – in fact, external pressure is unlikely to succeed unless there is a strong domestic coalition for reform. The reform process has advanced furthest in those medium-income countries where domestic pressure to reform has been strongest. In many of the least developed countries, where external pressure to reform the public service has been the over-riding consideration, the reform process has advanced more slowly. Nevertheless, external pressures have been very powerful in most countries undergoing government reform, and for that reason alone they merit special treatment.

The fiscal crisis of the state

Until the 1980s, government reform was low on the political agenda of most countries. This was despite official recognition in many countries of widespread administrative corruption, extreme overstaffing, low productivity and the absence of a culture of 'service' to the common citizen, all of which resulted in the inefficient, inequitable and ineffective delivery of a wide range of economic and social services. Although governments were rhetorically committed to reform, initiatives usually took the form of commissions of enquiry, with few tangible end results. For most governments there was little political advantage to be gained (and much potentially to be lost) from confronting the rent-seeking activities of vested interests, including powerful public sector unions.

However, this situation began to change from the 1980s onwards as governments introduced economic policy reforms in order to cope with the debt crisis and the challenge of global restructuring. Governments experienced growing frustration over the poor rate of implementation of their reform agenda. Politicians blamed this either on bureaucratic inertia or, more strongly, on bureaucratic sabotage. But there was also a tacit recognition that the economic crisis itself had further demoralised the civil service through the drastic decline in real wages and infrastructure support. Civil service reform climbed to the top of the political agenda as governments realised that they needed public administration systems capable of implementing their reform programmes.

Structural adjustment

Symbolised by the Mexican default in August 1982, low- and medium-income countries struggled from the early 1980s to adjust to a lethal cocktail of hikes in real interest rates and a sharp deterioration in their terms of trade. Facing theoretical debt service ratios of over 100 per cent, many were forced to accept structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) imposed by the IMF in order to obtain the agreement of creditor banks and multi-lateral lending agencies to debt rescheduling and refinancing packages.

At about the same time, a paradigmatic shift was taking place in north America and parts of western Europe towards a more market-oriented political philosophy. This approach was transferred through SAPs to many low- and middle-income countries facing economic crisis. Its core assumption is that macroeconomic imbalances (fiscal and external deficits)

are primarily caused by the inefficient allocation of resources – in practice a bias towards producing for the domestic, as opposed to the foreign, consumer and a bias towards the public as opposed to the private sector form of production.

Faced with this crippling fiscal crisis and a continuing rapid growth in urban demand for both ‘economic’ services (electricity, water and telecommunications) and ‘social’ services (health, education and housing), governments were encouraged by the IMF and the World Bank, as an integral part of their SAPs, to adopt a twin-track strategy for reducing the role of the public sector in the economy. This involved the transfer of responsibility for service provision both ‘horizontally’ to the private sector through greater private sector participation (PSP) and ‘vertically’ to local government through decentralisation. At the risk of simplification, responsibility for ‘economic’ services has tended to be transferred horizontally, while responsibility for ‘social’ services has tended to be transferred vertically.

After two decades during which they had encouraged state-owned corporations and sought to by-pass local government in their lending programmes, the World Bank and the regional multilateral lending agencies (the African, Asian and Inter-American Development Banks) suddenly rediscovered the virtues of the private sector and municipal endeavour. This volte-face was a reflection of their support for the harsh exigencies of SAPs spearheaded by the IMF. From the mid-1980s onwards, the multilateral development agencies launched new lending programmes in most adjusting economies that promoted PSP in state-owned corporations, as well as municipal institution building.

The ‘efficiency’ argument was now turned on its head and used to justify dismantling state ownership and promoting decentralisation. The transfer of responsibility for service provision to the private sector was assumed to raise productive efficiency through the ending of natural monopoly and the introduction of competition. The transfer of responsibility for service provision from higher to lower tiers of government was assumed to raise allocative and productive efficiency – the equity and the effectiveness of service delivery.

The arguments in favor of decentralisation can be summarised as follows:

1. Allocative efficiency will be improved because resources can be allo-

cated more efficiently by local government, which has a better understanding of local priorities than central government; this leads to a greater focus on human development expenditure with a higher social priority ratio and be more labour intensive in nature.

2. Productive efficiency can be improved through lower unit costs arising from the use of locally-available resources in construction (e.g. user groups, rather than government contractors, can build water supply systems) and in maintenance (e.g. road maintenance can be carried out through inter-municipal pooling of equipment, rather than by the Ministry of Public Works).
3. Equity can be improved because local government has the detailed local knowledge to enable more effective targeting to identify, implement and monitor programmes designed to benefit the very poor. This is in contrast to the failure of traditional social programmes administered by national agencies, the benefits of which do not accrue to those in greatest need.
4. Effectiveness will be improved because local government, through community organisations, is better able than central government to monitor the implementation and impact of public expenditure.

Resolving the fiscal crisis

But in both cases, the crucial overarching objective is the same, to resolve the fiscal crisis of the state in order to correct a structural imbalance in the balance of payments. The horizontal transfer of responsibility through PSP is seen as contributing to resolving the fiscal crisis through one or more of the following mechanisms:

- A once and for all revenue inflow from the sale of assets;
- The introduction of cost-recovery pricing, leading to reduced expenditure in the form of central government subsidy;
- Capital expenditure now financed by private operators, leading to reduced government outlay;
- A tax yield from the future profit stream of the private operator.

The vertical transfer of responsibility through decentralisation is seen as contributing to resolving the fiscal crisis by harvesting the enormous fiscal potential of local government. Effective yields on most local taxes,

especially property taxation, had fallen to derisory levels over the previous decades in most countries because of:

- The failure of cadastral surveys to keep abreast with rapid urban growth;
- The failure to adjust tax rates in line with high rates of inflation,
- Widespread administrative inefficiency and corruption facilitated by systems of self-assessment for local taxation.

Redrawing the boundaries of the state

Clearly, both these IMF-inspired processes of horizontal and vertical transfer of responsibilities are having important implications for the role of central government ministries. One over-simplistic but common interpretation of this process refers to the ‘withdrawal of the state’ – the idea that central government ministries are in some sense withering away. In fact, the implications of this process for the organisational restructuring of central ministries is far more complex.

Downsizing the public sector

In several countries, the horizontal and vertical transfer of responsibilities has indeed brought about a quantitative reduction in the number of central ministerial staff, some of whom are re-employed by privatised utility companies and/or lower tiers of government. By enabling the payment of higher salaries to fewer staff, it was hoped that staff retrenchment would increase labour productivity, combat corruption and reduce opposition to those reforms that undermined rent-seeking activities (e.g. the abolition of foreign exchange controls and import licences). Retrenchment usually went hand-in-hand with performance-related pay (PRP) which, by making the bureaucracy more flexible, would be expected to strengthen individual staff commitment to the implementation of the reform agenda.

More importantly, it was assumed that retrenchment would make a major contribution towards reducing the overall fiscal deficit. After all, personnel costs typically account for at least 75 per cent of recurrent central government expenditure in most low- and middle-income countries, and a high proportion of this tends to be spent on staff employed in central government ministries.

However, the limited experience to date suggests that a mere reduction in staff numbers does not necessarily contribute to resolving the fiscal crisis. In a sample of 15 sub-Saharan countries that have undergone retrenchment, eight recorded increases in wage bills (e.g. Senegal); even among those registering reduced wage bills, severance payments generally drained the budget substantially, often exceeding or equalling the short-term savings from downsizing. In Ghana, for instance, total public sector employment fell by nearly 30 per cent, from 143,000 in 1987 to around 90,000 in mid-1993. But the hoped-for savings were not realised because staff belonging mainly to lower grades were retrenched with lucrative severance payments, while (for reasons explained below) new staff tended to be recruited to higher grades.

This problem is especially pronounced in the case of the vertical transfer of responsibilities. Here, the reduction in numbers on the central ministerial payroll is offset by an increase in the local government payroll, where terms and conditions may be better than those in central government (as in, for example, Venezuela and Peru). In this case, unless there is a greater local tax effort, the fiscal deficit may worsen as an increase in the central government grant to lower tiers of government outweighs the savings in recurrent expenditure at the centre.

The new provider role of the state

But the impact on ministerial restructuring brought about by horizontal and vertical transfer of responsibilities is not confined to the quantitative reduction in staff numbers. Of potentially far greater significance is the fact that in the post-adjustment environment these ‘slimmed down’ institutions are now required to implement a qualitative shift in their whole *raison d’être* – away from the direct delivery of services (economic or social) towards the regulation and/or enabling of other ‘actors’ – the private sector, NGOs and lower tiers of government – that now have the responsibility for producing these services. One recent study has identified nine possible institutional arrangements (combining public and private actors in alternative aspects of provision, production and delivery), showing how each might be more or less appropriate to the supply of goods or services with different features.

In addition, a significant by-product of PSP has been the introduction of private sector ‘enterprise culture’ into the core civil service itself. The new

concern about cost-consciousness has led to a range of internal activities being increasingly subjected to quasi-market conditions (e.g. internal markets, benchmarking and cost recovery pricing).

Re-engineering the civil service

The World Bank was slow to recognise that SAPs were being undermined by the inability of a demoralised civil service already reeling under the effects of the economic crisis to take on the additional burden of implementing the major reforms associated with PSP and decentralisation. In the 'model' case of Ghana, this was only recognised four years after the start of its SAP in 1983. A new World Bank focus on capacity building (CB) in the 1990s recognised that this qualitatively distinct role of central government requires complex skills which are often completely lacking within existing ministries.

As the old 'generalist' administrators are metamorphosed into modern managers of scarce public resources, they need to develop a wide range of skills in order to meet these new institutional requirements, for example:

- Tendering skills
- Contract compliance
- Policy and budget analysis
- Performance evaluation
- Information systems management
- Value for money audits
- Negotiation skills and partnership with private sector
- Economic regulation of natural monopolies.

In order to fulfil this new 'provider' role ministries of health need:

- An effective planning and policy capability, particularly with respect to the need to incorporate a wide range of different actors in health sector plans;
- An effective and up-to-date information system providing data on private operators, enabling the monitoring of private sector activities;
- Good data on costs of public sector services, enabling identification of

cost-effective interventions and possible areas to contract out to the private sector;

- Legal skills in order to draw up clear, comprehensive contracts with the private sector;
- Independent and effective regulatory agencies to ensure that consumer complaints receive a fair hearing.

Conclusion

The withdrawal of the state promoted by structural adjustment programmes has led to the paradoxical need for public administration to perform new tasks that are more complex than those it performed before. In addition to core administration and direct service supply, which is itself increasingly subject to quasi-market conditions, it now has to regulate and enable private, community and arms-length agencies, as well as undertake policy analysis and strategic planning that incorporates the activities of these other actors.

The new tasks are technically complex and politically sensitive. They require a radical change in both the organisational structures of central government and the skills and attitudes of the civil service. Yet they are being introduced into public administration systems that are historically weak, and have been further weakened by the effects of economic crisis during the 1980s. It is no surprise, therefore, that capacity building within public administration is now regarded as crucial to the sustainability of SAPs over the longer term.

8

The Implementation of the Decentralisation Process in The Gambia*

Omar Khan, Governor, Upper River Region

Mr Chairman, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Fatoumata Jahumpa-Ceesay, Secretary-General and Head of the Civil Service, Madam Teneg Ba Jaiteh, UNDP resident representative, National Assembly members here present, Dr Munawwar Alam and the team from the Commonwealth Secretariat, permanent secretaries here present, Lord Mayor of the Banjul City Council, Lord Mayor of the Kanifing Municipal Council, regional governors, the Paramount Chief, participants, invited guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

Let me first of all thank the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Gambia Government through the Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs and the Personnel Management Office for organising such an important high level in-county workshop on decentralisation. The theme of the workshop, which is 'Managing Change in Local Governance', is most appropriate at this crucial stage in the implementation process of our decentralisation programme. My task today is to initiate discussion on the decentralisation process in the context of the experience of The Gambia.

Decentralisation in The Gambia was formulated based on a broad consultative process with local and international stakeholders. International donors such as the UNDP, EDF, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and World Bank have acted in close collaboration and partnership with the Gambia Government. Attempts to decentralise authority in The Gambia started in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In January 1986, to be precise from 13 to 22 January 1986, a national workshop was conducted on decentralisation, jointly organised by the Gambia Government, the

*Text of address made by Governor Omar Khan at the workshop.

Management Development Institute (MDI) and the ECA. The workshop was facilitated by local experts and an ECA consultant, Peter Efange.

The main focus of the workshop was to examine conceptual issues relating to decentralisation, and local government practices and experiences in other African countries so as to devise a system that best suits The Gambia. The conclusions of the workshop helped in drawing up a road map. Discussions and consultations continued, and in the early 1990s the UNDP commissioned an international consultant, MA Choudry, to carry out a study and make recommendations on decentralisation and re-organisation of local government administration in close collaboration with Gambian experts. He visited all divisions in The Gambia and met with all relevant stakeholders, including divisional commissioners (now regional governors), area councils, seyfolu, members of the divisional co-ordinating committees and other stakeholders. Suggestions and recommendations were made which were incorporated into his final report. His report was submitted to government at the end of 1993. The Ministry for Local Government and Lands, together with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, submitted a joint Cabinet paper, which was discussed and approved by Cabinet in April 1994. There was no follow-up by the concerned ministries (the Ministries of Local Government and Finance).

However, when HE The President, Dr Alhagi Yaya AJJ Jammeh, took over on 22 July 1994, one of his first priorities was to ensure that power was given to the people to allow them to fully participate in all development activities affecting them. The issue of decentralisation took centre stage and was given the attention it deserved. National workshops involving all the relevant stakeholders were conducted in Mansakonko, Tendaba, Brikama and Banjul. Finally, a validation workshop was conducted and a final document was submitted to Cabinet for approval. This was immediately approved by Cabinet, which authorised immediate implementation of the decentralisation programme.

The 1997 constitution therefore provides that:

Local government administration in The Gambia shall be based on a system of democratically elected councils with a high degree of local autonomy.

It also calls for decentralisation and devolution of government functions and powers to the people at appropriate levels to facilitate democratic

governance. The legal dictates are prescribed by the 1997 constitution and the Local Government Act (2002).

Councils

The Local Government Act provides that councils shall be established for the local government areas and be constituted and have such functions as set out in column A of part 1 of schedule 1.

- (a) Each council shall be a body corporate by the name ‘area council’, ‘municipal council’ or ‘city council’ as may be appropriate, preceded by the name of the local government area for which the council is established.
 - (b) Each council shall have perpetual succession and a common seal with power to sue and be sued in its corporate name.
 - (c) The Secretary of State may, by order published in the *Gazette*, establish such additional councils as he or she may deem necessary for the administration of the local government area.
 - (d) Each council shall be vested with the legislative power of the local government area and be answerable to the governor.
 - (e) The legislative power of the council shall be exercised by by-laws passed by the council in accordance with the Act and signed by the governor.
1. The council shall consist of:
 - (a) A chairperson elected in accordance with section 13;
 - (b) member from each ward elected by the ward;
Except in the case of the City of Banjul
 - (c) A seyfo representative member selected by all the district seyfolu, or in the case of a municipality, an alkalo representative selected by all the alkalolu in the municipality;
 - (d) A youth representative;
 - (e) A woman nominated to represent women’s groups in the area whenever more than two-thirds of the members elected under paragraph (b) of this section are male; and

- (f) Nominated members, consisting of not more than one-fifth of the elected members of a Council, representing local, commercial and social interest groups.
2. Nominated members shall be proposed by the civil organisations or interest groups they represent, and appointed by the chairperson with the concurrence of the Secretary of State.

The chairperson of a city council or municipal council shall be known as the mayor or mayoress.

Regional governors

The regional governors are the direct representatives of the centre and co-ordinate the activities of the decentralised structures of all departments of state. They also ensure that power is properly devolved to appropriate levels.

The district seyfolu

His Excellency the President of the Republic of The Gambia, Alhaji Dr Yaya AJJ Jammeh, has established a national council of seyfolu (traditional authorities) through the National Assembly. The council consists of the paramount seyfo as chairperson and all the seyfolu in the country. This move is yet another giant step in the country's decentralisation process. The council was established in 2007.

The council is responsible for:

- Settling disputes affecting the seyfolu in The Gambia;
- Dealing with matters relating to the administration of justice and social development, cultural and traditional issues.

The paramount seyfo in The Gambia will be appointed by the President for a period of two years on a rotational basis.

The Local Government Act 2002 as amended stipulates the role and responsibility of the district seyfo as follows:

- To promote good order and stability in their district;
- To preside over the district tribunal, and hear and determine matters over which they have jurisdiction according to law;

- To promote the general well-being of the district;
- To safeguard the traditions, customs and culture of the district and promote the well-being of its people;
- To keep a register of every village in the district, and perform such other duties as may be assigned to him or her by the council of the governor.

The district authority shall be responsible for:

- Preventing and supervising riots or affrays and maintaining the peace, whether by the employment of necessary force, or any other means reasonable and dealing with such circumstances as may arise;
- Preventing and detecting crime, the arrest and detention of offenders, and all other such duties as are usually performed by a civil police force;
- Assisting the council in collecting revenue;
- Enforcing all statues and by-laws, regulations and lawful polices of a council within the district;
- Protecting the environment and taking preventive measures against bush fire;
- Promoting cultural and other social activities;
- Performing such other functions as may be assigned to it by the council.

The seyfo acting alone may exercise any of the powers of the district authority to ensure the implementation of government policies and programmes in the district. The following are the guiding principles of decentralisation in The Gambia and of its good governance process:

- Power to the people over local development and services delivery, thus achieving local empowerment;
- Development should focus on local interests and priorities, and people should be allowed to articulate their interests and aspirations in development and partnership with traditional leaders such as seyfolu, alkalolu, kabilo heads and leaders of local opinion, as they know them better than any one else;
- Decentralisation should be seen as a tool for promoting democracy and enhancing service delivery and should be continuously nurtured to address evolving development issues as an essential requirement for

deepening democracy and good governance and the preservation of our cherished local heritage.

Like all other developing countries in Africa, the decentralisation process faces many challenges such as:

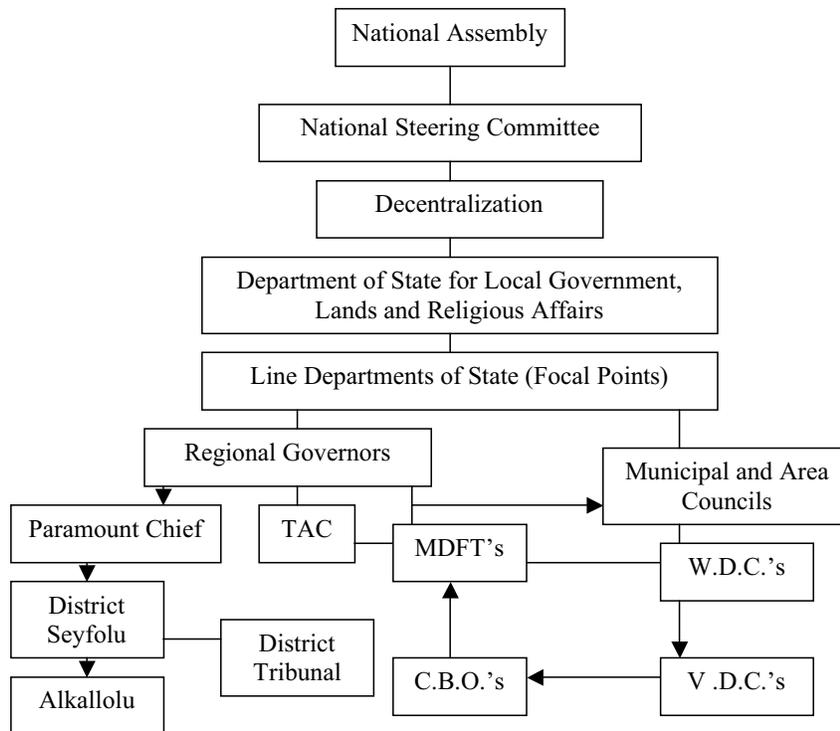
- Weak planning budgeting, human resources management and other technical capabilities;
- Inadequate resources for development projects and programmes;
- Poor co-ordination of local development efforts;
- Weak participatory mechanisms resulting in ill-conceived interventions that do not meet needs of the target communities;
- Low community awareness of rights and obligations, and capacity.

The challenges are not insurmountable, as there is high commitment from the government and all other stakeholders in the process.

On that note, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to conclude, but not before retracing my steps and reiterating the point that while most of the work is grappling with the question of resources for the area councils and municipalities, the priority is still for the central government to consider subventing to our local government authorities.

Annex

Organisational structure of the decentralisation process in The Gambia



9

Recent Trends Towards Decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Dr Roger Koranteng, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration

This presentation gives an overview of selected cases of decentralised administration in four sub-Saharan African countries, Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Swaziland.

Ghana

In 1988 the Ghana Government initiated a comprehensive local government reform and decentralisation programme, intended to transfer functions, powers, means and competences from central to local government. The tenets of local government are enshrined in the 1992 Constitution. The key objectives of decentralisation are:

- Democratic participatory governance;
- Effective and efficient service delivery;
- Rapid socio-economic development.

A number of programmes were envisaged to implement these objectives:

- Political decentralisation by establishing regional co-ordinating councils, district assemblies and sub-district structures;
- Administrative decentralisation by transferring staff from sector ministries to local government;
- Fiscal decentralisation by instituting a district assembly common fund;
- Decentralised planning by making the district assemblies the planning authorities.

Local government structures

The Regional Co-ordinating Council (RCC) consists of:

- The regional minister as chairman and his deputy or deputies;
- The presiding member of each district assembly;
- The district chief executive of each district in the region;
- Two chiefs from the regional house of chiefs;
- Regional heads of the decentralised ministries.

The District Assembly consists of:

- The district chief executive;
- Two-thirds of the members directly elected by universal adults suffrage on non-partisan basis;
- The MP or MPs representing constituencies within the district;
- One-third of the members appointed by the President in consultation with chiefs and interest groups in the district.

The District Chief Executive is nominated by the President, approved by two-thirds of the members of the District Assembly present and voting, before appointed by the President.

The Assembly has a presiding member who is elected from among its members by two-thirds of all the members of the Assembly.

The District Assemblies Common Fund (fiscal decentralisation)

To ensure that the district assemblies do not fail in carrying out their responsibility, enabling laws have been put in place to assist them to fulfil their mandate. These fiscal decentralisation laws include the District Assemblies Common Fund Act of 1993 (Act 455) which provides that not less than 5 per cent of national income should be shared among the district assemblies. In 2007 the Common Fund was increased from 5 per cent to 7.5 per of national income.

Local government service

The decentralisation strategy also envisaged a transfer of competence to the sub-national level to build the much needed bureaucratic and tech-

nocratic capacity of the local government bodies to enable them deliver on their mandate. The implementation of the decentralisation strategy of integrating field offices of line ministries into the district assembly system has rather proved very difficult.

Traditional leaders

Traditional leaders have two formal inputs into local governance. The first is through the places reserved for appointed members of the district assemblies. The second is through the regional house of chiefs which has representatives on the RCC.

Constitutional difficulties

The difficulties arising out of the 1992 Constitution included the following:

- A partisan central government system superimposed on a non-partisan local government system;
- The appointment of the District Chief Executive with the prior approval of two-thirds of the members of the district assembly and the District Chief Executive as a voting member of the assembly;
- The requirement that the presiding member shall be elected by at least a two-thirds majority of all members of the assembly.
- The undefined relationship between the MP as a non-voting member of the assembly and the District Chief Executive as a voting member of the assembly.

Uganda

By 1987 the National Resistance Movement (NRM) had secured power in the war-torn country. The NRM came to power by establishing liberated zones during the civil war through the establishment of resistance councils (later transformed into local councils). These were later formalised in the Resistance Councils and Committees Statute 1987.

In 1992 the President launched the decentralisation policy and a year later the Local Governments (Resistance Councils) Statute 1993 was passed. The 1995 Constitution enshrined a decentralised government structure.

Political representation takes place within the ‘movement system’ and bars candidates from standing on a political ticket. Candidates are elected on individual merit; however, caucuses are active in the national legislature.

The local government system

Participatory democracy was considered the bedrock of the ‘movement system’ (the non-party politics that characterised Uganda) and was a stated requirement in the constitution, but the 2004 referendum changed the political system from ‘movement’ to multiparty.

The multi-tiered local government system is designed to promote participation. Councils are not permitted to function without their full complement of women. Young people and people with disabilities are assured of democratic input through special constituencies.

Local government organisational structure

There are five organisational tiers in rural areas and four in urban areas: village councils; parish councils; sub-county/town councils; county councils; district councils.

Local government staffing

Local government staff are recruited by the district service commission but employed by the individual local authority. The local authority has the power to discipline and dismiss staff. However, central government can deploy staff in local government but only at the request of local councils.

Relationship between central and local government

In each district there is a resident district commissioner appointed by the president, whose role is to represent central government and to co-ordinate the administration of government services in the area. The chairperson (or mayor in city and municipal councils) is the political leader of the council and is directly elected to the post for a term of five years. A speaker is elected by district councillors to preside over meetings.

Finance

There are three forms of grants made by central to local government: conditional grants, unconditional grants and equalisation grants.

The unconditional grant is the minimum grant to finance decentralised services, allocated according to a formula provided for in the constitution. Conditional grants are given to local governments to finance programmes agreed upon between central and local governments. These grants are all within central government priority programme areas. Equalisation grants are paid to local governments based on the degree to which an individual local government lags behind national average standards set by the central government for a particular service.

Traditional authorities

The role of traditional authorities in Uganda is to facilitate cultural development and exchange, and to assist community development programmes and social mobilisation. The traditional authorities include the chiefs and kings who have influence in different parts of the country. The most notable is the king, or kabaka, of Buganda.

Sierra Leone

A new system of local government was introduced following the local elections in May 2004. The constitution is silent on the subject of local government. The Local Government Act 2004 is the main piece of legislation governing local government; it repealed earlier local government legislation. The Minister of Local Government and Community Development has primary responsibility for its administration.

Local government organisational structure

Local government operates in a single-tier, all 19 local councils being governed by the provisions of the Local Government Act 2004. In the urban areas there is one city council and five town councils. In the predominantly rural areas there are 13 district councils. The responsibilities of local councils vary according to their location and whether they are urban or rural.

Local government staffing

Local government staff are recruited by the local council, which has powers to discipline and dismiss staff. Senior appointments must meet selection criteria determined by the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC). Councils must appoint a local council chief administrator who is

head of the paid service. Councils are required to appoint other senior staff after consultation with the commission, and in accordance with its guidelines

Finance

The main sources of income specified in the legislation are:

- Local tax (the precept)
- Property rates
- Licences, fees and charges
- Mining revenues
- Interest and dividends
- Central government grants.

Traditional leaders

The paramount chieftaincy is an important institution in the governance of Sierra Leone. Under the constitution, the institution of chieftaincy, as established by customary law and usage, and its non-abolition by legislation, is guaranteed and preserved. The government is committed to restoring the traditional role of paramount chiefs, including their administrative and customary judicial responsibilities, on the basis of the ruling houses existing at independence in 1961.

Paramount chiefs, who may be male or female, are elected for life by chieftom councillors, but may be removed from office by the government or the people, or may resign.

Swaziland

Swaziland is a unitary state, with HM King Mswati III as head of state. The king appoints the prime minister and cabinet. The legislature, sitting in the capital Mbabane, is bicameral, comprising the House of Assembly and the Senate. The Senate is composed of 30 members and the House of Assembly is made up of 55 elected members.

The Assembly members are elected by universal suffrage directly from *tinkundla* centres. Their term of office is up to five years. The Senate

comprises ten members elected by the Assembly and 20 appointed by the monarch. Political parties are illegal.

Legislative provisions

The main legislation governing local government is the Urban Government Act 1969, amended in 2001 and 2003. The Department for Urban Government in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the administration of this Act.

However, the draft constitution includes a section that will entrench local government. This will require the redefinition of local government areas and the establishment of a dedicated ministry for local government.

Local government organisational structure

Local government is divided into rural and urban councils. The urban councils are municipalities and the rural councils are the *tinkundla*. There are 12 municipalities and 55 *tinkundla*.

The municipalities have the authority to hire and dismiss staff and also have revenue-raising and budget-setting powers: the *tinkundla* do not. There are three tiers of government in the urban areas: city councils, town councils and town boards. Similarly, there are three tiers in the rural areas, where there is the regional administration, *tinkundla* and chiefdoms.

Democratic and political structures

Local government elections for councillors are conducted under the first-past-the-post system on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The term of office for councillors is three years. Mayors are elected indirectly from among the councillors on an annual basis. The ward system is used to consult residents on council matters. Decisions are made by full council based on recommendations made by the various committees established under the Urban Government Act. The town clerk is the chief advisor in each local authority council or town board.

Local government staffing

Local authorities are responsible for the employment of their staff. Employment and conditions of service for senior staff must be approved by the minister. Under certain circumstances, especially when capacity building

is required in an authority, central government staff will be deployed until the local government can assume property-levying functions. The head of the paid service is referred to either as the town clerk or chief executive officer. The *tinkundla* do not have managerial staff, in contrast to urban councils. This issue is currently being addressed by the deputy prime minister's office.

Finance

Urban councils receive central government transfer payments according to a formula set in policy. Both general and specific grants are allocated.

Envisaged reforms in Swaziland

A comprehensive review of local government policy and the Local Government Act is forthcoming. Among other measures, it is expected to unify the system, removing the urban/rural split that currently exists.

Traditional leaders

The chiefs play an important role in Swazi local government. Their future role will be one of the issues considered in the constitutional changes.

Ghana: A case study of constraining factors

Factors constraining the effective implementation of the decentralisation policies include:

1. A multiple and conflicting legal framework without any clear guidance on the decentralisation process.
2. Limitations of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development's capacity to co-ordinate – decentralisation requires reforms of the entire public service and all sectors: this was beyond the mandate of the ministry.
3. Lack of a high-level overarching political body above line ministries to offer guidance and co-ordination of decentralisation reforms.
4. The reluctance of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MFEP) to put in place a well-functioning predictable and timely inter-governmental fiscal transfer system.

5. The slowness of the low fiscal decentralisation process – the constraints on the discretionary power of district assemblies have had a negative impact on the implementation of decentralised planning.
6. Retention of potentially high yielding taxes at the centre and the low level of revenue mobilisation performance at the sub-national level.
7. Bureaucratic obscurantism – reluctance and lack of involvement of the line ministries’ officials in the decentralisation reforms.
8. Lack of donor co-ordination – multiple and non-coordinated donor-assisted projects and programmes in the districts are a challenge to harmonisation and work against a decentralised system.

Enabling factors

Factors that have facilitated Ghana’s decentralisation reforms include:

1. Enactment of enabling laws and regulations such as the Constitution, Acts of Parliament, legislative instruments and action plans.
2. The presence and roles of champions of decentralisation, such as the former political head of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development who, against opposition from his colleagues, drove the Local Government Act and later the decentralisation secretariat, which were crucial in promoting the reforms.
3. The District Assemblies Common Fund, set up to ensure that the district assemblies carry out their responsibilities and provide them with a financial base and reliable source of revenue.
4. The introduction of planning guidelines by the National Development Planning Commission, to involve sector departments, subdistrict structures and communities in the decentralised planning process.
5. The harmonisation of donor-supported projects and programmes in the district assemblies and the institutionalisation of government-donor co-ordination by the decentralisation secretariat.

Conclusion

To conclude my presentation, I will quote an officer who visited a very remote village in Ghana. His remarks encapsulate the essence of decentralisation:

If you visit the districts and some communities and see some of the projects there, you would wonder whether such projects would have ever reached such communities if we did not have decentralisation. How would someone in the Ministry of Finance or Local Government know that some remote village needed a three-classroom block? Even if they knew, who would champion it at that level for them? The people are now in direct contact with their own assembly-men, planning officers and district chief executives, and with all the decentralised agencies at their disposal the communities have a voice.

Problems notwithstanding, decentralisation must be made to work because it satisfies the principle of good governance, equity and popular participation in greater national development.

10

Leadership for Change: How to Develop Personal Skills for Change

Andrea Deri, LEAD International

Force-field analysis of decentralisation in The Gambia

Rationale

The force-field analysis helps in visualising the opposing forces in a situation. It can assist in identifying the current balance between forces that help in moving towards the goal and forces that are a hindrance in reaching it. The visual representation of forces often helps to prioritise actions, so giving the necessary ‘gentle push’ in the desired direction.

Instructions

STEP 1 or Group 1

Think of every aspect that helps you to move towards the goal, i.e. decentralisation in The Gambia. These are the helping forces. Write down all forces on post-it notes (one force per note). Draw an arrow above the line to represent each force. The length of the arrow is proportional to its strength. See the example below in Figure 10.1.

STEP 2 or Group 2

Repeat Step 1 for hindering forces.

STEP 3 or whole group

Look at your results and generate ideas around ways to move in the desired direction by:

- Removing hindering forces (preferred); or
- Increasing helping forces.

Figure 10.1. Force-field analysis – an example

Goal: Decentralisation in The Gambia

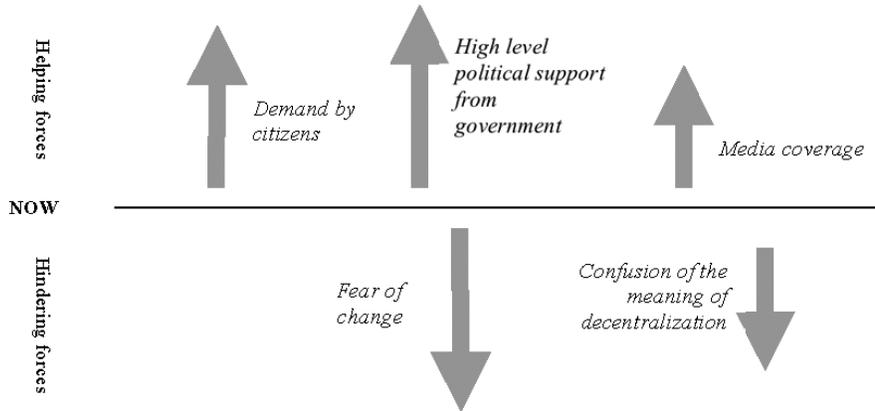
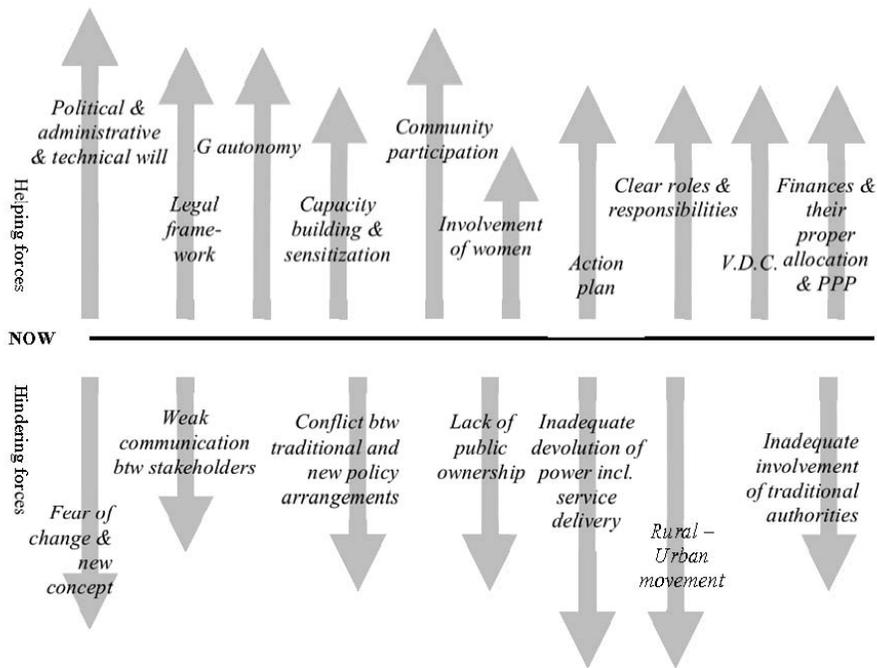


Figure 10.2. Force-field analysis – summary of results

Goal: Decentralisation in The Gambia



Helping forces

Group A: Munawwar Alam

Forces in order of strength

1. Political will – unified local government service commission in place; trust and transparency; financial transfer; central government must let go some of its functions (starting point).
2. Administrative will to give away authority.
3. Capacity building – for implementers and beneficiaries; at grassroots level; financial (grants) and human resources capacity building.
4. Sensitisation/awareness – helping decentralisation at grassroots level.
5. Clarifying roles and responsibilities.
6. Staffing issues – local government service/cadre of its own. A policy on decentralisation consistent with the legislation can give the decentralisation process the needed impetus.
7. Action plan.

Group B: Andrew Nickson

Active community participation by sensitisation – strongest force

Finances

- Financial resources
- Adequate finance
- Strong public-private donor partnership

Political will

- The Department of State for Local Government
- The politicians
- Strong political will
- Central government to release power to the local government

Capacity building, and raising awareness and sensitisation

- Capacity development
- Community/grassroots capacity building
- Awareness creation
- Adequate sensitisation

- Bottom to top approach
- Manpower

Community participation

- Community participation at grass-roots level

Autonomous local government

- Local government to be fully autonomous in relation to its accounts
- To give direct functions to local government so that it is directly accountable its electoral
- Local electorates who are willing and working at their own expense
- Sense of belonging and ownership
- Enabling legal frameworks
- Involvement of women
- Formation of village development committees
- Sub-ward – wards/councils
- Strong technical will

Hindering forces

Group C: Roger Koranteng

Autonomy

- Lack of autonomy

Finances

- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of finance for the decentralised structures
- Lack of administrative commitment, resources and capacity
- Lack of human capacity at local level

Weak communication between stakeholders

Roles and responsibilities

- Conflicting roles
- Unclear roles and responsibilities

Fear of change

Capacity building

- Lack of capacity building
- Lack of sensitisation to the local community that is to contribute to development

- New concept vis à vis the accepted timeframe of up to 20 years
- Lack of strong political will to devolve authority
- Lack of public ownership of the process
- Conflict between traditional and new policy arrangements
- Lack of proper administrative co-ordination

Group D: Andrea Deri

Inadequate devolution of power (strongest force)

- Conflict of roles in the administration and councils
- Conflict of roles among governors and chief persons
- Local councillors are not motivated
- Fear of losing power on the part of the central government
- The top does not want to lose power
- Change is made up more of talking than acting
- Unwillingness to transfer power and authority
- Illiteracy: the 'old guard' does not want to change the way they do things
- Conflict of interest between local authority and central government
- Devolution of power by central government: Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs
- No consultation with key stakeholders about policy amendments
- People do not know what roles they should play
- The chairperson has limited power to run the affairs of local councils

Rural-urban movement (second strongest force)

Inadequate capacities (third strongest force)

- Lack of capacity to run the affairs of councils
- Lack of training and capacity building in decentralisation
- Lack of awareness of the local people
- Councils do not have the capacities
- There is a poor accounting system in the councils
- Misunderstanding of the concept (of decentralisation)
- Councils are not given adequate capacity: the most appropriate people are not placed in key positions
- There is no efficient management of council resources

Inadequate financial resources and their distribution (fourth strongest force)

- Councils have poor financial resources
- There is no autonomy of councils' finances

- Funding is unrealistic
- Grants have not been disbursed by the central government to the local government authorities
- Inadequate technical will from the centre
- Non-payment of grants by central government
- Lack of control of finances hinders implementation of service delivery
- Devolution of funds
- Lack of funds

Institutional framework is inadequate (fifth strongest force)

- More legislation to be enacted
- Lack of institutional framework
- No action plan for the implementation of the decentralisation programme

Inadequate service delivery (sixth strongest force)

- Non-establishment of the local government service commission – the key to the decentralisation system
- No scheme of service
- Devolution of services

Inadequate involvement of traditional authorities (seventh strongest force)

CHANGE MANAGEMENT MATRIX FOR DECENTRALISATION IN THE GAMBIA

Change Management Rubric – Diagnostic Tool

Place four marks (x), one in each column, according to your own experience of how decentralisation in The Gambia is being implemented

Pressure Vision Capacity Actions

Level	Pressure	Shared vision	Capacity building	Action/ implementation of reforms
3	Reform legislation approved – top level political commitment All ministries are on board	High level of awareness and support at all levels Action plan in place, regular reviews Staff highly motivated	Resources (staff and funding) routinely committed to capacity building	Actions being taken and embedded throughout central and local governments Monitoring and reporting of progress to Cabinet and Parliament
2	Reform policy proposal agreed	Representatives from all levels of government involved in planning process and drawing up action plan(s) All staff given opportunity to make an input	Staffing and funding needs identified Resources becoming available	Wide engagement across central and local government
1	Institutional arrangements are in place (e.g. decentralisation secretariat) High level 'focal point' or 'director of decentralisation' identified Initial drafting of decentralisation policy Active 'change champion'	Change champion drives implementation strategy	Middle management level 'focal point' or co-ordinator appointed Training and development needs assessment	Commencement of isolated actions at some levels of central and local government

Level	Pressure	Shared vision	Capacity building	Action/ implementation of reforms
0	No explicit policy Lack of consistent leadership and responsibility for reforms	Demotivated staff kept in the dark No communication between different levels of government	No investment in capacity building High stress level in over-worked and under-valued staff	Zero action (or actions limited to crisis management)

Key: Level 3 = Advanced; Level 2 = Developing; Level 1 = Emerging;
Level 0 = No attempt being made

Based on © Government Office for the South West, 2004 http://www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/change_matrix.doc. Adapted from A Nickson, M Alam, R Koranteng and A Deri, *Managing Change in Local Governance*, 7 April 2008

My role – please mark (x) one:

- I am a governor or an official working in a governor's office
- I am an elected councillor or a local council official
- I am a member of the National Assembly
- I am working for the Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs
- Other, please specify:

11

Managing Change: A Local Government Perspective*

Samba Faal, Lord Mayor of Banjul

Mr Chairman, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Fatoumata Jahumpa-Ceesay, Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service, Madam Teneg Ba Jaiteh, the UNDP resident representative, National Assembly members here present, Dr Munawwar Alam and the team from the Commonwealth Secretariat, permanent secretaries here present, Lord Mayor of Kanifing Municipal Council, regional governors, the Paramount Chief, participants, invited guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

All political systems undergo change. ‘Seeing that everything which has beginning also has an end’, wrote Plato, ‘even a constitution such as yours will not last forever, but will in time be dissolved’. This clearly explains the process that The Gambia’s local government system has gone through over the years with amendments and how the nature of local government in The Gambia has metamorphosed into a strong local government structure after it was given constitutional recognition in 1997.

The United Nations Development Programme Document, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, defines governance as ‘The exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all level’. Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.

The definition draws on various UN human rights instruments – notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: ‘The will of the

*Text of address made by Mayor Samba Faal at the workshop.

people shall be the basis of the authority of Government’ and reiterates that ‘everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country, directly or through freely chosen representatives’ and that ‘everyone has the right to access to public service’.

This can only be affected by or through the right of suffrage – the right on the part of the ruled to choose their rulers at proper intervals and to hold them thereby responsible for their conduct; the responsibility of the rulers to the ruled, through the right of suffrage, is the indispensable and primary principle in the foundation of a constitutional government. When this right is properly guarded, and the people sufficiently enlightened to understand their own rights and the interests of the community, and their duty to appreciate the motives and conduct of those appointed to make and execute the laws, it is all sufficient to give to those who elect effective control over those they have elected. The sum total, then, of its effects, when most successful, is to make those elected be true and faithful representatives of those who elected them.

Constitutional provision

A democratic constitution is a contract among citizens and other levels of government. Without such a constitution the structures of devolution will remain precarious. As Plato noted, nothing in politics can be absolutely certain, but a constitution enhances the prospect that two or more levels of government will co-exist independently within a single party. The 1997 constitution of The Gambia guarantees participatory democracy that reflects the undiluted choice of the people. The constitution for the first time in the country’s history accorded constitutional recognition to local government and decentralisation, and committed all future governments to decentralise. Chapter XII, Section 193 (1) provides:

Local Government administration in The Gambia shall be based on a system of democratically elected councils with a high degree of local autonomy.

Chapter XX, Section 214 (2 and 3), on the direct principles of state policy provides that:

The people shall express their will as to who shall govern them and how they shall be governed, through regular, free and fair elections of their representative.

The state shall be guided by the principles of decentralisation and devolution of government functions and powers to the people at appropriate levels of control to facilitate democratic government.

Again, Chapter 1(2) notes:

The sovereignty of The Gambia resides in the people of The Gambia from whom all organs of government derive their authority and in, whose name and for whose welfare and prosperity the powers of government are to be exercised in accordance with this constitution.

The aforementioned clauses of the constitution reflect the contract theory which, through Locke and Rousseau, exercised considerable influence in America political thought, which in turn has great influence on our constitution and our local government structure. The theory was invoked in the American Declaration of Independence:

All men are born equally free and independent: therefore all government, or right, originates from the people, is founded in consent, and instituted for the general good.

The provisions of The Gambia's constitution mentioned above should be seen, therefore, in light of the foregoing, not as requiring mere decentralisation, but demanding the type of decentralisation which constitutes development to the furthest corner of The Gambia and to the humblest of its citizens. Such democratic participation leads to ownership, and therefore sustainability, of those development initiatives which result from such participatory decision-making.

In addition to the constitutional provisions and to further demonstrate the resolve to empower the people by devolving power, the government of The Gambia in its *Vision 2020* document, Part III, on strategic issues, under the head 'good governance' states:

To encourage participatory government and a balanced development, government shall pursue intensive political and institutional decentralisation process ...

The only guarantor of democracy is people making their own political, cultural, social and developmental decisions at their own level, and the only safeguard of sustainable development is when people participate in setting their own priorities, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating them themselves within the overall national interest.

Local government and the distribution of powers in The Gambia

A local government system exists because it is created by an act of the National Assembly. The Local Government Act (2002), subsection (2) of Section 193 mandates:

To establish and regulate a decentralized Local Government system for The Gambia; to make provision for the functions, powers and duties of Local Authorities and for matters connected therewith.

The National Assembly is to provide for the establishment of councils and their area of jurisdiction. Section 193 extensively mandates the National Assembly to make provision for the functions, powers and duties of local government authorities, including infrastructure development and administration, essential and other services, raising of local revenue, the management and auditing of its finances, the making of by-laws, the preservation of the environment, the promotion of Gambian tradition and culture, and control of finances.

A local government possesses the power to carry out certain services because the National Assembly has delegated these powers under various statutes. The Act states:

Each Council shall be a body corporate by the name 'Area Council', 'Municipal Council' or 'City Council' as may be appropriate, preceded by the name of the Local Government Area for which the Council is established. 10(2)

Each Council shall have perpetual succession and a common seal with power to sue and sued in its corporate name. 10(3)

The main functions of local government

Local government is local self-government. Its affairs must be purely local. To be exciting, local self-governance emphasises three important attributes: locality, primary accountability to the local people and the provision of important regulatory, economic or social services or a combination of these.

The purpose of a council is to administer the affairs of an area, which means in practice to provide the inhabitants with those services that help to make life worthwhile (48(1)). A council also is obliged to control some

of the activities of its people. It can make by-laws and punish non-compliance (54(1)).

A council may therefore be described as:

- (a) Legislative – it passes by-laws (54);
- (b) Administrative – it manages affairs (42);
- (c) Executive – it carries out functions delegated to it (49).

The functions that a council performs depend on the status of that council. Democratic government in practice devolves into a process of discussion before action is taken through a committee system. This committee system is characteristic of local government authorities (34–41).

Every council delegates its work to functional committees, some of which the council must form according to statute (finance, establishment, appointment and development) and some of which will be introduced as a matter of administrative convenience. The number of these committees will, of course, depend on the size of the area and the nature of the authority. They will be broken down into sub-committees according to the magnitude of the work.

It is therefore safe to say that committees are:

- (a) Standing – of a permanent character;
- (b) Special – formed to deal with a particular matter;
- (c) Joint – when two or more councils work together.

Supervision by central government

Central supervision is exercised in three ways – by the National Assembly, by government departments, and by the courts. It is repeated that all local government power stems from National Assembly/Parliamentary statute. Anything done by a council which has not been provided for in the statute is *ultra vires* (beyond one's legal power or authority).

Government departments usually lay down minimum standards of administration below which services given by councils must not fall. Inspections, the auditing of accounts by the Auditor General's office, the submission of building plans to the Physical Planning Department and monitoring by the Directorate of Governance of the Department of State for Local

Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, are some of the principal means by which administrative control is carried out. Naturally, government departments are wise enough not to behave arbitrarily. They consult the local authorities and try to work with them as far as possible. The merit of this method is that it secures some uniformity of policy, and enables the collective wisdom and experience of local government to be pooled and used for the benefit of all.

The courts exercise judicial control by means of:

- (a) An order of mandamus given by the High Court commanding a local authority to reform a certain public duty;
- (b) An injunction by the High court that prevents a local authority from carrying out an act outside its powers, such as a demand for payment of money for a purpose which is challenged as *ultra vires*;
- (c) An order of certiorari issued by the High Court prohibiting a local authority from continuing proceedings in which it has failed to act in a proper judicial manner, such as the way in which it comes to a decision to grant or to refuse a licence.

These safeguards are probably necessary to protect the citizens from arbitrary behaviour and to maintain the rule of law.

Conclusion

The challenge facing central government is to strike a workable balance between local autonomy and central supervision. Managing change in local governance therefore calls for a clear understanding of development paradigms at the local level and their interconnectedness with central policies. This we tried to do in this paper by looking at the political evolution of governance theories with the support of strong constitutional provisions and then looking at the emerging role of local government in national development through the empowerment of the people and the provision for essential social services.

We can therefore conclude that in managing change, democratic local governments have unique potential comparative advantages to:

- Spend money on the right things by using public money through participatory processes and social auditing). This is only possible on a

local scale and is critical to allocating public funds to what really counts and can have an impact on the lives of the people within the locality (the essence of having village and ward development committees).

- Get 'value for money' by adopting standards, tailoring programmes to local conditions and mobilising resources from local communities and the private sector. There is a wide range of partnership arrangements with other actors in the locality that a functionally and fiscally empowered local government authority can promote to deliver infrastructure and services at a lower cost to the public treasury.

However, resources cannot be properly mobilised if local government autonomy is suppressed and fiscal arrangements are lagging behind; if autonomy in setting tax rates is seriously restricted; and if unfunded mandates (responsibilities without resources) are common. Pure financial autonomy of local government authorities is illusory.

In addition to these problems, human resources remain inadequate. Local government authorities are generally undermanned; most importantly, personnel is unqualified and underpaid. There are also limited or no care prospects for local government staff, which makes it difficult to attract and retain good professionals.

Finally, the system should not be perceived as a dumping ground for the incompetent and the barely literate, or change will be very difficult to manage in this day and age of globalisation. Hence, to manage change, we really do need to think globally and act locally.

12

How to Build Lasting Partnerships with the Private Sector

*Dr Roger Koranteng, Ghana Institute of Management
and Public Administration*

It has been mentioned that many public functions could be performed better and more cheaply and efficiently by the private sector or at least by the public sector using private sector methods. This paper aims to introduce the range of public-private partnership options available for the delivery of local government services and identify the appropriate conditions for each. It also intends to ensure an understanding of the complexity of the process of deciding on suitable partnerships for local government service delivery. The challenges facing local governments as they explore new ways to deliver local services are also highlighted.

In so doing, the paper explores the reasons why there is a move to greater private participation in the provision of public services and the advantages and disadvantages of doing so. In terms of structure, the paper briefly describes a range of public-private sector partnership options (ranging from simple service contracts to complex build-own-operate arrangements) and highlights the benefits and potential pitfalls of each option. The final part of the paper describes the analysis required to determine the most suitable.

Why involve the private sector?

Governments are turning to the private sector for help in developing and delivering services because they hope to:

- Take advantage of private sector skills and knowledge;
- Improve the efficiency of service delivery;
- Gain access to finance for new investments.

But private sector participation on its own is no solution to problems in service delivery. It requires a partnership between government and the private sector, and the nature of this partnership – and the rights, responsibilities and risks it entails for each partner – must be carefully mapped out.

Advantages

There are many advantages to having private sector involvement in the delivery of local government services:

- The private sector may bring technical and managerial expertise to the sector;
- The private sector may improve operating efficiency;
- A partnership with the private sector can result in a large scale injection of capital and greater efficiency in the use of that capital;
- It may reduce the need for subsidies.

Disadvantages

Partnership with the private sector is not without its disadvantages. Governments are often concerned about a number of issues including:

- How employees of the present local government utility will be affected and the potential for labour unrest
- Potential price increases that will hurt the poor
- The loss of control of a strategic and politically sensitive sector.

Although there are no simple solutions, these concerns can be addressed through careful planning of the public-private partnership arrangement and design of supporting policies (for example, subsidies to support low-income households). In addition, by involving affected stakeholders – consumers, employees, unions, management and other government agencies – from the beginning of a process of private sector participation much can be done to ensure that legitimate concerns are heard and addressed.

Key success factors

The process for involving the private sector must meet two basic requirements:

- Private sector participation must make sense in local conditions;
- The option must be implemented in a careful, thorough and credible manner.

In other words, the option has to make sense technically, financially and politically. A technically sound option is one that is well targeted to the problems and is compatible with the existing legal and regulatory framework. A financially sound option is one that can be financed at a tariff that consumers are willing to pay or with the aid of a politically viable subsidy scheme. A politically sound option is one that has political support, both within the government and among stakeholders.

Successful implementation requires strong political commitment, rigorous management, a high degree of technical skill, careful attention to the concerns of stakeholders, transparency and fairness. Listening to prospective private sector investors to find out their concerns about the local environment and their ideas about what is possible is also essential.

Getting a good private sector arrangement is not simply a matter of writing a good contract. Private sector arrangements are based on a partnership between the public and private sectors. From a local government perspective, establishing a good public–private partnership requires defining the local government’s future roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that the monitoring and regulatory frameworks are in place. It also includes working out exactly what risks and responsibilities the local government will retain once the arrangement is in place and determining how it intends to manage them.

On the other hand, the private sector is seeking a fair rate of return over a period that allows the business to recover its investment. This requires a well-specified contract, consumer willingness to pay (and the ability to enforce payment), credible, stable regulatory arrangements and mechanisms for handling risks beyond the local government utility’s control.

Types of private-public sector arrangements

The following provides a description of the options available for public–private partnerships.

Service contracts – simple, but with limited benefits

Service contracts are short-term agreements which secure private sector assistance for performing specific technical tasks. They leave the responsibility for co-ordinating these tasks, and for investment, with the local government utility manager. Service contracts secure private sector assistance in performing specific tasks – installing or reading meters, monitoring losses, repairing pipes or collecting accounts. They are typically for short periods, from six months to two years.

Their main benefit is that they take advantage of private sector expertise in technical tasks or open these tasks to competition. Although relatively simple, service contracts must be carefully specified and monitored. If a utility is poorly managed, its service contracts will probably be no different. Service contracts are at best a cost-effective way to meet special technical needs for a utility that is already well managed and commercially viable. They cannot substitute for reorganisation in a utility plagued by inefficient management and poor cost recovery.

Management contracts – a good first step

Management contracts transfer responsibility for the operation and maintenance of local government-owned businesses to the private sector. Management contracts can be a good first step towards more private sector involvement. Because decisions about involving private companies can be politically costly, governments may be unwilling to move beyond a management contract.

These contracts are generally for three to five years. The simplest involve paying a private firm a fixed fee for performing managerial tasks. More sophisticated management contracts can introduce greater incentives for efficiency by defining performance targets and basing remuneration at least in part on their fulfilment. To be worthwhile, the more complex management contracts must produce efficiency gains large enough to offset the regulatory costs of establishing targets and monitoring performance against them.

Specifying clear and indisputable targets is often difficult, especially when information about a utility's current performance is limited. Some targets may be beyond the private sector partner's power to achieve.

A management contract might be chosen, for example, where:

- Tariffs are too low to support a commercial operation, and the government needs time to increase tariffs or develop a system of public subsidies compatible with private sector participation;
- The regulatory framework has defects that need to be remedied before a long-term private sector arrangement can be secured;
- The local government utility lacks a good track record in public-private partnerships;
- The government faces difficulties in getting key stakeholders to agree to long-term involvement of the private sector.

In such conditions a management contract can help develop trust between the public and private sectors.

The benefits and potential problems

- Management contracts leave all responsibility for investment with the local government. Thus they are not a good option if a government wants to access private finance for new investments.
- They do not necessarily transfer any of the commercial risk to the management contractor and do not always reduce costs and improve the quality of services.
- Management contracts are a good way to secure at least some private sector involvement in risky cities.
- Governments may also be lulled into a false sense of security if a management contract provides just enough gains to keep voters happy – even if many people still lack adequate services.
- Management contracts can be good at improving services for those who already have access, e.g. water and sewerage connections, but they typically do little for those lacking connections, who often have less political power.
- Because decisions about involving private companies can be politically costly, governments may be unwilling to move beyond a management contract.

Leases – a way to pass on commercial risk

Under a lease arrangement, a private firm leases the assets of a utility from

a local government and takes on the responsibility for operating and maintaining them. Leases leave the responsibility for financing and planning investment with the government.

Leases are most appropriate where there is scope for big gains in operating efficiency, but only limited need or scope for new investment. Leases have also sometimes been advocated as stepping stones toward more fully fledged private sector involvement through concessions. So a lease is a much bigger first step than a management contract.

The benefits and potential problems

- If major new investments are needed, the government must raise the finance and co-ordinate its investment programme with the private sector operator's operational and commercial programme.
- Because the lessee effectively buys the rights to the income stream from the public utility's operations (minus the lease payment), it assumes much of the commercial risk of the operation.
- Under a well-structured contract, the lessee's profitability will depend on how much it can reduce costs (while still meeting the quality standards in the lease contract), so it has incentives to improve operating efficiency.

Concessions – a route to fully fledged private participation

A concession gives the private partner responsibility not only for the operation and maintenance of a utility's assets but also for investments.

Asset ownership remains with the government and full use rights to all the assets, including those created by the private partner, revert to the government when the contract ends – usually after 25 to 30 years.

Concessions are often bid by price: the bidder that proposes to operate the utility and meet the investment targets for the lowest tariff wins the concession.

The concession is governed by a contract that sets out such conditions as:

- The main performance targets (coverage, quality)
- Performance standards
- Arrangements for capital investment

- Mechanisms for adjusting tariffs
- Arrangements for arbitrating disputes.

The benefits and potential problems

The main advantage of a concession is that it passes full responsibility for operations and investment to the private sector. The concession is therefore an attractive option where large investments are needed to expand the coverage or improve the quality of services. However, administering a concession is a complex business for the government, because it confers a long-term monopoly on the concessionaire.

The quality of regulation is important in determining the success of the concession, particularly the distribution of its benefits between the concessionaire (in profits) and consumers (in lower prices and better services).

Joint venture leases and concessions

A typical joint venture creates a new company with the local government entity holding (perhaps) 51 per cent of the equity and the private operator or a financial institution (or both) holding the remaining shares.

In some countries it has become common for governments – national, regional and local – to establish joint ventures with the private sector to run leases and concessions

The benefits and potential problems

By limiting the private sector's control, these joint ventures can help secure stakeholders' agreement to private sector participation. Demonstrating public commitment to the venture can reduce the private sector's perception of risk. On the other hand, joint ventures can create conflicts of interest if the same government entity is both the regulator of the utility company and its part owner.

Without management control, the private firm may feel that its interests are not protected and may not be able to produce the efficiency gains expected from private involvement. Most joint ventures address control issues through detailed clauses in the company's by-laws, allowing both parties to vet key managerial appointments. These clauses may foster partnership, but they can also complicate the utility's governance.

Build-operate-transfer contracts – a solution for bulk supply and treatment problems

Build-operate-transfer (BOT) arrangements resemble concessions, but are normally used for projects, such as a water or wastewater treatment plant. In a typical BOT arrangement a private firm might undertake to construct a new dam and water treatment plant, operate them for a number of years and at the end of the contract relinquish all rights to the public utility.

The local government or the distribution utility would pay the BOT partner for water from the project, at a price calculated over the life of the contract to cover its construction and operating costs, and provide a reasonable return.

The contract between the BOT concessionaire and the local government utility is usually on a take-or-pay basis, obligating the utility to pay for a specified quantity of water whether or not that quantity is consumed. This places all demand risk on the local government utility. Alternatively, the local government might pay a capacity charge and a consumption charge, an arrangement that shares the demand risk between the local government utility and the BOT concessionaire.

The benefits and potential problems

BOTs tend to work well if the main problem a utility faces relates to water supply or wastewater treatment. If the problem is a faulty distribution system or poor collections performance, a BOT is unlikely to remedy it – and may even aggravate it.

Where private sector participation is needed both to provide new bulk services and to improve the performance of distribution systems, separating these tasks under different contracts and bidding processes may have advantages. Separating the tasks maximises the potential efficiency gains from competitive bidding and reduces the monopoly power given to a single company.

Variations of BOTs

There are many possible variations on the BOT model, including:

- Build-operate-own (BOO) arrangements, in which the assets remain indefinitely with the private partner;

- Design-build-operate (DBO) arrangements in which the public and private sectors share responsibility for capital investments;
- BOTs may also be used for plants that need extensive overhauls in arrangements sometimes referred to as ROTs (rehabilitate-operate-transfer).

Full or partial divestiture – another route to fully fledged private participation

Divestiture of assets – through the sale of assets or shares or through a management buyout – can be partial or complete.

A complete divestiture, like a concession, gives the private sector full responsibility for operations, maintenance and investment. But unlike a concession, a divestiture transfers ownership of the assets to the private sector, so the nature of the public–private partnership differs.

A concession (as outlined above) assigns the government two primary tasks: (i) to ensure that the utility’s assets – which the government continues to own – are used well and returned in good condition at the end of the concession; and (ii) to protect consumers from monopolistic pricing and poor service through regulation.

A divestiture leaves the government only the task of regulation. In theory, the private company should be concerned about maintaining its asset base. But private companies may not always take the long view. Even with an asset sale, the regulator may need to scrutinise the private utility’s plans for renovating or enhancing its assets.

The benefits and potential problems

In some circumstances, divestiture may be more appropriate than a concession. Where the public sector utility is technically capable, for example, divestiture by sale of shares or management buy-out may produce the required efficiency gains without involving the foreign conglomerates that typically dominate bids for concessions.

Identifying the best option for private sector participation

Firstly, local government needs to clarify the objectives of the service and decide whether private sector participation is appropriate and affordable.

To do this, the local government needs to conduct:

- A rough financial feasibility analysis;
- A preliminary analysis of the political support for (and opposition to) private sector participation;
- Informal market soundings to assess which forms of private sector participation are likely to attract bidders.

Once a local government has determined that private sector participation appears financially and politically feasible, it needs to move on to the second, more in-depth stage of analysis.

Secondly, local governments should do an in-depth analysis that explores:

- What is the state of the existing utility?
- How compatible is the regulatory regime with private sector participation?
- How committed, or opposed, to private sector participation are key stakeholders?
- What options are financially viable?
- What are the main risks that need to be allocated or mitigated to ensure that private sector participation can succeed?

This analysis is vital for the following reasons:

- Without it, the package offered may contain too much risk to be attractive to the private sector;
- A contract may be secured, but only by offering big concessions to the private sector and leaving much risk with the public sector;
- It can reduce the time spent in post-bid negotiations;
- It lessens the risk that the resulting private sector arrangement will diverge widely from what was originally intended.

Conclusion

This paper has explained the types and issues involved in the development of public–private partnerships. As with any major decision, it is important

to ensure that sound research is conducted and rigorous analysis applied to ensure the most suitable decision. On the one hand, stakeholders may oppose concession or divestiture, but accept a management contract or BOT, which give the private sector a more limited role. On the other hand, stakeholders may oppose any arrangement which has the private sector acting alone, but support joint ventures with the public sector.

13

The Role of Traditional Authority in Managing Change in Local Governance

Seyfo Lamin SI Jammeh

Traditional authority may be defined as that home-grown leadership mandate which forms a critical part of an institution that is handed down from one generation to another. Characteristically, it forms a single chain made up of individuals at different levels. Like all stratified societies, traditional authority cannot be said to be void of conflict, but conflict between the different levels or classes in it is the exception rather than the rule. It is effective at all levels of Gambian society from the family to the clan, the village and community.

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, governance is ‘the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)’. Good governance has eight major characteristics: participation, orientation towards consensus, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusivity and compliance with the rule of law.

Social change may be defined as the transformation of culture and social institutions over time. It is important to note that this process of change has four major characteristics:

1. Social change happens all the time, although some societies change faster than others. In this respect reference may be made to William Ogburn’s (1964) theory of cultural lag, which asserts that material culture usually changes faster than non-material culture (ideas and attitudes).
2. Social change is sometimes intentional, but often unplanned.
3. Social change is controversial: for example, capitalists in the developed world welcomed the industrial revolution because advancing techno-

logy increased productivity and swelled profits. Workers, on the other hand, feared that machines would make their skills obsolete and therefore resisted the push toward ‘progress’.

4. Some changes matter more than others. However big or small the level of change may be, social change is generally attributed to causes, including.
 - **Culture and change** by factors such as invention, discovery and diffusion;
 - **Conflict and change**, as argued by Marx, who regarded class conflict as the engine that drives societies from one historical era to another;
 - **Ideas and change**, as argued by Weber who, although he acknowledged that conflict could bring about change, traced the roots of most social changes to ideas, and especially to people with charisma;
 - **Demographic change.**

Traditional authority in history

Traditional authority in The Gambia has been confronted with diverse experiences in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods. To some extent, there has even been diversity between the first and second republics. In the pre-colonial era traditional authority maintained its integrity and effective functional competence in relation to particular institutions and society at large. It maintained the custody of local culture, was the centre of new ideas and was the sole decision-maker through consultation and consensus in relation to collective community action. The colonial period, on the other hand, witnessed an altogether different scenario. This was a period when conscious plans were implemented with a view to dismantling traditional authority and building in its place a new system that was to become global.

In the first Republic of The Gambia, traditional authority was neither able to genuinely regain or restore itself from the encroachments of colonialism, nor was it able to revitalise itself or consolidate to meet the challenges posed by the rapidly changing world. Culture in general and traditional authority in particular continued to be relegated, because the system lacked policies capable of integrating this important dimension of sustainable development. Partisan politics in particular had adversely

impacted upon it, leaving it with only those virtues that no human force or influence could take away. Consequently, community spirit began to be fragmented as the African value of consensus dwindled and even the smallest settlements found it difficult to unite for development.

Despite these bitter experiences, traditional authority was able to survive the test of time. Various factors were responsible for this survival, but especially important was the fact that no substitute could be provided with the same functional values as traditional authority. This is because it is built on the bedrock of society and is continually reproduced and nurtured for posterity's inheritance. It bears an identity and love of the people and constitutes an essential element of our non-material culture, whose functional weight and importance cannot be numerically valued. Above all, it is the principal provider of the culture in which we are nurtured through socialisation.

I therefore wish at this point to pay tribute to His Excellency the President and his APRC government for the laudable attempts they have so far made in respect of this authority. It is recognition and appreciation of this functional importance of traditional authority that has resulted in appropriate policy formulation and implementation; this has not only revitalised traditional authority, but also consolidated and built on it.

The way forward

The way forward can therefore be charted by recognising the following:

- Traditional authority is the gateway and keeper of any genuine community participation;
- It is the principal custodian of local culture that includes the factors of production, including land and labour, on which and with which development takes place.
- It is the single most effective authority readily available in all local communities that has the requisite capacity to reward or reprimand;
- It provides transparency because everybody can see and know what anybody does;
- It has served and still serves as the engine for rural development;
- It is responsive because everybody is directly affected by the effect of any decision or action taken for the public good.

In conclusion, therefore, what is important for development planners and practitioners to understand about traditional authority is that involving it, rather than excluding it, will pay dividends for development. It is the pride in their authority that matters to traditional leaders, rather than individual material well-being. Although numerous attempts were made in the past to erode this authority, almost all of them failed because of the in-built structural arrangements of local communities. They must know that positions of responsibility and prestige are assigned to individuals, but the pride of ownership and protection is a collective one. It may temporarily resist any change that is imposed, but it will accept it as soon as it is understood as a source of mutual benefit or for the common good.

Therefore, traditional leaders should be involved from the stage of conceptualisation right through to the end. To achieve this, planners must understand, appreciate and adopt the highest African and Gambian values of mutual respect and sharing, and recognise and praise people for their hard work. Equally important is the need to build the capacity of traditional leaderships in readiness for the dynamic challenges of the process of change. In view of the latter, training packages at local, national and international levels should be explored.

14

Understanding Strategic Planning and Management for Local Service Provision

Dr Roger Koranteng, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration

Defining planning

Planning involves analysis of relevant information from the past (historical information and data) and the present (intelligence information and data), together with an assessment of probable future developments (forecasting), so that courses of action (i.e. plans, such as strategies, tactics, programmes, projects, budgets and procedures) may be developed to enable the organisation to achieve its desired objectives and goals.

Planning answers the following questions

- What is to be done and why?
- How is it to be done?
- Who is to do it?
- When is it to be done?
- Where is it to be done?
- What resources are required?

Strategic planning

Strategic planning is a process by which an organisation envisions its future and develops the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. Essentially, strategic planning deals with the management of the broad plan, stressing strategies to be used to achieve the planned objectives at minimum cost.

Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis identifies the expectations of the stakeholders and agrees on the most important ones.

Who are the key stakeholders in your local government? Stakeholders are all those people (individuals and groups) who have a stake or interest in local governance. They may include businesses, community groups, schools, religious bodies, government agencies and NGOs.

Key questions in strategic planning

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- How are we going?
- How do we know when we get there?

Where are we now?

The essence of the question ‘Where are we now?’ is the assessment of the current situation of the local authority in terms of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and threats in their internal and external environment. This is done by using SWOT analysis and stakeholder analysis.

SWOT analysis:

Strengths – positive resources within the organisation.

Weaknesses – negative factors or problems within the organisation

Opportunities – positive factors outside the organisation’s control.

Threats – problems and constraints outside the organisation.

Where are we going?

The question ‘Where are we going?’ seeks to explore the desired future situation of the organisation. Local authorities should have a clear vision and mission from which corporate goals, objectives and targets are derived. Growth and survival are dependent on strategies that enhance the attainment of the vision.

Vision

A vision is the preferred picture of where the local government entity

ultimately wants to be – the ultimate dream and aspiration of the entity. Its realisation may or may not occur in the lifetime of the present generation. To formulate a vision, ask what the local government entity (city, municipal or metropolitan district) wants to become or be recognised as in the next five or ten years.

Examples of vision

A strategic vision for a city provides a framework for the activities of all the stakeholders in that city, encouraging all groups to work cohesively for the good of the city – whether in establishing services or attracting investment and creating jobs.

For example: *Our vision is to develop a vibrant and sustainable municipality that ensures equitable opportunity for all residents to participate in, and benefit from, the economic and political life of the city.*

Mission

The question ‘How are we going?’ seeks to explore the specific approach or method to be used in achieving a stated vision. The definition of the mission is of fundamental importance since it answers the question ‘What business are we in?’ The answer must not be too specific or technological advances may overtake it. However, if it is too general, it may lack focus.

A mission statement is a declaration about the type of organisation, its reason for *being* and its values. It has the following main components:

Purpose: Why does the organisation exist? What is its *raison d’etre*?

Business: What does it do to accomplish this purpose?

Values: What beliefs do the organisation’s members share?

It can be used as the basis of the organisation’s public image.

A mission rarely changes.

Examples of mission

Our mission is to advance of justice and the rule of law by ensuring a free, fair and speedy dispensation of justice by an independent judiciary and an efficient judiciary system with highly trained and committed staff that will command the support and confidence of the people.

Our mission is to continuously enhance the capability of middle and top level executives in public and private sectors as well as non-governmental organisations, both in Ghana and internationally, to manage their institutions efficiently and effectively through training, research and consultancy.

Values

Values are the beliefs or guiding principles that are shared by the members of an organisation and that guide its conduct. Values determine behaviour and involve ethical considerations. To formulate values, answer the following questions:

- What are the qualitative things that we consider as important to our organisation?
- What are the things that our organisation will not compromise on?
- Values can form part of the mission statement or can stand alone as statement of values or principles.

Examples of values

- Commitment to public service
- Honesty
- Innovation
- Good corporate governance
- Gender equality
- Sustainable development
- Integrity
- Dignity
- Courtesy
- Goals and objectives

A goal is an anticipated or desired state or a medium- to long-term aspiration or result of the organisation's activities. A goal can be derived from the mission, for example:

- To create a liveable city where there is access to education, employment, housing and credit facilities;
- To create competitive cities with sound economic and broad-based growth of employment, incomes and investment;
- To enhance the beauty of Accra.

An objective is the expected specific result, output or end-point and is more specific than a goal, for example:

- To create a liveable city where there is access to education, employment, housing and credit facilities in the next five years;
- To create a competitive city with sound economic and broad-based growth of employment, incomes and investment by 2017;
- To enhance the beauty of Accra so that it becomes a world class modern city by 2016.

All objectives must satisfy the SMART criteria:

S = Specific; M = Measurable; A = Achievable/Attainable; R = Realistic; T = Timing

Environmental analysis (internal and external)

Internal analysis: i.e. examining the organisation's or unit's internal circumstances (environment) to assess its strengths and weakness with respect to:

- Financial resources;
- Human resources – number and quality residents in terms of knowledge and skills;
- Infrastructure – such as water, sanitation, road, public transport, health care, etc.

External analysis: i.e. monitoring the organisation's external environment, observing changes taking place at first-hand and/or relying on management intelligence and research systems to track these changes. The purpose is to identify the opportunities and threats that unfold in the external environment. These can be summed up as LePEST & Co.

Le = Legal environment; P = Political environment; E = Economic environment; S = Social environment; T = Technological environment; Co = Competitive environment

Identification of key issues

Key issues are those areas of activity that are crucial to the success of the achievement of the stated objectives or planned changes. They can be identified in both a positive and a negative context.

- Positively – they are those areas where, if performance is good, the success of the project will be assured.
- Negatively – they are those areas which can ensure the failure of the project if performance is not of an appropriate standard.

The key result areas of your strategic plan become the goals of your action planning.

Strategy formulation

A strategy is an approach, a way or a method to be used in achieving a mission, goals and objectives or expected outputs. The approach or method should have the following attributes:

- It maximises benefits;
- It minimises costs;
- It reduces risk.

Strategic options

Strategic options are alternative strategies that have been identified and evaluated. Each strategy is then examined on its merits by asking the following questions:

- Is it feasible, given the resources available?
- Is it suitable to the local government entity's existing position?
- Is it acceptable to its stakeholders?

Action planning

At this point in the strategic planning process, you have already com-

pleted all or most of the strategic analysis, including the environmental scan, SWOT analysis and identification of strategic issues and goals. You have also already developed or updated the mission, vision and values statement.

Action planning typically includes deciding who is going to do what, by when and in what order for the organisation to reach its strategic goals. The design and implementation of the action planning depend on the nature and needs of the organisation.

Action plan: Specific activities and programmes designed to achieve the objective or goal over a period of time.

An action plan includes the following:

- Objective (SMART)
- Expected output
- Activities or task/action steps
- Resources/inputs needed
- Responsibility
- Time frame: start and finish
- Location
- Monitoring indicators.

Strategy implementation

The implementation of the strategy has to be planned by assessing the key tasks that must be undertaken to satisfy the critical success factors, and the financial and human resources to be allocated to the key tasks.

Strategic planning model

- Vision (where do we want get to?)
- Mission and strategies (how are we going?)
- Environmental analysis (where are we now?)
- Internal and external environment analysis

- Stakeholder analysis
- Identification of key result areas
- Goals and objectives
- Strategy formulation and selection
- Strategy implementation
- Action plan
- Monitoring and evaluation.

15

Community Involvement in Local Governance

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Introduction

Local governments play an important role in society as catalysts of change and development because they represent the interests of particular localities at a micro level and have the aim of improving the welfare and well-being of their people. The Gambia Government recognises that improving the governance environment is a necessary precondition of stimulating sustainable development and improving the welfare of the Gambian people. Like many developing countries, the Gambia government recognises the need to involve local communities in development efforts. Both the first and second five-year plans (1975/76–1979/80 and 1979/80–1983/84) emphasised the importance of decentralisation and enhancing the administrative capability of local councils for the planning and implementation of development projects (Choudhry, 1990: 2). However, decentralisation to the divisions did not receive due attention because the country was gripped with severe economic difficulties and government efforts were initially focused on structural adjustment and later on the economic recovery programme spearheaded by the World Bank.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the July 1994 military take-over ushered in renewed government commitment aimed at reforming the local government system to make it more participatory, efficient and transparent, with a view to building a strong foundation for good governance. The reform process began with wide consultations on governance, including the community and other stakeholders. These consultations resulted in the formulation of a national governance policy and by extension the enactment of the Local Government Act in 2002, outlining the mandate, roles and responsibilities of the local government decentral-

ised structures. Furthermore, the Act seeks to establish and strengthen administrative structures and processes in order to put in place a system of governance that is participatory and transparent.

Community involvement in the policy formulation and decision-making processes of local government is part of the wider question of who should be involved in this area apart from elected members and public servants. There is, however, an increasing trend at all levels of government to increase the amount of public participation, especially in those areas which directly affect the lives of the whole community. This is because a more aware and involved community is likely to yield fresh ideas on problems and their solutions. In view of this, this paper discusses ‘community involvement in governance’, with reference to the Local Government Act (2002).

Objectives of the presentation

This presentation aims to share experiences and information on community involvement in governance, with particular emphasis on local development management and the change process

Specifically, it aims to:

- Define key concepts that have a bearing on governance;
- Highlight community involvement in the various decentralised structures;
- Identify key challenges that hinder community involvement;
- Make recommendations for the future.

The paper is organised in four parts. Part one comprises the introduction and outline of the objectives and organisation of the paper. Part two defines the concepts that are associated with governance and decentralisation and its challenges. Part three highlights community involvement in the different stages of project design. Part four sets out the conclusion and recommendations

Definition of concepts

In any discussion of community involvement in governance it is important that key concepts are discussed and understood.

Participation

Participation is a process the objective of which is to enable people to initiate action for self-reliance and development, and acquire the ability to influence and manage change within their society. There are numerous and diverse participatory approaches with their individual objectives, operational strategies and results. However, participation is always based on the recognition that genuine development can only be brought about by virtue of the contributions and roles of the other actors, i.e. the communities on whom development is meant to impact.

Development

Development is a term which defies any single definition and can mean different things to different people at different times. Some schools of thought have used almost exclusively economic indicators (e.g. gross domestic product, gross net product or individual purchasing power) to define what is meant by development. Other schools of thought rely on indicators such as social, demographic, cultural, technological or political factors to define the concept. What is indisputable is the fact that development is a factor involving all the elements mentioned above. Its ultimate goal is to provide a better standard of living for the people within a sustainable and economically friendly environment (Department of Community Development, 1998)

Decentralisation

Decentralisation refers to the devolution of power, authority, responsibility (and accompanying resources) from the centre to the periphery. In context discussed here, it requires the empowerment of the village, ward, district and divisional levels to take responsibility for their own development processes. Decentralised development strategy is therefore the anti-thesis of the conventional top-down, centralised development approach.

Governance

This refers to the system and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organisation (www.governancehub.org.uk). Governance is about people and how they are organised to prepare themselves for actions that will have a positive effect on their lives. Governance relates to how local

resources are mobilised and managed effectively for the benefit of the people. All analysis of governance involves questions of process, participation and accountability. It has been argued that analysis of how governance takes place is not meaningful without considering the domain and context being analysed, and that therefore one must always consider the question of ‘governance where and for what’.

Community involvement

The introduction and adoption of The Gambia’s first five year (1975/76–1980/81) development plan for socio-economic development saw a great shift of emphasis, calling for mass community participation promulgated by the philosophy of ‘Tesito’ (a Mandingo word meaning ‘gird up’ or prepare for hard work while relying more on one’s self). The rationale was to mobilise mass community efforts (in terms of human, material and financial resources) to facilitate project implementation and reduce government expenditure, while at the same time encouraging community commitment. Though this philosophy was popular, it could not achieve most of its objectives, as most of the projects implemented were substandard due to inadequate financing coupled with weak community groups and organisations.

The NGOs that began to emerge in the late 1980s and are still developing have also recognised the importance of involving people not only in the implementation, but also in the design, monitoring and maintenance of development projects and decision-making. As a result, NGOs have introduced fresh impetus into the planning and development process. This has led to the practice and promotion of participatory methodologies, with the aim of improving community need assessment, planning and development.

Village and ward level development committees have been introduced as grassroots organisations that can foster more community involvement not only in the planning process, but also to empower them to take decisions on issues that affect their lives. These have led to the rapid formation and spread of village and ward development committees and divisional coordinating committees (village and ward development committees, technical advisory committees) to facilitate the process with a view to ensuring representation.

Project identification and funding

The process of project identification called for in the Local Government Act (2002) starts with situation analysis by which the community identifies its needs and problems. The problems are then analysed in terms of the cause, effects, coping strategies and solutions applicable, and the opportunities they present. Problems are prioritised and objectives are set for the village development plan (the ideal situation). The community consultation process seeks local initiatives, and the adoption and adaptation of diverse development issues, ideas, problems and options. Participatory project identification can enhance people's capabilities to bring forth self-reliance practices. The interactive nature of the process encourages and promotes experimental learning, collective interest, commitment, and joint programming and action. The process can improve people's access to quality services, especially when their needs and aspirations are heavily weighted in the process.

The use of participatory methodologies contributes to empowering people to identify, understand and address their development needs through interaction and learning that can have a significant impact on their lives. When considering the involvement of communities in projects, it must be remembered that 'you cannot develop people'. We can only assist or enable them to 'develop themselves'. Nor can we teach them to be responsible: rather, responsibility is assumed and in the process it is learnt and qualified. This suggests that it is only when communities perceive that a project is theirs, springing from them, belonging to them and being under their ownership and managed by them, that it stands any chance of surviving as a real development in that area.

In spite of the widespread use of participatory methodologies used to help communities identify their development needs, many of the projects identified collapse as soon as donor support is phased out. A typical example is the Support to Decentralised Rural Development Project (SDRD), which began to show evidence of a positive impact on rural development. Decentralised structures were involved in the community planning process. Ward and village development committees were observed to be better organised than those in regions without SDRD. But currently, even with the Local Government Act in place, community involvement poses challenges, due to the low level of awareness about roles in fostering decentralisation.

Notwithstanding this, when a community is adequately consulted at a satisfactory level, it may evolve a process in which individuals, groups and institutions are able to identify ways in which they wish to live their lives, since they have become more aware of their rights and obligations than they were before. Proper community consultation can lead to community empowerment that enable peoples to focus on ways to engage individuals and groups in decision-making through dialogue. This can help make people more capable of organising themselves and influencing change, based on their access to knowledge and to political, financial, social and natural resources. However, the process of empowerment is complex. In many instances it is not easy for the powerful to relinquish power. Demanding power and community involvement needs to begin with awareness building and mobilisation emerging from within.

Decision-making, on the other hand, is not as complex as empowerment. What is more difficult is for those with the resources to accept and respect the decisions taken by the community. There have been some instances where projects fail because donors have disregarded community decisions. We need to allow communities to have more say over the use and allocation of limited resources. If this happens, people will be able to exercise their power and authority over issues as they affect them. Whatever the case, it is important to always be mindful of the social relations of communities

With regard to project funding, communities do not have a unified funding mechanism. Attempts were made earlier to look into ways of establishing a council development fund, and national consultants were contracted in 2003. After consultations with stakeholders, the consultants produced their report, which was validated. Since then nothing much has been heard about such a fund. However, the community-driven development project initiative provides a window of opportunity for benefiting communities to decide on their priorities, plan and manage their resources, and account to the wider community.

Challenges that hinder community involvement

The concept of community involvement emerged as a way of operationalising decentralisation with a view to increasing the ability of government officials to obtain better information about local conditions in order to plan programmes more responsively and react quickly to unanticipated

problems that might arise during implementation. The mere fact that we differ in terms of our vision and thinking poses the biggest challenge in any attempt to involve the community, or even if the communities want to involve each other.

Resource allocation problems confront many organisations. This is an important issue to be considered if we are to make any meaningful impact on community involvement. However, the biggest challenge is how we communicate with each other, coupled with low awareness levels. Sometimes when new opportunities arise it will take longer than necessary before community members hear about the opportunity. Some of the challenges are internal, while others are external. Internal challenges include dealing with inter-relationships within the community and involve cultural and development considerations. External challenges include delays in disbursing funds, and inadequate supervision, monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to the above, there are challenges related to project implementation where community contribution is not forthcoming. This affects implementation schedules. In fact, we have seen instances when implementation is left in the hands of a small number of people who take possession of the intervention. In spite of these and other challenges, communities are always keen to contribute cash or contributions in kind towards the implementation of their sub-project.

Many development agencies (both governmental and NGOs) do not work through decentralised structures like the ward and village development committees. This creates jealousy and rivalry between the decentralised and project structures. We are all aware that these decentralised structures do not own resources and are in need of development assistant. In order for them to be active, they need support to build capacity not only through training but through provision of financial and material resources.

Another important issue that is hardly ever addressed is sustainability. During project identification, communities always propose a sustainability plan which, in most cases, is never implemented. It is vital that communities are listened to.

Some reasons for community involvement and participation

- With community involvement more can be achieved;

- With community involvement, services will be provided more cheaply;
- Community involvement encourages a sense of responsibility;
- Community involvement guarantees that felt needs are addressed;
- Community involvement makes it more likely that things will be done in the right way;
- Community involvement uses valuable local knowledge;
- Community involvement makes people more conscious of their existence.

Adapted from special course No. 011, lecture on community participation

Recommendations: the way forward

The following recommendations are suggested in order to continue to stimulate community involvement in governance:

- Build the capacity of community organisations and the decentralised structures to make them more responsive to addressing needs;
- Sensitise communities on the concept and principles of the Local Government Act and decentralisation;
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy to enlighten communities about the Local Government Act and decentralisation;
- Sector departments should also support and work through the decentralised structures at ward and village levels;
- Provide the necessary financial and material support to the ward and village level committees to enable them practice their management skills.

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Annex 1

Workshop Programme

Monday 7 April

- 08.00–08.30 Registration of participants
- 08.30–08.45 Welcome remarks by **OG Sallah**, Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister’s Office
- 08.45–09.00 Remarks by **Dr Munawwar Alam**, Commonwealth Secretariat
Chair: **Alasana ST Jammeh**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs
- 09.00–09.15 Official opening by the Hon. Secretary of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs, **Alh. Ismaila K Sambou**
- 09.15–09.45 BREAK
- 10.00–11.00 Introduction to the programme – outline of content
Introductions
The Meaning of and Different Types of Decentralisation, **Andrew Nickson**, University of Birmingham
- 11.00–12.00 The New Public Management and Changing Local Governance, and *Making Services Work for Poor People the World Development Report 2004* and Local Governance, **Andrew Nickson**, University of Birmingham
- 12.00–13.00 The Implementation of the Decentralisation Process: The Gambian Experience, **Omar Khan**, Governor, Upper River Region
Chair: **Andrea Deri**
- 13.00–14.00 LUNCH BREAK
- 14.00–15.30 Recent Trends Towards Decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa, **Dr Roger Koranteng**, GIMPA, Ghana
- 15.30–16.00 BREAK

16.00–17.00 Leadership for Change, How to Develop your Personal Skills for Change, *Andrea Deri*, LEAD International
Chair: Mayor of the Kanifing Municipal Council

Tuesday 8 April

08.00–08.30 Registration of participants

08.30–10.00 How Convincing are the Stated Advantages of Decentralisation in the Case of The Gambia?
Group discussion led by *Andrew Nickson*

10.00–10.30 BREAK

10.30–11.00 Leadership for Change, How to Develop Your Personal Skills for Change, *Andrea Deri*
Chair: *Momodou Soma Jobe*, Governor, Lower River Region

11.00–12.00 What are the Keys for Success in Managing Change?: A Local Government Perspective, *Samba Faal*, Lord Mayor of Banjul
Chair: *Alh. Abdou Badjie*, Governor, Western Region

12.00–13.00 How to Build Lasting Partnerships with the Private Sector for Local Service Provision that are Based on Trust, *Dr Roger Koranteng*, GIMPA, Ghana
Chair: *Eduwar Seckan*, Governor, North Bank Region

13.00–14.00 LUNCH BREAK

14.00–16.00 The Role of the Traditional Rulers in Managing Change, Paramount Chief (Seyfo) *Alh. Demba Sanyang*
Chair: *Abdoulie Manneh*, Permanent Secretary, Department of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs

Wednesday 9 April

08.00–08.30 Registration of participants

08.30–10.00 Human Resources Management and Public Private Partnerships, *OG Sallah*, Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office
Chair: *Ganji Touray*, Governor, Central River Region

- 10.00–10.30 BREAK
- 10.30–12.00 Strategic Planning, Management and Assessment for Improvement in Local Service Delivery, *Dr Roger Koranteng*, GIMPA, Ghana
- 12.00–13.00 Community Involvement in Local Governance, *Buba Joof*, Department of Community Development, followed by open discussion, questions and answers
Chair: *BK Jobarteh*, Director of Community Development
- 13.00–14.00 LUNCH BREAK
- 14.00–15.00 Making the Case: A mock trial with speakers for and against the motion ‘The Gambia would Benefit from Decentralisation’, led by *Andrew Nickson* with a jury comprising *Dr Munawwar Alam*, *Dr Roger Koranteng* and *Andrea Deri*
- 15.00–16.00 Open discussion and presentation of group findings and learning experience from the workshop, led by *Andrew Nickson*
- 16.00–16.30 Closing ceremony, led by *Alasana ST Jammeh*, Permanent Secretary, Department of Local Government and *Dr Munawwar Alam*

Annex 2

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Governance and Institutional
Development Division (GIDD)

OG Sallah
Permanent Secretary
Prime Minister's Office
Government of The Gambia

Annex 3

About the Governance and Institutional Development Division

The Governance and Institutional Development Division has responsibility for the Commonwealth Secretariat's mandate on public sector development. GIDD's work covers the full spectrum of public policy, management and administration, as well as issues relating to civil society and private sector institutions with public responsibilities. Its role is to provide strategic advice and technical assistance in capacity building and institutional development towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Commonwealth developing countries. GIDD's in-house advisers work in collaboration with other divisions and external partners to provide assistance across a wide range of development issues to meet the specific needs of member countries in a diverse, complex, and rapidly changing environment.

The Thematic Programmes Group provides specialised expertise and advisory services to member countries in four thematic clusters: governance, service delivery; leadership and human resource policy; and information and communication technology. It serves Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting mandates like Commonwealth Connects and maintains specialisations in public sector management and reform, institutional governance, anti-corruption, corporate governance, public expenditure management, sub-national government, public-private partnerships, human resource management, leadership development, ethics and values, e-governance and other aspects of public sector development. The Thematic Programmes Group works closely in the division with the Regional Programmes Group and the Technical Cooperation and Strategic Response Group to provide an integrated and seamless service to member governments.

The Regional Programmes Group includes four regions, covering the countries of the Commonwealth in Africa, the Caribbean and Mediterranean, Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Programmes Group works

with Commonwealth member countries in response to their public sector development capacity building needs by providing specialised advice and advisory services. It works primarily to assist national governments in transforming their public services into responsive, citizen-focused, results-oriented, sustained and effective service delivery systems.

The Technical Cooperation and Strategic Response Group is responsible for the preparation, appraisal, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of technical assistance projects for all the divisions of the Secretariat. The group provides long- and short-term technical assistance through the services of specialist consultants and volunteers to member governments and regional organisations in response to their needs towards building national capacity and institutional strengths. The experts come from both developed and developing countries, and are very experienced in their fields; their assignments range from a few days to two or three years.

The Commonwealth Service Abroad Programme (CSAP) is also included within this unit. The CSAP places about 30 volunteer experts every year to assist member countries to provide technical assistance related to hands-on, on-the-job training, exposure to new operating technologies and innovative practices, technology transfer, community workshops and stakeholder retreats.

The Divisional Coordination and Support Unit is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy and procedures, and for the effective functioning of the division. It also acts as a contact point for other divisions in the Secretariat.

For further information please visit:
www.thecommonwealth.org/governance

