CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND BUDGETING IN AFRICA: INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

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Paper presented at the Pan African Conference of Ministers of Local Government held in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho, from August 30th to September 1st, 2006
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Prior to decentralization, local government development planning was largely a top-down process. The central government set national development goals and the plans of provincial and local government. The latter simply followed the national government’s lead in order to be eligible to receive development funding.

Introduction

Community-led plans and budgets regarding provision of basic services, local development and poverty reduction are harbingers of participatory democracy and autonomous decentralized governance. As a result, the need to develop practical tools, techniques and competences that can delicately balance top-down and local-level bottom-up participatory planning and budgeting\(^1\) can not be over emphasized. It is through participatory practices that democratic traditions find genuine expression and allow for efficient and sustainable all-inclusive decision making and administration. The challenge facing the new paradigm is creating a critical mass of principal actors with changed mindsets and attitudes to appreciate the fact that participatory governance, and in particular, planning and budgeting has the potential to significantly improve the quality of local administration. In addition, it is imperative to establish the required mechanisms to enable the change. It is the author’s submission that the paradigm shift can be effected not only through learning by doing, but also through sustained awareness campaigns, advocacy, exposure and outright training and retraining.

This brief paper highlights some of the perspectives related to capacity building that require the attention of policy makers and public managers as well as the community at large if participatory planning and budgeting are to become an integral part of management in decentralized governance. The paper highlights selected cases to illustrate the potential of participatory approaches in establishing sound decentralized governance.

Background

To start with, let us briefly discuss three important factors that might explain why participatory planning and budgeting have taken a centre stage in promoting decentralized governance.

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\(^1\) Participatory planning is a process by which a community undertakes to reach a given socio-economic goal by consciously diagnosing its problems and charting a course of action to resolve those problems. Experts are needed, but only as facilitators. Moreover, no one likes to participate in something which is not of his/her own creation. Plans prepared by outside experts, irrespective of their technical soundness, cannot inspire the people to participate in their implementation.

The UN-HABITAT defines participatory budgeting “...an innovative mechanism that promotes the engagement of local government, private sector and civil society alike in the allocation of municipal resources. It is an inclusive process designed to stimulate participation of, and dialogue between, the different actors of society”. The World Bank defines the concept of participatory budgeting as “... an innovative mechanism which aims to involve citizens in the decision-making process of public budgeting.”
1) **Urbanization:** Like in other regions of the world, cities in Africa are steadfastly becoming the home of human habitation as a strategy to escape rural poverty, among other factors. It is estimated that by 2030 African cities south of the Sahara will be experiencing a turning point. Africa will have 11 cities having more that 5 million inhabitants and more than 3000 cities with population in excess of 20,000 (an increase of almost 300% from 1990). This means that more than half of the population in Africa will be urban. The UN-HABITAT'S's State of the World Cities Report 2006/7 warns that whilst cities are becoming engines of economic growth and centres of opportunities, the problems created outweigh their attractiveness and **significantly** lower the quality of life for residents to a level below that enjoyed by their rural counterparts. Thus the need for city development strategies to counteract such outcome.

### The Urban Story

Over 70 per cent of the urban population live in slums where there is no water and sewerage connection, and without electricity. Given these conditions, slum dwellers are more likely to die earlier, experience more hunger and diseases and attain less education than their rural counterparts. The situation of urbanization will continue to be exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other endemic diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. With just over 10% of the world's population, Sub-Saharan is however home to 70% (25.4 million in 2004 up from 24.4 in 2002) of all people living with HIV/AIDS. The number of orphaned children is counted to be over 12 million and many are turning to streets for survival. Despite massive investments in water resources, there is a continuous lack of access to safe and affordable water and sanitation. As a result, many urban dwellers particularly the poor who live in slums are exposed to diarrhoeal diseases in which 80 – 90% children under the age of five die.

2) **MDGs:** The world today is following the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted in the special UN General Assembly in 2000. The MDGs consist of eight goals, seventeen indicators and forty seven action areas. The primary goal of the MDGs is to halve poverty by the year 2015 from the level of 1990. While East Asia, is likely to attain the poverty reduction goal before 2015, prospects for Africa remain grim. Jeffrey Sach's report entitled UN Millennium Project (2005), points out that whilst some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa seem to be making some progress towards achieving the millennium goals, overall, the MDGs will not be achieved in Africa as planned. He states that primary education seems to be off track with most children learning very little and dropping out; child and maternal mortality remain high; the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues unabated; access to improved drinking water supply and sanitation has not increased significantly; the number of slum dwellers is on the increase; and environmental degradation seems to be worsening.

3) **Resurgence of Apathy:** In recent years, there has been a resurgence of the culture of apathy manifested in various ways such as: attitudes of despair and depression, non-involvement in important issues that affect community life, lack of interest in public affairs, an attitude of resignation, withdrawal and despair and a state of hopelessness. Apathy is caused by a number of factors that include imposed decisions, corruption, and unfulfilled promises.

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2 The same view was expressed by Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT at the CLGF Commonwealth Secretariat African Regional Symposium on: Strengthening Local Democracy and Good Governance: Realizing the Millennium Development Goals, Kampala, 26-28 April, 2006, p. 3.

3 Apathy by definition is reluctance by citizens to participate in civic obligations.
Reasons for Promoting Participatory Planning and Budgeting

Against the above dynamics, there are various reasons for encouraging civic participation in planning and budgeting at sub-national level.

Real and perceived corruption resulting in poor decisions and investments accompanied by dwindling resources and decaying infrastructure have generated significant mistrust between public officials and their citizens. This trend has propelled demand from civic organisations to have a voice in identifying needs, setting priorities, and determining resource allocations.

Interface between Civil Society and Local Government

The information on the ground reveal that whilst there is need for civic groups and local authorities to work together, there is inadequate contact between the two parties. A study on “Interaction between Municipal Councils and Civic Groups from one of the African countries provided various explanations for this.1

For the local authorities:
- There was no formal mechanism to engage civic groups in municipal affairs
- There is no flow of information between civic groups and local authorities resulting into implementing program without coordination.
- Council structures are intimidating to the public
- There is misunderstanding by councillors of the motives and objectives of civic groups.

For the civic groups:
- There is inability to translate their narrow interests into wider policy issues.
- There is a misunderstanding by civic groups of the role of councils.
- Civic groups feel that they have little ability to influence council decisions
- Civic groups consider that council have money but it is being stolen by council staff.

The mutual distrust highlighted above is partly responsible for “the crisis of democracy” in Africa which is reflected in low voter-turnouts during election periods.

Increased community participation in public decision making at both the national and local level has the potential to improve the capacity of municipalities to understand better the complex demands of their communities. This will enhance coordination, transparency and accountability in action planning, priority setting and expenditure allocation. As a by-product, this can strengthen social networks and solidarity.

Benefits Derived from Participatory Budgeting

In Mutoko Rural District Council in Zimbabwe, the following benefits have been recorded from the elected and appointed members of the local authority working together with traditional leaders and various civic organizations;

- Increased public ownership of local developmental processes evidenced by citizens’ reduced vandalism on public property
- Greater understanding of civic issues by ordinary citizens
- A signed social pact for participatory budgeting in a systematic manner spelling out roles, budget cycles, definition of terms, and communication methods as well as regular evaluation of the budget performance in

1 Municipal Development Program, Strengthening Civic Participation in Municipal Governance in Eastern and Southern Africa 1999
as far as it meets the strategic objectives of the city.

- Quicker finalization of the budget
- Greater acceptance of increased charges by citizens
- No written objections to the budget, which had derailed timely budget implementation before
- Simplification of the budget process and thus allowing ordinary citizens to draw out the meaning, place themselves in it and contribute to its development.
- Increased capacity to articulate needs and enhanced negotiation skills by ordinary citizens thereby realizing community needs.

In Singida District Council in Tanzania, the following benefits have been recorded ever since participatory budgeting was introduced:

- The numbers of projects suggested by ordinary citizens that have been implemented has increased.
- Sense of ownership is high for projects and security from the community has increased.
- Some communities are participating only in project identification and priorities
- Capital budgets have now been separated from operating budgets giving greater transparency in the budgetary process.
- Good rapport between the council and stakeholders through improved dialogue that used not to exist.
- City council staff are now more accessible to citizens
- Grass root communities are now involved in the identification of development projects.
- Services are more responsive to citizens’ needs
- Inequality and exclusion has been addressed through the involvement of many stakeholders like women and slum dwellers.
- Poverty reduction has been addressed through projects that improve the status of the poor.
- Revenue collection has improved.

Supportive Legal Frameworks: From Public Participation to Participatory Governance

In many countries, rigid conventional approaches to planning are being discarded and laws are being put in place to facilitate community participation in local governance. For example, in Mozambique, Article 186 of the Constitution, allows for the organisation of local communities to participate in local planning and governance. In South Africa, the Local Government Act of 1996 contains information that allows communities to play an active role in the formulation of an Integrated Development Plan (IDP). In Tanzania the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act of 1982 and its amendment Local Government (Miscellaneous) Act of 1998 and Regional Administration Acts of 1997(URT 1997, 1998) provides for the establishment of Mtaaa, a structure of local governance that is intended to facilitate community participation in local planning and governance. In Uganda, the post-1986 period has been touted as the era of participatory decision-making and development. The Constitution of 1995 and the Local Government Act of 1997 allow for the direct participation of communities in development planning and administration of local areas. In Kenya, the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) under the Authorities Act No. 8 of 1998 seeks to strengthen participatory development by involving stakeholder participation in local authority activities.

UN-HABITAT Global Campaign on Good Governance

The promulgation of new laws was given a boost in 1996 by the launching of the UN-HABITAT Global Campaign on Good Governance whose theme and vision is "Inclusive City". That is, a place where everyone regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities that cities have to offer. It is a place where those who are traditionally marginalized break out of the cycle of exclusion.
Outputs of Participatory Governance

The outputs of participatory governance processes are given different names. These include: Strategic Plans (SPs), City Development Strategies (CDSs), Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), Corporate Strategy, Multi-stakeholder Policy and Action Plans (MPAPs), Citizens’ Charters, etc.

### Integrated Development Planning (IDP) in South Africa

In South Africa Integrated Development Planning was introduced as a key tool for management and progress towards sustainable development. The preparation of the IDP is seen as an opportunity for community building through the provision of forums where discussions can be held, and where common ground can be reached regarding development priorities in the area. Community engagement is therefore central to the successful completion of the IDP. Thus, the IDP process, with the involvement and support of the local citizens, will hopefully obviate the need for mediation of disputes later on.

Central government is the instigator of the IDP process through its redefinition of the role of local government, and of strategic planning as a statutory requirement of the IDP process. The agenda for each municipality's exercise was generally set by the Municipal Manager. The premediation, negotiation and engagement was done by different players in most instances, with officials, politicians, professional planners - whether municipal official or consultant - as well as professional facilitators, being mentioned in different projects.

### Gender Inclusive Planning and Budgeting in Uganda

In Uganda, the District Development Project (DDP) made a significant contribution towards inclusion of gender concerns in planning and budgeting. In conjunction with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Local Government embarked on a comprehensive Gender orientation strategy for the Technical Planning Committees at the District and sub-county (sub-district) levels.

According to the new strategy, all the sub-counties and districts are in possession of well outlined planning and budgeting guides. The planning guidelines emphasize a bottom-up approach to the soliciting of planning ideas and their prioritization. Gender inclusion in planning and budgeting systems and processes happens through ensuring that the needs of women and girls are incorporated into the village, parish, sub-county and district plans. Fair women representation in the expanded planning meetings is emphasized.

Like most Government programs, the DDP design relies on the various Sector Wide Plans for achieving the various concerns. Notable among these is the Education Plan, which among other things is supposed to ensure equitable education opportunities for both women and men, correcting education, and career imbalances through increased education for girls and ensuring a cut in illiteracy rate currently at an average of 60 percent for women and 38 percent for men. The Health Plan on the other hand emphasizes promotions of health education, provision of maternal health services in order to curb maternal mortality rates currently at 130/1000

**Major Achievements**

The program has made remarkable steps in the inclusion of gender concerns.

- The inclusion of both women and men on the planning and investment committees at sub-county and parish levels.

- The program has introduced expanded planning meetings which as much as possible incorporates the planning views of women and men.

- DDP has opened out the participation of women in none traditional areas such as construction of health units and other facilities. This has increased ownership.
- For the first time, there is a system for tracking gender inclusion in the development plans.

- A gender task force was constituted with representatives from the Ministry of Gender, UNDP/UNCDF, UNICEF and Ministry of Local Government. The Task Force will oversee the incorporation of gender concerns in the DDP and other Local Government Development Programmes.

- A study to engender all training materials and develop a mainstreaming strategy for Local Governments is underway.

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**The Story of Zimbabwe**

If planners are responsive and prepared to negotiate when problems arise, plans and policies can be adjusted to take account of community needs. The questionnaire survey elicited a good example of this from Zimbabwe. As in many poor countries, planning policy was opposed to buildings constructed by the informal sector. Harare City Council sought to demolish 'tuckshops' - one-room, informal-sector structures, that appear in open spaces or against the wall of a house, and which sell a limited stock of food and drinks. These illegal constructions are disorderly and unhealthy but provide a livelihood to owners and are a convenience to local residents. In 2001 the City of Harare's Town Planning (Development Control) section began demolishing all tuckshops on open spaces. There was a public outcry from the tuckshop owners, politicians and non-governmental organisations against the demolitions. The Commission running the City of Harare instructed the planners to negotiate with the various stakeholders to come up with a policy and procedure for the approval and operation of tuckshops. The planners held consultations with other Council departments such as Housing and Community Services, Health Services and the Town Clerk's department. Their views were incorporated into a draft policy document. The tuckshop owners formed their association. The planners also consulted them and listened to what they expected the Council to do for them and what contributions they were willing to make in order to make tuckshops viable in a healthy environment with water and sanitation facilities. The process was very effective, and a new tuckshop policy was put in place.

The lessons learnt was that negotiation is an important means to adjust and implement policy and plans. A negotiated outcome is likely to be more successful than an imposed solution.

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**UNCDF Supporting Decentralized Planning**

- Since 1998, Mozambique has been firmly set on the road to recovery and sustainable development. In many cases, central government was initially skeptical about the capacity of local governments because of lack of essential technical and human capacity. Later on, there was change of attitude. It was acknowledged that it was imperative to transfer authority if capacity was to be built and strengthened to allow local government to plan, implement, manage, and monitor local development programs and strategies. The results are as follows:

- Local governments, institutions/CSOs and communities have the opportunity in participatory manner to decide on how to generate and use local resources.

- The process enhanced accountability and satisfaction of local needs. Local institutions became more transparent, accountable and more proactive to address local needs and demands.

Source: Israel Jacob Massuanganhe, Building Sustainable Local Development Through Participatory Governance And Sub-National Capacity Development: Why development and international support failures in Africa? UNCDF/UNDP MOZAMBIQUE
The real-life advantages of participatory budgets from Porto Alegre\textsuperscript{5}, Brazil

Listen to what local players have to say about the real-life advantages of participatory budgets. While walking through his neighborhoods, a delegate in Porto Alegre tells his daughter:

"Before, the ground was bare here, and we walked in the mud. Now we have water, sewers, paved streets and buses. All these things are good for the health. Soon, there will be a school in which you will receive an education to build citizenship. Education enables the world to improve."

Capacity Building Issues

Capacity building can be described as “identifying constraints and helping those in need to improve their competencies to overcome such constraints and achieve desired goals”. In that regard, capacity building in participatory planning and budgeting, can be defined as a “process of strengthening the key actors’ capacity to identify their needs and determine their own values, priorities, destiny. The process consists of, among others, developing awareness, acquiring knowledge and skills for purposes of meaningful participation.

As of today, one can safely say that in many African countries, the voice of communities and civic organizations has become stronger in local decision-making, planning and expenditure allocations and performance as a result of capacity building and supportive legislations that are intended to deepen democracy and decentralised governance.

However, local government studies still show that capacity building is still much needed to ensure sustainable participatory governance.

There is need to expose public officials and communities to participatory approaches and methods in order to improve the quality of interaction. More specifically, there is need to improve competencies in areas such as public relations, negotiation, mediation, listening, consensus building, confidence building, priority setting that come into play in participatory management and which are not part of the curricular in traditional planning and budgeting practices. Studies in many countries have revealed that whilst local government officials might be well trained as economists, finance experts, engineers, planners, environmentalists and other technical fields, not many are interested in developing skills in communications, listening, or getting exposed to participatory processes in general.

Beside the human factor, experiences from many countries confirm that council structures and processes also do not encourage civic participation in decision making. There are no formal mechanisms to facilitate it. Civic groups - and the rest of the public - rely on \textit{ad hoc} and largely informal contacts with friendly councillors to get their voices across in the planning and budgeting process. The participatory processes tend to overlook issues that might be specific to certain groups such as: the youth, women, displaced, disabled, refuges, immigrants, traditional leaders, religious leaders, intellectuals.

On the other hand, civic groups are seriously lacking in advocacy, planning and budgeting as well as policy analysis skills. Studies have also revealed that not all organizations of civil society are adequately accountable, either to their own members or to the public at large. Furthermore,

\textsuperscript{5} Porto Alegre is a Provincial City in Brazil which initiated the practice of Participatory Budgeting in local government.
although some groups may be quite vocal, the interests they represent may not be widely shared. In some countries, citizens and civic groups are too busy thinking about their own daily problems to think about collaboration.

Innovative Tools

There are a number of innovative tools that are in practice today to foster participatory governance. These include: City Consultations, Service Delivery Surveys, Community Score Cards, Multi-Stakeholder Forums, Outcome Mapping, Roundtables, Participatory Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.

Experience shows that capacity building in these tools can help local governments and their communities including the private sector to work together more productively in identifying needs and priorities as well as allocating the scarce resources. These tools have excellent potential to promote not only participation but also to improve transparency, social accountability, create an atmosphere of trust, confidence and spirit of cooperation. They can also be instrumental in developing a shared understanding of problems and ownership of solutions. Ultimately, they have the potential to boost local government revenues as well as social networks, solidarity between elected leaders, chief officers and civil society groups.

Who should be targeted for Capacity Building?

Every individual no matter whatever level need to be capacitated to better appreciate the significance of participatory governance. Beneficiaries are many and varied. They can be grouped in the following categories:

Councillors and Mayors: Councillors are key actors in promoting participatory governance. They represent the citizens and are supposed to demonstrate a political culture that appreciates innovations and creativity. Until the late 1980s, it was never conceived that representation of ordinary people require a mayor to have extraordinary skills. Moreover, their engagement was on a part time basis. In many countries many elected mayors and councilors come to local authorities without any appreciable level of participatory management skills. A region-wide consultation carried out by MDP-ESA in 2004 to establish the capacity building needs of newly elected mayors revealed that mayors are interested in learning about “how to”:

i. engage residents in municipal affairs meaningfully;
ii. improve the resource base for their local authority;
iii. prepare strategic plans;
iv. attract investors;
v. establish enabling policy and institutional environments;
vi. guard against corruption;
vii. handle street vendors;
viii. engage the private sector;
ix. commercialize or set rates for municipal services;
x. play a meaningful role in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS;
xi. respond to the needs of AIDS victims;
xii. protect the environment;
xiii. protect children and women against abuse and violence; and
xiv. deal with street children.

All these areas require good understanding of participatory governance.

**Chief Officers:** While a number of professional training programs have been offered for technical staff like finance officers, engineers, planners, etc, it used to be assumed that skills in fostering participation and transparency would be acquired as one rose through ranks or by observing and learning from the practical experience of older members of staff (Allen Hubert 1990, p.80). In practice, this might not be the case. There is need to equip managers with formal knowledge, skills and attributes that are crucial for effective good governance.

**Citizens:** Citizens’ participation, especially the poor, in local government affairs is essential if local governments are to be sensitive to accountability for their actions and transparent in transacting business. By participating in decision making and planning processes, demanding quality services, and holding local officials accountable, citizens can ensure that government truly represent their interests.

In order to foster community participation in local government affairs, there is need to promote civic education and community awareness programs. Citizens need to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities to demand, participate in, and monitor delivery of services to their community. They must be made aware of the cost of infrastructure, social services, and of the need for mobilization of resources including taxation for delivery of the services. They need to be trained in participatory processes such as planning and budgeting, implementation and monitoring. They must also be conscious of the accountability of the elected and appointed officials to them, and their role in ensuring the integrity of their representatives.

**Community Leaders:** Community leaders also need appropriate training to enable them foster citizens’ participation around issues of concern to them. Community leaders need to develop knowledge about power relationships (who controls, where do the funds come from, roles and responsibilities of citizens etc) and about financial mechanisms for services delivery. They also need to learn how to collect information and present facts, how to prepare projects, how to mobilize the community to demand services and participate in their implementation, how to influence change in policy, programs and services.

**Ministers and Top Officials:** Ministers, top public officials and policy advisors of central government ministries responsible for and / or involved with local government also need exposure and retraining. Whilst central government officials still control various resources, they sometimes lack adequate skills in participatory processes with local authorities and communities. There is need to develop skills in consultation process to facilitate effective policy development. Ministers need political support to participatory governance. There are questions which Ministers could interrogate to make participatory governance a feature of decentralized governance. For example:

- What are the pre-conditions for successful introduction and practice of participatory governance at local level?
- How can such conditions be created and sustained?

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6 A Mayors’ course was designed and is offered annually.
What are the challenges that are facing the introduction and practice of participatory local governance and participation at local level and how can such challenges be overcome?

What is the cost of not supporting participatory planning and budgeting?

What institutional and structural arrangements must be established not only to initiate the practice of participation but also to sustain it at local level?

What are the capacities that must be built, developed and strengthened in order for participatory local level development planning and budgeting to be introduced, practiced successfully and sustained?

How and by whom should this capacity building be done?

Are there cases of participatory governance, participatory development planning and budgeting at local level in Africa or elsewhere that can serve as lessons for introducing and practicing participation in planning and budgeting at local level?

**Local government associations:** Local government associations bring together those who work in local government to share information and experiences, build support network, initiate policy dialogue, and present a common voice for local government on policy and management issues. Strong national associations can play an important role by identifying the needs of their members and could constitute a source of information on good local government practices. In order for national associations to play their advocacy role effectively, they need to know how to collect information and present facts, how to prepare policy positions and projects and mobilize their members to influence change in policy, programs, and services.

**Perspectives on Training Institutions and Trainers**

Training Institutions and Trainers lack adequate orientation towards participatory tools and techniques. In general, capacity building institutions in Africa – management institutes, universities, and research institutions are still not well in tune with local government reforms. The situation is compounded by absence of national training policies for reforming local governments.

While there is need to develop capacity among training institutions, local authorities themselves should play a central role in enhancing the capacity of the local government fraternity through decentralised cooperation and direct mentoring. MDP-ESA has identified resource municipalities that have developed expertise, and tools and are willing to share their experience with others. These include: Mutoko (Zimbabwe); Entebbe (Uganda); Windhoek (Namibia); Ilala, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania); Dondo (Mozambique); Kabwe (Zambia); Porto Alegre (Brazil). The strategy involves promoting transfer of skills, technical exchange visits and twinning, internships and apprenticeships for young professionals.

**The Role of MDP-ESA**

MDP-ESA working with national associations of local government authorities is developing various programs and guidelines for enhancing social accountability and the competencies of local officials and grass root communities to engage in participatory planning and participatory budgeting. These activities are made possible with financial support from the World Bank, UN-HABITAT and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The materials developed are tested in pilot local authorities and fine-tuned during implementation. Part of MDP-ESA strategy involves promoting e-learning through radio and videoconferencing in which local authority
officials, community organisations, civil society and the private sector can exchange information on how best to work together to improve the quality of life in their neighbourhoods.

MDP-ESA is in the process of establishing a Participatory Budgeting Knowledge and Action Support Facility for Africa. The overall objective of the Facility is to enhance governance and accountability mechanisms by means of empowering citizens, particularly the poor, to actively participate in the formulation, execution and evaluation of public policies and budgets.

The Center’s main functions include, among others:

- Promoting sharing of materials and emerging experiences on participatory budgeting
- Translating relevant materials into local languages
- Facilitating knowledge exchanges between Regional Centers, other interested
- Maintaining a common web page on participatory budgeting and a Virtual Help Desk

The beneficiaries of the Facility include, but not limited to, elected officials, civil servants, technical professionals, universities, NGOs, local government associations, civic groups, and others organizations involved in participatory budgeting in Africa.

In addition, MDP-ESA working closely with national associations of local government authorities is in the process of developing training materials on participatory planning and budgeting for elected and appointed officials as well as grass-root communities to enable them appreciate the potential of participatory practices in establishing good governance. With regard to participatory budgeting, the course is in two levels.

At level one, the emphasis is placed on “How to implement participatory budgeting”. The components include:

- What is a budget?
- What is participatory budgeting?
- Who participates in the PB process?
- Why is PB important to local governments?
- Why should councilors support PB?
- What are the key elements of participatory budgeting?

Level Two consists of ten modules that provide policy makers, practitioners, civic organization leaders and academics with in-depth knowledge of participatory budgeting. The Modules include:

- Conceptual framework on Participatory Budgeting
- Approaches and important stages followed in Participatory Budgeting (Budget Cycle including budget execution)
- Aligning Participatory Budgeting to development policies, plans and legal instruments (PRSPs, NEPAD, MDGs, Strategic Plans)
- Political, institutional & administrative dimensions of PB (formal and informal)
- Legal and regulatory framework for Participatory Budgeting Fiscal & Public Expenditure Management dimensions for Participatory Budgeting Empowerment of vulnerable groups (conditions to participate & the impacts of the budget on the vulnerable groups)
- Communication, awareness and access to information (best mechanisms, tools and modalities to provide access to information)
- Monitoring and evaluation of Participatory Budgeting
- Designing stakeholder capacity building in Participatory Budgeting (citizens, civil society organizations & local governments)

Finally, a Training Companion is underway to complement the training programs. This is intended to provide mechanisms for initiating or triggering participatory budgeting processes in a local authority.

To enhance the sharing of information and knowledge, MDP-ESA has put in place an interactive website - The Africa Social Accountability Action Forum (ASAAF). The domain is: www.asaaf.org.zw. It is a vehicle for strengthening dialogue on participatory budgeting and social accountability in decentralized governance. To join the dialogue forum, the following steps are followed:

a) Log on to the forum on http://www.mdpafrica-pb.org.zw
b) Click on Register on the top horizontal bar
c) Enter e-mail address and password

After registering, you will able to interact with others on issues related to participatory budgeting and social accountability and decentralized governance in general.

In February 2007, MDP-ESA with support from the World Bank and UN-HABITAT will convene an Expert Group Meeting on Participatory Budgeting to ascertain the prevalence of the practice in the Africa region and to work out a program on how it can be applied in areas of local economic development and poverty reduction. Besides the participants from the Africa region, observers will be invited from Asia and Latin America to facilitate sharing of experiences.

**Conclusion**

Whilst there is no doubt the grass root communities are gaining ground in influencing decisions at local level, a lot more needs to be done to ensure that their voice is sustained and the competencies of public officials are continuously enhance to come to terms with the new change. To achieve this, capacity building in various forms should remain the principle vehicles for strengthening both the process and action. Capacity building institutions must position themselves to play a facilitative to achieve this goal.

I will conclude by quoting what Col. Max Ngandwe⁷ said.

“For effective local government based on democratic principles to succeed, there is need for capacity building in its broadest sense at all levels and in all sectors of Society. Municipal service delivery which is at the centre of Local Government is a complex science, art and business requiring tailor – designed institutions and suitably qualified and experienced personnel at both political and officer levels to run and manage them properly. There are no alternatives or short cuts to these basic operational requirements. Capacity building does not develop by accident. It is a product of well-planned and implemented process with adequate and appropriate investment. Paradoxically, many central governments, especially in developing countries, give, lack of adequate capacity at lower levels of the governance structure as the reason for not decentralizing without making any effort to build such capacity. Yes, given the usually limited resources at the disposal of central governments against many competing demands, investing in governance capacity building may not seem to rank high on their priority list. But it is a question of what comes first between the chicken and the egg”.

⁷ Col. Max Ngandwe, Rtd. was the President of the African Union of Local Authorities (AULA) between 1997 and 1999.
Key Questions emerging from the Paper

- What would central governments wish to see done to enhance participatory governance - planning and budgeting in local government?

- What would local governments wish to see done for them to engage in meaningful participatory governance?

- Which cities can be identified as providing good practices in the field of participatory planning and budgeting and governance in general?

- Under what conditions can participatory planning and budgeting be sustained?