

POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION IN AFRICA: EXPERIENCES OF UGANDA, RWANDA, AND SOUTH AFRICA

Discussion Paper

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Abstract

This paper looks at political decentralization or devolution and attempts an assessment of how it has been designed, implemented and how successful it has been in achieving the intended objective of being an instrument of promoting participation of grass-roots people in decision-making. The paper specifies a working understanding of political decentralization (devolution) and attempts to answer questions such as: (i) what are the practical reasons and objectives for devolution? (ii) Through what processes, modalities and mechanisms was devolution decided and agreed and how did such processes facilitate or constrain its implementation and success? (iii) if devolution was intended to promote participation in decision making in local governments, what was introduced in designing decentralized governance, to institutionalize participatory decision making? (iv) Based on the objective of promoting participatory decision making in local governments what are some of the cases that illustrate that devolution so far has worked? The paper is based on the decentralization experiences of Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa.

Key words: Decentralized governance, devolution, political decentralization, participation, participatory development planning, integrated development plans, community development committees.

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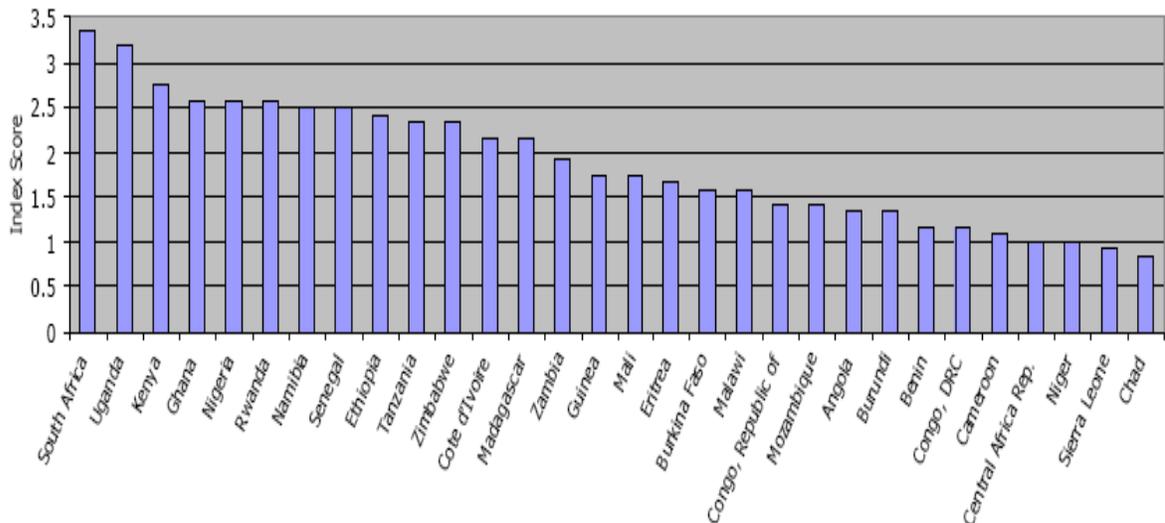
“The mere fact of opting for decentralization shall not by itself ensure that the population effectively participates in its development which is the ultimate goal of a good policy of decentralization and good governance. It is important to set up mechanisms reassuring the participation of the population....”¹

Introduction

In terms of modern Public administration, historically African countries have experienced fused, personalized and at best highly centralized governance systems and practices. In pre-colonial times kings or traditional leaders represented basically all authority. During the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods governance was structured and practiced in a highly centralized manner. During military dictatorships that in many countries replaced the immediate post-colonial governments governance was practically personalized. The search for inclusive, involving, and participatory governance has taken the path of decentralization. Political and administrative reforms that have been going on in many countries in Africa, especially since the 1990s, have sought to break with the past through decentralization of powers to lower local governments.

Decentralized governance is increasingly being favored by many African countries as the most suitable mode of governance through which poverty reduction interventions can be conceived, planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated². Many hope that the process of decentralization will facilitate greater participation of communities in problem analysis, project identification, planning, implementation as well as oversight which in turn will increase ownership and the likelihood of sustainability of such initiatives. In the graph below Ndegwa shows the extent to which different African countries have decentralized their governance.

Figure 1: Extent of decentralization in Africa³



The term decentralization embodies several concepts including devolution, deconcentration, delegation and delocalization⁴. In many instances a decentralization policy that promises success will most likely include dozens of each of these. This paper

however, will look at only political decentralization or devolution and attempt an assessment of how it has been designed, implemented and how successful it has been in achieving the intended objective of being an instrument of promoting participation of grass-roots people in decision-making. The paper will specify a working understanding of political decentralization (devolution) and attempt to answer questions such as the following: (i) what are the practical reasons and objectives for devolution? (ii) Through what processes, modalities and mechanisms was devolution decided and agreed and how did such processes facilitate or constrain its implementation and success? (iii) if devolution was intended to promote participation in decision making in local governments, what was introduced in designing decentralized governance, to institutionalize participatory decision making? (iv) Based on the objective of promoting participatory decision making in local governments what are some of the cases that illustrate that devolution so far has worked? The paper will be based on the decentralization experiences of Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa.

Working Understanding of Political Decentralization (Devolution)

Political decentralization can be understood to refer to either or both of the following: (i) Transferring the power of selecting political leadership and representatives from central governments to local governments, and (ii) Transferring the power and authority for making socio-politico-economic decisions from central governments to local governments and communities: Understanding political decentralization only in the first sense would be limiting the meaning of “political” to the choice of political leadership through elections. Therefore the promotion of political decentralization in this sense would entail only putting in place structural arrangements that would facilitate local people to exercise their voting power with limited hindrance or intervention from central government. Here political decentralization would be referring to only electoral decentralization and participation would be understood only in terms of elections. On the other hand, promoting political decentralization in the second sense, would entail putting in place structural arrangements and practices that would empower and facilitate local governments and communities to exercise not only the voting power in the choice of their local leadership and representatives but also to have strong influence in the making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of decisions that concern their socio-politico-economic wellbeing and to constantly demand accountability from their local leadership. The first sense of political decentralization refers to the vote while the second one refers to the voice. A combination of both enhances the influence of local people on the decisions that concern them.

Political decentralization is best conceived within these two frameworks so that the power and authority to decide is not limited to electing leaders or representatives but includes the full range transfer of decision-making from central government to local governments / authorities / communities. This requires a structural arrangement that goes beyond putting in place local governments. It requires a process that combines vertical and horizontal decentralization⁵.

While vertical decentralization transfers power and authority from central government to local government, horizontal decentralization empowers the local communities and enables them to receive and utilize the powers that are transferred to

them especially in problem analysis, priority setting, planning, and constantly demanding accountability from their local and national leadership or any governance actor at the local level. Horizontal decentralization would require growth of civil society as well as structuring local governments in such a way that they are legally obliged to seek and promote the participation of the local communities in setting priorities, planning and making decisions that the local governments will implement in a whole range of socio-politico-economic activities.

Objectives of devolution

The rationale behind devolution in the three countries (Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa) can be found in the countries' decentralization policy documents. Essentially decentralization in the three countries was promoted in response to the political and economic problems in their history. In South Africa, promoting local governments was aimed at “rebuilding local communities and environments, as the basis for a democratic, integrated, prosperous and truly non-racial society”⁶ following the trauma of apartheid in the country. In Rwanda decentralization was to “provide a structural arrangement for government and the people of Rwanda to fight poverty at close range, and to enhance their reconciliation via the empowerment of local populations”⁷ following the trauma of the genocide of 1994. In Uganda decentralization is “a democratic reform, which seeks to transfer political, administrative, financial and planning authority from central government to local government councils and to promote popular participation, empower local people to make their own decisions and enhance accountability and responsibility”⁸ following the brutal and ineffective regimes of Idi Amin (1971 -1979) and the Obote II regime (1981-1986). Political empowerment, economic development, improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services, ownership of local programs by local people, participation of the people in planning and implementation of development activities as well as improvement in democracy and accountability are common buzz terms in the decentralization policy of the three countries. The table below summarizes the stated objectives of decentralization in each of the three countries

Table: Objectives of decentralization

Uganda	South Africa	Rwanda
<p>1: The transfer of <i>real</i> power to Local Governments with the aim of reducing the load of work on remote and under-resourced central officials</p> <p>2: Bringing political and administrative control over services at the point where they are actually delivered, thereby improving accountability and effectiveness, and promoting people's feeling of “ownership” of programmes and projects executed in their Local Governments.</p> <p>3: Freeing local managers from central constraints and enabling them to develop, effective and sustainable organizational structures tailored to local circumstances in the long-term</p>	<p>The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) mandates local government to:</p> <p>1: Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities</p> <p>2: Ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>3: Promote social and economic development.</p> <p>4: Promote a safe and healthy environment.</p>	<p>1: To enable and reactivate local people to participate in initiating, making, implementing, and monitoring decisions and plans that concern them taking into consideration their local needs, priorities, capacities and resources by transferring power, authority and resources from central to local government and lower levels.</p> <p>2: To strengthen accountability and transparency in Rwanda by making local leaders directly accountable to the communities they serve and by establishing a clear linkage between the taxes they pay and the services that are financed by these taxes</p> <p>3: To enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of public administration to the local environment by placing the planning, financing, management and control of service provision at the point where services are provided and by enabling local leadership</p>

<p>4: Improving financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between the payment of taxes and the provision of services they finance.</p> <p>5: Improving the capacity of local authorities to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to users</p>	<p>5: Encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government</p>	<p>develop organization structures and capacities that take into consideration the local environment and needs</p> <p>4: To develop sustainable economic planning and management capacity at local levels that will serve as the driving motor for planning, mobilization and implementation of social, political and economic development to alleviate poverty</p> <p>5: To enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the planning, monitoring and delivery of services by reducing the burden from central government officials who are distanced from the point where needs are felt and services delivered</p>
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Engineering consensus on devolution

In decentralization parlance devolution is about transfer of decision-making powers and authority from central government to lower entities (local governments) by what ever name called. Considering the objectives given above, devolution represents a radical departure from the past (the centralized systems and practices people were used to). In the context of the three countries in question, it is tempting to arrive at an easy conclusion that the traumatic past (apartheid in the case of South Africa, genocide in the case of Rwanda, and turbulent brutal dictatorships in the case of Uganda) made agreement and consensus on devolution easy and straight forward. In reality this is not necessarily the case. There is need to analyze and assess the processes and mechanisms through which the consensus on devolution was engineered and reached. In fact for other African countries that are still in the initial stages of introducing decentralization and are still trying to manage resistance to decentralization the three countries may offer some lessons learnt on how to engineer consensus on the transfer of decision making powers from central government to local governments and communities.

First one needs to analyze and understand the stakeholders and actors plus the interests they represent in the process of decentralization. The stakeholders and actors are several and their interests are rarely the same. First the political wing of central government must have the political will to engage in shared exercise of power and authority. Without political will decentralization cannot succeed. Second the bureaucracy of central government (the Civil servants) must be ready and willing to facilitate the process of transferring power, authority, functions, responsibilities and the requisite resources. Without bureaucratic will, there will be many stumbling blocks in the way of decentralization. Third, the society at the grass-roots especially community leadership, however organized, must be capable and willing to receive and utilize the power and authority responsibly for the socio-economic development of the people. Without civic will and capability, the functions transferred through decentralization will not be carried out effectively and the resources transferred will be wasted. In addition local leadership is likely to behave as local dictators and jeopardize the participatory or even representative democracy that decentralization is intended to achieve. Lastly, since we are dealing with relatively poor countries mostly dependant on donor funds for implementation of decentralization, there has to be willingness on the part of donors and development partners to support decentralization. Donor support for decentralization is not always a

given. It is interesting to see how these issues were handled to engineer consensus for devolution in the three cases.

Engineering support for decentralization in Uganda:

Uganda's current decentralization was born from both the exigencies of a guerrilla war and ideological conviction. First, in Luwero district which was the initial area occupied by Museveni's guerilla force, a political local people-based infrastructure, named the Resistance Councils, which aimed at cultivating and sustaining support for the National Resistance Army (NRA) was secretly organized in the areas which the guerrillas captured and occupied. Despite the necessary secrecy, the structure was democratic in the sense that it was composed of democratically elected members of the villages. Later the structure was introduced in other areas captured serving the purpose of educating the villagers about why it was important to support the guerrilla war and remove the Obote II regime from power. Second, the first point of the Ten Point Program of the National Resistance Movement which was elaborated during the guerrilla war and which was Museveni's manifesto around which he galvanized national support for taking over power emphasized democracy, especially participatory local democracy. Political decentralization was therefore a practical step taken to actualize this ideological conviction. Whether one considers the exigencies of the guerrilla war or the ideological conviction, the most visible political aim of the National Resistance Movement in pursuing decentralization right from the beginning was to widen its support by increasing people's participation in decision making processes through the Resistance Councils system. So the struggle was double edged. On one side the National Resistance Movement (NRM) wanted political support from the grass-roots people⁹. On the other it wanted to plant seeds of participatory democracy for empowering the people.

After the National Resistance Army (NRA) capture State power, the rhetoric of war had to be curtailed and new methods of galvanizing support for and reaching consensus on decentralized governance (Resistance Councils) had to be deployed. Essentially two methodologies were used to gauge and galvanize support for the decentralization policy of the National Resistance Movement: survey and enquiry and piloting. First a Commission of enquiry was established in 1987 to conduct survey, enquiry and consultations at all levels to establish what form of local government should be operated in the country. The Commission of Enquiry recommended the Resistance Councils System as democratic organs of the people¹⁰. Second, in 1993 implementation of decentralization started in 13 Districts. Officially this was known as the first phase of decentralization but technically it was viewed as pilot exercise in decentralization. The experiences and lessons learned in the first thirteen districts to be decentralized were used to finally decentralize the rest of the districts in the country. In 1993 the Local Government (Resistance Councils) Statue, 1993 was passed firmly providing a legal basis for Resistance Councils in the country. These two methods, the Commission of Enquiry and the piloting provided sufficient time for consultations, discussions, negotiations, to reach consensus on devolution in the country. In 1995 a new National Constitution was promulgated after nation-wide consultations. Chapter 11 of the Constitution gives a clear constitutional base for decentralized governance in the country. Following the Constitution the Local government Act of 1997 was enacted cementing devolution.

However, the implementation process of decentralization has experienced some resistance some of which is still going on. First some of the bureaucrats in Ministries believed that they would lose power over resources through decentralization and resisted its implementation. To counter this, the Decentralization Secretariat was established in 1992 as a semi-autonomous body under the Ministry of Local Government to spearhead the implementation of decentralization in the country. Second, in Uganda since independence there has always been a claim especially from the Buganda region for a federal arrangement of governance in the country. This claim was undermined by the decentralization policy. The advocates of federalism have never given up and at any given opportunity they raise the issue of establishing federalism in the country. In a way this has given the impression that the consensus on decentralized governance in the country has never been reached. However, chances of federalism being implemented in the country are slim because the grass-roots people have tasted the power and authority they enjoy under current decentralization. They will not easily accept to give away any of the powers to a higher level of government under federalism. Lastly, during the initial stages of implementing the decentralization policy, Donors were not completely in agreement with the government on what kind of decentralization was to be chosen for the country. While the government was clear in its priorities that it sought to implement devolution as a policy of participatory democracy and people's political empowerment and decentralize up to sub-county level, the World Bank, for example, sought to persuade government to implement decentralization as a means of efficiency in financial management and financial accountability and decentralize only up to the district level. It is DANIDA and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) who agreed with the government on the objective of democratization and people empowerment and provided funding for implementing decentralization including the financing of the Decentralization Secretariat in the initial stages. Most other Donors turned around and supported decentralization after it demonstrated success and popular support.

But engineering support for devolution in Uganda had also to do with the substantive content especially in terms of widening the bracket of political involvement and participation to include women, youth, and people with disabilities. Most Ugandans saw the introduction of the inclusive Resistance Councils as an opportunity for them to have a say in the affairs of their locality. They also took it as a chance to politically get rid of those among them who had been associated with the regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. As for the women and people with Disabilities, their representation and participation in the Resistance councils was a rare occurrence not to be missed and was perceived as a sign of the magnanimity of the new leadership and its commitment to the wellbeing of the disadvantaged.

Negotiating cooperation in devolution in South Africa:

If in Uganda decentralization was born from the logic of searching for support for the guerrilla war and introducing grass-roots participatory democracy, in South Africa it was an offspring of the struggle to dismantle the segregating local administration system of apartheid. The process is different from the one in Uganda described above. In fact the debates on and publicity of the process of abolishing Apartheid at national level in a way masked what was going on at local level to introduce a local government system that

would correct the socio-politico-economic injustices and segregation that obtained through apartheid. Although Apartheid was abolished during the first half of the 1990s, it left a permanent mark on the local government system in the country. For this reason a complete understanding of the process of post apartheid devolution is only possible when one grasps the history of human settlements and the role local governments played in establishing and sustaining separation, segregation, and inequality at local level¹¹. The history of the resistance against this system at local level also played a big role in shaping the development of local governments in the country. It should be noted that while in Uganda decentralization was supply driven from above with consultations made to confirm and galvanize support for it, in South Africa decentralized governance as it stands today was demanded from the grass-roots black communities as a way of dismantling apartheid. The consultations about it were to determine what shape it would take and to solicit at least cooperation from the white communities in its decision and implementation. In a way it was a new deal reached between the aspirations of the black local communities and the status quo of white supremacy and segregation to implement the agenda of doing away with apartheid for the benefit of every one.

The negotiations were spearheaded by both the Local forums and the National Local Government Negotiating Forum which eventually negotiated the Local Government Transition Act of 1993 forming three phases through which the post-apartheid local government system would be put in place. The current decentralized governance system is part of the outcomes of the negotiated National Constitution which mandated local governments to: provide democratic and accountable government for local communities, ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, promote social and economic development, promote a safe and healthy environment, and encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government.

Sensitizing and convincing the people about decentralization in Rwanda

After the war and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the leadership sought to decentralize governance and let people have a strong say in determining their socio-politico-economic destiny. The leadership had a legal basis on this in the Arusha agreements which, without mentioning decentralization, had committed government to creating a governance system that passes power to the people. In the Decentralization document it is stated that one of the legal foundations of decentralization in the country is the “principle of power sharing as expressed in the Accord de Paix d’Arusha entre le Gouvernement de la République Rwandaise et le Front Patriotique Rwandais. Up to now power sharing has only been seen among the political elite at Parliament and Executive levels. The decentralization policy will reinforce power sharing by ensuring that the Rwandese people themselves are empowered to shape their political, economic, and social destiny”¹².

The proposal for decentralization thus came from above. The government then had the hard task of convincing a traumatized population used to being told by Central government authorities what to do in almost everything. Rwanda is a typical example of decentralization from above. The formulation of the decentralization policy was done by government with assistance from consultants. The unique aspect in the formulation of the policy was that it was initially done as part of the overall governance program and

strategy of the country which was formulated through consultations (meetings, workshops, and seminars) with all government institutions. After decentralization was adopted as one of the components of the national governance program, the decentralization policy was formulated. The policy is premised on promoting participatory democracy, empowering grass-roots communities for socio-economic development, and reconciliation. While these are noble causes to pursue, the population needed to be sensitized, persuaded, and enabled to embrace them. This task constituted the initial years of introducing decentralization in the country (generally from 1997 to 2000). Seminars, field visits by the Minister in charge of local government and his staff, study visits to other countries that had implemented decentralization, intensive sensitization of the population on their understanding and contribution to the success of the decentralization were successfully conducted and the population came to understand and accept decentralization as a mode of governance to be applied in the country. Political will to decentralize initiated the policy, civic will to accept decentralization was cultivated, but essentially bureaucratic will was generally lacking. Because of the reluctance of the bureaucracy (Civil servants) in 2005 (six years after decentralization was implemented) a number of services which had been legally decentralized especially health, education and agricultural services, were yet to be effectively decentralized. This prompted another bout of consultation (workshops and seminars) which culminated in the review of the decentralization in the country and, without changing the initial thrust and objectives of the policy, the formulation of the “decentralized governance reform policy” aimed essentially at effectively decentralizing the delivery of these services and improving the performance of local governments in this regard¹³. In effect and with hind sight knowledge, one notices that some of the aspects of the “Decentralized Governance Reform Policy” confirm an important aspect of Rwanda’s decentralization. It is supply driven and highly driven from the top. In the decentralized governance reform policy, it was possible to reduce the number of local governments (Districts) from 106 to only thirty¹⁴. This is contrary to the usual tendency which is for local governments to strongly resist their abolishment. If the districts had gained local identity and had concern for their control of their local problems and interests they would not have accepted to be combined very easily. On the contrary lower administrative units would have been demanding local government (district) status. Either the government’s persuasion was very powerful or central government still has the strongest say even in local affairs.

In this section we have illustrated that even if devolution is an exercise of transferring decision-making power and authority from central government to local government, its support is not always a given. It has to be engineered depending on the circumstances that obtain. In Uganda engineering this support was in the interest of the government because in the first instance decentralization had to be used to galvanise support for the resistance war and secondly it had to be used to spread the ideology of participatory democracy of the National Resistance Movement. In addition it was used to dismantle the political base for the political parties that had dominated the political landscape of the country since independence. Sensitization workshops, consultations through a Commission of enquiry and a pilot phase were instrumental in galvanising support. In South Africa support or at least collaboration had to be mobilised especially from the white communities to accept the principle of empowering local communities through shifts in the local government system to dismantle apartheid. The National Local Government Negotiation Forum as well as Local Forums were instrumental in these negotiations which went on alongside the negotiations for the post apartheid national

constitution. In Rwanda, the decentralization policy having been initiated and lead from the top, the population had to be sensitized about its meaning and benefits so that they could support it. Workshops, seminars etc were instrumental in this.

The next section is dedicated to illustrating how participation in decision-making, which is the real indicator of political power, has taken root and been institutionalised in the three countries.

Institutionalizing Participatory Decision-making

“Participation does make better citizens. I believe it, but I can't prove it. And neither can anyone else. The kinds of subtle changes in character that come about, slowly, from active, powerful participation in democratic decisions cannot easily be measured with the blunt instruments of social science. Those who have actively participated in democratic governance, however, often feel that the experience has changed them. And those who observe the active participation of others often believe that they see its long run effects on the citizens' character”¹⁵

Decentralization has many aspects one of the fundamental ones being the establishment of local governments with legislative assemblies (Local Councils) and Executive arms of local government to manage the implementation of the decisions of the Council. Traditionally democratic participation would be understood to refer to the participation of the people in elections to choose their leaders for example “participation in the democratic process as measured by turnouts in major elections”.¹⁶ In this paper we will not pay particular attention to the participation of local people in the election of their representatives in the Councils. We will concentrate on the participation of the people directly in the decisions of local governments. Participation of the people in electing their representatives in local government councils in Uganda, South Africa, and Rwanda has been commented on and found to have effectively taken root.¹⁷

On the other hand, participatory democracy which refers to how the local communities engage in the making of the decisions that concern them needs to be studied not only in respect of whether and how it is taking place but especially in the way institutions have been created to formalize its operation and sustainability. This is a rather lengthy subject matter. We will selectively pick some of the cases which we consider as prominent and present them to illustrate the institutionalization of participatory decision making in Africa.

Institutionalization of Participation of the women, youth and disadvantaged in decision-making in Rwanda and Uganda

In Uganda as well as in Rwanda the policy of devolution introduced a form of direct participatory decision-making at the lowest level of the local government system. In Uganda the lowest level is the Local Council one (LCI) which is composed of all members of the village who are 18 years and above. They elect from among themselves a Chairperson and an executive to lead the process of their decision-making and their implementation. In Rwanda, the lowest level is the cell where, like in Uganda, all members of the cell who have reached voting age re members of the Council. They also elect from among themselves an Executive to manage their affairs at that level. This is direct participatory democracy. As the local government system progresses to higher levels however, participation is through representation. Here the inclusion of

representatives of groups formerly excluded (such as women, the youth, and the disabled) is significant in the implementation of participatory decision-making.

Participation should not be generalized. There are groups who need special attention in order to promote and encourage their participation. These are mostly women, youth, and the disabled as well as the very minority groups. While in certain societies provisions are made to make such groups represented in for example national legislatures and in the national voting processes, this is very limited. Their participation can be best promoted at local community level within a framework of decentralized governance. In order for them to have their influence on the development process, inputs, and outputs, they need to participate using the vote, their voice and their direct action by engaging in specific activities.

In designing local government councils in Uganda and Rwanda, care was taken to legislate mandatory representation of women and the youth in local government councils. In Uganda, for example, at least one third of each local government council must be women. In Rwanda at least half of the local government council must be women. However, there has been observation to the effect that care should be taken not to mistake the numerical strength of women on local government councils with the way they participate in and influence the decisions of the same councils. In Uganda, the former Director of the Decentralization Secretariat observed that although there was a significant improvement, the number of women serving on Local Government Councils, increase of female representation in decision-making process does not automatically guarantee that the decisions are more gender sensitive.¹⁸

Institutionalizing Participatory Development Planning in Rwanda and South Africa

The Community Development Policy of Rwanda points out a critical fact that is often forgotten in the design and implementation of political decentralization to foster participatory democracy. It states that “the mere fact of opting for decentralization shall not by itself ensure that the population effectively participates in its development which is the ultimate goal of a good policy of decentralization and good governance. It is important to set up mechanisms reassuring the participation of the population especially in a country like Rwanda where the community, which constitutes the base of community development, is rather skeptical because, in the past, it was not fully involved in its development”¹⁹. South Africa’s Integrated Development Planning and Rwanda’s Community Development Committees provide good examples of institutionalizing participatory development planning in local governments.

Integrated development plans (IDP) in South Africa:²⁰ In South Africa, each Municipality is by law required to make an Integrated Development Plan elaborated with the participation of the entire Municipality, the community and all the stakeholders and coordinated with the plans of all the other levels of government (e.g. District, Province, and National). The Integrated Development Plan Representative Forum is the structural arrangement that facilitates the formulation of the plan and may be composed of the following: Members of the executive committee of the council, Councilors including district councilors, Traditional leaders, Ward committee representative, Heads of departments and senior officials from municipal and government department, representatives from organized stakeholder groups, people who fight for the rights of

unorganized groups (e.g. a gender activist), Resource people or advisors, and Community representatives. The main aim of the Integrated Development Plan Representatives Forum is to: provide an opportunity for stakeholders to represent the interests of their constituencies, provide a structure for discussion, negotiations and joint decision making, ensure proper communication between all stakeholders and the municipality, and monitor the planning and implementation process.²¹

Given the apartheid planning which left the country with: racially divided businesses and residential areas, towns that were badly planned leaving the poor lacking in terms of service delivery, undeveloped and under-serviced rural areas, settlements which made the delivery of services difficult and expensive, Local Municipalities have to use the Integrated Development Planning method to plan for the development of their areas.

The law requires that the municipalities come up with Integrated development Plans that provide the following: a vision of the long-term development of the City, an assessment of the existing level of development in the City which must include an identification of the need for basic municipal services, the City's development priorities and objectives for its elected term, the City's development strategies which must be aligned with any national or provincial sectoral plans and planning requirements, a spatial development framework which must include the provision of basic guidelines for a land use management system, the City's operational strategies, a disaster management plan, a financial plan, which must include a budget projection for at least the next three years, and key performance indicators and performance targets.²² The process generally goes through analysis of the problems and their causes, prioritization of the problems, developing vision for the future of the community of the municipality, developing strategies for realizing the vision, identifying projects for implementing the strategies, designing the projects, integration of the plans and ends with the approval of the plans.

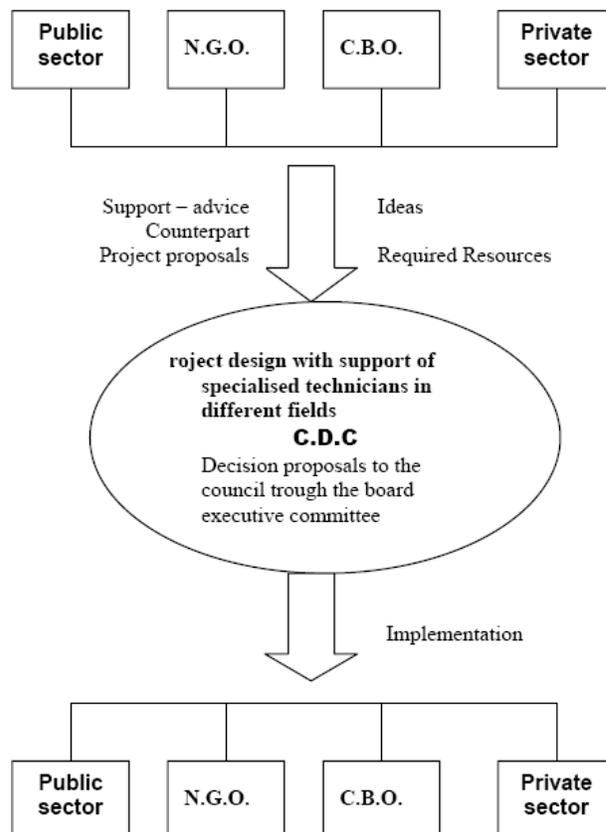
The structure and practice has served to: ensure effective use of scarce resources in local government, speed up the delivery of services, attract additional funding, strengthen participatory democracy, promote coordination between local, provincial, and national government, and overcome the legacy of apartheid especially in segregation in Municipalities. But above all, it has institutionalized participatory decision-making in local governments and given a whole new meaning of political decentralization going far beyond election of leaders to embrace the ultimate purpose of local government which is economic development. It is a structure that illustrates how communities can be empowered to participate in and influence the socio-political-economic decisions that concern them.

The Community Development Committees (CDC) in Rwanda:²³ Another experience which illustrates how some African countries have taken political decentralization to embrace domains that are beyond election of political leaders to include socio-economic decision-making in particular and community development in general is the one of Rwanda's Community Development Committees which have their origin in the Community Development Policy of November 2001. Community development was conceived as a dynamic process of socio-economic activities in which members of a given community analyze their environment, define their needs and problems, both individual and communal, elaborate collective and individual plans to address the problems and needs, implement the plans using community resources complementing them where necessary with resources provided by central government and/or private sector organizations. Noting that that people's participation in their own

development is the key element of community development and the main solution on which all the other solutions rely in fighting poverty in a comprehensive way, the Community Development Policy sets its key objective as allowing the implantation of the national policy of decentralization by suggesting ways and means of assuring the actual and durable participation of the community in its own development focused on poverty reduction.

The Community Development Committees at different levels of local governance are composed differently but characteristically include all actors in the community. The composition of the CDC at the district level, city and town, for example, consists of: the Council Executive Committee Secretary in charge of finance and economic development as the Chairperson of the Committee, the district urban area executive secretary; the chairpersons of CDCs at sector level, the women representatives at district and urban area level, the youth representatives at district level, and representatives of other actors in development from Non Governmental organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and private business enterprises, at district or urban area level. Even foreign development partners and donors who have projects in the District will be represented in the Community Development Committees. The diagram below illustrates the interrelationships between the various actors and the CDC.

Figure 2: Interrelations between the Community development Committees and other organizations at local level²⁴



Different actors in development channel their ideas, support, advice, technical assistance, project proposals and resources to the Community Development Committees which, in collaboration with those actors, develop them and make proposals for the decision-making to the council through the executive committees. The decision of the council is communicated back to those actors for purposes of implementation and each actor shall implement the activities relating to their specialization and domain of operation. The monitoring-evaluation and the control of the activities are co-coordinated by the Community Development Committee with the support of the community, donors and other development partners. Through this institutionalized interrelationship among a multiplicity of actors at local level in the process of planning for socio-economic planning for service delivery and development, the Community Development Committees have enabled local population to own their development destiny and to learn that local government is something more than enforcing laws and regulations made from above.

Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has enabled us to show that decentralization in Africa (at least in the three countries) is an ambitious process that seeks to empower local communities to engage in their own development. This is a departure from most past decentralization efforts which were geared only in the direction of administration. The objectives of decentralization in Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa give decentralized governance a development mission and call up on local communities to shape their destiny.

Decentralization has enhanced participation in decision-making, enabled local communities to determine their local leadership through democratic elections, provided institutionalized structural arrangements for participatory bottom-up development planning, and for involving special groups such as women, youth and the disabled in decision-making. It has also facilitated the mainstreaming of gender in development planning at local level²⁵.

The experience of Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa also illustrate that whether decentralization is demanded as in South Africa, engineered from the top through consultations and pilot programs as in Uganda, or directly driven from the top as in Rwanda, the process of agreeing the exercise of shared power and authority should not be taken for granted. Which ever approach applied, support for decentralization comes through patient and sustained negotiation, sensitization, persuasion, demonstration of positive results, and sometimes, when necessary coercion. The three cases also show that decentralization is not a one time action but an on-going process that constantly engages the relevant stakeholders and actors in order to produce the desired results. Finally if decentralization has to be successful it needs to be conceived as the transfer of power and authority to the people and not only to local governments. This requires innovative ways of structuring and institutionalizing the interface between the people and their local governments. The Integrated Development Planning in South Africa and the Community

Development Committees in Rwanda are indeed innovative ways of institutionalizing the participation of the people in developmental decision-making.

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⁴ Decentralization is a generic term which covers a number of modes such as the following: (i) deconcentration which refers to the process of administrative decentralization whereby the central government designs a structure that enables its agents to work close to the local people in field units / agencies of central government, (ii) delegation which is the transfer of responsibilities from central government to semi-autonomous bodies that are directly accountable to the central government, (iii) devolution which is the process of transferring decision-making and implementation powers, functions, responsibilities and resources to legally constituted local governments, (iv) delocalization which is the spatial distribution of central government socio-economic development facilities and activities such as schools, hospitals, etc in peripheral regions. Discussion on these terms can be found in: Gay Braibant: Institutions Administratives Comparees: Les Controles (Fondation nationale des Sciences politiques, Services de Photocopies, Paris, 1985-1986 pages 89 – 93) and in Jacques Chevallier, Science Administrative (Presse universitaire de France, Paris, 1986, pages 372-386). See also Charles Debbasch, Science Administrative 5th edition (Daloz, Paris, 1989, pages 221-237).

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