

1. Abstract

Government authorities owe their populations the responsibility to plan, facilitate and to sustain the provision of communal services. This is usually achieved through several methods, one of which is decentralisation. In Africa, some states are in the process of decentralising the central government decision making process to offer more acceptable “local services”, though engaged in the process; the programmes are not very effective in some states. This paper examines decentralisation and appeal to state authorities in the process to take appropriate responsibilities towards realising the programme; to institute grassroots-central government link to an effective decision making process.

To be effective, decentralisation is a deliberate and purposeful driven mechanism that brings the benefits of offering quality services to the electorates, through the bottom-up local authority dialogue structures. On issues of a country’s governance, decentralisation is a tool that facilitates the provision of meaningful services to the local people. It is the way forward to development, the way forward to meaningful freedom of expression and a much advocated starting point for people charting the course of their own development, i.e. development as a democratic tool, for people to freely express their common needs.

Government’s resources are usually complimented by the business or corporate social responsibility spending and the civil society’s charitable resources to offer much needed services. The government, corporate sector and charitable service provisions are better coordinated through a decentralised structure which offers people the right to decide what they need, and a means of accountability of leadership actions in the service delivery processes. That is the way forward for people oriented development efforts. Above all, decentralisation is a tool to be used to facilitate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While appealing for effectiveness of the processes involved, this paper is written to salute and to encourage the efforts of states already decentralising their central ministerial unit’s decision making processes.

2. Meaning of decentralisation

Generally, decentralisation is defined as any of various means of more widely distributing decision-making to bring it closer to the point of service or action. Gregersen et al adopts the following definitions:

Political decentralisation: Groups at different levels of government—central, meso and local—are empowered to make decisions related to what affects them.

Administrative decentralisation: Different levels of government administer resources and matters that have been delegated to them, generally through a constitution. In terms of decentralisation as a process of change, and according to the level of transfer of responsibilities, it is useful to distinguish between de-concentration, delegation and devolution.

Fiscal decentralisation: In this case, previously concentrated powers to tax to generate revenues are dispersed to other levels of government, e.g., local Governments are given the power to raise and retain financial resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

Market decentralisation: Government privatises or deregulates private functions, such as occurred in the case of New Zealand forest sector".

3. Decentralisation and related terminology

- 1) De-concentration is the process by which the agents of central government control are relocated and geographically dispersed" (Sayer et al.).
- 2) Devolution is the statutory granting of powers from the central government of a sovereign state to government at a sub national level, such as a regional, local, or state level. It differs from federalism in that the powers devolved may be temporary and ultimately reside in central government, thus the state remains, *de jure*, unitary.
- 3) Delegation is the transfer of managerial responsibility for specified functions to other public organisations outside normal central government control, whether provincial or local government or parastatal agencies" (Ferguson and Chandrasekharan).

4. Why decentralise

The central government is elected by the national electorate. One of the prime functions of an elected government is to manage the national economy in ways that the citizens, irrespective of location, benefit from government's interventions. In order to meet up with these expectations, governments are required to decentralise to institute local authority dialogue lines by empowering local communities to decide on what is good for them. By decentralisation, the decision making process on community resource utilisation and related infrastructures are initiated by the concern community and then pass up to hierarchy for implementation. Decentralisation creates an environment for democratic governance. An environment necessary for the central government to dialogue with the populations they serve and get their feedback before packaging required services. It enables the government to provide acceptable cost benefit services as prioritised by the beneficiaries.

In 2000, the United Nations agreed on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are intended to meet widespread human needs, the MDGs are:

MDG1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

MDG2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

MDG3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

MDG4: Reduce Child Mortality

MDG5: Improve Maternal Health

MDG6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

MDG7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability
MDG8: Develop A Global Partnership for Development

The dateline set for the attainment of the MDGs is 2015. As at the end of 2010, five years to the end of the United Nation's ambitious 15 years project, expected outcomes are yet to be visible. In meeting widespread human needs, countries develop strategic plans geared towards meeting the needs of their populations. People that live on less than \$1 a day should be touched by appropriately plan and delivered services. The services should be tailored in ways that influences lives by improving yields and incomes for poor people to achieve acceptable living standards. That is the spirit of the MDGs. Each of the goals compliments the rest of the seven in ways that are acceptable and sustainable to eradicating human miseries and developing the economies.

Decentralisation is therefore a viable tool to reaching out to all peoples, planning nationally and making decisions locally to attain the plans, i.e., logical conclusions are drawn after feedback from communities using the local authorities' structures. This paper is of the opinion that decentralised economies will attain the MDGs faster than none or slow process moving decentralise states. Above all, decentralisation is a people friendly development policy.

5. The nature of authority in the decentralisation process

Authority is merely the discretion conferred on people to use their judgment to make decisions and issue instructions. Decentralisation therefore is the tendency to disperse decision making authority in an organisational structure. It is a functional aspect of delegation; therefore authority is not delegated, it is centralisation. There could be absolute centralisation of authority at the center, which means no subordinates, and therefore no structured organisation.

On the other hand, there can not be absolute decentralisation, for if the centre delegates all their authority, their status as the central authority ceases, then the center will be eliminated, and therefore no government. Centralisation and decentralisation are tendencies which hold organisations and governments together. The government must first be centralised to plan for, and to create and manage the national strategic directions. These directions are therefore refocused to local realities of particular regions, hence the need to decentralise and better serve local populations.

6. Functional Government structures

The chain of command in the government power structure refers to the line of authority from the central administration, Chief executive or president or hierarchy down to the community or local government structures (bottom level).

One important problem for efficient and effective management of resources is to establish the most suitable number of administrative links in the line of government action. Peter Drucker cites the Roman Catholic Church as a classic example of an organization with a short chain of command. From the pope down to the Parish Priest there is only one intermediary layer of management, the Bishops, so that the papal edict comes down to parish priest just one step.

Writing on the topic federal and functional decentralization, Peter Drucker argued in favour of more rather than less decentralisation, in order to provide a spur to management for better performance. A national governance programme should be structured so as to facilitate efficient and effective management of national resources. The efficiency and effectiveness of managing national resources in developing nations lies in getting the grassroots into decision making on issues of common concern to them and their community. Indigenous people in local communities know their priorities better than any outsider, and they are satisfied with community programmes which are rightly informed by thinking and directions. This is to say that government's spending on community work should result from the

community peoples chosen projects. Projects executed without the participation of the beneficiaries, which must start with project initiation may well end up as central governments model designed and forced through, but simply wasteful spending as beneficiaries may not use strange facilities.

7. Public Spending Philosophy

Government spending is the main source for development capital of the developing nations of Africa. As the needs are many with limited budgetary allocations, governments in order to carry out yearly development plans adapts a culture which recognises that inefficiency or non maximising policies usually prevent the government from achieving its annual objectives.

With the decentralisation process, local authorities are under unprecedented pressure from central government to achieve greater value for money in their operations. The first stage in the government cost-cutting or efficient resource management process lies in the basic principles of Value For Money (VFM) attitudes. The VFM principles take their roots from; *Efficiency*, *Effectiveness* and *Economy* on government allocated resource spending;

7.1 Efficiency is considered the most important of the elements since it embraces both in puts and outputs. The greater the output achieved for the same or less input, the more efficient the spending is evaluated to be. As output rises at one rate, the input should be rising at a lesser rate.

7.2 Effectiveness is concern with the achievements, i.e. outputs: how well the resource has done in meeting targets? Governments use this technique on it's own; and the problem is that they tend to examine how well they have met a target without then asking if it cost more than was necessary.

7.3 Economy technique when used with effectiveness, resolves problems within the system because economy is concern with inputs, i.e. what something has cost.

7.4 Problems of cost-cutting and civil services efficiency

The problems with any cost-cutting exercise is the danger of working with pre-determine figures, and excluding all other considerations, which includes the long term implications of growth and its attendant accommodating effects. Some unpleasant effects of cost –cutting are poor quality inputs, recruitment freeze or delays in filling vacant posts, delays in property maintenance, delays or avoidance of staff training options, etc.

8. Waste to be avoided

8.1 Allocations from central government to local authorities

Resources at local government disposal that are not being used are a cost to the authority.

This means that resources sent from central administration on the imagination that could be utilised by the local authority may just be wasteful expenditures. This can happen when equipment are bought without consulting the users, old or obsolete equipment are supplied the authorities. In a truly democratic dispensation, every aspect of service delivery should be properly consulted, and if need be, the required local manpower trained. Indigenous people trained and raised from the authority area are a plus to any decentralisation process, and a permanent link to progressive development. Relocated civil servants from elsewhere on permanent basis, other than the local authority area may not be the best of decisions.

9. Government and the Local Economy

Before the World war 11, the average citizen was poorly educated and dependent from orders from above to know what to do. In such an environment it is relatively easy for a superior to give instructions and use a dictatorial manner, perhaps with coercion and threats to win obedience.

The post-war years brought drastic changes: populations increased and with more complexity, with citizens becoming better educated with increased international concerns to protect nationals from coercion by dictatorial hierarchy.

From here henceforth, there have been calls for governments to establish longer chains of command, extending the decision-making procedures for the management of state resources to the grassroots. If the provision of services at the local level is to be people oriented, those services should be produced after due consultations; calling for popular participation of stakeholders listening to the wishes of local people, and fulfilling community needs on community priority bases; thereby producing services and courteously delivering them. Care need to be taken to provide efficient, effective and accessible services.

Decentralising is a thought out policy for government services to be user-friendly with the less privileged, the grassroots people, or the informal economy class. In the developing countries of Africa, those services that touch the lives of the poor and vulnerable in their communities will include but not limited to:

- 1) Trained community leaders to facilitate and animate decision making
- 2) Health facilities and related infrastructures
- 3) Schools and related infrastructures of libraries
- 4) Leisure centers and their related cultural infrastructures
- 5) Appropriate artisans centers
- 6) Pipe borne water needed to eradicate related diseases
- 7) Village energy supply schemes
- 8) Adult Literacy committees or centers
- 9) Environmental information supply and monitoring centers
- 10) Civic education and Civil liberties in relationship to Human Rights counseling centers
- 11) Appropriate farming technologies and tools, etc

Lack of these services is one of the causes of urban drift and eventual brain drain into Diaspora. The future of African nations lies in developing rural infrastructures compatible with what is found in urban centers. That is an attraction to keep the youths back in the villages to learn and improved upon traditional value systems and practices.

10. Personal Attitudes towards Delegation/Decentralisation

Although charting an organisation and outlining goals and duties help in delegation, the knowledge of the principles of delegation will furnish a basis for it; but certain personal attitudes underlie the ability to delegate.

10.1 Receptiveness: An underlying attribute of superior who will delegate authority is a willingness to give other people's ideas a chance. Decision-making always involves some discretion, and a subordinate's decision is not likely to be exactly the one a superior would have made.

The superior who knows how to delegate must have a minimum of the "NIH (Not Invented Here) factor" and must be able not only to welcome the ideas of others but also to help others and to compliment them on ingenuity.

10.2 Willingness to let go: A superior who will effectively delegate authority must be willing to release the right to make decisions to subordinates. Superiors who insist upon confirming every purchase or the appointment of every labourer or secretary do not realise that doing so takes their time and attention from far more important decisions. Superiors will enhance their contributions to the firm if they

concentrate on tasks that contribute most to the organisation's objectives, and assign to subordinates other tasks, even though they could accomplish the later better themselves.

10.3 Willingness to let others make decisions: Since everyone makes mistakes, a subordinate should be allowed to make some mistakes in a learning process, the costs to those learning processes are considered as investment in personal development. While delegating, counseling, asking questions and carefully explaining objectives and policies are the appropriate tools to good delegation.

10.4 Willingness to trust subordinates: Trust is a key in every work relationship. The ability to trusts and work with others must be inculcated in top management. Distrusting a subordinate because the boss does not want to let go, or for fear of failure, is a serious weakness in management. In a work relation the superior and the subordinates are two sides of the same coin, while the superior have the role to develop and equip the subordinate, from good will intentions for the good of the organisation, the subordinate must be willing to learn, and to ask questions and get clarifications from the boss.

10.5 Willingness to establish and use broad controls: Tasks are delegated but not responsibility, and so the superior must be able to develop and institute controls based on; Clear goals, policies, and objectives and to some extent determining activities.

11. Decentralisation as a philosophy and policy

Decentralisation implies more than delegation: It reflects a philosophy of organisation and management. It requires careful selection of which decisions to push down into the organizational structure and which to hold near the top, specific policy making to guide the decision making, proper selection and training of people, and adequate controls.

A policy of decentralising all areas of the entire structure and can be looked upon as an essential element of a management system: without decentralization, subordinates could not use their discretion to handle the ever-changing situations they face. Organisations or institutions are meant to achieve bigger results than what individuals can. This means that there is every reason for setting up an organization that deals with issues of centrally planned concerns.

Decentralisation is the process where the decision making process is geared towards those who benefits from the decisions, that is moving decision making structures from the center (top) to include the bottom, beneficiaries of the interventions. As far as community governance is concern, non consulted solutions are clear signs of bad leadership, which is, pushing down government design models, instead of peoples identified needs to vulnerable beneficiaries.

12. Decentralisation as a Democratic Practice

Political culture is a critical factor in a democratic process. Citizenship sovereignty is recognized as a key element to facilitate better awareness and informed people who make better voting choices.

Citizen's sovereignty creates an atmosphere where people can participate freely in political decisions, and are able to cause the government to be open in their activities and accountable for their actions. Devolving power and the decision making process down the line to the local government level structures, strengthens the democratic process by accustoming participants to the formalities of democratic decision making. To a people oriented government, decentralisation empowers the grassroots people, giving back power to those who are capable of making wider choices for issues of common concern to their communities. Democracy involves all people, be they; political, religious, charitable actors, etc, these people depends on the government and its governing structures to implement people friendly, and user friendly legislation to make life comfortable to all. Decentralisation

therefore is an acceptable and all embracing process that uses the democratic machinery to govern people more effectively through quality decisions initiated by the citizens.

A state that embarks on a decentralisation process puts in place a deliberate process of a compassionate government to provide for the weak and helpless and socially disadvantaged. Those are the people whose quality of life has to be improved and they have the rights to benefits from government's cover, activities and comfort. An effective decentralisation practice builds social capital for the government, creates trust and shared values between the government and its people, which are necessary elements that determine quality leadership. Decentralisation is closely linked to democracy and representation and should therefore be a connecting factor to nationality and nationalism.

13. Decentralisation as a Service delivery tool in development

Decentralisation is a service delivery tool which puts an end to the risk of duplication. Once the Local Authorities become involved in decision making, it will mean that accountability will fall on the shoulders of the authority leadership, whom everyone in the locality relates to. As local authorities become increasingly conscious about how their resources are used, there is a tendency to clearer value for money and conformity with service objectives of channeling services to appropriate users. Decentralisation creates room for people's participation which ensures that needs are identified by beneficiaries before committing government resources. Projects are better monitored by key stakeholders who conceived and initiated them and for the benefits of the immediate public.

Public projects are facilities at everyone's disposal. Every member of the public or community has a right to public facilities and the outcome of public affairs. The government which is the first sector player of their society carries the overall responsibility of; enabling, planning, directing and coordinating interventions that lead to purposeful and sustained development of the nation.

14. Sustainability of development projects and programmes

One frequently posed argument about the African economies is that, urbanisation set in first, without the corresponding industries to create jobs for the populations, and that urban drift has become a big problem, because there are no industries to absorb people moving from the rural communities to the urban centers in search of work and urban life.

Industrialisation is identified as a backbone of the strong economies of the developed nations. Industries have grown because those governments created and managed an enabling environment that is necessary for business growth and sustainability. Lessons from the developed nations should guide developing nations to move on to meaningful development. States will decentralise to bring meaningful development to their people, but development efforts must be sustainable to ensure continuity and improvement of the quality of life.

The first thing the government could do to ensure growth and sustainability of its national development programmes, is to enable businesses to be established. Businesses belong to the second sub sector of society, classified after the government. Businesses will create employment to absorb the jobless and where necessary; complement governments' efforts through their corporate social responsibility programmes. The corporate sector is organised and managed through capital accumulations from individuals' savings. That will lead to the creation and functioning of the stock market.

14.1 Stock market and its role of enabling the corporate sector to function

The stock market is one of the most important facilities for companies to raise capital money. It allows businesses to be publicly traded, or raise additional capital for expansion by selling shares of ownership of the company in a public market.

The liquidity that an exchange provides affords investors the ability to quickly and easily sell securities. This is an attractive feature of investing in stocks, compared to other less liquid investments such as real estate.

The smooth functioning of all these activities facilitates economic growth in that lower costs and enterprise risks promote the production of goods and services as well as employment. In this way the financial system contributes to increased prosperity. The stock market raises money and facilitates the establishment and functioning of industries faster than any other sources of capital. Industries are a backbone of the economy.

The second thing, which the government needs to ensure the sustainability of its planning process and programmes execution, is to ensure that there is a dedicated staff in each ministerial department, entrusted with that key planning and execution role.

The state whose planning process is separated into annual planning and budgeting programmes needs to ensure that decisions and plans running more than a year are followed up to their logical conclusions. In some jurisdictions the monitoring of long term plans is the responsibilities of the civil service personnel for each government ministerial department. Civil servants with long term view are called "Permanent Secretaries" who oversees the implementation of the of government plans to logical conclusions. Without an element of permanency, that is, ensuring that despite political appointees who come and go on constant bases, there is a key staff that has a permanent stake in the public affairs of their department, and by virtues of their position, are not subject to frequent transfers, relocations or appointment in different areas of the civil service function.

14.2 Role of the Permanent Secretary as a sustainability link to development

The Permanent Secretary is derived from the parliamentary system of governance, as practiced in the United Kingdom. The Permanent Secretary, in most departments officially titled the Permanent Under-Secretary of State (although the full title is rarely used), is the most senior civil servant of a British Government ministry, charged with running the department on a day-to-day basis. The permanent secretary (known by other names in some departments; see below) is the non-political civil service head (and "accounting officer") or chief executive of a government department, as distinct from the political Secretary of State, to whom they report and whom they advise. Permanent secretaries are the accounting officers for departments, meaning that they are answerable to Parliament for ensuring that the department spends money granted by Parliament appropriately.

Permanent Secretaries are thus frequently called for questioning by the Public Accounts Committee and Select Committees of the House of Commons. The permanent secretary usually chairs a department's management board which consists of executive members (other civil servants in the department) and non-executive directors.

15. Decentralisation and inertia in Africa

Deliberate planned and executed decentralisation programmes will work well, but programmes implemented because of pressure from outside by international bank group, donors and development concern institutions will suffer from so many lapses. Lapses will be found in: "unwillingness to let go" the central holding power, unwillingness to allocate financial resources to the process, unwillingness to train required local level manpower, etc, etc.

Writing about "*Decentralisation: The Long Road*", in the SPORE CTA magazine Number 149, of October – November 2010, page 5, the magazine had this to say; "worried about losing their privileges, many

governments remain reluctant to delegate a share of their responsibilities to local authorities, especially when it means relinquishing their hold on national resources”.

In continuation, Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) gave statistics pointing out that, “most authorities have a maximum annual budget of €4 per capita, and less than €1.5 for rural local authorities”, and that in most countries, less than 5% of state budgets are available to local authorities. Jean Pierre pointed out that in South Africa, Ghana, Rwanda, and Uganda, the figure is between 5 and 10%, and in Dominican Republic, it is around 15%”.

From these statistics and government budgetary allocations to the ongoing decentralisation process in Africa, there is either negligence or lack of commitment to successfully decentralise. Ineffectiveness could be assumed to be a confirmation of those personal attitudes described on point’s number 10 to 10.5 above. That could be related to an ungovernable situation where civil servants are not willing to execute government plan programmes, of which top government functionaries are not able to control the situation.

To give decentralisation its rightful place, governments should take full responsibilities of the processes in their countries. That is the way forward to development, the way forward to meaningful freedom of expression and a much needed starting point for people charting the course of their own development.

16. Decentralisation as support to development and growth strategies

A Governance process is open when processes are transparent, and there is accountability of government’s actions by the leaders and the populations irrespective of their social standing, or their geographic locations are allowed to contribute to the decision making processes on issues of common concern to all.

Decentralisation has been identified by development oriented actors as a tool to accomplishing good governance programmes. Centralisation of decision making as opposed to decentralisation reduces the chances of the indigenous people in their peripheral locations needing government leadership and touch. The down-trodden of society needs the touch of their leaders.

A good governance process will lead the government to plan policies and infrastructure which favours both an investment climate and the populace. Thereby, causing the resulting investment gains to trickle down to the less privileged. The government’s intent and policies should be compatible with accompanying actions. A good governance process can be appreciated from the example of a World Bank research cited here below;

In a 2010 World Bank research to determine “Investors’ Haven”, in Nigeria, titled “Doing Business in Nigeria 2010” Jigawa state was ranked the best, the ranking was taken after appraising all 36 Nigerian states, including the Federal capital Territory (FCT) and compared by global ranking of 183 economies.

The study analysis came up with key facts of acquiring land, obtaining building permits, due process delays, costs and delays to enforcing contracts, days required to initiate action and to start business in the state, and procedures involved. The ranking that made Jigawa, the Investors’ Haven in Nigeria, highlights a government practising good governance, an enabler of business environment. Here the governance process is based on the determination of civil servants to deliver plans as speedily as possible, and to satisfy the grassroots people. Under the Community Action for Popular participation, the government in concentrating on how to eliminate some of the historic nightmares of the “Talakawa”, the down trodden, is unifying all the elites into a fighting force against poverty; To these bottom level people, the government convened a Talakawa summit, a summit for the less privileged. The Jigawa government through the summit listened to the cries of the people, the voices of the voiceless, and a leeway to community people’s projects and sustainable programmes.

In other jurisdictions of the continent, the less privilege is relegated, and government action is based on expert studies. The views of these downtrodden are not heard. The best they can get of government's action may be through periodic agricultural or rural artisans' shows, where articles are displayed and the best item(s) are rewarded prizes, handouts? No concrete dialogue or lobby permitted from the bottom to get the feelings from the bottom of decision making tree. In fact it is rare to hear of a summit of rural informal economy people else where in the continent.

17. Local Authority Leaders (Councilors)

Indigenous people know better than any external expert of who can better represent them. Given the mandate, the community elects and forwards their able leaders to the hierarchy. Men, Women and youths should be given equal weightings when electing community representatives.

Elected local leaders are first of all, volunteers who have been chosen by their communities, after pre-judging the individuals from each one's values and attitudes in community affairs. Local Authority leaders enjoy the privileges and facilities of community recognition in a democratic system and are capable of truly representing their communities, after due consultations with all segments of the community. Local leaders form a direct and deliberate link from the bottom of central government decision making process.

Irrespective of their time and role in the authority, elected leaders should each have the same legal mandate, and enjoy the same rights to committee roles, and their determine mandate. The councilors should profile their members to recognise and use appropriate talents and professionals in sub committee roles. Most of all, the leaders should recognise their own roles and how they are going to exercise them.

The authority leadership should be trained on how to identify their needs and to design appropriate job descriptions for each leader and related positions. These should fall in line with expected local authority outcomes.

18. Enabling Role of Local Authorities

In the decentralisation process the Local Authority has three major roles of problems (project) identification, solution provision and service accountability. Identified and prioritised problems by the community of the represented area(s) should be programmed for solutions, as duly prioritised by the community.

18.1 Problem identification Role

The principle underlying an enabling role is that the local authorities identify and address the needs of their communities. This means going out of their traditional local government work of simply liaising with agencies such as the health services, the schools systems, the rural infrastructure, etc.

Enabling means creating structures whereby the authorities are ideally equipped to identify the broader needs and concerns of their communities. This will involve the increasing use of community surveys and profiling coupled with more information gathering techniques of:

- 1) Public consultations
- 2) Public meetings
- 3) Consultations with the business and voluntary sectors
- 4) Research into local social and economic trends

This information can be used as a basis for developing the enabling role by feeding into the development of particular strategies or into a corporate planning exercise.

A refocus and enhance approach to information gathering should be complimented by a new look at the core decision-making process, both its structure and the role of councilors or grassroots peoples representatives. The purpose of this is to create an “outward” looking organization, more able to assess the broader community needs. That means that councils have to create sub communities, each focusing on particular clients’ interests, and councilors serving on these committee should represent specific client interest within the decision making process, rather than being primary concern with service delivery.

18.2 Problem solution Role

Working with the central government, voluntary sector, and the business community (especially where there is corporate presence, or the industries) should constitute sources of solutions to local authorities.

The central governance except for lack of funds as is usually the case in most situations is the first problem solver. Where resources are limited or not available, the local authority should coordinate action to compliment solutions package through the voluntary sector or the business community.

The role of local authority leaders is equally important to the development of the enabling role, in both an individual capacity and as committee and council members. Of particular relevance is their role as the primary link between the community and the local authority. Services recognise not to be outside the traditional areas of local community work can be sub contracted to the corporate sector, through Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) arrangements. PPPs offer the advantages of working on commercial strategies to offer services at competitive cheaper rates, but yet on a profit.

18.3 Service Accountability Role

In its service accountability role, the Local Authority (LA) should set clear standards that are duly discussed, negotiated and accepted by both stake holders. These are to be seen through:

- 1) Sharing information about the LA, its purpose, objectives and values in the decentralisation process, the LA’s ongoing projects-plans, cost and people involved, and stages of completion
- 2) Work with the community to set up policies and procedures to enable the LA to be accountable to the communities
- 3) Setting up focal points for NGOs in the LA and creating partnerships to set and monitor projects in each NGO area of work
- 4) Work with community to design rules instituting an Accountable Officer, who coordinates projects and activities and report to stakeholders
- 5) The Accountable Officer ensures an effective complaints procedures, of suggestion boxes, letters etc, which are attended to within set limits
- 6) Design and place posters at LA premises on core values, e.g. except where it is expressly stated in writing, LA services are free of charge
- 7) Design and place posters at LA premises directing community members on which offices offers particular services
- 8) Design and place posters containing information about ongoing projects in the local language(s), if applicable
- 9) Work with the community to set up accountable mechanisms to be followed by the LA treasurer
- 10) Work with the community to establish a conflict resolution mechanism between the LA and the Communities they serve
- 11) Work with the community to establish regular community/LA stock- taking meeting intervals to include the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- 12) Ensuring that community members participate in project decisions

- 13) Ensuring that service delivery staff has competencies for what they do
- 14) Raising communities awareness on public expenditure policies and procedures for project execution
- 15) Raising communities awareness of community project budgeting
- 16) Carry out budgetary literacy trainings in the communities;
- 17) Getting the communities participate in issues of “contracting out” of services, starting from project initiation phase, specifications, launching of tenders, bid evaluations and final contract award
- 18) Training communities on project monitoring methodologies

These points listed above can only be attained if the central government, most especially the executing service heads are committed to the decentralisation process. When there is a willingness to pass on the decision making process for efficiency and effectiveness of government interventions; there will be trainings and support to the LA staff and local support leaders to enable them to be accountable to the communities they serve. The service accountability role constitutes the basis for the LA accountability process. It is a vehicle for transparency that calls for service beneficiaries to be part of the process of determining what they need which is eventually provided to them by their government.

19. Conclusion

Decentralisation is a process whereby the government seeks to get feedback from the local communities, and to facilitate those communities to initiate and prioritise projects for effectiveness of government interventions and outcomes. It is a democratic, political as well as a service delivery tool of the central government. Decentralisation is aimed at devolving government decision making machinery to local authorities. It is an attempt by the government to institute the bottom-up approach in decision making, prescribed by international development actors, to ensure that obsolete or expert undesired services are not imposed on the local populations.

A well informed and organised process equips the local authorities with strategic directions on how they can enable charities and the corporate sector to assist government in providing solutions to people’s participated, identified and chosen solutions. Where the corporate or second sector has a strong presence, the Local Authority can enter into Private Public Partnership (PPP) arrangement, for the second sector to deliver needed services to the client communities.

After the business sub sector, well known players in complimenting government’s community development efforts are the charities or Community Based Organisations (CBOs), who belong to the civil society category. As the country’s resources are always limited in proportion to the overall national demands, the business sector and civil society in their own efforts compliment government efforts by providing crucial charitable humanitarian services.

By nature, the informal economy class of indigenous people is the most vulnerable of which the society’s assistance should be tailored. For sustainability of community projects and programmes, the system of government should ensure continuity of plans; operating a governance process where the appointment or relocation of political appointees do not affect ongoing community projects. In a parliamentary system of government, it is the role of the permanent secretary in each ministerial department to ensure the execution, follow up and maintenance of long term government project plans. While the Stock Market ensures that capital is available for the growth and sustainability of businesses, the corporate sector, which incidentally is the second sector after the government. These two functions are necessary if development interventions are to be sustainable.

Central to the decentralisation process are the three cardinal principles to practice the art of; (1) Participation of the people whom the process is aimed to serve in the decision making process, and for

the local authorities who are handling the process to ensure (2) Accountability of their actions in relations to participatory laid down policies, that leads to (3) Transparency in community project executions. Where the decentralisation process is delayed or ineffective, the civil service commitment is lacking. And where it works, the local authority is fully trained, equipped and supported to lay down the basic rules for efficiency and effectiveness of government interventions and outcomes duly confirm by the communities being served.

Finally, a decentralised government gives back power to the electorate to manage their affairs in ways that are best suited to local realities and of valuable service to beneficiaries. Local authority leaders are trained in the process, and government influence is brought closer to the people, thereby improving the economic development mechanisms and the required manpower. Decentralisation facilitates the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. These advantages should be considered above individuals' tendencies, and should override the short comings in decentralising the decision making of state institutions.

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