Review

Touching the poor: Re-thinking on millennium development goals by promoting participatory governance and local development

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Is there any commitment made to reduce poverty? This is evident because 1.) The concept of poverty is vague, 2.) the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) mostly stop at the national level and not sub national level where there are needs. Less attention is devoted to local institutions and traditional authorities, which are the real agents of local development. In African development, less attention is devoted to grassroots' perspective and political leadership; traditional authorities who hold spiritual power to influence local community and transfer culture are neglected. Their potential to take collective action is disregarded, partly because of their ignorance and development paradigm, which is seen as "modernisation and scientific". To increase the effectiveness of local government is through democratic decentralization, which involves transfer of power and resources. Many developing countries use it to improve the quality of service delivery and strengthen sustainable local development. Decentralization is a vehicle for achieving MDGs because it operates at local and community level; and planning is crucial to ensure participation in governance and local development. Increasingly participatory governance is emerging as a key focal area, both in its own right, and as a means of securing MDGs, especially poverty reduction. Decentralization and participatory processes are complex and take years to implement; but they play critical role in achieving MDGs. Sustainable development cannot be realized without robust strong institutions and active citizenry engaged in key decision-making. Political leaders should promote good governance, by strengthening institutions and public participation to address national and local development agenda. Furthermore, functional local structures and ancestral systems are important for a strong service delivery, a prerequisite for any vibrant, democratic, and decentralized governance. The new development paradigm involves political commitment. To address local development, authority and resources have to be transferred, and it is crucial to promote citizen´s engagement at all levels. The paradigm should consider: a) strengthening of Local governments, b) building capacity of Civil society, including communities and traditional authorities, and c) Promotion of emerging Private sectors by local economic development interventions that generate employment and income for the poor; local institutions should address local structures and systems to promote local development.

Key words: Governance, local development, millennium development goals, poverty, Africa, communities.

INTRODUCTION

Persistent rural poverty is one of the most stubborn social problems facing Africa. Considering that tomorrow is 1st

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January, 2015, how far the commitments made to achieve the MDGs were honored? What the world will be told about eradication of the extreme poverty? In many debates about Africa development, one issue has been part of the agenda: The need of strong Africa Leadership. It's consensual that in Africa's good governance, less attention has been devoted to local perspective, looking local institutions, traditional authorities and their capacity towards response to the local demands and to address local development agenda, meaning that there is a critical need to promote participatory governance and inclusive local development. This paper is a grassroots perspective that aims to bring the concept of Poverty and MDGs close to the poor, since many debates have mostly stopped at the national level and rarely does the concept sufficiently extended to sub national level where needs are felt, services are demanded. It is noted that less attention has been devoted to the role of local authorities, civil society and grassroots organizations and structures that are the real agents of local development. The concept of poverty is rhetoric and based on our self perceptions and never incorporates the grassroots perspectives or the poor dimension of who fells, what is poverty. The exercise of modeling the MDGs Massuanganhe (2006) is critical to identify the variable and support the governments to forecast what needs to be done today to achieve the MDGs tomorrow, meaning that the critical variables have to be identified (e.g. good governance, leadership, economic growth, population, etc). The variable determining the MDGs, almost are critical and under control of the governments. In most cases, the variable determining the MDGs are related to endogen factors and internal capability to sustain local development.

Simultaneously, national and sub-national debates are needed. It is consensual that transferring capacity and resources to the poor is the most direct and immediate way to reduce poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. One way to increase the effectiveness of local government is through democratic decentralization, which involves a transfer of powers, resources, and assets to local structures. Effective local governments are vital to achieving the Millennium Deve-lopment Goals. The MDG's implies strong commitment, long term deve-lopment vision and will not be achieved if the governments do not strengthen institutions of governance and build capacity at local level. There are actions to be taken in view to touch the poor, e.g. promote leadership, public policies, institutions, and pro-active systems that provide better services, capacity development, and livelihoods improvement. If not, as result, in 2015 the world will continue being constrained and affected by current problems.

Participatory governance and local development

A recurrent question in development debates has been:

Why development agenda and international support failure in Africa? This old continent has been to the international community the most privileged recipient of donor support during last 20 years. More than US$1 trillion in foreign aid[1] - more that the equivalent of four Marshall Aid Plans - was invested in Africa between 1960 and 2005 in development programmes. Instead of increasing development, aid has created dependence. The more aid poured into Africa, the lower its standard of living. Per capita GDP of Africans living south of the Sahara declined at an average annual rate of 0.59 percent between 1975 and 2000. Additionally, other direct and/or indirect forms of assistance were provided via technical cooperation/ assistance by multilateral or bilateral partners. Nevertheless, Africa is the poorest in the globe and still being affected by chronic poverty, violence and unstable regimes that are called to carry long term development vision of their people.

Africa, with enough natural resources, possesses large extension of arable land with diversity agro-ecologic conditions, but hungry and misery affects more that 1/2 of the population, with major incidence in Sub-Sahara Africa. Child and women mortality, associated with high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, especially in women; illiteracy and low enrolment level are some critical challenges to be addressed in Africa development agenda. African agriculture itself is in crisis, and according to the International Food Policy Research Institute, this has left 200 million people malnourished. In many debates about Africa development, one issue has been part of the agenda: The need of strong *Africa Leadership*. In this connection, it is particularly highlighted political problems such as civil strife, refugee movements, and returnees. The implication is clear - Africa's years of wars, coups, and civil strife are responsible for more hunger than the natural problems that befall it[2]. By some measures, more that 70 percent of African nations have experienced internal conflicts in the last three decades. Democracy and transparent and accountable governance and administration in all sectors of society are indispensable foundations for the realisation of social and people-centred sustainable development (Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development, 1995).

Conscious that Africa's poor are getting poorer and that good governance is essential for successful economic development, the continent adopted fundamental reforms - The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Robert, 2005). For a long time, the worsening rural poverty levels in Africa were explained principally in terms of poor economic performance, and externally prescribed economic remedies predominated in policy prescriptions. Emerging evidence, however, shows that

[1] https://www.cato.org/pubs/edb/edb2.html
[2] http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/develop/africa/2006/0131sistcrisis.htm

economic growth alone is not sufficient to bring about, in a sustainable way, the needed poverty reduction. It is particularly worthy to observe that Africa possess extremely low growth elasticities of poverty reduction[3]. This recognition does not minimise the importance of economic growth in poverty reduction and rural develop-ment. For poor countries, rapid growth is a necessary, essential and powerful tool for poverty reduction in the medium to long term. In interventions that target poverty, one of the primary conceptual hurdles is to define who the poor are and, consequently, how to target them. Proper targeting of the poor has generally proved to be elusive and this is one area where more work is still required. The other challenge regards how best to ensure that there is local ownership of the interventions. This consideration brings to the fore the issues of local governance. One of the lessons from the past failures of poverty-focused interventions is the importance of avoiding a 'top down' approach to project design and implementation, as this invariably results in ineffec-tiveness of the interventions, while a decentralised and participatory approach has resulted in poverty reduction. The global community has recognised the development of Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, as the world's foremost development challenge.

Researchers have pointed out that the critical issue is Good Governance, meaning strengthen institutions and public administration reforms to address national and local development agenda. UNDP[4] defines governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a society's affairs. This broad concept encompasses the organizational structures and activities of central, regional and local government; the parliament; the judiciary; and the institutions, organiza-tions and individuals that constitute civil society and the private sector. Governance requires concerted efforts by those managing the affairs of developing countries. Elements contributing to the latter concept of good governance include the basic laws and institutions of a nation, the administrative competence, and transparency, decentralization of its administration, and the creation of an appropriate market environment; all of these are needed to support people's participation in every aspect of politics, the economy, and society. These are therefore necessary components of good governance as "the government functioning as the basis for participatory development."

In Africa good governance debate, less attention has been devoted to local governance perspective and political leadership, looking local institutions and their capacity towards response to the local demands and to address decentralization and local development issues. Good governance doesn't means to advocate strong states or centralism, but in market economy is to have state intervening on behalf of the poor (regulatory) and let the poor brings his voice (devolution). Increasingly participatory governance is emerging as a key focal area, both in its own right, and as a means for securing the Millennium Development Goals, and especially poverty reduction. There is a growing consensus that democratic governance creates the conditions for sustainable deve-lopment and poverty reduction. Local governments can play a major role in this effort by ensuring more effective and accountable local infrastructure and service delivery for the poor and by improving the dialogue between the state, citizens and their communities, and the private sector. Institutional capacity plays a central role in any decentralization process. Failure of institutional setting will result in poor outcomes. It's evident that the reluc-tance of decentralization in developing countries mainly is associated with weak systems, poor institutions, weak capacity and administrative diseconomies. Community developers must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions[5].

DECENTRALIZATION, PARTICIPATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Effective local governments and institutions are vital to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. One way to increase the effectiveness of local government is through democratic decentralization, which involves a transfer of powers, resources, and capacity. Many deve-loping countries have initiated this process in an effort to improve the quality of service delivery and strengthen sustainable local development. By creating the conditions for more inclusive, accountable, and transparent opera-tions, decentralization enhances civil participation in local government and allows communities and their elected representatives to take charge of their own development. There are strong evidences that improved decentralization is linked to poverty reduction and the achievement of MDG through the promotion of participatory governance, where resources and capacity are planed, allocated implemented and monitored in a participatory manner and though shared responsibility of the local level repre-sentative bodies and councils and thorough the promotion of local capacities to ensure that resources and services to the poor are being delivered in accordance with local poverty reduction objectives.

The potential of democratic decentralization will not be achieved automatically. The transfer of powers and resources necessary for local governments to work must

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[3] Elasticities in the developing economies of Asia are, on average, much higher than those in Africa. This has led to the argument that while economic growth is important for poverty reduction in Africa, it is definitely *not* sufficient.

[4] http://www.undp.org/governance/programmes/life/LIFE.pdf

[5] http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/comm_deve/cdhbooke.pdf

go beyond policy to become a fact on the ground. UNDP Practice Note on Capacities for Integrated Local Development identifies four approaches to local development: (i) Direct community support (community level); (ii) Support to local government (sub-national and community level); (iii) Area-based development (sub-national level); and (iii) Decentralized sector approach (cross-cutting)[6]. Participation must not be transient; it must entail the sustainable upgrading of participation quality. For this to happen, the underlying conditions must be met to facilitate the long-term process of participation and its self-reliant sustainability. The long-term process of participation cited here is raising the awareness of local people, forming community groups, upgrading their requisite resource management abilities, and creating norms or internalizing their mechanisms, and improving capabilities for external negotiations. Decentralization initiatives have been launched in at the majority of developing countries, but these rarely lay the foundations necessary to reach decentralization's purported efficiency and equity benefits. Those foundations include the transfer of important discretionary powers to downwardly accountable actors, capacity building, and technical assistance that represent and respond to local challenges. The shaping and planning of this participatory process requires both a long-term vision and a willingness to selectively improve and bolster traditional community systems as tools of development.

In many cases it is pointed out that central government cannot devolve significant power to local institutions and local authorities, because the lack essential technical and human capacity. This is the assumption that drives centralism of state, but in practice, transfer authority means to create capacity at the local level. "Good governance" assumes a government's ability to maintain social peace, guarantee law and order, promote or create conditions necessary for economic growth, and ensure a minimum level of social security. The concept of "governance" is not new. It is as old as human civilization. Simply put "governance" means: the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance. Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made, and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement those decisions. Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under

discussion.

Decentralisation is a process through which authority and responsibility for some functions are transferred from the central government to local governments, communities and the private sector. By means of this process, decentralised institutions [7], either local offices of central government or local private and civil organisations (entrepreneurs, farmers, communities, associations, etc.), are provided with high levels of power when it comes to decision-making. defines decentralisation as the transfer of the authority to plan, make decisions, and manage public functions from a higher level of government to any individual, organisation or agency at a lower level. Effective decentralisation can provide exciting opportunities for democratic change at the local level and can help improve national democracy as well. Through local participation and practices such as public meetings, citizens can participate more effectively in local decision-making, gain experience in democratic processes, and hold local officials responsible for their decisions. Communities can become more pluralistic in the absence of central political control.

Decentralized government can provide space for people to participate in local development. It can ensure a more efficient allocation of resources, enhance local resource mobilization, and improve local governance. Decentralization is a complex process that takes years to implement, but is recognised that should play critical role to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it because its nature to work at local level. Furthermore, a functional decentralized local government system is of particular importance to the flourishing of a strong service delivery, which is prerequisite to any meaningful, vibrant, democratic, and decentralized governance system. Decentralization is not "the end itself". It means consistent legal framework that articulate basic and stable principles, functions and responsibilities of local governance, coherent policy/strategy that indicate clear vision on how reforms should be taken and finally, technical support to deliver results. Indeed, the politics inherent in decentrelization reforms means that alliances among different political actors can be formed across administrative levels of the state, and that actors at the same level – central, provincial, or local – are not necessarily united by a common set of interests.

Participatory governance is increasingly emerging as a key focal area, both in its own right and also as a means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – especially poverty reduction. Given insufficient participatory capabilities of local people and local societies, however, it tended on the other hand to put the intended

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[6] The draft Strategy Statement on Local Development, which identifies four levels of local development programmes.

[7] This is in part because the policy thrust seeking to empower the peasant communities is supply-led, and thus defined according to the terms and processes of external agents, including funders and central governments and their functionaries.

beneficiaries of development these very local people and societies in a passive position. From a local community perspective, effective decentralisation concerning powers requires these same elements. However, when examined in detail, community-based and decentralised forms of management often lack representation, downward accountability and/or sufficient powers. Decentralisation plays a special role in local democratisation, because local populations that participate in management and use participatory decision-making can be a fulcrum for rural development. A combination of locally accountable representation and discretionary powers is also needed and this combined condition is rarely established.

Participatory development is not an attempt to replace the top-down development approach with a local-community-led approach. Rather, it is a viewpoint that simultaneously stresses the need for the government-led approach in terms of national-level economic planning and coordination of development planning and the demerits of widening disparities and worsening poverty inherent in that approach when used alone. Participatory development attempts to introduce a bottom-up style of development in order to remedy the government-led approach's shortcomings, specifically by focusing on qualitative improvements in local society's participation. Recent experience from a number of developing countries suggests that programmes of decentralisation accompanied by parallel efforts to promote greater power and autonomy in decision-making for local communities can offer genuine opportunities to improve outcomes. The Government is increasingly seeking to involve citizens in public decisions and community development since plays an important role in the implementation of development policies. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities. These skills are often concentrated around building political power through the formation of large social groups working for a common agenda.

Institutions and the theory of efficiency

Traditionally many analytical techniques focused on quantitative measurements, ignoring qualitative influences of policies and institutions (formal and informal – traditional). The theory on how to measure poverty is rhetoric. The concept of Poverty usually is defined based on perceptions and rarely incorporate the poor dimensions exactly who feels what is poverty. What is the meaning of Poverty from the poor view point? Two recent strands of institutional economics have been influential in development literature. One is associated with the *theory of imperfect information*: the underlying rationale of institutional arrangements and contracts (formal or informal) are explained in terms of strategic behaviour under asymmetric information among the different parties

involved. Another is associated with the *rural theory of development*. It is recognised that effective and participatory decentralised systems are a precondition to promote practices and adopt mechanisms that contribute to providing *daily livelihoods of the* local communities.

As governments at all levels find it more and more difficult to deal with the social and economic issues, it becomes more and more obvious that we can't turn to governments for solutions. Citizens must see themselves as responsible for their own well-being and must stop depending on government for innovation and leadership. Cultural local identities will play a fundamental role in the process and very important – the way small villages or human settlements will feel represented in higher/wider structures of local government. In many cases it is pointed out that central government cannot devolve significant power to local institutions and local authorities, because the lack essential technical and human capacity. Through local participation and practices such as public meetings, citizens can participate more effectively in local decision-making, gain experience in democratic processes, and hold local officials responsible for their decisions.

It may give greater voice and representation to citizens, stress local ownership as an effective instrument of implementation, and bring greater grassroots-level control over resources and their utilisation. A combination of locally accountable representation and efficiency of discretionary powers are also needed. This combined condition is rarely established. Enhancing livelihood intensity is possible. It requires coordination to encourage the various institutional and managerial systems that formulate and implement rural policy to work together, and political commitment to overcome sectoral tendencies. This is the assumption that drives centralism of state, but in practice, transfer authority means to create capacity at the local level. Is to promote decentralization by building and strengthening local capacities to plan, implement and monitor local development programmes and strategies.

THE WAY FORWARD

Institutional setting

The role that institutions should play in development has been recognised for years. The classic example of inefficient institutions persisting as the lopsided outcome of distributive struggles relates to the historical evolution in developing countries. Institutions are generally categorised into formal and informal institutions. The *formal institutions* are largely governed by the pre-decided legal setup in the form of formal norms. In certain circumstances these norms are flexible and can change over time, whereas in other circumstances they can be static in nature. Therefore there are two types of categories:

One is the dynamic characteristic of the institution whereas, the other is static and inflexible in nature. The *informal institutions*, on the other hand, emerge out of the spontaneous requirements based on the needs of society. The profile of development is influenced and also determined by the institutional setup. Institutions shape human interaction and define the choices and decisions made by the individual, community, or society to achieve a satisfactory lifestyle under the given constraints. Thus institutions play a significant role in shaping and regulating human activities to optimise production and to minimise the risks associated with production systems. Any development process presumes three levels in achieving its goal. Of these, the first stage begins at the preparation for the process of development that essentially requires inducing growth in the first place. The erosion of the commons set in only with major demographic and institutional changes in recent decades, often accelerated by commercial or bureaucratic appropriation of the common resources, supplanting the traditional historical rights of local communities.

A major problem that hinders most schemes of decentralised governance is related to distributive conflicts. In areas of high social and economic inequality, the problem of 'capture' of the local governing agencies by the local elite can be severe, and the poor and the weaker sections of the population may be left grievously exposed to their mercies and their malfeasance. The central government can also be 'captured', but there are many reasons why the problem may be more serious at the local level. For example, there are certain fixed costs of organising resistance groups or lobbies, and as a result the poor may sometimes be more disorganised at the local level than at the national level where they can pool their organising capacities. Similarly, collusions among the elite groups may be easier at the local level than at the national level. Policymaking at the national level may represent greater compromise among the policy platforms of different parties, while capture at the national level may be subject to greater media attention, and so on. When the local government is captured by the powerful and the wealthy, instances of subordinate groups appealing to supra-local authorities for protection and relief are not uncommon.

It's found that the inevitable trade-off in the historical growth process between economies of scale and capacity on the one hand, and participation on the other. In Western societies, complex institutional (legal and corporate) structures have been devised over time to constrain the participants, to reduce the uncertainty of social interaction in general to prevent the transactions from being too costly, and thus to allow the productivity gains of larger scale and improved technology to be realised. These institutions include elaborately defined and effectively enforced property rights, formal contracts and guarantees, trademarks, limited liability, bankruptcy laws, large corporate organisations with governance structures to limit problems of agency, and what North has called ex-post-opportunism. Some of these institutional structures are non-existent or weak or poorly devised and implemented in less developed countries. In these countries the State is either too weak to act as a guarantor of these rights and institutions and/or much too predatory in its own demands, posing a threat to them.

The nature and capacity of institutions is an issue, as is the question of the articulation between customary and formal state authority. The rationale behind decentralisation is that these reforms foster increased efficiency and equity in development activities. By virtue of their proximity to the people they serve, democratic local institutions are likely to have access to better information about local conditions and a better understanding of local needs and aspirations, and to be more easily held accountable by local populations. It's evident that institutions and governance policies have a role in creating an attractive climate for development, including institutional reforms needed to generate an enabling environment for local development. To create the conditions for promoting sustainable participation, governments must create and adapt basic legislation and institutions that guarantee political and economic freedoms as well as strive to meet a broader range of basic human needs. Governments also need to relax regulations in order to remove obstacles to economic participation, improve financial management, build infrastructure, and train business people and entrepreneurs. These are important components of good governance, which is the basis of participatory development. Understanding institutional processes allows for the identification of restrictions/barriers and opportunities (or "gateways") to sustainable livelyhoods. The investment in the community capacity-building process should result in substantially improved local development plans, greater mobilization of local resources to finance plan implementation, better inter-institutional coordination in community development programmes and greater representation and more effective community participation in local consultative bodies.

The role of local authorities and traditional leaders

Sustainable development can not be realized without robust policies, strong institutions and active citizenry engaged in key decision-making. A key governance challenge is to build the political will and institutional capacity to promote sustainable livelihoods and this requires a particular focus on developing practical linkages to translate national policies, laws, and regulations into action at the local level. Support for local institutions to strengthen their ability to deliver services (government) and to make claims on entitlements (citizens) is an area on which there needs to be considerable

focus in the years ahead. Traditional leadership as part of the above-mentioned systems, in its form before external interference, operated on the principle of community participation, consultation, consensus, and an acceptable level of transparency through the village council or open tribal consultative meetings.

One important assumption is that the reduction of poverty is more likely to be assured when the people for whom pro-poor interventions are meant are allowed, through empowerment, to effectively participate in these interventions. Great care is needed to achieve an appropriate balance of respect for traditional authorities and their role in representing the interests of local communities, while still aiming to redress grievances that emerge from these same institutions. Traditional leaders are at the centre of development in rural areas and then the role of traditional leadership cannot be ignored. This is a role they have always played, as demonstrated by traditional leaders facilitating the building and maintenance of schools and clinics within their respective traditional authorities and representing the local communities. This representation should provide the necessary checks and balances to deal with suspicions that some traditional leaders and their courts are biased. Such bias could be against women or against people not related to the traditional leader.

Local institutions, the role of traditional authorities and leadership have changed over time. Traditional institutions are important to people in many parts of the developing world and especially, though not exclusively, among indigenous peoples. Traditional institutions such as indigenous cooperation groups, councils of elders, and customary laws and mediators are important for resolving disputes, enforcing widely agreed standards of behaviour, and uniting people within bonds of community solidarity and mutual assistance. Traditional authority includes those who hold local traditional power – the traditional chiefs, lineage chiefs, the chiefs of social groups, those who hold spiritual power, the traditional doctors, those who know the essential skills for the basic physical survival of the community, those who know and can work with the mechanisms of social control, and those who control cultural transmission. However, traditional institutions are rarely included within plans of development that are formulated for the most part in national capitals. Planners have mostly disregarded the potential for collective action that inheres within these institutions, partly because of ignorance and partly also because development, which is seen as "modernisation", is often regarded as antithetical to tradition in any form.

Traditional community leaders have status (legitimacy), based on the lineage (or tribe) as a social unit and on religious grounds, as mediators between a given ethnic group and its natural and social environment. Their prime function is to ensure peace and harmony in the rural communities within their territory. Given the vast hetero-geneity of traditional community institutions, which reaches well beyond the simplistic dichotomies taken as parameters within the confines of the definition employed in the present context, the present study focuses on the *existing dimensions of leadership* in a given rural area, and on the membership dynamics of their attributes. In many traditional agricultural and pastoral societies there is the custom of not passing decisions unless there is an absolute consensus among the local elite that in effect act as watchmen over natural resource management at the village level. In lineage-based hierarchical societies, mechanisms for redistribution are an expression of the moral obligations of the senior members of the community who are responsible for ensuring social and spiritual reproduction, as well as its junior members, responsible for ensuring economic welfare. They are essentially net-works of mutual support and solidarity, as well as clientelistic relations among kinship groups of unequal social status, nested in historical power relations and priority rights for some lineages.

Scholars of anthropology and sociology have been creative in interpreting political movements and in offering conceptualisations for their understanding (Lundin and Alfane, 1999). Local governance has also followed from the same process. Revitalised local institutions have asserted the supremacy of civilian authority. The process has reinforced the recognition of the traditional system as a means of empower local authorities and has allowed people to come together and discuss diverse local problems within the forums that have drawn upon and strengthened their local institutions. Local government units are working in partnership with these traditional structures to support the development aspirations arti-culated by area residents. Working within their traditional norms and institutions enables people to understand and readily come to terms with change. However, traditional institutions are rarely included within plans of develop-ment that are formulated for the most part in national capitals. Planners have mostly disregarded the potential for collective action that inheres within these institutions, partly because of ignorance and partly also because development, which is seen as "modernisation", is often regarded as antithetical to tradition in any form. On their own part, too, leaders of traditional institutions have been reluctant to adapt to new concerns. The incursion of modern activities and forms of governance is often seen as challenging the prerogatives of these institutions. It is exceptional, thus, to find traditional institutions taking an active role in regional development activities. It is even more unusual to see such institutions working closely in cooperation with technical personnel of government agencies.

As referred by Gebrehiwet[8], the role of traditional

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[8]http://www.fiuc.org/umu/tmp/pdfs/the%20role%20of%20traditional%20leaders%20in%20decentralization%20governance%20-%20robiel%20gebrehiwet.pdf

leaders in Africa, especially in modern African democracies and decentralization, is complex and multifaceted. Many people regard Africa's traditional chiefs and elders as the true representatives of their people, accessible, respected, and legitimate, and therefore still essential to politics on the continent. Most strikingly, the sharp distinctions outsiders draw between elected local government officials and traditional leaders are not made by most of the Africans who live under these dual systems of authority. Local government officials frequently lacked knowledge of the customs and beliefs of local population; traditional authorities, who "officially" did not exist, commanded more respect from local communities than local administrators appointed. Traditional Authority's in Africa are the leaders of an important traditional African socio-political institution; that their legitimacy derives exclusively from the community over which they hold authority. What emerges from this argument is a strong reminder that traditional authority is, at the root, an African institution that was in existence before colonialism and independence and remains very much alive into the democratic political system at present. It is an enduring institution that has survived more than two centuries of change because it has the confidence and support of local peoples. Throughout Africa's turbulent history, the many local governments that populate the country have looked to their traditional authorities for assistance in matters of the spirit and such pragmatic questions as who owns what land, who should be punished for a given crime, and how to provide moral, education to the young.

Traditional leadership as part of the above-mentioned systems, in its form before external interference, operated on the principle of community participation, consultation, consensus, and an acceptable level of transparency through the village council or open tribal consultative meetings. These principles are not too different from the ones which modern democracies prescribe as essential for democracy. It might serve a purpose, therefore, if African countries that are striving to achieve good governance could look with renewed focus to the role of traditional leaders, and pay specific attention to the similarities between the principles of traditional governance and the aspirations of new democracies the world over. The role to be played by traditional authorities in the society she characterised is seen as "culturally diverse". This position is that "the meaning and function of 'traditional authority' has been transformed many times over with changes in the larger political contexts in which local institutions have existed". As consequence of that, an understanding of the issue of traditional authorities can only be achieved through a close examination "of its variegated and contentious history", taking into account "local contexts" and "using terminology with greater geographical and historical precision".

Relationship between state organs and traditional leaders

In the older model of grassroots development, the target population or beneficiaries were largely seen as passive objects of pity, not agents of change in and of themselves. The new model views poor people as opportunities, not problems and seeks to enable them to actively participate in development. The role of customary institutions, particularly amidst recent waves of return migration, has been observed. However, "the nature and capacity of community-based management institutions is an issue, as is the question of the articulation between customary and formal state authority, at locality and district level. There are a variety of actors at the local level that pursue the same agenda as traditional leaders. These are structures such as the consultative councils, women's groups, youth groups, etc. While often targeting the same group of people, it is rare to find these structures in constant communication with one another in the new dispensation. The community, therefore, has a right to act against such a person. A traditional leader becomes an embodiment of the community; members of the community affected by a problem will therefore approach the traditional leader to seek relief. Traditional chiefs have legitimacy, on religious and lineage grounds, as mediators between a given ethnic group and its environment.

With regard to household participation in local institutions and arrangements with socio-economic wellbeing, using local classifications of poverty and wealth, it was found that in general, there are few barriers to participation in these institutions, and the poor and women are well represented. An exception may be political parties that appeal to the richer families, mainly men. There is concern among many people that the institution of traditional leadership is so inherently undemocratic that it simply does not have a place in an open democratic society. In support of this view, those against traditional leadership point to the hereditary nature of traditional leadership, the lack of representation of youth and women, as well as the unconstitutionality of some of the practices and sentences in the traditional court. Indeed, there is a great deal to take issue with in the institution of traditional leadership. By creating the conditions for more inclusive, accountable and transparent operations, decentralization enhances civil participation in local government and allows communities and their elected representatives to take charge of their own development.

The primary function of traditional authorities is to ensure peace and harmony in the rural communities within their territory. Thus, a "bad" chief would be someone not able to ensure this, for example during celebrations when people consume alcohol and fights break out. Mediating in conflict resolution and regulating access to local resources are thus the main tasks of traditional authorities. Most of the time solutions are

reached among the parties involved, often with the mediation of the respective local lineage chief(s). Only when the latter are unable to reach a verdict acceptable to everyone is the traditional chief approached. He or she is acknowledged to have ultimate knowledge of the customary geographical boundaries, and will reach a decision in consultation with his or her counsellors.

The new development paradigm: the integrated framework

As a process, local development involves a range of different stakeholders - civil society organizations, local communities, local governments, private sector companies, national governments - that act together to promote access to quality basic services and inclusive economic growth. For such concerted efforts to be successful, local actors need to be empowered and capacitated to improve their situation - either through direct action or indirectly through voice mechanisms. There may be some grain of truth in arguments about lack of local capacity, absence of technical expertise to govern. But these arguments also seem to be more than a little self-serving. At the same time, the case descriptions we have provided implicitly show that the central state is not a monolithic actor. To effectively address the MDGs, there is a need of consensual positioning, that become more relevant to meet the targets when is approached the local level interventions. It involves an integrated framework characterized by interaction between local government's capacity building, civil society and institutions empowerment and Private sector development:

- Strengthen *Local governments,* by build technical, human and institutional capacity to respond local needs and provision of public services. It include: (i) strengthening the provision Public Service, (ii) Strengthening Management of Local Government, including systems and practices, capacity building, systems for implementing change and measuring performance and results. (iii) Improved Fiscal Management involving systems for efficient, accountable and transparent inter-governmental financial transfer and creative mechanisms to mobilize, collect and manage local financial resources.
- Promote *Civil society organizations and local authorities,* including local community, by enhancing their capacity in provision of basic services and their involvement in local good governance. Local institutions/ CSOs and communities have opportunity in participatory manner to decide on how to generate and to use local and existing resources and capacity. Citizens, including women's associations have opportunity to participate actively in local governance/development, planning and budgeting close to the grassroots and provision of local basic

services.
- Promote *Private sector* development- small and medium enterprises (including transformation of informal). As part of this framework the feasibility of introducing one-stop citizen services access centres will be studied and piloted in selected districts. A second step will be promoting of pro-poor Local Economic Development - LED, by strengthening and promoting employment and income via small and medium enterprises.

CONCLUSION

Public debate about development emerges from the cyclic question why poverty eradication is moving slowly, while development assistance and other direct and indirect supports are increasing? The Governments have agreed to reduce 50% incidence of the poverty by 2015. To attain the MDGs, means to target the poor. Simultaneously, this challenge implies harmonization of sectoral and territorial plans. In Africa, less attention has been devoted to local perspective[9] and political leadership towards response to the local demands and development agenda, looking local institutions and the role of traditional authorities who are leaders, holding local traditional power, spiritual power, knowledge, and essential skills to influence local community, control over the territory and cultural transmission. However, traditional institutions and authorities are rarely included within plans of development that are formulated. States have mostly disregarded their potential for collective action within these institutions, partly because of ignorance and partly also because development paradigm, which is seen as "modernisation". Increasingly participatory governance is emerging as a key focal area, both in its own right, and as a means for securing the Millennium Development Goals, and especially poverty reduction. Decentralization is a complex process that takes years to implement, but play critical role to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Furthermore, a functional decentralized local government system is of particular importance to the flourishing of a strong service delivery, which is prerequisite to any meaningful, vibrant, democratic, and decentralized governance system.

   Findings reveal that there seem to be a correlation between lack of capacity and environment conducive to fraudulent practices. Results-oriented development action plans require sound performance monitoring, realistic targets for performance assessment indicators, and timely provision of data. Cultural local identities will play a fundamental role in the process. Traditional institutions are important to people in many parts of the developing world and especially though not exclusively among

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[9] local culture, agents and actors, traditional authorities and leadership, indigenous institutions and local livelihoods

indigenous peoples. Local Governments should promote good Governance, by strengthening local institutions and public administration reforms to address national and local development agenda. It means consistent legal framework that articulate basic and stable principles, strong institutions functions, and responsibilities of local governance, coherent policy/strategy involving all actors, governmental and non-governmental. Sustainable development can not be realized without robust civil society, private sector and active citizenry engaged in key decision-making. In order to realise an institutionalised system for capacity building, a realistic and need based capacity building strategy and programme is required.

Sustainable development cannot be realized without robust policies, strong institutions and active citizenry engaged in key decision-making. For their mere indispensability, there is a need to reconcile the political and the institutional decentralisation process with public-sector management reform. The role and importance of civil servants at sub-national levels of government must be considered. The absence of decentralisation, or only partial decentralisation of the public service, may compromise the links between that public service and its corresponding political structures on the same horizon or tier of government.

This paradigm requires a change in the policy infrastructure conception and efficient implementation mechanisms, and a movement away from the traditional hierarchical administrative structures and institutional arrangements. Planning and implementing a sustainable livelihoods approach is therefore necessarily iterative and dynamic. Having the support of technically qualified personnel facilitates the capacity-and knowledge-building required for dealing competently with the new tasks of modernisation and development. The resulting blend of capacity and legitimacy enables people to participate fully in development enterprises, deriving the best possible results in the process. MDGs should consider political commitment and the sub-national priorities have to be emphasized in national plans by transfer authority, resources and promote local institutions to respond citizen's needs and demands, while the new practices and systems are established and maintained.

The notion of endogenous development has been put forward in opposition to traditional understanding. As a process, local development involves a range of different stakeholders-civil society organizations, local communities, local governments, private sector companies, national governments – that act together to promote access to quality basic services and inclusive economic growth. It implies inclusive and participatory development by recognizing the role of the local agents, actors, and structures (traditional leaders, structures, cultural values and institutions) to improve their socio-economic well being. For such concerted efforts to be successful, local actors need to be empowered and capacitated to improve

their situation. It will involves strengthening of *Local governments,* build capacity of *Civil society organizations,* including local communities and traditional authorities, and finally promotion of emerging *Private sector* - small and medium enterprises through stimulation of local economic development interventions that generate employment and income for the poor, while local institutions create enable set to address local needs and demands.

A key governance challenge is to build the political will and institutional capacity to promote sustainable livelihoods and this requires a particular focus on developing practical linkages to translate national policies, laws, and regulations into action at the local level. MDG's implies strong commitment and long term development vision and will not be achieved if the governments do not strengthen institutions of governance and build capacity at local level. Africa leadership should promote good Governance, by strengthening institutions, local participation and practices such as public meetings, citizens can participate more effectively in local decision-making, gain experience in democratic processes and promote Local institutions and authorities to address local needs and demands. Ultimately it is consensual that effectiveness of the MDG's, depends on how local development plans are integrated into national strategies and development plans, and how local initiatives are being addressed at local level. In short, sustainable development can not be realized without robust policies, strong institutions and active citizenry engaged in key decision-making.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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