



# **Support Programme to the Political Shaping of Decentralization in Africa**

**AFRICA**

**RESEARCH  
PAPER**

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
AFRICAN LOCAL  
GOVERNANCE TIMELINE:  
DECENTRALIZATION STUDY  
POST 1980**

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**Y o u r c o n t a c t p e r s o n s**  
within GFA Consulting Group GmbH are

Dr. Birgit Boetius  
Christopher Smith

Development of the Africa Local Governance Timeline:  
Decentralization Study Post 1980

**Africa**

**R e s e a r c h P a p e r**

Prepared by: Elroy Africa

**A d d r e s s**



GFA Consulting Group GmbH  
Eulenkrugestraße 82  
22359 Hamburg  
Germany

Phone +49 (40) 6 03 06 – 352  
Fax +49 (40) 6 03 06 – 119  
E-mail [christopher.smith@gfa-group.de](mailto:christopher.smith@gfa-group.de)



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a summary overview and assessment of decentralization in Africa since the 1980s. The four main issues that this report addresses are: a timeline and trajectory of African decentralization 1980 and 2010; a typology of African decentralization; an assessment of the key triggering influences; and selection of case studies of African decentralization.

The core standard definitions of decentralization are taken as given. In its broadest sense the term decentralization is used to encompass a variety of alternative institutional and financial arrangements for sharing power and allocating resources (Martinussen, 2004). In general it refers to the transfer of responsibilities, public resources and personnel from the national level of government to sub-national levels of government (Ndegwa, 2002).

The literature identifies three main types of decentralization: deconcentration; delegation; devolution. Privatization is often also located under the umbrella of decentralization:

- Devolution: the devolution of power to sub-national units is seen as the ideal form of decentralization since it combines the joint promises of local democracy and technical efficiency.
- Deconcentration: this is where countries operate administrative structures that assign responsibilities for functions within specific sub-national territories to field level civil servants.
- Delegation: this takes place when public enterprises and other semi-autonomous government agencies are assigned responsibility for implementation.

## **2           TIMELINE AND TRAJECTORY OF DECENTRALIZATION IN AFRICA: 1980s - 2010**

There is a rich recent history of decentralization in Africa (inter alia JICA, 2008; Eyoh and Stren, 2007; Ndegwa, 2002, Cabral, 2011; Patel, 2007; USAID, 2010; Nagaruku, 2003; Le Bay, 2009; du Gaudusson, 1989; Ribot, 2002, World Bank, 2010).

One observation argues that since 1917 there have been four waves of decentralization in West Africa since 1917, that could also be applicable to Africa generally: post-World War 1, post-World War 2, post-independence in the 1960s, and post-1990 (Ribot 2002). Others argue that there were distinctive trends distinguishing the 1980s and the 1990s (e.g. Ngaruko 2003; Le Bay 2009; Cabral 2011). The most recent work arrive at many similar conclusions of decentralization in Africa post-2000, but with important differences regarding the current impact and likely future of African decentralization (Wunsch 2008; USAID 2010; World Bank 2010; JICA 2008).

The overall synthesis of the historical trajectory of African decentralization shows three broad periods since the 1980s.

### **2.1       The Lost Decade of the 1980s: Structural Adjustment Influenced Administrative Decentralization**

By the early 1980s many African states had post-colonial regimes that sought to consolidate central power over local affairs. This was after initial commitments to democratization and decentralization immediately post independence in the 1960s and 1970s. These two latter decades were largely characterized by centralization and military rule that set the scene for the 1980s.

Widespread economic decline in many African countries in the 1980s contributed to the characterization of this decade as the "lost decade" (Meredith 2005). International financial institutions, foreign governments and donors viewed the African state as the principal cause of economic and development failure and called for various Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) measures. Key elements of structural adjustment included relaxing trade barriers, promoting economic growth and a greater role for the private sector and the cutting down of central government bureaucracies. A key component of the public service reform was advocacy of decentralization as one initiative to trim the apparatus of central governments.

In 1979 Senegal became the first African country to get a structural adjustment loan from the World Bank. During the 1980s about 36 Sub-Saharan African countries entered into structural adjustment agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Donors played a key role in this period and linked their support and conditions to the SAP and the imperatives of decentralization.

During the 1980s decentralization was argued to be in the national interest and to have tremendous developmental value in responding to local needs and aspirations. This would make local institutions more accountable to local communities and consequently greater equity and efficiency would follow. Examples of countries who followed this path included Kenya in 1983 with their "District Focus" initiative, Zimbabwe deconcentrated power to local administrators, and Nigeria introduced elected local government and devolved major powers in 1983 (Ribot 2002).

What was the state of local government and decentralization in Africa by the end of the 1980s?

Driven by various structural adjustment agreements and donor programs, many countries pursued the decentralization agenda. Some of the first countries were Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana, Ivory Coast, Kenya and Tanzania.

One writer commenting on former French colonies observed the following positive trends: decentralized government was extended to the entire territory of countries, e.g. Mauritania and Ivory Coast; the powers of local communities were enlarged, e.g. Benin and Madagascar; and the system of elections was generalized. (du Gaudusson 1989).

Most writers are in agreement that the general nature and type of decentralization in Africa at the end of the 1980s was that of administrative decentralization and deconcentration that failed to produce autonomous representative local government. Drawing specifically from the trends in Southern and Eastern Africa one author argues that "Decentralization was more in the form of deconcentration" since it requires less systematic change in administration (Kundishora, 2009). It is also argued that centralized states existed in Africa for most of the 1980s. (Ribot 2002; USAID 2010) Consistent with this view, it is also argued that up to the early 1990s local level structures either ossified along with the public sector under the weight of centralization or became conduits of central state's repression (Ndegwa, 2002). By the end of the 1980s the World Bank was calling for "better governance" and not less government in Africa (Meredith, 2005).

The 1980s decade of decentralization in Africa was largely externally driven by the perceived crisis of the African state and associated wide-spread economic decline. In reality many African countries took small second (after the first period following independence) bold steps that mainly resulted in various forms of administrative decentralization and deconcentration. Concerns for national unity and cohesion were also paramount in the decentralization agenda during this period.

## **2.2 African Decade of Democratic Renewal in the 1990s: Entrenching Decentralization in National Legislation, but with Limited Development Impact**

The 1990s ushered in a new period of African decentralization and in many ways laid the basis for ongoing efforts post-2000. A new movement of democratization swept through Africa in the 1990s (Ribot and Oyono, 2006). There was a generalized view that the SAP project was a failure in Africa and was not having the desired results. Commenting on decentralization in Eastern and Southern Africa, the UN HABITAT (2002:18) argued that "more than 10 years of structural adjustments have not produced the sought after stabilization or economic growth that was initially anticipated".

Across the continent, during the 1990s, there was a transition taking place to more competitive and democratic politics. Various decentralization reforms took place in a context where in the mid-1990s more than 60% Sub-Saharan African lived in absolute poverty (Ndegwa 2002; Crook 2003). The new wave of democratic renewal was partially a revolt against the failure of structural adjustment and the dominant form of administrative decentralization that characterized many countries. Donors and international development agencies now promoted Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers as the new mantra.

This wave of democratization had a number of positive results for decentralization and democratic governance in Africa. One writer describes this period as one that saw a key shift

from monocentric to polycentric governance on the continent. Some of the critical features included: a greater diversity of institutional options besides deconcentration; a scenario where local government was interacting with other institutional actors in the local community; and the objectives of decentralization went beyond participation to the empowerment of communities. Civil society organizations became much more visible and active in this period (Olowu in Eyoh & Stren, 2007).

No doubt one of the most positive trends of African decentralization during this period in the 1990s was the enshrinement of local government in the constitution of many countries, e.g. Benin, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Niger, South Africa, Namibia, Senegal, Uganda (Ribot, 2002; Le Bay, 2009). The effects of this flood of legal frameworks in the 1990s were: the holding of sub-national elections; devolving responsibilities and resources to sub-national officials; and the decentralization of decision-making in the areas of planning, management and implementation (USAID, 2010).

Notwithstanding these positive trends in the 1990s, some are equally critical of the impact and nature of decentralization by the end of the 1990s. It is suggested that despite the dominant discourse of this period on rights, pluralism, democracy and democratic decentralization, in reality decentralization was neither accountable, representative nor saw powers devolved. The argument went further to state that "regardless of the design of the local government system the prevailing centralizing tendencies on the part of central government have rendered political decentralization a myth" (Ribot 2002:7). Various factors and reasons are set out that informed this state of affairs, including primary country concerns about national cohesion and central control, e.g. Ethiopia, Uganda, Mali, DRC, Morocco and Cameroon. The same author argues that at the end of this decade the Decentralization experiment in Africa only took timid steps in the direction of deconcentration and that the various democratic decentralization reforms were generally weak.

This argument about centralization tendencies is further elaborated by another writer citing various examples of decentralization and "re-centralization" in the areas of planning and capital management, budget and fiscal management, and personnel systems and management, e.g. in both Ghana and Botswana in the 1990s local government personnel were employees of the central government or Local Government Service (Wunsch, 2001).

An impact study undertaken by the World Bank in 2002 also provides negative findings whereby it argues that decentralization in Africa by the end of the 1990s has not resulted in poverty reduction mainly because of poor implementation capacity and corruption at the centre. It recognizes that decentralization is proceeding unevenly and is in need of deepening; the political component of decentralization is most advanced on the continent, but the fiscal and administrative components are lagging behind (UNDESA, 2003:15). Ndegwa (2002) succinctly suggests that by the end of the 1990s the portrait of African decentralization is a mixed one, neither as bleak as a decade ago, nor is it a vista of energetic reforms. Cabral (2011) provides a more certain conclusion of the 1990s by arguing that deconcentration was the preferred pathway for decentralization in Africa during this period given the high scoring of the 2002 World Bank study.

### **2.3 Post-2000: "Decentralization by Devolution" and "Portrait of Mixed Results"**

In the second half of the post-2000 decade, a number of fresh studies have attempted capture the patterns, trends and challenges of African decentralization. (Eyoh and Stren, 2007; JICA, 2008; Wunsch, 2008; USAID, 2010; Alam, 2011; Cabral, 2011; World Bank, 2010; UNDP,



2012). There is a recognition by most that post-2000 has seen significant advances in decentralization, but it remains uneven with mixed results and is not deep. Cabral (ibid:15) argues that "*despite data gaps, available evidence suggests that the overall picture for decentralization in Africa is glooming, as there are no indisputable success stories in terms of governance outputs and outcomes at a local level*". Regarding the constitutional entrenchment of local government, it is suggested that less than 40% of African countries today have constitutional provisions enshrining municipal government (Adeyeye, 2009).

Regarding the content of decentralization in Africa, the JICA report (2008:185) argues that "*in African today, the popularity of 'decentralization by devolution' is high*". While the normative value and advantages of political democratic decentralization is commonly recognized by most, if not all, some reports clearly note the appropriateness of deconcentration and administrative decentralization in particular contexts. It is further noted that devolution and deconcentration co-exist in many countries, e.g. Mozambique and Mali (Le Bay, 2009; USAID, 2010).

The dominance of decentralization by deconcentration in the current decade is not unanimously held by all writers. In looking at the relationship between NEPAD and local government one author argues that "*at the present time, local governments in most African states have limited functions. In many member states of the African Union, local is primarily viewed as the administrative arm of other arms of government, particularly the national one*" (Drent, 2004:17).

Regarding the durability of the current decentralization trajectory in Africa, Eyoh & Stren (2007:10) are cautiously optimistic; they argue that the current 'wave' of decentralization of decentralization "*there appears to be stronger and more deeply entrenched than initiatives in the early 1960s, the 1970s and the early 1980s. This is true for West Africa as is the case elsewhere*".

Certainly the hegemonic policy discourse and emerging practice of the post-2000 decade has a clear policy bias about the preferred nature and type of decentralization, i.e. democratic decentralization. However, most recent studies seem to agree that the extent to which this is being realized and what its impact has been, is more of a mosaic picture than a two tone portrait.

### **3 TYPOLOGY OF AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION**

Given the above historical trajectory of African decentralization, is it possible to group and categorise African countries into various segments ? Clearly what the above discussion has shown is that the typology of African Decentralization is contingent on the specific period in Africa's history and the particular regional and country contextual factors intermingling at the time. This section briefly shows how various authors and studies have attempted capture the overall patterns and categories of African decentralization between 2000 and 2011.

#### **3.1 Colonial-Based Typology of Decentralization**

The most simplistic (and problematic) typology of African decentralization is rooted in explanations that seek to group and type-caste countries according to their colonial heritage. Francophone countries are recognized to have a history that makes them more disposed to centralized models of governance, based on the French system of "tutelle" (close monitoring and supervision) that has lead to many more examples of administrative decentralization and deconcentration, e.g. West and North African countries. Lusophone countries, e.g. Angola and Mozambique, are argued to have similar centralized forms of governance.

Anglophone countries, informed by the British colonial system of "indirect rule" are assumed to be more disposed to decentralized forms of governance, e.g. Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa. Although there is a recognition that former British colonies have taken diverse paths regarding systems of governance (USAID, 2010). There is no doubt that colonial legacies have impacted hugely on the nature and form of governance systems adopted by former colonies, however these legacies have not pre-determined the future of decentralization in any part of Africa.

#### **3.2 Typology Based on the Pace and Speed of Decentralization**

Brosio (2000) undertook a useful summary of African decentralization reflecting back on the 1990s. In 2000, African states were grouped into four categories:

- Fast Pace of Decentralization Reform: e.g. Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda
- Just started, e.g. Malawi and Gambia
- Large group that adopted legal texts for decentralization, e.g. Benin and Mozambique
- Announcement stage of policy, e.g. Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Kenya

The author goes further to show how decentralization has implanted itself into various political systems. In federal systems there are examples of South Africa (with three levels or spheres of government) and Ethiopia (which has 9 regions that is further comprised of 66 zones and 2 cities). The next system described is that of Mali with four layers of government, i.e. central, regions, departments, and municipalities. Next are the two-layered systems such as the Ivory Coast comprising of the national level and the second of communes (total of 197). Finally there are those systems with a huge number of sub-national units, e.g. Ethiopia and Uganda.

#### **3.3 Composite Indicator-based Typology of Decentralization**

In 2002 the World Bank undertook an assessment of decentralization in 30 African states (Ndegwa, 2002). Four indicators were used to assess the degree of decentralization: political decentralization; administrative deecentralisation; fiscal decentralization; and downward accountability. Countries were ranked individually according to each of these four indicators and

then there was a composite ranking based on all indicators. The overall results of this stocktaking was as follows:

- Highest Degree of Decentralization (2): South African and Uganda
- Moderate Degree of Decentralization (11): Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Namibia, Senegal, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and Madagascar
- Low Degree of Decentralization (13): Zambia, Guinea, Mali, Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Angola, Burundi, Benin, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon
- Nominal or Zero Degree of Decentralization (4): Central African Republic, Niger, Sierra Leone, Chad

Of the sample of 30 African countries this study showed that more than half, i.e. 17, fall within the bottom half of the typology indicating moderate to low degree of decentralization. It appears that the colonial heritage has a bearing on the results: only 4 out of the 13 in the high to moderate categories are Francophone (Senegal, Rwanda, Ivory Coast and Madagascar); and all, except 4 out of the 17 in the two lower bands, are Franco- or Lusophone countries.

Four main limitations of decentralization are outlined: the unitary structure of the state (the report argues that of 47 African countries, only 4 have federal constitutions); the colonial heritage of the administrative state; the institutional insecurity of the African state; and poverty and the lack of capacity at local community level.

### **3.4 Federal - Unitary Typology of Decentralization**

In 2010 USAID undertook a detailed study of Decentralization in 10 African countries. It concluded that "*decentralization has advanced considerably in Africa between 1990 and 2010*" but that there were mixed results in these countries that were studied. A primary set of three goals of decentralization were used to assess progress, namely democracy, stability and development. Additional inter-mediate objectives of decentralization were also used in the assessment: authority, autonomy, accountability, and capacity.

The study concludes by outlining three broad patterns (typologies) of decentralization in Africa:

- Federal Countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa- In these countries there are high levels of sub-national autonomy and accountability and there is political decentralization at multiple levels of sub-national government. It suggests that there is a correlation between federalism and the size of the economy. Capacity however is compromised by patronage and corruption.
- Countries that are Most Centralized: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mozambique- These countries in the main have Francophone and Lusophone histories. Sub-national autonomy is limited by the fiscal and administrative dimensions. In addition, downward accountability is also limited by central administrative controls.
- Anglophone Countries: Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda - The general pattern in these countries is that they are "*middling with respect to decentralization*". State legitimacy is the common motivating factor for decentralization. There are growing fiscal responsibilities to sub-national government, but this is accompanied by continued state controls. These countries have the largest variety of political systems, but what is common is that all have seen some attempts at re-centralization.

### **3.5      3.5 Decentralization Matrix**

Alam (2011) offers an additional perspective on discerning patterns of decentralization. This author presents decentralization matrix that comprises of four levels:

- Advanced: reform laws are approved,
- Developing: reform policy is agreed,
- Emerging: institutional arrangements are in place, and
- No Attempt: status quo and no explicit policy is in place.

## **4 TRIGGERING INFLUENCES AFFECTING AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION SINCE THE 1980S**

How do we explain the shaping and triggering influences that have come to bear on the trajectory and typology of African Decentralization since the 1980s ?

Many of these hegemonic factors and discourses are apparent in the sections above. A simple conceptual toolbox divides these factors into external and internal ones, i.e. both in relation to the continent and particular countries. The discussion below draws on a combination of sources that reflect the interplay between historical and contemporary, between endogenous and external forces.

### **4.1 Colonial Legacies and Heritage**

Ethiopia is the only country in Africa that can claim to be unaffected directly by the colonial legacies of decentralization. All studies point to some degree of influence by the colonial masters of African countries (e.g. USAID, 2010). The various historical moments of post-colonial independence offered all African countries with ambitious springboards to shape their political systems and decentralization reform agendas.

The inherited political systems of the Francophone and Lusophone countries are widely regarded to be more centralized in nature and have assumed in post-colonial times political systems that have predominantly displayed varying degrees of administrative decentralization and deconcentration.

The paradox is that some of the Francophone countries in West and North Africa are reputed to have some of the oldest forms of decentralization and local governance in Africa. For example, the Senegalese towns of Saint Louis and Goree had the status of communes in 1848 and their inhabitants voted in the French elections in 1872. However it should be noted that these communes had no powers transferred to them (Eyoh and Stren, 2007).

In the colonial period, decentralization was called "association" in French colonies and "indirect rule" in British colonies. Ndegwa's (2002) report observes that countries with the French tradition and the role of tutelle, represented by functionaries of the central state, effectively neutralizes local authorities. On the other hand, countries with British colonial traditions have a parallel system of sub-national administration tiers that co-exist with and often dominate local authorities.

Indirect rule for some was seen as a hybrid of delegation and deconcentration (Ngaruko, 2003). However, the dominant view in the literature is that Anglophone countries are disposed to decentralization. The 2010 USAID study has been instructive on this point in that it has pointed to the diverse decentralization routes that former British colonies have taken; two extremes of the spectrum being Botswana (centralized state) and Nigeria (federalist state).

The general conclusion is that at the point of independence all African countries inherited political systems where decentralization was a tool of administrative management. However, contrary to the anticipated deconcentration colonial predisposition of French colonies, it is argued that West African Francophone countries immediately after independence sought to create "participatory local governments" (Ribot, 2002).

In 2003 some analysts predicted that African decentralization was likely to be messy with an uneven stop - start process, and this was more likely to be the case in African Francophone countries than in the rest of Africa (Ngaruko, 2003).

## **4.2 Post-Colonial International Development and Donor Influences**

Schneider noted (2003:33) that "*the current fondness for decentralization began in the 1980s*". As argued earlier, the 1980s were largely synonymous with the Bretton Woods institutions' Structural Adjustment Program reform interventions in Africa. In many respects, decentralization was posited as a centre piece of the overall civil service reform agenda of down-sizing. UN Habitat (2002:3) cites a 1989 World Bank report on Sub-Saharan Africa that argues that the goal of decentralization is to reduce the number of tasks by central government and to decentralize the provision of public services.

The failure of structural adjustment was then followed by the heavily donor sponsored Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in African countries (UN Habitat, 2002). Here too, decentralization was a centre piece, but under the banner of promoting the wave democratic revival and poverty reduction in Africa.

On poverty alleviation strategies and the role local government one writer argues (Brosio, 2000:4) that "*the view is becoming increasingly popular, particularly among donors, whereby the responsibility for these policies should be assigned to the very small local governments, or to informal communities to avoid the risk, which is substantial where democratic institutions are fragile, of capture by vested interests*". This approach is still prevalent in the decade post-2000.

The example is cited in Malawi where the Poverty Reduction Strategy process is largely donor controlled and all the related policy making for that matter. As a consequence Districts are ill-informed of this process (Patel, 2011).

There are countless examples of donor-supported programs for decentralization in Africa (e.g. JICA, 2008). Also many donor agencies are working directly with and in local authorities and local communities. Many donors have made participatory governance (e.g. OECD) and decentralized cooperation (e.g. European Union) a crucial component of the conditionalities of their support (Oluwu in Eyoh & Stren, 2007).

A concrete example of this is Kenya where donors put pressure on the Moi government for greater governance reforms and for that country to become a model of post-Cold War reforms. Donors indicated that if the democratization reform process in Kenya was poor they would reduce their aid. Subsequently aid to government was cut and alternative support was given to NGOs was increased (JICA, *ibid*:97).

For most African countries with limited resources, decentralized cooperation has now become a vital source of support for local governance and decentralization reform. In 1994 the President of the United Towns Organizations at an international meeting for Decentralized Cooperation with Africa stated that "*what is important is the realization that decentralized cooperation is a concept with considerable impact ... It is a notion that is still a little vague ...*" (UNPAD, 2008). This term can be traced to Fourth Lome Convention in 1989 where it was recognized as having the potential to enhance decentralized participatory democracy and governance as well as the principle of subsidiarity and local ownership of development.

The Cotonou Agreement of 2000 was a significant milestone in influencing African decentralization. This agreement was a Partnership pact between the European Union and the

African Caribbean and Pacific states. It formally recognized both local government and non-state actors and partners in international cooperation and development processes. The founding congress of the United Cities and Local Governments in Paris in 2004 also strongly supported decentralized cooperation. By 2008, at least 48 African countries had entered into various decentralized cooperation agreements with European countries (UNPAD, *ibid*:16).

The key sectors addressed by decentralized cooperation by the European Union are water and sanitation, environmental sustainability, energy, ICT, urban management and governance and decentralized governance.

Even the UNDP could not escape the prevailing discourse of decentralization and its impact on the work of the organization. In a joint 2000 study with the German government it was recognized that,

*"UNDP support and involvement in decentralization and local governance have evolved significantly over the last decade. UNDP activity used to focus on primarily on the administrative aspects of decentralization ... Currently, UNDP support in these areas aims at increasing political, financial and administrative authority and responsibility for local level governance structures and improving responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of local communities"* (UNDP, 2000:6)

This qualitative shift was also complemented by a quantitative increase in the number and value of decentralization and local governance projects supported. Between 1992 and 1999 the number of decentralization projects increased from 28 to 136. The average amount of resources spent per project over the same period increased from 146 thousand US dollars to 665 thousand US dollars (UNDP, *ibid*:7).

An UNPAD 2008 study also provides insightful case studies of decentralized cooperation with African local authorities: e.g. between Kampala City (Uganda) and Kirklees Metropolitan Council (UK) ; between Nakuru Municipal Council (Kenya) and Leuven City Council (Belgium); and between Marondera City Council (Zimbabwe) and Leighton-Lindsdale (UK).

Japan's support for decentralization reform in Africa is thoroughly captured in a study undertaken in 2008 by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA:2008). The study reviewed the four main areas of Japan's international development support, namely

- Sector support: e.g. A Kenyan project for the improvement of Health Services with a focus on safe motherhood in the Kisii and Kericho districts;
- Community development support: to the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Centre for Sustainable Rural Development Project;
- Support for decentralization reform: e.g. Local Government Support Programme in Tanzania, and the Zambian Program for Capacity Development for the Provision of Decentralised Services; and
- Area based development support: e.g. Regional Development Program in Nyando District and Homa Bay District (Kenya), and the Ghanaian Integrated Social Development Program.

Based on a number of lessons from these support initiatives and an assessment of decentralization in Africa, Japan has begun to explore the possibility of initiating projects aimed at strengthening decentralization reform and local government capacity development in Africa (JICA:2008:191).

There can be little doubt that international development and donor agencies are playing a valuable role in supporting and shaping the course of decentralization in Africa.

### 4.3 Political and Developmental Factors Influencing Decentralization

Many writers have observed that decentralization is not new to Africa, but the language and discourse has shifted. Some of the motivating factors and objectives of decentralization have been the dismantling of central government, consolidating national unity, consolidating central government, and strengthening local government (e.g. Ribot, 2000). In Kenya for example in 1984 the "District Focus" was intended to increase the efficiency of central administration rather than promote local autonomy or popular participation.

At a Conference on Decentralization in West Africa in 1994, participants had various expectations of decentralization. These included efficiency, equity, better service provision, greater participation and democratization, national cohesion and central control, and local empowerment and poverty reduction.

In 1989 one writer commented that "*it is probably right to say that one of the reasons for the decentralization process is the crisis of the African state*" (du Gaudusson, 1989:112). This theme is a common one that runs through the literature on African decentralization between the 1980s and the post-2000 decade. More recently it has been argued, but not dissimilar, that the fundamental dilemma of African statecraft is broadcasting authority to populations that are poorly integrated with the nation-state (USAID, 2010).

Two of the primary endogenous driving forces for decentralization are briefly discussed, namely the desire for greater popular local democracy, and improved service public provision and poverty reduction.

The example of the Government of Angola shows this commitment very clearly in its Decentralization And Local Governance Project: Phase II Project Implementation Plan (August 2007 to July 2010),

*"With the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2002 the Government opened up the political arena by among other things embarking on a decentralization program whose main objective is democratization. More specifically the democratization process is aimed at enhancing popular participation in decision making and local governance processes, involving local communities in local development planning and service delivery, empowering local communities for poverty reduction, strengthening of local government system for effective public service delivery, and promoting and consolidating a democratic culture". (UNDP & Government of Angola, 2007:1)*

As noted earlier, the 1990s are uniformly recognized as a period of democratic renewal and revival in Africa. Some characterize this as a consequence of the post-Cold War era (USAID, 2010). This period of democratization had direct implications for local governance and decentralization. A number of democratic regimes in the 1990s and beyond have strongly promoted decentralization, e.g. Ghana, South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania.

The point is however made that a number of authoritarian regimes have equally pursued decentralization, e.g. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Uganda. It is noted that in these latter countries real incentives for decentralization were offered. The choice of a unitary or federal political system has also not seen a significant difference in the levels of administration (USAID, 2010).

In Benin, one study argues that decentralization was motivated by two principles: the proximity principle and the the competition principle. In 1998 Benin started the decentralization process that became effective with elections in 2002 and follow-up elections in 2008. Sub-national



government is comprised of 12 Departments, 77 communes (comprising of elected local government), and 546 districts. Legislation in 1999 transferred important competencies to communes, i.e. elementary school, health, economic development, transport infrastructure and tourism. One of the observations of the study is that decentralization induced inter-jurisdictional competition (Caldeira et al, 2010).

In the case of Uganda, a number of reasons are offered for this country's renewed interest in local government and decentralization after successive military regimes: an increased emphasis on popular participation and democratization; the economic crises; frustrations with the results of planning and implementation by central governments that lack capacity and legitimacy; and the recognition that a well functioning public administration is an indispensable part of a modern developing society. (UN Habitat, 2002:20)

One of the glaring observations is that despite the noble intentions by many African states to pursue decentralization, this in itself did not deepen or promote popular democracy. Put differently, there is no guaranteed deterministic link between local democracy and decentralization.

Many African countries have undertaken decentralization reform to explicitly drive their poverty reduction and public service provision agenda. The UNDESA report (2003:16,17) provides three of the common reasons that are normally advanced as to why and how decentralization supports poverty reduction. Firstly, decentralization is argued to promote greater accountability and responsiveness, which in turn reduces the costs of corruption and doing business for both the public and private sectors. Second, the mobilization of communities and strengthening of social capital under decentralization stands a better chance of being sustained. Thirdly, it is more difficult to sweep projects under the table when communities are involved in project planning and monitoring.

Caldeira et al (2011:6) notes a few examples where there has been a positive link between decentralization and service delivery in Africa in the roads and health maintenance sectors. Instances of decentralized primary health care services to locally elected health committees in Benin, Guinea and Mali are noted, as well as to local government in Mozambique. These examples have increased access to affordable health services and have also contributed to improvements in immunization rates and infant mortality.

Ethiopia is cited as another example where there has been at least a modest, if not positive link, between decentralization and public service provision (UN Habitat, *ibid*). In a recent study on Decentralization in Eastern Africa by the UNDP (2012) service delivery progress is also noted in the case of Rwanda. It states that there has been improved service delivery and accountability to the population through consultative planning and budgeting processes and increased budgetary allocations to the districts and sectors. Between 2000 - 2009 key development sectors in Rwanda such as health (reduced mortality, morbidity, increased child birth rates, etc) education, agriculture, enterprise/micro financing and water and sanitation have seen improvements. Recent gender assessment reports indicate that both women and men have enjoyed benefits accruing from decentralized governance. Both men and women are members of the district council planning committee that develops and reviews *Imihigo* and sector performance plans.

Many poverty reduction and service delivery programs are directly informed by the Constitutional mandate given to local government in African countries. For example, the 1996 constitution of South Africa states that local government is responsible for basic service delivery and that this level of government must promote social and economic development.

Pieterse and Smit (2011) overlay the challenges of urban development, urbanization and decentralization and argue that the former two have been and will be key variables in shaping the nature and form of African decentralization. They quote a 2010 UN Habitat study that suggests Africa had the fastest rate of urbanization of all regions in the world between 2005-2010. It is further stated that between 2000 - 2030 Africa's urban population will increase from 294 million to 742 million people.

It is argued that the current urban crisis in Africa has many manifestations and can be attributed to fundamental institutional problems across many states. This has meant that central governments have failed to provide adequate support to urban local governments.

For many African countries decentralization, sub-national government, and local government in particular, is seen as a critical vehicle to drive the service delivery and poverty reduction agenda's of their countries. In this sense all countries have made some link between decentralization and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time it is argued that African governments are not doing enough to recognize the importance of the urban development and urban governance crisis and what this means for decentralization generally.

#### **4.4 Conflict and Post-Conflict Environmental Factors**

A notable triggering influence for decentralization in Africa has been the scourge of civil war and conflicts that have plagued a number of countries. The USAID (2010:49) study argues that,

*"Mozambique and Uganda are clearest cases here, along with Ethiopia. In three other countries internal strife featured prominently as a factor in the calculations regarding regime stability and directly influenced calculations about decentralization, but was somewhat more contained than in the cases of all out civil war: Mali, Nigeria and South Africa".*

A significant finding of the above study is that decentralization has been used in post-conflict societies, with the initial framework often established as part of the peace process. Cabral (2011) gives the example of Uganda where due to the threat of regional / ethnic separation, decentralization was used as a political strategy in that country.

Regime maintenance is often a closely related factor to that of addressing conflict and post-conflict situations. It has been argued that *"at the regime level, political incentives may be directed at maintaining an entire system... Relevant examples here may be Burkina Faso and Uganda where long established individual leaders made calculations about the need to decentralize under governing constraints. regime maintenance can motivate decision makers who may have little interest in development outcomes ..."* (USAID, *ibid*:9). It is further argued that political patronage and decentralization are also often comfortable bedfellows used by national leaders to served the same end of regime maintenance.

## 5 BEST PRACTICE TRENDS IN AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION

Informed by the plethora of forces and factors triggering and shaping African decentralization, are there any best practices ?

There are valuable examples of best practice regarding decentralization reforms and practices in Africa. This is notwithstanding that most studies paint a picture of uneven and mixed results. For ease of simplicity the three dominant themes of decentralization are used in this section: political decentralization, administrative decentralization, and fiscal decentralization.

### 5.1 Political Decentralization

Political decentralization is also referred to as devolution and is regarded as the most extreme form of decentralization. Here responsibilities are transferred to elected sub-national government with some level of autonomy. Specific indicators used to assess the degree of political decentralization include the number of directly elected levels of sub-national government, the regularity of elections at these sub-national levels, and the extent to which these elections are free and fair (Ndegwa, 2002).

There are many good African examples of progress and case studies in this area. One example of the positive impact of democratic decentralization is in Ivory Coast where the municipal system has progressively evolved. In 1980 after local government legislation was passed the number of municipalities rose from 37 to 137, plus the city of Abijan (du Gaudusson, 1989).

In a stocktaking survey of decentralization undertaken in 30 African countries by the World Bank in 2002, 8 scored high in the area of political decentralization. These countries were South Africa, Uganda, Namibia, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Ivory Coast. A total of 7 countries fell in the second band of moderate: Nigeria, Rwanda, Madagascar, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi. An important milestone for Kenya was the outcome of a referendum in 2010 that resulted in elected districts (USAID:ibid).

Another good example is Tanzania that adopted a "Local Government Reform Agenda" for the period 1996-2000. This was formally adopted as government policy in 1998, whereby it identified "Decentralization by Devolution" as the preferred route for the country. The central-local government relationship was revolutionized and local government was given significant independent authority under guidance of the national constitutional framework. The Ministry for Regional Administration and Local government was placed within the Prime Minister' Office. The District level became the core local government authority and assumed responsibility for basic social services such as primary education, healthcare, agricultural extension, village water supply and sanitation and the construction and maintenance of local roads (JICA, 2008).

Cabral (2011:5) argues that political decentralization was found to be the most advanced and widespread in Africa, although it is not well established. Elections at the sub-national level is a common factor, but the extent of fairness is questionable. The USAID (2010:13) report supports this view by arguing that "*the most unambiguous achievements in African decentralization have been the establishment of new legal frameworks of authority that empower devolved or deconcentrated officials. The countries in the study have introduced significant decentralization laws in the two decades since 1990.... this constitutes a rather remarkable shift from the highly centralized authoritarian regimes that prevailed in Africa before 1990*".

Ethiopia is regarded as an exceptional success story of institutionalizing a framework for self rule at a sub-national regional level. Significant decentralization reforms in 1991 lead to an

"ethnic federalist" state whereby major ethnic groups were given their own regional states. This is regarded as a noteworthy case study of a country emerging from civil conflict and finding a solution for stable political management. This preceded the constitutional strengthening of local government in 1995 which built on this initial political solution. Presently there are 9 regional states, each with the right to their own constitutions. These regions further have their own civil service that is separate from the national public service. Below the regions are 66 zones and 2 city administrations. The zones are deconcentrated units of the regions. Under the zones are woredas and kebeles. Both these levels of government provide services, while the former has an important coordinating role. Ethiopia has 3.6 million sub-national posts. (Brosio, 2000; USAID, 2010).

Of the 10 countries in the USAID study, it concludes that 4 have had free elections at sub-national level (Botswana, Ghana, Mali and South Africa). In the remaining 6 the sub-national elections were partly free (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda). At the time of writing the report in 2010, all but 3 had conducted sub-national elections (Botswana, Nigeria, Uganda) since the mid- to late-1990s. Ghana and South Africa are also scored positively on the political factors of decentralization with regard to elements such as political support from the centre and local levels, policy coherence, accountability mechanisms, political mobilization of the poor and institutional participation (Cabral, 2011).

The overall positive trends in political decentralization are further supported by Le Bay (2009) whereby Mali is cited as a concrete example; *"since the early 1990s the situation has changed. Democratic decentralization has been anchored in constitutional laws and in the creation of hundreds of new local governments. For example, Mali alone established more than 680 new rural councils"*.

Zimbabwe is another example where deconcentrated powers were transferred to local administrators in 1984, which was followed in 1993 with the decentralization of new powers to elected rural district councils. Similarly, Nigeria introduced elected local government and devolved major powers to local governments in 1983. Ghana also established elected district assemblies, although they had limited powers (Ribot, 2002).

Most authors seem to be in agreement that in the last decade post 2000, political or democratic decentralization has been one of success stories in Africa.

## **5.2 Administrative Decentralization**

Administrative decentralization or deconcentration concerns the transfer of power to the local branches of the central state, such as prefects, administrators or line Ministry agents (Ribot, 2002:iii).

In the World Bank study of 2002, three indicators were used to measure the extent of administrative decentralization, namely the role clarity of powers and functions between national and local government provided in law, where responsibility for the actual delivery of services resided, and where the responsibility for the hiring and firing of civil servants resided.

This study concluded that only 2 countries out of the 30 studied were ranked as having high levels of administrative decentralization: South Africa and Uganda. A total of 10 fell into the category of moderate: Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Congo, Republic, DRC, Burundi).

On a more optimistic note, the USAID (2010) argues that administrative decentralization has seen consistent achievement in Africa and is therefore also a success story. Examples are Botswana, Mali, Mozambique, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. Areas of concrete progress are

with regard to the devolution for local planning and deconcentrated monitoring, support and coordination.

Ngaruko (2003:136,137) provides examples in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia where deconcentration has been a success. In 1995 Burkina Faso implemented a system of decentralized education service delivery, i.e. the Satellite System of Basic Education, that was aimed primarily at girls. The project was highly participatory and involved NGOS, local labour of villagers and the UNICEF provided key equipment. The success indicators were that teachers employed were paid 50% less than those teachers in the traditional system, yet they were motivated and the test results of pupils showed that those in the satellite system performed much better than those in the traditional system.

In a different example, the Mali government and the EU launched a pilot program in 2006 to support Administrative Reform and Decentralization. Six strategic areas of support were negotiated including specific indicators for "strengthening deconcentration" (Le Bay, 2009:33).

As one form of decentralization, deconcentration is entirely legitimate but it is not democratic decentralization. (USAID, 2010). As noted earlier devolution and deconcentration often co-exist in many African countries and need to be judged on their developmental and governance impacts.

### **5.3 Fiscal Decentralization**

Fiscal decentralization refers to the transfer of fiscal resources and revenue-generating powers from the central level to sub-national levels of government (Ribot, 2002). The 2002 World Bank study measured fiscal decentralization against the following indicators: the arrangements for fiscal transfers from the central government to localities, and the proportion of public expenditure controlled by localities. Against the above framework South Africa was the only country to score "very high"; 3 fell into the high category (Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe) and 7 were in the moderate category (Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana, Senegal, Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, DRC).

A notable achievement of fiscal decentralization in Africa is that it has proceeded through the decentralization of revenues and significant expenditure responsibilities. This is demonstrated by the fact that most African countries receive transfers from central government that are formula-based and not on central discretion. This predictability is a crucial principle of fiscal decentralization. It is further noted that the most commonly devolved areas have been the major public services such as health, education, water, sanitation and basic infrastructure (USAID, 2010).

Other best practice examples of grant management are in Uganda and Tanzania where they have introduced a "Performance-based Grant System" which includes performance evaluations of local government in the grant distribution criteria.

The best practice case of South Africa is based on an established and often-used formula for fiscal transfers and a locally-controlled expenditures account for a high proportion of overall public expenditure (Ndegwa, 2002:4). In addition, other key elements of this sound inter-governmental fiscal framework include a decentralized federal fiscal model, a Medium Term Expenditure Planning Framework, strong controls and monitoring, few own source revenue instruments, and the fact that sub-national government accounts for at least 40% of the national fiscus. (USAID, 2010). A further detailed analysis is provided of South Africa's inter-governmental fiscal system by Smoke (2000) where he documents many of the significant gains and challenges that remain for that country. This latter study also undertakes a useful comparative study of Uganda, Kenya and South Africa on fiscal decentralization.

Brosio (2000) points out that Ethiopia is also a successful example of how centrally distributed resources have benefited the poorest regions in that country.

A robust and effective inter-governmental fiscal system should explicitly aim to build the capacity and capability of sub-national government. One of the many good examples of this is in Tanzania who established a Local Government Capacity Building Grant in 2005. The intention by central government was to address the anticipated shortfall in human capacity endangering local capacity. By 2007, this grant was divided into the following components: skills for councilors and staff (minimum 50%); technical assistance (15%); professional career development (15%); and retooling (20%). (JICA, 2008).

The USAID study of the 10 African countries highlights a number of other countries, in addition to South Africa, where sub-national government's expenditure as a proportion of national government's expenditure is higher than 40%; these are Nigeria (50%), Uganda (40%), and Ethiopia (40+). Countries with higher levels of sub-national revenue from own sources include Burkina Faso (44% from market and resident taxes), Ethiopia (states own source revenue taxes vary between 45% - 80%), and Mozambique (50% derived from fees and property sales).

Other best practices noted are in Ghana (local tax collection and redistribution) and Mali (local resource mobilization). In the case of Ghana, District-level assemblies are the sole tax raising authority in the district. Due to low levels of tax collection, the central District Assemblies Common Fund is therefore an important source of revenue for Districts. Recently, this fund was increased from 5% to 7.5% of total government revenues. The total amount of this fund is 37% of revenue for Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies which is double their own source raised revenue. This fund is therefore an important constitutionally guaranteed minimum that District can depend on. This is regarded as an interesting case study of "functional complementarity" (USAID:ibid).

#### **5.4 Africa Values That Have Promoted Local Governance and Local Development**

Many African countries have adopted indigenous concepts and values that have reinforced their decentralization agenda. A few examples are cited below.

The first example from Tanzania is related to traditional forms community forestry management where the concept of "*ngitiri*" is explained. This concept brings the core African values of community solidarity and environmental sustainability together. These latter values are at centre of the local governance and decentralization project in Africa.

Odera (2004:27) explains,

*"One of the most significant recent developments in forest and woodland management in Tanzania has been efforts to strengthen, or to otherwise reintroduce, earlier management traditions. This has involved building on the customary practices of setting aside tracts of land for rituals or for later emergency use. Wily and Monela (1999), reporting on the concept of the traditional forest management system under ngitiri in Mwanza and Tabora regions, noted that the concept was originally applied to grazing areas and has recently been extended to include residual pockets of woodlands. Ngitiri is a portion of land protected from farming and grazing for a specified period of time, thus allowing natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and grasses. The ngitiris provide products such as fodder (especially during the dry season) and poles. The revised forest policy recognises ngitiris and other indigenous systems of forest management. ..."*

*Today, more than 1 300 ngitiris have been established in the Mwanza Region, and thousands of others in the Tabora and Shinyanga regions.”*

In the case of South Africa three traditional indigenous concepts have played an important role in promoting and deepening community-based governance and development. The first example is the phrase and philosophy of “**Batho Pele**”, literally meaning “People First” in the Sotho language. In 1997 the national government in South Africa adopted a White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery that rallied around this concept. The immediate application of this policy was aimed at national and provincial government departments.

Eight Principles of Batho Pele were identified:

- i. *Consultation*: Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive;
- ii. *Service Standards*: Citizens should be told what level and quality of services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect;
- iii. *Access*: All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled;
- iv. *Courtesy*: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration;
- v. *Information*: Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they receive;
- vi. *Openness and Transparency*: Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments run, how much they cost and who is in charge;
- vii. *Redress*: If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy;
- viii. *Value for Money*: Public Services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best value for money.

In addition to national and provincial governments, very soon these Batho Principles were also cascaded to local government in South Africa. Most municipalities today freely commit themselves to these eight principles, e.g. City of Tshwane (Pretoria), Amajuba Municipality. Even the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has committed itself and all municipalities in South Africa to promote the Batho Pele principles.

Another traditional concept from the South African experience is that of “*imbizo*”. Hartlief (2006) explains that the term *imbizo* derives from the South African Zulu language, meaning “gathering”. The *imbizo*, in its traditional form, constituted an important aspect of the African political system for many centuries, especially in South Africa. It is only during the presidential term of Mr Mbeki, that the concept was revived to a position of importance in the contemporary lexicon and governance in the country.

In practice the *imbizo* demonstrates itself as an organised event where the President and other senior officials visit remote areas and municipalities in South Africa, where they meet with ordinary people to exchange views on the status of service delivery and problems communities experience with public services. Mr Mbeki was quoted as warning that “*when democracy is conceived too narrowly, as simply the work of government, citizens become marginalised and democracy seems to revolve around politicians. When citizens are placed at the centre, everything looks different*”.

Hartlief (ibid) further argues that the *imbizo* participation programme is embedded in theories of policy-making and analysis that is discursive and that gives recognition to lay and indigenous knowledge systems. Presently in South Africa all levels of government, i.e. national government, provinces and municipalities engage in *imbizo* with local communities to interact in an



unmediated manner to get feedback on the state of service delivery and governance in their areas.

The third example from South Africa, although it is not limited to that country, is the concept of "**Ubuntu**". Ubuntu (a Zulu word) serves as the spiritual foundation of many African societies. It is a unifying world view enshrined in the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, i.e. "a person is a person through other persons". This accords with the daily experience of many Africans. For example, at a *calabash*, which is an African ritual which involves the drinking of beer, a little bit of beer is often poured on the ground for consumption by ancestors. It is argued that Ubuntu requires an authentic respect for human/individual rights and related values, and an honest appreciation of differences (Ubuntu Institute)

Ubuntu lies at the core of many community and local development initiatives in Africa and it has been associated with a number of decentralization agendas on the continent.

In Namibia in pre-colonial times there is concrete example of how the core values of ubuntu manifested themselves in that country. George (2010:20) indicates that,

*"The practice of **mafisa**, which was more prevalent amongst the Lozi-speaking people, is a good example of how the moral economy operated. According to this practice, any member or family in a community whose livestock had been depleted through sickness or drought could ask for animals on mafisa from the rest of the community. He or she undertook to look after them for an agreed period. When this time had expired, the original animals were returned to the owners, and the caretaker kept most of the offspring born during his or her period of caretaking."*

## 6 PITFALLS AND CHALLENGES OF AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION

All studies and authors commenting on decentralization recognize that there are many pitfalls, challenges and problems affecting the continent. One of the strongest critiques of African decentralization argues that "in general, decentralization has been a disappointment for Africa over the last several decades" (Wunsch, 2008:1). The main shortfalls include:

- a) Incomplete legal reforms;
- b) Persistent emphasis on control by the centre;
- c) Weak performance and technical support by the centre;
- d) Weak local councils;
- e) Dominance by local council executives and administrative personnel;
- f) Weaknesses in local attentive publics and civil society; and
- g) Failure of local officials to honestly and effectively supervise local service delivery personnel.

In reflecting on the challenges in Commonwealth Africa, Ahwoi identifies a number of risks to decentralization (in Alam, 2011:40):

- a) Decentralization could weaken national unity;
- b) It could create inequality by promoting more developed regions and districts;
- c) It could weaken support for national priorities;
- d) The central government could lose power and control over the country;
- e) Local government boundary demarcation disputes could easily erupt into violence;
- f) If implemented when the political and administrative structures do not exist, it could create inefficiencies.

Many critiques of decentralization in Africa can be grouped into the following thematic areas:

### 6.1 Political Challenges and Pitfalls

Re-centralization in some African countries is noted as a critical trend that is undermining decentralization. Ribot (2000:7) argues that "*regardless of the design of the local government system, the prevailing centralizing tendencies on the part of central government have rendered meaningful political decentralization a myth*".

Examples are cited in the areas of planning and capital investment, budget and fiscal management, and personnel systems and management by Wunsch (2001). These include the cases in Botswana where in 1995 all local government personnel were members of the local government service at a national level. Also in Ghana local government technical staff are employees of the central Ministry. Pieterse and Smit (2011:12) cite the case of Nigeria where decentralization has been stalled by quoting a UN Habitat report of 2008,

*"Urban governance in Nigeria cannot be fully understood without reference to the three principal levers of power: the local, the state, and the federal government. Each of these levels intervenes more or less directly in urban management. Local governments, although saddled with urban governance responsibilities, have never had much autonomy. Reforms have been initiated, but the states maintain their hold on local authorities. Local government ability to generate revenue has collapsed, increasing their dependence and reducing their capacities to face the challenges of runaway urbanization, while lack of coordination increases the difficulties of urban management"*.

It is also argued that new decentralization reforms in 2004 in Cameroon also placed new limits on local governments autonomy (Mback in Eyoh & Stren, 2007). Senegal is also cited an example, where it is noted that in 1996/7 the decentralization laws were noted as a major achievement. However, eight years later the administration of local taxation was highly centralized. In Mali while the country sought to establish a democratic local government system, the forestry system of planning has been re-centralized (Ribot, 2002). South Africa has also been highlighted a country where some centralizing tendencies are manifesting themselves (USAID, 2010).

In the World Bank study of 2002 discussed earlier, 15 countries scored very low in the area of political decentralization: Guinea, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Congo - Republic, Angola, Burundi, DRC, Niger, Chad. This constituted half of the entire sample of 30 countries assessed and should be a worrisome finding.

The poor relationship between central and local government is also given as key factor that can undermine decentralization. This is related to the overall governance architecture of the decentralized system. In Tanzania it is argued that the role of regions was almost neglected, while in Uganda there have never been administrative regions between the central and local government levels, which is now being explored. Two models of central - local relations have been offered (JICA, 2008):

- Separationist model of decentralization: this is informed by the Anglo-Saxon experience and the intention is to establish highly autonomous local governments; it is argued that this model will only succeed if preceded by sector reforms that are empowered to provide close guidance and technical support.
- Integrationist model of decentralization: this model is based on the European continental experience and is premised on strong guidance by central governments to local authorities; it is argued that this is more appropriate for Africa.

In the case of Angola, one assessment offered of the central-local government relationship and pace of reform is characterized as follows (Yilmaz and Nkongolo, 2009:21),

*“The assessment of local government discretion and accountability in Angola confirms several arguments laid out in the diagnostic framework Local Government Discretion and Accountability: A Local Governance Framework, (2008). First and foremost, it states that granting local governments a meaningful discretionary space is both desirable and necessary for good local governance however, provided with a discretionary space, local governments need to be checked and balanced against abuse of using their new discretions. In comparison to other countries, Angola can be described as one with low discretion (despite recent changes in the legal framework) and low accountability”*

The complexity of the political local government system can also negatively affect the overall decentralization agenda. Uganda has five levels of local government which has significant challenges of coordination. Linked to this it has been argued that the size of local governments is also an issue. By international standards, African local government are very large. In a study of selected developing countries quoted in 2006, the average population per local authority was 79,000. Uganda and South Africa scored the highest by international comparison with 373,321 and 238,839 respectively (JICA,ibid:18).

Decentralization is reputed to have wide ranging benefits for local democracy. At the same time it has been argued that the relationship between democracy and decentralization is multi-faceted and fragile in Africa (Ribot, 2000). Some of the specific challenges affecting this relationship are elite capture, corruption, institutionalized regionalism and secessionism.

A paradox was observed in the case of NGOs in Malawi, whereby the logical view would have seen them fully embrace the decentralized system. However, this was not the case. At the end of the Banda regime in Malawi in 1994, popular participation saw a revival in that country. A flood of NGOs emerged after 1994, however these NGOs viewed some elements of the decentralized system with skepticism. Patel (2007:76) argues that,

*"NGOs main objective for shunning the Decentralization planning framework is that they view one another and the District Assemblies not as partners, but as competitors at a local level."*

In this same country the author noted that only 14% of eligible voters participated in the 2000 local government elections.

The institution of traditional leadership can also pose problems for decentralization. Ribot (ibid:56) argues that the "biggest challenge to decentralization appearing on the horizon is the re-emergence or resuscitation of chieftaincy or custom to challenge the formation of local democracy ...". Many have recognized the relationship between traditional institutions and elected local government as a critical one for Africa. The approach adopted by Malawi is one where the Constitution provides for local government to include Chiefs. This has been reinforced by the Local Government Act of 1998. Traditional leaders are ex-officio members of District Assemblies (Patel, 2007). In South Africa, similar legal provisions are made for traditional leaders to be non-voting ex-officio members of particular municipal councils.

Problems with popular participation and local democracy are often closely associated with problems of downward accountability in the decentralized system. In the 2002 World Bank of Decentralization in Africa, 16 countries scored very low on "downward accountability". The bottom 5, of the 16 in this band, were Cameroon, Sierra Leone, DRC, Burundi and Chad. By way of contrast, the 4 countries that scored very high overall on downward accountability were South Africa, Uganda, Namibia and Kenya.

Many countries have made provision in law and in their policies for popular participation and local democracy at the sub-national level of government. However, the main challenge is with the functionality of these various systems and mechanisms.

The contrary objective for decentralization to local democracy in some instances has been "regime maintenance". It has been argued that in particular instances decentralization is not limited to a democratizing agenda (USAID, 2010). Authoritarian regimes, like Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Uganda, have promoted Decentralization for various reasons. One reason has been regime maintenance. In the case of Uganda, the regime pre-empted to demand of the Buganda for federalism. Other decentralization strategies in favour of regime maintenance have been initiatives to consolidate alliances with local elites and reinforce central power and also the fragmentation of local power bases (JICA, 2008; Cabral, 2011; Crook, 2003).

Finally, elite capture is also a recurring theme in the literature associated with the pitfalls of decentralization. It has been argued that this can take two forms, namely political capture or bureaucratic capture. A number of countries are cited where these problems have played themselves out: Uganda, Senegal, Cameroon, Nigeria (Brosio, 2000; Ribot, 2002).

The assertion that "*different countries have different purposes and motivations for introducing decentralization*" is probably a correct one (Crook, 2003:78).

## **6.2 Service Delivery Poverty Reduction Challenges and Pitfalls**

There are often basic assumptions regarding the relationship between decentralization, poverty alleviation and service public provision. Ribot (ibid:(v)) argues that,

*"the underlying developmentalist logic of decentralization is that the local institutions can better discern, and are more likely to respond to, local needs and aspirations ... (they are) more accountable to local populations ... there is good reason to believe that greater equity and efficiency will follow".*

He immediately states that these assumptions must be approached with caution.

African governments and their decentralized systems have enormous development challenges. It is argued that between 1990-2000 the overall rate of extreme poverty has hardly moved in Sub-Saharan Africa from around 46%. Furthermore it was suggested that it was unlikely that the MDG target of halving poverty by 2015 would be achieved. The situation in West Africa was noted to be more disturbing than the overall continental picture (UNDESA, 2003). Overall access to basic services in Sub-Saharan Africa is not good:

- 40% of the population have access to potable water;
- 20% have access to electricity;
- 27% have access to adequate sanitation; and
- 4% have access to mobile telephony.

Pieterse and Smit (2011) paint an equally disturbing picture about urban Africa. It is noted that urban inequality in Africa is the second highest in the world, when compared to other regions. The average Gini co-efficient for African cities is 0.58. It is also noted that 62% of urban dwellers in Africa live in slums. Added to this, the rate of urban growth is proceeding rapidly on the continent, although not at the rates predicted a decade ago (Africa, 2012 (b)).

How have the various decentralization reforms and programs assisted in addressing the development and poverty reduction challenges of Africa?

It has been argued that the impact of decentralization on service delivery has been limited and that the pro-poor character of decentralization is questionable. It is further suggested that the available evidence does not confirm that decentralized governments perform better in providing services to the poor (Cabral, 2011). Other studies also support this view by citing examples in Ghana and Nigeria (USAID, 2010).

One of the reasons for the limited impact of decentralization on service delivery is that central line Ministries continue to plan and work outside of the local decentralized planning system, e.g. cases in Uganda and Tanzania (JICA, 2008). Limited resources for local government is also a common feature of many local governments in Africa, such as is the case in Kenya where health care workers and teachers have no budgets. In many instances there is just an absolute shortage of staff in the delivery chain.

## **6.3 Institutional Challenges**

The institutional challenges associated with decentralization relate to both systemic and individual capacity problems across the entire decentralized system.

At a structural level, most problems are linked to the design of the inter-governmental system. These include whether the distribution of responsibilities is appropriate to the context and is clearly understood by everyone. Many countries have overlapping forms of decentralization, i.e. a combination and mix of devolution, delegation and deconcentration. Complicating this, there is sometimes no standard guide or template regarding which responsibilities and functions are to be undertaken by a particular level of (sub-national) government. There is significant variation across countries on this matter.

Coordination problems are inherent in any decentralized regime. Depending on the nature of the decentralized system, coordination can be shared across the entire system of government or assigned to specific levels or tiers of government or administration. Two basic problems are the uncoordinated planning and implementation by central and regional levels of government in local areas, and also the absence of formal dispute and coordination mechanisms in government.

Any government is given life by individuals and institutional entities. The effectiveness of decentralization is therefore a consequence of the capacity and capability of these public servants and these state institutions. Capacity problems abound at all levels of government, especially at a local government level. The example of Kenya is cited where local government officials comprise only 7% of the total complement of the public service (JICA, 2008:13). Other examples are given where, even where there is staff in place they are not able to reach communities after decentralization. It has also been noted that in countries like Botswana and Ghana, local government employees are centrally employed.

International development and donor agencies often complicate the institutional landscape in a decentralized system. Key problems that have been noted include (Brosio, 2000):

- Donor preferences to concentrate their support in a few areas;
- Insufficient coordination between the budgets of donors and sub-national governments;
- Donor priorities are sometimes different to that of national and sub-national government;
- Insufficient reporting by donors; and
- Donors don't support recurrent budgets.

#### **6.4 Fiscal and Financial Challenges**

A poorly designed fiscal decentralized system can undermine the entire decentralization reform agenda. In a study on East and Southern Africa, Smoke (2000), takes a detailed look at South Africa inter-governmental fiscal system. Critical issues are highlighted which have application across many African states. These are posited as key issues which can also be understood as areas that require urgent attention:

- Defining vertical shares;
- Balancing local autonomy with central control;
- Securing and analyzing information;
- Building capacity and fiscal discipline;
- Addressing the shifting institutional structure of local governments;
- Managing national government's institutional concerns and coherence; and
- Adopting and implementing an overall reform strategy.

In the 2002 World Bank study, nineteen countries scored low in the overall ranking on fiscal decentralization. This showed that there are serious concerns about the architecture and institutional design and robustness of the fiscal decentralization systems in most African states. The literature identifies many specific challenges and problems (e.g. Smoke, 2000; JICA, 2008; Wunsch, 2001; Brosio, 2000). Tanzania is one example where grants simply ignore the

formulas that are meant to underpin them. More fundamental is that some grants are poorly designed, e.g. Nigeria.

Unproductive tax systems are also a problem in countries like Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali and Uganda. Specific issues include too many local instruments, like in Tanzania and Benin, or unsatisfactory tax assignments, e.g. South Africa (Brosio, 2000). Linked to this it is argued that redistribution can also be more difficult in a devolved governance system (Cabral, 2011:9).

Another common problem facing many countries is the limited revenue and tax base. This has been aggravated in countries where local tax instruments have been scrapped. In Uganda the Graduated Tax was abolished, as was the case in Tanzania when local taxes were scrapped in 2003. Kenya abolished the development levy in 2004 that resulted in a decrease of an independent revenue source for local government (JICA, 2008).

Corruption and patronage directly affect the decentralized fiscal system. Problems can and do occur, from the centre right across sub-national government to a community project level. Various examples can be found on this, e.g. Kenya, Ghana (JICA, 2008, Alam, 2011). In the case of Ghana, a 2004 report to their Parliament identified problems in a range of areas: misappropriation of revenue, suppression of value books, unsubstantiated and fraudulent payments, store irregularities, contract irregularities, unearned salaries and questionable outsourcing of revenue collection.

Some of the key determinants of the above were: a lack of strict enforcement with regulations, non-application of sanctions, monopoly of power within municipalities and low citizen participation, poor monitoring and supervision, tele-guidance and micro-management from the centre, and leadership problems.

## 7 LESSONS OF AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION

What are some of the main lessons arising from decentralization in Africa between the 1980s and the first decade post-2000? The literature is not short of observations, lessons and some scenario projections.

### 7.1 Political Lessons and Observations

At the apex of all observations, it is probably useful to be reminded that decentralization is a means towards something and not an end in itself. Decentralization has been argued to be a necessary, but not exclusive, determinant and enabler for good governance and sustainable human development.

With the above taken as a given, the following are important preconditions:

- a) The recognition that the adequate level and mode of decentralization differs from service to service;
- b) It is important to view decentralization reforms within the overall vision of the country's central-local government system as a whole;
- c) It is necessary to balance system-wide reforms vs the capacity development of local governments;
- d) Endogenous development and the importance of national debate must be recognized (JICA, 2008)

One argument has further suggested that decentralization has a number of political implications (Alam, 2011):

- a) Decentralization has an important impact on the structure of political power within a country and may be contrary to the established interests of institutions and individuals;
- b) Many national experiences show a tendency to revert to centralization after a period in power;
- c) Central government fear that decentralization may increase divisive tendencies existing in a country;
- d) Strengthened local government could be at the expense of central government;
- e) Fear that donors and external creditors try to introduce conditionalities and benchmarks that appear to be impositions;
- f) There is a need for political commitment at the highest level of government.

There appears to be consensus that decentralization needs a well-defined set of rules. These are best captured at the level of Constitutional frameworks of a country. Primary legislation is also crucial and this is already the case in a number of African countries. Although it has also been argued that decentralization in law has outpaced decentralization *de facto*.

It has also been shown and argued that the regime type, i.e. authoritarian, democratic, military, unitary, federal etc, does not predetermine the success or failure of decentralization in a country. Examples on this have been given (USAID, 2010).

It may appear self-evident, but the observation has been made that central governments do not need to be dismantled to pursue a decentralized agenda. Linked to this, legitimacy is very important for local government. The empowerment of local government can bolster the legitimacy of local government. The observation is that the weak state of local government has resulted in many communities questioning the legitimacy of local governments (Ribot, 2000).



On the matter of local government autonomy, the observation is that the transfer of legal authority does not guarantee an increase in autonomy de facto (USAID, 2010).

Drawing from experience from Cameroon, one author suggests the following lessons (Edou: undated:5),

*“The transfer of authority from the State to Regional and Local Authorities is underpinned by three principles, namely:*

- *the subsidiary status principle: authority is transferred and exercised at the territorial level which is most suitable or closest to the people concerned. As such, the authority devolved on Regions is different from that devolved on Councils, not forgetting those devolved on the State;*
- *the graduation principle: transfer of authority is spread over time and is done in packages or levels;*
- *the additionality principle: authority transferred by the State does not exclude the fact that the latter continues to exercise same. In effect, authority is exercised concurrently by the State, Regions and Councils.”*

Examples have been cited in this paper that suggest that political incentives for decentralization are more important than political will (USAID, *ibid*).

What is the link between decentralization and conflict and post-conflict environments ?

- a) Decentralization has frequently been used in post-conflict countries as part of the peace negotiations;
- b) Countries that have attempted to undercut decentralization are nation-states that have stabilized, e.g. Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa, Mozambique;
- c) Non-conflict states such as Botswana have also re-centralized;
- d) In general, the extent of re-centralization has been very limited at best; and
- e) There is no indication that devolution or deconcentration has compromised stability (USAID, *ibid*).

The extract from the Constitution of the DRC shows the link most clearly for this country,

*“With the goals of consolidating national unity, much damaged after the wars, and of creating grassroots centers for development and initiative, this Constitution creates 25 provinces plus the city of Kinshasa as the administrative structure of the Congolese State”* (Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2005)

The issue of managing the interface between the endogenous institutions of traditional leadership and the systems of local government is a crucial one. In Africa it is argued that there is a continued importance of traditional institutions. Examples are given as to how Chiefs were integrated into the governance system in Francophone countries. (USAID, *ibid*; Ribot, *ibid*)

## **7.2 Fiscal Decentralization Lessons**

The most important lessons on fiscal decentralization focus on the getting the overall system correct:

- a) Ensuring an adequate enabling environment;
- b) The assignment of appropriate functions to sub-national government;
- c) The assignment of appropriate revenues to sub-national government;
- d) Developing an appropriate inter-governmental transfer system;
- e) Developing adequate access to local investment capital (Smoke, 2000).

In addition, the JICA (2008) study emphasizes the importance of the fiscal autonomy. The highest form of autonomy is "revenue autonomy" and the second is "expenditure autonomy". In the former, the three critical legs are unconditional grants, conditional grants and own source revenue.

In reflecting on the experience of Senegal, Wahab Ba (Eyoh & Stren, 2007) notes that legislation in 1996 promoted local government fiscal autonomy, which was later entrenched in the 2001 Constitution. The author concludes that the overall decentralization reform and implementation did not sufficiently take the imperatives of fiscal decentralization into account. Against this background the following observation and lessons are offered:

- a) Fiscal decentralization must not be considered outside of a global approach to taxation in the national economy;
- b) Allowing local governments, especially regional governments, to freely establish their own taxation systems presents a risk of creating important inter-regional disparities;
- c) Allocation of resources to local government must be rationalized;
- d) Efficient fiscal decentralization must have an operational and transparent system of information on local government finances, supported by audits and regular controls of accounts; and
- e) The objectives of financial transfers from the central state to local government must be defined in relation to those local governments.

The observation of deep-rooted corruption affecting decentralization is a widely held view. Wunsch (2008:7) captures this point as follows,

*"Some studies have suggested that African local governments operate primarily to provide jobs for low level personnel, rents for senior personnel and patronage opportunities for political figures and lucky villages and neighborhoods".*

### **7.3 Decentralization Lessons for Service Delivery and Poverty Alleviation**

There is a relationship between decentralization in general, fiscal decentralization and poverty alleviation.

The UN Habitat report of 2002 (p109) argues that,

*"Local governments will need to access as much direct revenue as possible, including regular, stable, reliable and commensurate appropriations by central governments. This, unfortunately, does not seem to be happening on a scale wide enough to meaningfully reduce poverty".*

However, others have recognized that the amount of resources available to municipalities does not correlate directly with improved service delivery, e.g. Nigeria (USAID, *ibid*).

Resources, and financial resources, in particular are important levers to enable decentralization reforms and programs to tackle development challenges decisively. The tenuous link between decentralization and poverty reduction has been recognized by a few studies. Cabral (2011) has argued that decentralization does not guarantee that local needs will be addressed and that participation by local communities is not enough for pro-poor policy.

Crook (2003:85) states that poverty reduction and service delivery are influenced by central-local relations. According to this author, *"decentralization is most likely to result in pro-poor outcomes where it is designed by central government intent on challenging conservative local*

*elites*". The argument is that in most African cases the central -local linkage had a different purpose, e.g. Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast. So what has happened is that "*in most African countries, elite capture of local power struggles has been facilitated by the desire of ruling elites to create and sustain power bases in the countryside*" (ibid:86).

Millet and Nkongolo (2011:23) argue that, informed by the experience of the DRC,

*"The debate remains inconclusive as to whether decentralization generates better outcomes in terms of national cohesion, public service delivery improvements, and economic growth. If well designed and implemented, decentralization has the potential to achieve critical policy objectives; if mismanaged; it may delay and even jeopardize possible improvements in the lives of the poor."*

#### **7.4 Decentralization Lessons for Community Participation and Accountability**

Consistent with the democratizing agenda of decentralization, there is a widespread view that the role of communities and civil society is a key element in sustaining decentralized governance. A range of specific measures are proposed to promote effective participation at a local level:

- a) *"Empowering women more generally, with one consequence of political involvement;*
- b) *Creating networks for information transfer by CBOs, NGOs, civil society forums, distributing council resolutions and budgets;*
- c) *Development of a legal framework for giving due recognition to people's role in development;*
- d) *Investment of funds and time in developing the capacity of communities to effectively participate in local governance. The capacity development needs to be extended to both levels of government;*
- e) *Building community - government partnerships as a way of mobilizing resources for local development"*. (UN Habitat, 2002:110).

Different examples have been cited where communities have organized themselves to address local development issues (Wunsch, 2008; JICA, 2008). This self organizing capability of communities can be seen as complementing weak local governments, e.g. Chad and Uganda. The success factors of these self-organized communities seem to be:

- a) Each was built on fairly small communities who lived in relative close proximity to one another;
- b) Each selected it's own leadership locally;
- c) Each initiative sought to produce a fairly narrow, easily observed and technologically relatively simple service based on broad community-wide consensus;
- d) There was enough space for leadership legitimacy. (Wunsch, 2008)

#### **7.5 Decentralization Lessons for International Development and Donor Agencies**

Some studies have offered lessons and made observations that affect international development and donor agencies' role in engaging with decentralization. The UNPAD (2008) report states it is important to recall the key pillars of the 2000 Cotonou Agreement, which are:

- Comprehensive political dimension;

- Participatory approaches;
- Strengthened focus on poverty reduction;
- New framework for economic and trade cooperation; and
- Reform of financial cooperation.

Informed by these principles, the main tenets of decentralized cooperation in the European Union were outlined as being,

- a) Active involvement of the various stakeholders;
- b) Seeking consultation and complementarities between stakeholders;
- c) Decentralizing management;
- d) Introducing a process approach;
- e) Giving priority to capacity building.

After reflecting on Japan's experience of supporting and cooperating with Africa, JICA (2008) highlighted the following lessons,

- a) It is possible for JICA to provide technical cooperation for the executive capacity development of local administrators for public service delivery, i.e. "*empowerment of the absorptive capacity*";
- b) It is difficult to sustain the improvement of management capacity if there is no proper institutional system in place. There is a need for Japan to become engaged in a country's "*institutional framework for development*", in addition to practical capacity development support; and
- c) If Japan wishes to be closely engaged in institutional aspects of decentralization, then it is advisable to make opportunities of "*policy dialogue*" between Japan and policy makers from recipient countries.

These lessons are equally applicable to all international development and donor agencies.

## **8 SELECTED CASE STUDIES OF DECENTRALIZATION IN AFRICA**

This section provides four (4) country case studies that reinforce and demonstrate the main arguments about the timeline, typology, successes and problems of decentralization in Africa.

### **8.1 MALAWI**

#### **8.1.1 Background**

Malawi is a landlocked country situated in south eastern Africa. It is bordered by three countries: DRC, Mozambique and Zambia. It has a population of 15 million people. English is the official language and the capital city is Lilongwe and the commercial centre is Blantyre.

In 1891 the British colonial government of Nyasaland was formed. In 1964 the country became independent under Dr Hastings Banda and was renamed Malawi. He ruled Malawi for almost 30 years, until a referendum in 1993 that saw the country become a democratic multi-party state. In April 2012 Joyce Banda became the President of Malawi.

#### **8.1.2 Socio-Economic and Political Overview**

The country is among the world's least-developed and most-densely populated countries. The country is mainly rural, approximately 80%. The economy is based on agriculture. In the past, the economy has been dependent on substantial economic aid from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other countries. The per capita annual income stands at around \$290 (IMF, 2008). Agricultural production is predominately subsistence. Malawi has a low life expectancy rate (53 years) and a high infant mortality rate (82%). Access to potable water is 80% and access to sanitation is 56%.

According to the government the economy has been growing at an average rate of 7.6 percent between 2005 - 2011. The government's view is that it is on track to reduce poverty and meet targets of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations by 2015.

The current constitution was adopted in 1995. The branches of the government consist of executive, legislative and judicial. The executive includes a president who is elected every five years. The Democratic Progressive Party is the ruling party and the Malawi Congress Party and the United Democratic Front acting as the main opposition parties in the National Assembly. The universal voting age is 18 years of age.

Malawi is composed of three regions (the Northern, Central and Southern regions), which are divided into 28 districts, and further into approximately 250 traditional authorities and 110 administrative wards. Local government is administered by central government-appointed regional administrators and district commissioners. For the first time in the multi-party era, local elections took place on November 21, 2000, with the UDF party winning 70% of the seats. The second round of constitutionally mandated local elections in May 2005, but these were cancelled.

### **8.1.3 Approach to Decentralization**

Local government is enshrined in the 1995 constitution in chapter 14. A Local Government Act was passed in 1998. The local government system dates back to the colonial period where paramount chiefs played an active role at a local level. At independence in 1964 provision was made for elected officials at a local level.

The Decentralization Policy of 1998 defines the powers, functions and responsibilities of local government.

### **8.1.4 Political and Administrative Decentralization**

The Local Government Act of 1998 empowers the national Local Minister to, inter Alia,

- Declare any local government area to be a municipality or township;
- Amend functions to be carried out by the assembly;
- Amend the sources of revenue available to assemblies.

The Decentralization policy makes provision for four levels of local government:

- District Assemblies;
- Town Assemblies;
- Municipal Assemblies;
- City Assemblies.

District and town assemblies have Chairpersons at the head and municipal and city assemblies have Mayors. Members of the national parliament large ex-officio members of the District Assemblies. The Districts are the link between central and local government and have a District Commissioner as the administrative head. The other three assemblies have Chief Executive Officers as the administrative heads. In 2007, all assemblies, except Blantyre had a male CEO.

Local government elections are mandatory every 5 years in all 842 wards. In 2000 only 14% of eligible voters went to the polls, compared to 99% in the 1999 Presidential elections. In 2000 elections, 8.3% of women were elected. With the cancellation of the 2005 local government elections, President Mutharika dissolved councils in March of that year.

In 1994 with the transition to a multi-party state there was an avalanche of civil society organizations. However, it was noted earlier in this report that they shunned the new decentralization planning framework. Community participation in local government is structured through development committees. The lowest level is Village Development Committees, which are represented on Area Development Committees who in turn report to the District Assemblies. Most of the Village and Area Development Committees are not functional.

Other challenges include human resource and skills shortages in local government. Results of a survey undertaken in 2006 revealed that 48% of Malawians were of the opinion that their councilors never listened to them.

As early as 1967 the Chiefs Act made legal provision for Chiefs in the country's governance system. Under colonial rule the chiefs were part of the British system of indirect rule. The 1995 Constitution says that local government must include Chiefs in their structures. Traditional leaders are non-voting, ex-officio members of District Assemblies. There are six levels of traditional leaders who are elected on the basis of kinship.

One critic has argued that the above description of local governance in Malawi has a fundamental systemic problem,

*"The first structural problem with decentralization in Malawi is that it did not transfer real powers to the local level. In this regards, decentralization vests power in line Ministries in central government and, in may cases does not recognize devolution of authority to districts.' ... In most cases the centre has virtually been unwilling to share power" (Tambulasi, 2009:32).*

Other problems identified are:

- That there are no clear real division of labour between Councilors and members of parliament;
- Conflicts have emerged between Councilors and traditional leaders; and
- There is also a conflictual relationship between the assembly secretariat and Councilors.

#### **8.1.5 Fiscal Decentralization**

Municipalities have three sources of revenue:

- Locally generated revenue;
- Ceded revenue; and
- Government grants.

A National Local Government Finance Committee is in place. A major responsibility is to prepare a formula for local government grants for parliament to approve. It also facilitates inter-governmental transfers and regulates the financial matters of assemblies. A total of 5% of national revenue goes to Districts. It has been noted in most instances government has not fulfilled this statutory obligation.

Two significant challenges of the system are that councilors operate with few resources and the local governments have a narrow revenue base. Councilors are not paid salaries but meager allowances.

#### **8.1.6 Conclusion**

According to the 2002 World Bank Study, Malawi fell into "low" category of the overall decentralization ranking of 30 African countries. Against the indicators of political decentralization it faired moderately, regarding fiscal decentralization it scored low and on both the downward accountability and decentralized system durability indicators it scored low.

In the 2011 Mo Ibrahim Index of Governance, which measures 86 indicators, Malawi ranked 17th out of the 53 African states.

It has been suggested that the future of local governance in Malawi is a bit troublesome:

*"the trend in Malawi's democracy since the 2009 elections have given rise to serious concern for the survival of participatory democracy ... The regression at a national level certainly has had significant bearing on an already fragile local governance structure. This has been exacerbated by amendment of the Local Government Act (no. 10 of 2010) which effectively gives powers to the President and the Electoral Commission to set the date for Local Government Elections, rather than an having it as a constitutional obligation ..." (Patel, 2011:31).*

One of the reasons for this is argued to be the poorly structured decentralization reforms, which have resulted in various types of conflicts at an institutional level (Tambulasi, 2009).

## **8.2 GHANA**

### **8.2.1 Background**

Ghana is located in West Africa and is bordered by three countries: Togo, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. The country has approximately 24 million people. English is the official language and the capital city is Accra.

The British established the Gold Coast Crown colony in 1874 over parts but not all of present day Ghana. In 1957 the Gold Coast attained independence from Britain and it was renamed Ghana which means Warrior King. It was the first Sub-Saharan country to achieve independence. Kwame Nkrumah was the first Prime Minister of Ghana. He held this position until a number of coups eventually saw Jerry Rawlings assume power in 1981. The constitution was suspended, political parties banned and this contributed to economic decline.

In 2009 John Atta Mills became the President, a position he continues to hold in mid-2012. Ghana is a democratic country where the President is elected for a four year term.

### **8.2.2 Socio-Economic and Political Overview**

Ghana is regarded by the World Bank as a Middle Income Country where 27% of the population live on less than 1.25 US Dollars per day. The population is marginally mostly urban at 51%. The life expectancy is 63 years. Access to safe water is estimated to be 81% and access to sanitation is 13%.

Ghana has a relatively diverse and rich natural resource base. Despite the oil and mineral wealth now being exploited, agriculture remains a mainstay of the economy, accounting for more than one-third of GDP and about 55% of formal employment. Ghana is one the world's major cocoa producers, which accounts for a third of all exports.

In 1993 the constitution of Ghana established the Fourth Republic that provided a basic charter for the republican democratic government. It declared Ghana to be a unitary republic with sovereignty residing in the Ghanaian people. Rawlings won the Presidential elections with 57% of the vote.

Presently Ghana is divided into 10 administrative regions, subdivided into a total of 138 districts each with its own district assembly. Below districts are various types of councils, including 58 town or area councils, 108 zonal councils, and 626 area councils. 16 000 unit committees exist on the lowest level.

### **8.2.3 Approach to Decentralization**

Under Rawlings in December 1982 a plan was announced to decentralize government from Accra to the regions, the districts, and local communities, but it maintained overall control by appointing regional and district secretaries. These secretaries exercised executive powers and also chaired regional and district councils. Local councils, however, were expected progressively to take over the payment of salaries, with regions and districts assuming more powers from the national government.



In 1988 further major reforms in local government were undertaken. These were aimed at creating an environment for the attainment of national and sub-national goals, which included the redefining of functions of various levels of government and tapping the vast potential resources of people in rural areas.

It has been argued that one lesson of Ghana in the 1980s is that decentralization produced local institutions that lacked legitimacy. The military government produced populist local governance structures, such that by 1989 a total of 110 District Assemblies were established. They were empowered as the sole taxing authority and empowered to deliver 86 functions, 22 of which were central government functions.

The 1992 Constitution makes provision for local government. This was followed by a Local Government Act in 1993.

#### **8.2.4 Political and Administrative Decentralization**

Based on the 1993 Act, the local government structures consist of two main layers:

- Regional Coordinating Councils: 10, and
- District Assemblies: 138.

The Regional Coordinating Councils are headed by a government appointed regional Minister. The 138 District Assemblies are made up of,

- 3 metropolitan assemblies;
- 5 municipal assemblies; and
- 130 district assemblies.

The regulatory regime for local government makes provision for political and administrative authorities at a district level. The district assemblies comprises of:

- Elected representatives;
- Members of parliament as non-voting members;
- Maximum of 30% Chiefs appointed by the President
- District Chief Executives appointed by the President, with prior approval of two thirds if the district assembly.

In addition to traditional leaders having reserved seats on District Assemblies, the Regional House of Chiefs also has representatives on the Regional Coordinating Committees.

A Local Government Service has been established to employ local government personnel.

In 2009, the central government initiated the "Local Government Instrument L.I. 1961, as the latest effort to enhance the capacity of District Assemblies. It also seeks to convert the line departments at district level into departments of District Assemblies.

A number of challenges have been noted with the decentralized governance system in Ghana (Cobbah in Alam, 2011). These include:

- Fear of disintegration of the unitary state;
- Partisan central government superimposed over a supposedly non-partisan local government system;
- Alienation of traditional leaders;

- "Single hierarchy model" of administration;
- Confusion as to which services should be rendered resulting from undefined roles;
- Limited financial resources;
- Apathy; and
- Various leadership challenges.

### **8.2.5 Fiscal Decentralization**

The current fiscal decentralization reforms are aimed at ensuring the transfer of adequate financial resources from the central government to the regions and districts for the provision of infrastructure and services, and the putting in place of district composite budgets. This based on chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution which states that there shall be established for each government unit a sound financial base with adequate and reliable revenue.

The Constitution and the 1993 legislation makes provision for a District Assemblies Common Fund that provides that not less than 5% of national revenue should be allocated to District Assemblies. By 2007, this had increased to 7.5%. The legislation also outlines the ten categories of internally generated funds, the borrowing framework and the financial management system.

Central government provides for the salaries of almost all staff of local authorities. In 1997 about 27% of District Chief Executive Officers were dismissed because of corruption related matters.

A number of observations have been made on the area of local government finance and revenue (Boachie-Danquah in Alam, 2011):

- h) Various reform initiatives in fiscal decentralization are not fully linked or coordinated;
- i) The operational fiscal strategy needs to be linked to the overall decentralization policy;
- j) Outstanding areas for elaboration include budgeting procedures, borrowing regulations and accounting procedures;
- k) Reform of local government funding arrangements to match new functional assignments;
- l) Integration of sector departments under the local government structure under the Local Government Act regarding expenditure assignments and accountability;
- m) Weak capacities at the local level for valuation of properties;
- n) Inadequate monitoring of revenue collectors; and
- o) A survey of households, business enterprises and public officials published in 2000 found that most public agencies, including local government were seen as dishonest.

### **8.2.6 Conclusion**

The 2002 World Bank stocktaking survey found that Ghana ranked "moderate" in the overall Decentralization assessment. The same ranking was given for fiscal decentralization. Ghana scored high on the indicators dealing with political decentralization and downward accountability. It also scored high for having a high potential for endurance and stability regarding decentralization.

Various factors enabling Ghana's decentralization reforms have been noted (Korateng in Alam, 2011):

- g) The enactment of enabling laws and regulations for local government;
- h) The presence and roles of champions of decentralization;
- i) The setting up of the District Assemblies Common Fund to provide a financial base and reliable source of revenue;

- j) The introduction of planning guidelines by the National Planning Commission to involve sector departments, sub-district structures and communities in the decentralized planning process; and
- k) The harmonization of donor-supported projects and programs in the district assemblies and the institutionalization of joint donor coordination at a central level.

Notwithstanding these enabling conditions, advice has been offered about the future of decentralization in Ghana (Ahwoi in Alam, 2011):

- There must be consensus both within government in power and among political parties on the key concepts and implementation strategies for local government reform. Legislation alone is not sufficient;
- The political structures to which powers and functions are to be transferred must be democratic. Central governments must not be permitted to appoint members to the democratic structures of local government;
- There must be checks and balances at the local level where the functions and powers have been transferred; and
- The unlimited power of the President to create new Districts must be revisited.

## **8.3 SENEGAL**

### **8.3.1 Background**

Senegal is situated in West Africa and shares a border with Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Gambia. The country has a population of 13 million people and the official language is French. Dakar is the capital city.

During the 1850s the French invaded the Sudan mainland. In January 1959, Senegal and the French Soudan merged to form the Mali Federation and gained independence from France in June 1960. Due to political difficulties, the Federation broke up in August 1960. Senegal and Soudan (renamed the Republic of Mali) proclaimed independence. Leopold Sedar Senghor, internationally known poet and statesman was elected Senegal's first President in August 1960.

Senegal is a multi-party democratic republic. Senghor governed Senegal until 1981 and was replaced by Abdou Diouf. Mr. Diouf was president from 1981 to 2000. The current president, Macky Sall, was elected in March 2012.

### **8.3.2 Socio-Economic and Political Overview**

About 58% of Senegal's population is rural. Life expectancy is 57 years. Access to safe water is 69% and access to sanitation is 51%. Between 1992 and 1997, the percentage of urban households below the poverty line rose from 30% to 35%.

The main industry in Senegal is agriculture, although the industrial sector is growing.

### **8.3.3 Approach to Decentralization**

There is a view that decentralization in Senegal is regarded as one of the oldest in Africa, based on strong French colonial influences. Elected municipal councils were first introduced under French colonial rule, and then developed further after independence in 1960. Generally, the national government ceded only limited authority to these councils, and most lacked the

revenue to accomplish even the few tasks assigned to them. A law in 1964 granted special status to the Dakar commune, but up to 1996 it is argued that no significant powers were attributed to local government (Wahab Ba in Eyoh & Stren, 2007).

#### **8.3.4 Political and Administrative Decentralization**

In 1996 a new phase of decentralization commenced in Senegal. A new Law of 96-07 deals with a Local Government Code that addresses the transfer of powers to regions, communes and rural councils. Presently, the decentralized system in Senegal is comprised of 14 regions, 34 departments, and 320 rural councils.

The 14 regions are divided into départements and arrondissements. Each région is administered by a governor whose role is coordinative and who is assisted by two deputy governors, one dealing with administration and the other with development. Regional assemblies, the powers of which were increased in 1996, are composed of general councilors responsible for local taxation. In each département the prefect represents the republic, as do the ministers. There are also autonomous urban communes. Dakar is governed by an elected municipal council.

It has been argued that for a relatively small unitary state, Senegal

is a relatively small unitary state, Senegal, governed by a prefect, and the arrondissement, governed by a sub-prefect. Local governments (communes) are elected in the countryside. (Dickovick, 2003).

Since 1996 the regions have had both elected and appointed bodies. They are governed by a regional council, which elects its own president; the region also has a governor who serves as a representative of the state and who works alongside the elected council. In principle, the governor only monitors politics a posteriori, with the elected regional council making the majority of political decisions attributed to this level of government.

The country has a Municipal Capacity Building Program, that focuses on, inter alia, on the building of technical capacity for infrastructure projects, with assistance from the World Bank and French Government.

Senegal's new constitution in 2001 affirmed that elected local government bodies will "*constitute the institutional framework for citizens' participation in the management of public affairs. They administer themselves freely through elected assemblies*".

#### **8.3.5 Fiscal Decentralization**

The first step of financial decentralization was Law 90-37 (1990) which codified the transfer of budget management of rural communities from sub-prefects to Presidents of rural councils. This is an example of how fiscal and financial decentralization preceded political decentralization (Wahab Ba in Eyoh & Stren, 2007). However the real step was the 1996 law. Key principles that were affirmed were the balance between decentralization and deconcentration and the distribution of functions between local governments based on the subsidiarity principle.

After the 2001 Constitution, other important milestones included local tax reform in 2004. The same author above argues that local governments in Senegal enjoy financial autonomy in terms of the power of conception, adoption, and execution of their budgets within the framework of the Local Government Code. Furthermore the financing of the transferred responsibilities is derived from transfers from the state through the FDD and FECL funds. There have been moderate

increases of these transfers to local government. For example, in the 2000 budget there was an increase of 10%.

The ability to raise internal own revenue is one that requires ongoing attention. It has been noted that some studies have shown a very weak performance in collection of taxes by local governments, with a few exceptions.

### **8.3.6 Conclusion**

One view on the overall state of decentralization in Senegal is that,

*"the implementation of the decentralization policy has not sufficiently taken into account the imperatives of fiscal decentralization ... The policy of decentralization is consolidating itself as a function of a better understanding of good practices"* (Wahab Ba, *ibid*: 30,31).

According to the 2002 World Bank study, Senegal ranked "moderate" in the overall decentralization assessment. Senegal ranked high in two areas: political decentralization and downward accountability. In the areas of fiscal decentralization and durability of the decentralized system it ranked moderate.

## **8.4 MOROCCO**

### **8.4.1 Background**

Morocco is situated in North Africa and shares a border with Algeria, Mauritania and Western Sahara. The country has 32 million people and the capital city is Rabat. Arabic and Berber are the official languages.

In 1912 the Treaty of Fez was signed, effectively dividing Morocco into a French and a Spanish protectorate. In 1956, after forty-four years of occupation, Morocco regained independence from France and Spain as the "Kingdom of Morocco".

Presently, Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. The King of Morocco holds vast executive powers, including the power to dissolve the parliament. King Mohammed the VI is the King of Morocco and the Prime Minister is Abdelilah Benkirane, from the Justice and Development Party.

### **8.4.2 Socio-Economic and Political Overview**

Morocco is 58% urban and about 15 percent of the population is poor. Life expectancy in Morocco is 71 years. Access to water by the population stands at 81% and access to sanitation is 69%.

Morocco has a developing economy. Between 1999 to 2004, poverty declined from 19 percent to 15 percent of the population, according to World Bank estimates, but poverty remains a serious challenge, particularly in rural areas, where the rate exceeds 25 percent. Morocco is the world's biggest exporter and third producer of phosphorus. Morocco's agricultural sector, including forestry and fishing, constituted 16.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) but employed 40 percent of the workforce in 2004.

Since 2011 important Constitutional reforms were adopted; these include,

- The King has the obligation to appoint a Prime Minister from the party that wins the most seats in the parliamentary elections. Previously, he could appoint any person in this position regardless of the elections results;
- The King is no longer "holy and sacred" but the "integrity of his person" is "inviolable", which means that he is still uncriticizable by anybody.
- The Prime Minister is the head of government and president of the council of government, he has the power to dissolve the parliament.
- The Prime Minister will preside over the council of Government, which prepares the general policy of the state. Previously the King held this position.

### **8.4.3 Approach to Decentralization**

It has been argued that the decentralization process in Morocco dates back to the 1960 charter which recognized the need for local government. However it was the 1976 charter that started the real decentralization process. It enshrined communes. The local government structure comprised of provinces, prefectures and urban and rural communes. In 1992 a new tier of regions was added. The 1997 charter assigned responsibility to regions for coordinating and consolidating the efforts of provinces. Constitutional reforms in 1986 and 1992 empowered sub-national governments to exercise a number of administrative and legislative powers. The 2001 New Communal Charter expanded the powers of elected representatives regarding local development, budgets and local taxes (Rao & Chakraborty, 2005).

Morocco is divided into 16 regions and subdivided into 62 prefectures, 37 provinces and communes, i.e. 249 urban and 1298 rural communes in 2005.

### **8.4.4 Political and Administrative Decentralization**

Governors are appointed by the king and regional councils are responsible for managing the country's 16 regions. The legislative body of the Regional Council is elected through the electoral college and executive head of the region.

Each province has a local government consisting of a centrally appointed governor and an assembly elected by municipal councils. These provincial governments handle local responsibilities delegated to them by the central government. Each municipality has a mayor and an elected municipal council, which are responsible for basic services involving public health and safety.

The legislative body for communes are elected by universal suffrage. These communes are considered the core of local democracy.

### **8.4.5 Fiscal Decentralization**

The decree of 1976 reformed the local authority budget structure which is applicable to prefectures, provinces and rural and urban municipalities. The regions have had their own budgets only since 1996. Of these three levels, municipalities represent 66% of local operational spending.

Own tax only became possible in 1989 for local government, which made provision for about 42 taxes, duties and license fees. State grants are the primary source of revenue for local government, i.e. 68% of total revenue for provinces and prefectures, 10% for urban municipalities and 36% revenue for rural municipalities (Belghazi, 2003). Borrowing by local authorities requires permission from the relevant central line Ministry.

Each municipality can define its own budget, but it must be approved by the regional Governor. It is suggested that despite the various initiatives, Morocco has a highly centralized fiscal system. All local governments incur just over 13% of total expenditures.

Positive features of the decentralized fiscal system include stability in the assignment and transfer system; the latter is formula based and it has a significant equalization component. Also the devolution of powers is based on the capacity of local governments to measure them (Rao & Chakraborty, *ibid*).

#### **8.4.6 Conclusion**

An academic commentator of decentralization in Morocco has argued that (Ben-Meir, 2009)

*"There are four major paths to a nation's decentralization that have been applied around the world. Morocco's decentralization roadmap is highly innovative in that it combines three of the four approaches. The three arrangements incorporated in Morocco's plan are devolution, deconcentration, and delegation ... Morocco's incorporation of the three approaches would create a progressive system whereby provincial and local government, and communities and their organizations, exercise decision-making authority, newly built skills, and other capacities, including financial, to carry out greater developmental responsibilities."*

## 9 CONCLUSION

This African local government timeline since the 1980s has showed a steady journey towards entrenching local government in law and in practice across many countries on the continent.

The overall decentralization trajectory between 1980 and the three decades thereafter have largely coincided with three ruling discourses:

- Structural Adjustment influenced Administrative Decentralization in the 1980s;
- A Decade of Democratic Renewal In the 1990s that Entrenched Decentralization in the Country Legal Frameworks, but with a Limited Developmental Impact; and
- The post-2000 Decade which is Characterized by Decentralization by Devolution, which has also seen a Portrait of Mixed Results.

African countries can be grouped in various ways to make sense of the patterns and typologies of decentralization on the continent. These typologies draw on colonial influences, the speed at which countries have moved, a composite index of decentralization indicators, and the type of political regimes that have marked their evolution.

An over-riding conclusion is that typologies are conceptual tools of analysis which show different results depending on the shape and intention of the particular instrument used. For example, decentralization has been pursued with equal vigor in democratic and authoritarian regimes.

These typologies do begin to show broad common patterns of better performing and poorly performing countries. In various studies those with limited decentralization progress are countries such as Chad, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Niger, and the Central African Republic. On the other hand, countries such as Uganda, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Ivory Coast often fall into the band of the higher performing countries.

The African local government timeline is better appreciated and understood by an analysis of the complex interplay and multiplicity of triggering shaping factors and influences. The main triggering influences of decentralization in Africa have been a combination of colonial legacies, post-colonial international development and donor influences, various endogenous political and development factors, and a number of conflict and post-conflict environmental and contextual factors.

There are many success stories of decentralization in Africa. At the broadest level political and administrative decentralization are argued to be such success stories. The same cannot be said for fiscal decentralization. In each of the three forms of decentralization, there are best practices from every region on the continent, in every decade since 1980, and across political regime types.

A limited number of examples are given which demonstrate that African governments have extracted from their indigenous traditional cultures and histories, concepts and core values that they have used to promote and deepen the decentralization agenda in their country and on the continent: i.e. Ngitiri, Batho Pele, Imbizo, Ubuntu, and Mafisa.

The challenges and problems of African decentralization are widely documented. It has been argued that there is a fragile and multi-faced relationship between local democracy and decentralization in Africa. Decentralization has been used to build patronage networks, facilitate corruption and bolster undemocratic regimes.



A few studies have also shown that there is no simplistic causal relationship between decentralization and poverty reduction and service delivery.

Systems of fiscal decentralization are poorly aligned to the overall decentralization policies of governments, and in many instances they do not promote sub-national fiscal autonomy. Resource shortages and capacity problems are common across all decentralized systems in Africa.

There are a key lessons to be learnt about African decentralization since the 1980s. One the most important lessons is the reminder that decentralization is a means towards and an enabler for good governance and sustainable human development. While Constitutional and regulatory frameworks are critical, they are not sufficient. Political will and political incentives have proved to be crucial success factors.

A number of principles must inform and drive decentralization on the continent, these include the principles of subsidiarity, graduation and additionality. Finding the appropriate interface between traditional forms of governance and modern democratic modes of governance remains an important priority for Africa.

The most important lesson on fiscal decentralization is that there should be a focus on getting the overall system right.

A key determinant in ensuring that decentralization plays a positive role in service delivery and poverty alleviation is the nature of central-local relations. It is argued that decentralization must be used by central government to challenge conservative local elites and to avoid elite capture at a local level.

The role of communities and civil society must be recognized and actively supported in a decentralized system. Various examples are cited where communities have organized themselves on local development issues.

Finally, there are lessons for international development and donor agencies. These include focusing on the empowerment of the absorptive capacity of recipient governments, engaging with the institutional framework for development in countries, and creating opportunities for policy dialogue in development cooperation.

This paper concludes by providing a selection of four summary country case studies on decentralization in Africa: Malawi, Ghana, Senegal and Morocco. In different ways each of these case studies reinforce and highlight some of the significant best practices, pitfalls, and observations about decentralization in Africa. They also provide concrete examples of the overall trajectory and periodization of African local government over the last three decades.

end

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## LIST OF COUNTRIES PER REGION IN AFRICA

**Northern Africa** (shaded blue on the map) includes:

- Algeria
- Egypt
- Libya
- Morocco
- Sudan
- Tunisia
- Western Sahara

**Western Africa** (shaded green on the map) includes:

- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Cape Verde
- Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Liberia
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Togo

**Eastern Africa** (shaded yellow on the map) includes:

- Burundi
- Comoros
- Djibouti
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Rwanda
- Seychelles
- Somalia
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

**Middle (Central) Africa** (shaded purple on the map) includes:

- Angola
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Equatorial Guinea
- Gabon
- Republic of the Congo
- São Tomé and Príncipe

**Southern Africa** (shaded red on the map) includes:

- Botswana
- Lesotho
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Swaziland