CONCEPT PAPER

LEARNING WORKSHOP ON
'LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN AFRICA: LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE'

ORGANIZED BY THE JOINT AFRICAN INSTITUTE AND THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE GERMAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (KfW.) WORLD BANK, & INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY ELECTION ASSISTANCE

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SHERATON HOTEL,
TUNIS, TUNISIA
Preamble:

Decentralization and participatory local governance have become prominent in the African Development Bank's agenda for work with its Regional Member Countries (RMCs) for several reasons. First, the delivery of crucial services contributing to the achievement of the MDGs is not possible without effective and responsive local institutions. Second, Country Governance Profiles (CGPs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) suggest that participatory decision-making and accountable public management are necessary for communities to meet their goals for development. Third, participatory local governance reinforces national democratization processes and increases the legitimacy of states, including those just emerging from conflict.

In spite of its promise, decentralization and local governance involve significant risks, dilemmas and challenges: it creates political winners and losers; requires more complex systems of financial allocation, control, and accountability; and demands more widely distributed management and technical capacities linked to service delivery. In some cases these costs and risks have led to stalled decentralization processes, or even to re-centralization.

However, several RMCs have achieved considerable progress by empowering local institutions. These success stories need to be shared more widely within the region. Effective local governance is not always associated with state-based or top-down decentralization programmes; in some cases it results from response by indigenous institutions to ineffective state efforts or through some development partners’ interventions in local communities. Whichever way it occurs, local governing institutions—local governments, local central government field/sector agencies, NGOs, and communities—could help to synchronize Africa’s highly centralized political institutions with the realities faced by their diverse and widely dispersed citizenry, small scale civil society, and business enterprises. They create opportunities that could accelerate development and poverty alleviation where it matters most---at the local level.

From the available studies and reports on this important subject, major keys to success or failure include:

- Political and managerial leaderships’ commitment to decentralized governance at the national level and their readiness to make hard choices posed by decentralization and local governance with respect to the assignment of responsibilities, financial and human resources;
- Relationship between political and economic reforms that promote sustainable development and poverty alleviation;
- Effective mobilization of local resources and of accountability mechanisms at the local level;
- Use of available social capital (e.g. community-based organizations and indigenous institutions) in structuring and supporting local governance;
- Synergy between wider public sector and local government reforms;
Partnerships between local government and non-governmental (for profit and not-for-profit) agencies;
Partnership between RMCs and between RMCs and their development partners (e.g. Local Development Framework, PRSPs etc) and harmonization of programmes and activities among development partners.

In order to formulate a client-responsive strategy for support of decentralized development, the AfDB has undertaken to identify, through dialogue with its RMCs and other partners, how best to assist its member states in linking local governance to their poverty alleviation goals.

AfDB is working with other international institutions supporting improved local governance in Africa. These include the German Development Bank (KfW), the World Bank, the Sweden-based International Democracy Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and Inwient of Germany. Each of these agencies will use the dialogue with RMCs to improve collaboration with the AfDB and harmonize donor activities in the local governance arena.

The Process Leading to a Local Governance Programme within the AfDB

The goal of the process to be initiated by the 2005 Local Governance Workshop is to develop a programme of assistance for RMCs that have committed themselves to building more effective and responsive systems of local governance, with a focus (but not exclusively) on democratically elected local governments. Follow up workshops are planned for 2006 involving high-level national policy makers to discuss instruments developed from the 2005 meeting. A review meeting is planned for 2007. AfDB plans to use the results of the 2005 meeting as a contribution to a strategy document channeling AfDB local governance support to RMCs. Other outputs are much better instruments for monitoring and analyzing local governance as a part of the CGP process and a harmonized framework for donor intervention in this critical area.

To this end, the 2005 learning workshop will launch a process linked to AfDB strategy formulation and country programme development, which will:

- Clarify the dilemmas of decentralisation and local development as these relate to poverty reduction and the MDGs in Africa;
- Support country teams in the development of a sustainable and comprehensive decentralized governance and participatory local development strategy and identify appropriate instruments to support and monitor good governance at local level; and
- Promote cooperation and coordination of various actors to support and monitor progress by RMCs in the implementation of their respective country local governance strategies.
Details of the 2005 Workshop

1. Objectives

The 2005 Local Governance Workshop will initiate an exchange of experience among country teams as well as a dialogue among country teams, the AfDB, and other development partners about formulating and implementing national strategies supporting decentralized governance and participatory local development. The 2005 workshop will also lead to the development of a set of indicators and protocols that can be used by the AfDB in undertaking country local governance profiles (as a part of the Bank’s CGP) and contribute to the development of policy-based lending for improving local governance under the Bank’s Policy Based Loan on Governance (PBLG).

This first workshop is a learning event, primarily designed to assist invited country teams (and secondarily for development partners) to achieve a common understanding and vision of local governance and participatory local development which will form the basis for future poverty reduction programs and activities within their respective countries.

At the end of the workshop, the country teams will have passed through a process, which will enable them:

- To clarify basic concepts by sharing an understanding of “local governance”, “decentralisation”, “participatory local development,” and “community driven development” and how they relate to each other and to poverty alleviation;
- To articulate a vision of local governance and participatory local development which is relevant to the social, economic, political, cultural, and institutional realities of their country;
- To analyse their country’s progress in relation to the above-mentioned vision;
- To exchange ideas and views across participating countries and to learn from each others’ experiences, including what successes have been achieved in improving local governance, what are the typical implementation obstacles encountered, and how these countries have tackled them; and
- To define the subsequent steps in each country which will lead to the 2006 meeting. This will include agreed plans for country teams to analyse local governance and participatory local development, for which they may use the tools developed by the sponsoring partners, and to undertake a consultative process related to these issues involving different political actors and civil society groups in their countries.

Through their participation in the Workshop, development partners will have had an opportunity to:

- Clarify the importance of support to local governance as a contribution to increasing the impacts and sustainability of their investments in poverty alleviation and democratization in Africa,
- Identify practical measures to channel assistance more effectively to local institutions, especially local governments and communities, in ways which contribute to both short-term results and medium-term capacity building;
• Improve strategies and mechanisms for donor harmonization and coordination in ways, which enhance their collective impact on governance, capacity building and poverty reduction at the local level.

2. Indicative Agenda for the Workshop Programme

During the first session, the workshop will present and analyze strategic frameworks and case studies to that focus on such topics as:

- Comparative experiences of poverty alleviation & role of decentralized governance organs
- Managing the risks, dilemmas and costs of decentralized governance approaches
- Institutional and Policy choices for financing decentralized delivery of services to the poor
- Indicators and protocols for assessing decentralized governance
- Partnerships for local economic development
- Integrating formal and informal structures of local governance
- Building and sustaining effective local accountability
- Local governments as instruments of conflict resolution
- Sustainable capacity development for local governance and participatory local development.

On the second day and third days, participants will reflect on their country experiences and discuss the way forward in groups and in parallel sessions, based on the country background papers which will be developed ahead of the workshop. On the third day, these experiences will be shared in plenary.

The fourth day will focus on the definition of indicators and protocols to assess and monitor local governance and on developing effective partnerships to support improvement of local governance in Africa. The outcome of these sessions will form the basis on which subsequent follow-up work will be planned (see draft programme attached).

3. Participants:

The workshop plans to target specific countries which have demonstrated a commitment to decentralization and participatory local governance and which are in a position to both contribute to and benefit from an exchange of experience regarding the major challenges they confront and possible strategies for tackling these problems.

Each country will be invited to send a delegation of 3-4 persons, including:

1) Directors or Senior Staff of Local Government Ministries or National Decentralization Programmes;
2) Directors or Senior Staff of Community Driven Development Programmes, Social Funds, or other agencies promoting community development and empowerment; 
3) Local Government Mayors, Senior Municipal Officials, or Representatives of Associations of Local Governments with front-line experience in local governance; and 
4) Civil Society Leaders engaged in promoting local governance including researchers and academics, NGO officials, capacity building specialists or others.

The partners and AfDB have identified the following RMCs for the workshop based on the need to include countries that are relatively advanced with medium to positive experiences of decentralized governance and those, which have thus far achieved less progress but have the potential to learn and apply lessons from other countries. AfDB currently has relevant studies ongoing in five countries and these are all included. Regional and linguistic balance has also influenced the choice of countries.

The countries selected include the following:

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Altogether a total of approximately 50 country participants are envisaged. In addition, at least 10 representatives of donor organizations, including other multilateral development banks, who would be responsible for own costs, will be invited. Up to eight resource persons will also be invited who will give expert presentations on specific issues/case studies to the workshop on the first day and participate in subsequent discussions.

A Partners'/Expert Meeting is therefore scheduled within the workshop program to provide opportunities for RMC-donor dialogue on current strengths and weaknesses of present donor interventions in this field and also assist the partners to discover how they can work more constructively together on local governance and capacity development issues on the continent.

4. **Venue:** Tunis, Tunisia, at the Sheraton Hotel

5. **Dates:** Main workshop—June 21-24; Partners’ Meeting and Joint Sessions—June 23-24.

6. **Resources and Cost Sharing**
The partners will share the costs of travel and accommodation for all participants as well as resource persons.

6. **Expected Results from the 2005 Local Governance Workshop**

a) Country Work Programmes for advancing local governance which will provide the basis for the planned 2006 meeting of high-level policy makers on local governance;

b) Recommendations for a Draft Protocol for assessing and monitoring local governance to be used as part of the AfDB’s ongoing Country Governance Profiles;

c) Framework on provision of support to local governance by partners: donors, central governments and AfDB as well as other MDBs & collaborators;

d) Capacity building materials and tools for assisting intermediary institutions—e.g. Municipal Development Programmes, social funds and other sources of finance and technical assistance to institutions of local governance and development.