



# AFRICA

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## I. Introduction

Africa encompasses some 31 million square kilometers and, according to recent estimates, houses a population of more than 933 million.<sup>1</sup> This rapidly growing population (2.5% per year), characterized by its extreme youth (median age: 20), is a mosaic of peoples speaking many languages. Moreover, the region is subject to rapid urban development; the rate of urbanization in African countries ranges from 40% to 70%. There are thirty-four metropolises with more than one million inhabitants; most are beset by the rapid growth of impoverished suburbs, as well as deficiencies in infrastructure, public transportation and basic urban services. Literacy rates on average range from 40% to 60%. Civil disorder and military conflict are commonplace in a few regions, and in some countries a sizeable percentage of the population suffers from pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

In economic terms, after some 20 years of implementing structural adjustment policies, African countries are becoming financially sound again, achieving an average annual growth rate between 4% and slightly more than 6% in 2005. Despite these positive signs, Africa is still economically underdeveloped. With nearly 15% of the world population, Africa accounts for only 2% of world trade, and receives only 3% of direct foreign investment. (China received about 22% of foreign investment). Of the world's 47 least developed countries, as identified by the United Nations, 18 are in sub-Saharan Africa. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has not yet been able to attract significant aid and investment to the continent, or to mobilize African savings of which 40%, according to experts, is invested outside Africa. Nevertheless, some of the measures taken by the international community, especially the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), should help to increase the finan-

cial and policy capacity of public authorities and local governments in certain countries, especially in combating poverty, providing access to services and improving living conditions.

There has been a substantial rise in the number of democratic political systems since the 1990s, in marked contrast to the 1950s and 1960s, the two decades following African independence. During that time, one-party political systems predominated, and access to state power was often gained by means of *coups d'état*.

In some areas, political and institutional systems remain fragile. Considerable tension still exists in parts of Central Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Chad), West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Togo) and East Africa (Ethiopia/Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan).

Most political systems are now multi-party, and leaders are chosen by universal suffrage. Some categories of local officials (regional governors, *walis* in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, *mouhafidhs* in Arab Republic of Egypt, and government representatives in Cameroon) are still appointed. Over the past five years, Africa has seen 35 electoral contests, including 20 presidential elections, five parliamentary elections, four constitutional referendums<sup>2</sup> and six local elections.<sup>3</sup> The majority of states are unitary republics; three of these, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa have federal systems. Lesotho, Morocco and Swaziland are kingdoms. Comparisons of constitutional systems reveal the predominance of presidential systems. South Africa has a mixed parliamentary and presidential system, Niger has a semi-presidential system and Morocco has a constitutional monarchy.

The table below provides baseline data on the geographic, political and economic position, and territorial organization of African countries.

**The majority of states are unitary republics, but there are also three states with federal systems (Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa) and three kingdoms (Lesotho, Morocco and Swaziland)**

1. *Internet world stats*  
<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>.
2. *Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, Tunisia*.
3. *Data current at 20th December 2006*.

Table 1 Geographic, political and economic position and territorial organization of each country

Country	Population / land area	Political system	Type of state	Regional level	Provincial level	Supra communal level	Municipality/Metropolitan level
<b>Algeria</b> 33.4 m / 2,381,741 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary		48 Wilaya		1541 municipalities
<b>Benin</b> 8.2 m / 112,622 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary				77 municipalities
<b>Cameroon</b> 16.3 m / 475,412 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary	10 regions		2 metropolis 11 districts	11 urban municipalities 316 rural municipalities
<b>Arab Republic of Egypt</b> 76.7 m / 1,001,450 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary		26 Mouhafasats (both decentralized and deconcentrated structures)	217 cities and Luxor (Special Status)	4617 towns
<b>Gabon</b> 1.4 m / 267,670 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary		47 departments		50 municipalities
<b>Ghana</b> 21.1 m / 238,540 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary			166 district assemblies	
<b>Guinea</b> 9.5 m / 245,860 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary				38 urban municipalities 303 rural municipalities (CRD) / 1 city (Conakry)
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b> 17.9 m / 322,463 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary	19 regions	58 departments		197 municipalities and 2 cities: Abidjan with 10 municipalities and Yamoussoukro with town councils
<b>Kenya</b> 35.1 m / 580,370 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary		8 provinces including the City of Nairobi		175 Local Authorities (municipal councils, town councils and county councils) and 3 cities: Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu
<b>Madagascar</b> 18.6 m / 587,051 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary	22 regions (Faritany)			1557 municipalities, including 45 urban municipalities, 3 cities with special status: Antananarivo with six districts- Nosy Bé - Sainte Marie
<b>Mali</b> 13.9 m / 1,267,000 km <sup>2</sup>		Presidential	Unitary	8 regions		49 cercles Bamako district (with six town councils) governed by special regulations	703 municipalities

CCountry	Population / land area	Political system	Type of state	Regional level	Provincial level	Supra communal level	Municipality/Metropolitan level
<b>Morocco</b> 32.2 m / 446,550 km <sup>2</sup>	Constitutional Monarchy	Unitary	16 regions	49 provinces 13 prefectures (urban areas)			1497 municipalities
<b>Mozambique</b> 19.8 m / 801,590 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary			10 provinces		33 urban municipalities 1042 localities (rural municipalities)
<b>Niger</b> 13.2 m / 1,267,000 km <sup>2</sup>	Semi Presidential	Unitary	8 regions* (with Niamey)	36 departments*	4 urban communities		265 municipalities, including 213 rural and 52 urban and 5 sedentarized nomadic groupings
<b>Nigeria</b> 131.5 m / 923,770 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Federal	36 Federated States				774 municipalities
<b>Senegal</b> 11.4 m / 196,722 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary	11 regions				67 municipalities, 43 innercity municipalities (in 4 cities), 2 metropolitan point authority, 321 rural municipalities
<b>South Africa</b> 47.4 m / 1,221,041 km <sup>2</sup>	Mixed parliamentary and presidential		Federal	9 regions	47 municipal district councils		231 including 6 metropolitan municipalities
<b>Tanzania</b> 38.8 m / 945,090 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary	A self-governing unit that is not federated, Zanzibar		92 rural district councils		1) 22 urban councils, 92 rural councils, 3 townships, 2) within the districts: 10,075 registered villages
<b>Togo</b> 6.15 m / 56,790 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary	6 regions*	30 préfectures*			30 urban municipalities
<b>Tunisia</b> 10.100 m / 163,610 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary	24 governorates (Wilaya, [ both decentralized and deconcentred structures])				264 municipalities
<b>Uganda</b> 34.2 m / 241,040 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary			79 districts		1 city council , 13 municipalities in urban areas - 87 town councils
<b>Zambia</b> 10.6 m / 752,614 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary			54 rural district councils		1) urban areas: 4 city councils, 14 urban district councils 2) rural areas: none
<b>Zimbabwe</b> 13.01 m / 390,760 km <sup>2</sup>	Presidential	Unitary			58 rural district councils		1) urban areas: 6 city councils, 28 urban councils, 10 municipal councils, 8 town councils, 4 board councils 2) rural areas: none

Regarding territorial organization, this table highlights only local governments in these countries and not the administrative jurisdictions.

\* Provided by the law, regions, departments or prefectures, as well as rural municipalities in Niger, have not been established by norm.

The view of decentralization in African governments seems to fluctuate between regarding it as a technique of administrative organization and –more rarely– as a genuine long-term policy. If decentralization is a policy, it can help to change the operation of existing political systems. If, on the other hand, it is thought of primarily as an administrative technique, it is likely to lead only to rationalization of administrative structures and their effectiveness.

In practice, decentralization in Africa has most often been conceived and implemen-

ted as an administrative technique. Indeed, when colonial powers controlled most of Africa, they often sought to disrupt traditional ties in order to consolidate their centralized power. In some cases a

colonial power did try to preserve an existing administrative model, but this approach too was adopted primarily to strengthen colonial power, rather than foster self-governance. Predictably, local populations perceived the few decentralized structures set up by colonizers as tools for reinforcing the colonial presence. In all countries in the region, this colonial legacy of an *ad hoc* and often contradictory combination of centralization and decentralization formed the foundation of post-colonial territorial administration. Following independence, embryonic national administrations relied on the familiar centralized model as they confronted urgent problems of resources, administrative management and the establishment of state structures. The continuation of centralized power was seen as expedient not only to control data and policy orientation, but also to deal with the shortcomings and failures of new governments struggling to establish national authority.

This explains why, particularly in francophone African countries, the centralizing model inherited from the colonial power

was adopted. For internal territorial administration, however, the preferred approach tended more toward decentralization, though not to an extent that could undermine an overarching philosophy of centralization. Decentralization was still feared and deliberately avoided if it threatened to move beyond administrative technique toward political substance and any democratic content. The concern of the new governing elites was to consolidate their power. From this perspective, the quest for national unity –seen as a way of combating potentially damaging tribal, local or regional affinities– was given a high profile. Modernization, economic development and national unity became the favoured slogans.

In African countries, the concepts of political and administrative decentralization developed along the lines of the French *déconcentration* –state representatives at the local level rather than locally elected bodies. From the outset they were strategic instruments intended primarily to ensure uniform administration of the territory by the central government. The ideal of centralization predominated for a long time, relegating the more democratic model of decentralization to the back burner.

The constraints on putting decentralization into practice have been apparent for a long time, though such restrictions have occasionally undergone nominal modifications to disarm critics. For the most part, such superficial alterations, however highly approved or formally enshrined in the legal system, amounted to little more than cosmetic palliatives.

Today, the legal status of decentralization policies in most African countries is stipulated in one of two ways: explicitly in a constitution, or by lower-level laws and regulations. To date, less than 40% of African constitutions mention local governments as a specific level of governance. In countries where decentralization

*In practice, decentralization in Africa has most often been conceived and implemented as an administrative technique*



and local governments are defined in statutes of a lower rank than the constitution, three main tendencies can be seen. Some countries have relatively elaborate legislation with many regulations, decrees and ordinances for implementation. This model is found primarily in francophone countries. The profusion of statutes complicates the implementation of decentralization and slows things down, causing substantial delays between confirmation of legality, and actual enforcement; delays of 10 years are not unusual. The second legislative tendency involves a relatively small number of laws and regulations on decentralization. Typically, only about half a dozen statutes cover the various aspects of implementing decentralization. The majority of countries in this category are former British colonies. Somewhere between the French and British models is North Africa, where there has never really been a major break in the decentralization policy. The process there seems to have taken root in the colonial era, and has progressed to this day with a kind of slow, sometimes imperceptible, continuity. Some of the earliest North African statutes date back to the middle of the 19th century (Tunisia, 1858). However,

there have been major territorial reforms, including the 1984 Algerian law, and Morocco's 1996 constitutional reform and 1997 law on regions. Despite the long experience of North African countries with decentralization, the autonomy of local government there is still restricted overall in relation to the central state.

A complex picture thus emerges of multiple historic, sociological, cultural, economic, political and legal influences in African governments. Nevertheless, movement toward decentralization and local democracy can be discerned.

The first major tendency, if not an actual trend, is quantitative. Since independence, in nearly every part of the continent there has been noticeable, continuous growth in the number of local governments and in the territory they administer. This growth is especially noticeable in the African urban environment. Diversification and a more refined and complex hierarchy of structures and territorial tiers of decentralization can also be seen.

The table below compares population figures, rates of urbanization and the number of local governments by African region.

**Table 2** Local governments: Demography and urbanization

Regions	Population (millions)	Rate of urbanization (%)	Municipalities (number)
North Africa	154	62	4200
West Africa	264	40	3000
Central Africa	98	47	1000
East Africa	245	31	1900
Southern Africa	148	36	1300
<b>Africa as a whole</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>11400</b>

Source: PDM, 2006.



The second major tendency is qualitative, an increasing acceptance of the substance of decentralization as a policy.

Although in most African states decentralization has long been regarded primarily as an organizational and administrative management technique, it now seems to be gaining true political substance in many countries. However slowly and gradually, decentralization is gaining recognition as an effective way to give increasingly robust independent decision-making powers to local governments. This gradual consolidation of local electoral legitimacy also enhances the credibility of the decentralized authorities. This trend is by no means dominant; in some areas decentralizing activities seem to be mixed with traditional systems and, as in Algeria, challenged to the point where it is virtually non-existent.

***In East and Southern Africa, the history of decentralization is closely related to the end of social and political crises***

Many countries, especially Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda, have already undertaken decentralizing reforms in the organization of state and public life. These countries have organized local elections, and have seen local authorities emerging as new public authority figures alongside national authorities. Admittedly, in most of these countries, the division of public authority has caused problems. In part, this may simply be because such a major institutional change can be absorbed only slowly by many incumbent national authorities.

Implicitly, implementation of the decentralization process has rarely been properly planned. While North African countries have a longstanding policy of decentralization, the pace of implementation there is not altogether uniform. In West and Central Africa, apart from Senegal and Burkina

Faso, there is no real plan to implement decentralization. Rather, moves to decentralize in this region seem to rest on policy announcements made in the speeches by heads of state. In East and Southern Africa, the history of decentralization is closely related to the end of recent social and political crises. There, implementation of decentralization has a high priority in government action plans and seems to be subject to a pre-established, regularly assessed timetable. The most exemplary case is South Africa, where the end of the apartheid policy imposed a new approach to governance that involves the entire population in public management at all levels. This policy of transformation is enshrined in the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) whose entire philosophy can be summed up in the slogan "A better life for all." With the Local Government Transition Act (1993), adopted to govern the transitional period, the Municipal System Act (2000) and the Municipal Property Rating Act (2004), the South African government gave itself 11 years to set up a system of local governance that is almost revolutionary compared with previous practice.

Apart from South Africa, African governments have not relied on rigorous planning to implement decentralization policies. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of them have no mechanisms to assess the conduct and establishment of such policies. This is why United Cities and Local Government of Africa (UCLGA) is asking that local governance be included in the good governance criteria selected by the Peer Review Mechanism of NEPAD.

Despite resistance, decentralization is moving forward in the region. More substantial progress may be expected as the number of local governments increases, and their capacities are enhanced. Understandably, the various decentralization policies have not developed in the same fashion, or in accord with the same timetable. Implementation as well as the content of policies is strongly influenced by the his-

torical context from which they emerged, and the administrative tradition inherited from the colonial era.

The third tendency consists of a relative increase in the responsibilities of local governments in many countries. In principle, this increase bears witness to greater decentralization, and fits within the logic of disengagement of the state and central administration. In practice, however, it has proved problematic and even counterproductive in the absence of any real transfer of powers and financial resources. In virtually all cases, the central government retains control of local funds and taxation, as well as its monopoly on foreign aid and financing.

The fourth tendency, which is still at an embryonic stage, looks to enlist local and foreign private-sector resources to provide and manage a certain number of urban services, such as the collection of household or industrial waste (Tunisia, Benin, Burkina Faso and South Africa), drinking water (Morocco), or urban transport and sanitation.

The fifth tendency, which is gradually taking shape, involves setting up networks of local authorities to foster decentralized co-operation. The creation of national associations of local governments, including the UCLGA, and the reinforcement of their role at the national level, reflects this tendency. Such associations provide tools to enhance the credibility of local authorities as relevant actors in the dialogue on development and co-operation in Africa. In South Africa, the association of local government authorities, SALGA, is recognized as a public institution. Elsewhere, national associations of local governments have the status of associations under private law, although some, such as the Association of Municipalities in Burkina Faso (AMBF), may be acknowledged as acting on behalf of public interest.

The sixth tendency now emerging and certainly varying from one country to another, is a modest relaxation of the control exer-

ted over local governments. There is a discernible retreat from practices reminiscent of the exercise of power from the top down, and a move toward restricting oversight to strictly legal aspects, allowing greater local autonomy. However, it is also true that, in a few African countries, the situation is less fluid, and there have in fact been some setbacks.

These various movements, obvious and tangible to varying degrees, and often very gradual with pauses, checks and less frequently, qualitative leaps, can be seen (i) at the structural level, (ii) at the material and functional levels of responsibility and management, and (iii), more globally and substantially, in the progress and limits of local democracy.

## II. Changes at structural levels

Municipal structures emerged in the 19th century, particularly in Senegal, Egypt and Tunisia. In the 20th century, municipalities were established and gained ground in all colonial territories. Far from respecting principles of local participation, the system was designed to ensure the colonizers' control over the territory, and their ability to oversee the local population. Before independence, municipal administration in African colonies differed somewhat, depending on the model preferred by the controlling European nation: the French system of "communes," the British local government system, and Portuguese "municipios." In all cases, decentralization tended to be purely administrative. Few local bodies were elected; local executives were usually appointed and had only limited or consultative powers. Such decentralization also enabled administrators and colonists in rural areas to be governed by the same arrangements as their compatriots in colonial capitals and in Europe.

Overall, two systems, direct and indirect rule, predominated in sub-Saharan Africa. Direct rule was favored in countries coloni-

zed by France, Belgium and Portugal. Direct rule meant administrative oversight of colonial territory organized into "cercles," subdivisions and cantons under the responsibility of the colonial administrators. Local authorities played only a consultative role.

***In fact, changes in administrative structure went hand-in-hand with moves towards decentralization, which formed the core of all endeavors to modernize the State and with it public policy in Africa, supposedly leading to "local democracy" as a key pillar of the entire territorial administrative organization***

Indirect rule, established primarily in British colonies, allowed local people some freedom to manage their own affairs, such as the administration of justice or the collection of taxes –to be shared with the colonial government. Indigenous customs and authority were more or less ignored as long as local leaders protected the interests of the colonial power. This system sowed the seeds of future decentralization in these countries.

In North Africa, the colonial administrative process was more complex. In this region, 18th and 19th century colonial powers encountered many established state structures. For the most part, colonial municipal administration under European nations rested on old, indigenous structures, albeit heavily influenced by the recent, European occupying power. Both the British in Egypt and Sudan, and the French in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia sought such accommodation.

When African countries achieved independence, the new governments chose to retain the structure inherited from the colonial power, rather than move immediately toward decentralization. From the

outset, the old systems were seen as instruments for extending central power over local communities. It was not until the 1980s and the ensuing wave of democratization in the 1990s that a new direction gained momentum. Centralized African governments showed renewed interest in decentralization. Gradually, local governments began taking charge of more local matters. In fact, changes in administrative structure went hand-in-hand with moves toward decentralization in all endeavors to modernize the state. This widespread change in public policy in Africa was expected to lead to acceptance of "local democracy" as a key pillar of territorial administrative organizations. Since the mid-1980s, several factors have pushed African governments toward economic liberalization and adjustment policies. These factors include: budget difficulties generated by shrinking resources, challenges to interventionist public administration systems, the resurgence of liberal ideas advocating the rehabilitation of market mechanisms, the disengagement of the state, and the changing roles of the public sector and private initiative. These new considerations implied taking part in globalization and international competition required genuine policies of reform and restructuring, and this rationale affected all subsequent reforms relating to local government and urban policy.

However, not all African countries chose the same route in adopting and implementing decentralization policies. In the majority of countries, decentralization policies were adopted following citizens' demands for increased participation. This was strongly expressed by local communities in pro-democracy movements during the 1990s. Because of the connection between democratization and decentralization, some people saw the adoption of decentralization reforms as a corollary to the democratization and liberalization that some financial partners of African governments were imposing as a condition for providing

aid. In some cases, central governments made the adoption of decentralization policies appear to be the result of donor conditions. In Mali and Niger, decentralization was a response to local demands, including some violent demonstrations and threats of secession. In other countries, decentralization provided an opportunity to overcome or even eliminate the stigma of a previous political and administrative organization, as in the case of South African apartheid.

In North Africa, changes in local government structures seem to have come about more slowly, and the reforms to have been less thorough. In all countries in this region, the territorial administrative structure seems to be fixed, tied to the structure of the governorate (Wilaya in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, Mouhafadha in Egypt), which is more a tier of administrative decentralization.

Nevertheless, almost everywhere the decentralization option is perceived as progress and is expected to:

- Mobilize communities to work for sustainable local development and improved living conditions;
- Help democracy to take root and spread at the local level;
- Reform the state and rebuild the legitimacy of public institutions from the bottom up;
- Constitute the starting point for regional integration genuinely rooted in African realities.

To achieve this, local governments are being given general notional authority over the territory for which they are responsible. Some have exclusive powers as well as powers they share with other levels of public governance. In North Africa, the powers of local governments must compete with the central administration and various national public enterprises for service delivery (education, health, transport, sanitation, drinking water and electricity).

The theory and content of decentralization policies tends to be different in federal states and unitary countries. The decentralization concept also varies in accordance with the administrative tradition inherited from the colonial period. In federal states, local governments come under the remit of federated states; these federated states define the content of the local government system and its administration. This can lead to a wide range of methods of organizing local government –a circumstance which does not facilitate a comparative interpretation of local governance. In unitary states, the organization of local governments is usually the same throughout the national territory. However, the actual powers granted to local officials are, again, influenced by the administrative tradition inherited from the colonial era.

In francophone countries, the organization of local governments corresponds in principle to a division of powers between central and local authorities, the latter being represented by an elected deliberative body and an elected or appointed executive body. Municipal terms of office are usually similar to those of national institutions (four or five years) and re-election is allowed. In these countries, the municipal executive, mayor or top administrator typically has real decision-making power in local management, the powers of this office being defined by law. However, this nominal decision-making power is often restricted by the practice of pooling funds; that is, all public resources are held in the Treasury under the control of the Minister of Finance. Thus, the representatives of the Ministry of Finance, such as the comptroller and municipal tax collector, have effective power over local governments. Many mayors consider such fiscal power excessive because ministry representatives can block expenditure even if it has been committed in accordance with all laws and regulations. It is therefore a claim of national associations of local governments to relinquish or even suppress the principle of unified treasury. However in Senegal the law makes it possible to deviate

te from this rule: local governments may be authorized to deposit all or only part of their available funds with the Treasury.

In countries with a British administrative tradition, local governments also have elected deliberative bodies; executive bodies are either elected or appointed. The terms of office of deliberative bodies are

similar to those in francophone countries, but those of the executive body –one to three years– are shorter. Furthermore, re-election is not always permitted. Mayors generally have a ceremonial rather than executive role. Real executive power

is actually held by another public official, the Town Clerk or Chief Executive Officer, who more often than not is appointed at the national level by the Minister for Local Government. As they do in francophone countries, national associations supporting local governments seek further decentralizing reforms in anglophone countries, including the establishment of true executive powers for mayors, and an extension of mayors' terms of office.

#### **Governance of Major Cities**

Most countries on the African continent are experiencing a marked trend toward urbanization, the gradual movement of rural populations into the cities. This phenomenon is considered a vector of modernization and competitiveness, not only for cities, but also for the surrounding territories.

In most parts of Africa, the organization of major metropolises –particularly capital cities– tends to display specific features. Such features can be identified in political capitals such as Rabat (Morocco), Lusaka (Zambia), Dakar (Senegal), Tswane (South Africa), Yaoundé (Cameroon), Accra (Ghana) and Algiers (Algeria). Common ele-

ments are also apparent in big cities whose importance is determined by demographic or economic weight, such as Johannesburg (South Africa), Douala (Cameroon), Kumasi and Shama-Ahanta (Ghana). All such major cities are governed by distinct legal arrangements that constitute important organizational and managerial exceptions to the more common laws of municipalities.

In Morocco, the new commune charter of October 3, 2002 made special arrangements for cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants. These cities are managed by a single commune with *arrondissements* that are not legal entities. Morocco modeled its system on the French political configuration of Paris, Lyon and Marseille (known as PLM Law).

The Moroccan charter also decreed special status for the urban commune of Rabat, the capital, and the Mechouar communes where the royal palaces are situated.

Typically, major African cities are divided into sub-urban administrative units, which may be separate legal entities. The latter is the case for the urban *arrondissement* communes in Douala and Yaoundé in Cameroon. Sub-metropolitan communes created in this way are governed by the common law of municipalities. Conversely, in some countries sub-metropolitan units remain sub-municipal bodies without administrative autonomy; this occurs in Accra and Kumasi in Ghana, and Cotonou in Benin.

Elections also differ somewhat in major metropolises; the deliberative body is elected by direct universal suffrage, as for example in Algeria, Nigeria, Gabon and Madagascar. Those elected then appoint one of their fellow representatives as municipal executive. Another method of selection is appointment by indirect universal

**More generally, African decentralization systems classify lower-tier local authorities according to their level of development or urbanization**

suffrage. Metropolitan councillors are elected by the deliberative bodies of the sub-metropolitan units; most candidates are members of that deliberative body, as is the case in Cameroon. As for the distribution of powers, sub-urban units are responsible for local community services, and are forums for participatory democracy. Federative services of importance to the entire city are provided by the larger, central government of the city.

Many African decentralization systems classify lower-tier local authorities according to their level of development or urbanization. For example, in decreasing rank of urbanization Cameroon has urban communities, urban communes under a special scheme, urban communes and rural communes. In South Africa, classification takes the form of an alphabetical hierarchy with category A, B and C municipalities. Such differentiation makes it easier to identify the most disadvantaged authorities and, through a process sometimes called equalization, to focus on their development with specific support policies.

The governmental variations observed in major cities point up the need to define the minimum common content of over-arching African decentralization policies. In fact, an African local government charter that addresses this need for more standardization is currently being mooted. The debate is being driven in particular by the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) and the African Conference on Decentralization and Local Development (CADDEL).

### III. Responsibilities, management and finance

Undeniably, there is a trend toward strengthening the responsibilities of local governments. However, the transfer of responsibility may not be accompanied by a transfer of the money or other resources required to fulfill the added duties. Most

African local governments continue to experience very serious financial constraints on their resources and powers.

The administrative capabilities of local governments are also restricted by a shortage of qualified personnel and the wherewithal to train employees properly. In part, it is this dearth of skilled officials that has led to inefficient and ineffective local management, particularly in the areas of strategic planning, urban development, economics and social development. Lacking qualified personnel, some local and urban governments have turned to the private sector for help in the management of local affairs, public services and property. Recently, several African cities have also sought private assistance with modern information and communications technology.

#### III.1. Responsibilities

One of the most important aims of decentralization is to provide an effective, appropriate response to the needs of local communities for public services. The density and efficiency of public services are among the most important indicators of the vigor of decentralization, and provide a vital source of legitimacy for local governments. Unfortunately, such services seem unsatisfactory in virtually all countries. The prerogatives of local governments also vary from country to country, with two notable tendencies:

- Increased responsibilities of local authorities for local services and urban management.
- More private-sector management of local public services by means of various forms of devolution, such as delegation, licensing and partnerships.

Table 3 shows that a majority of countries grant many important powers to local governments. The scope of responsibility covers social investment – infrastructure and social facilities, health, education, leisure–



and the provision of goods and services for education, health, culture, leisure, transport, water and sanitation. Local responsibilities also cover administration, urban planning and management, and local development.

Successful decentralization depends on the manner in which power is transferred to local governments. Invariably, transfer of authority provokes resistance from managers within larger regional and national ministries. In North Africa, transfer of power may be considered only nominal. In this region, national ministries typically

African countries, as well as a few anglo-phone countries in West Africa. In these countries, sectoral ministries are gradually disengaging from the implementation phases of their programs. The result: local governments are taking over the local departments that previously came under the territorial jurisdiction of sectoral ministries. This transfer of authority, seen in Ghana, South Africa and Uganda, necessitates changes in staff, budget resources, assets, and decision-making power. In these countries, central government defines strategic guidelines for sectoral policies regarding health, water and education. Local governments, however, are responsible for implementation. Wherever such territory-wide measures have been undertaken, as in the case of water and HIV/AIDS policy in Uganda, the effectiveness of these policies has increased substantially. However, the decentralization process is often hindered by national sector-based policies that tend to privilege deconcentration (limited transfer of responsibilities). One of the recurrent claims of African local authorities is that sector-based policies should be territorialized and thus more decentralized, as in Ghana, Uganda or South Africa, and that local authorities should be fully responsible for their implementation.

While public assertion of the new nominal powers of local governments is widespread, the actual transfer of real executive and operational powers is still rare. The challenge remains to resolve the problem of effectively transferring the real financial and managerial powers from the centralized ministries to local authorities. Financial management is, of course, the crucial factor.

### III.2. Financial management

Local government finance comes from two main sources –local taxes and state grants. In some places, local governments share local tax revenues with the central government. The state also makes financial transfers to local governments in the form of

***The ministries concerned tend to bypass local governments in implementing sectoral policies. They are encouraged to a greater or lesser extent in this by the practices of development partners who are often in ignorance of the consequences of applying such policies***

retain control of local services, or delegate them to the private sector. Sectors such as education and health are managed directly by the corresponding ministries, while drinking water, sanitation and energy are either state monopolies, or are provided by private concerns. In virtually all cases, the private providers are under contract to the state, rather than to local authorities. This tendency can also be observed in West and Central Africa, although basic services there for education, health, water, sanitation and transportation are generally acknowledged as local concerns. Even so, the ministries in this region also tend to bypass local governments in implementing long-range sectoral policies. The ministries are often encouraged by their private partners to minimize larger policy discussions with local authorities. It appears to be of small concern to private developers how their pressure for increased central control might affect a national momentum toward decentralization.

Nevertheless, there are promising developments in several eastern and southern



Table 3  
Responsibilities of local authorities

COUNTRY	POWERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (COMMUNES/MUNICIPALITIES)									
	Planning and support to the local economy	Drinking water, waste, sanitation	Security (administrative police and CID)	Town planning and habitat	Basic services (health, basic education)	Sport and leisure	Culture and tourism	Energy	Transport	
Algeria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Benin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Cameroon	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Egypt, Arab Rep. of	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Gabon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Ghana	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Guinea	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Côte d'Ivoire	X	X	X	X	X				X	
Kenya	X	X	X	X						
Madagascar	X	X	X		X			X	X	
Mali	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Morocco	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Mozambique	X	X	X	X	X				X	
Niger	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Nigeria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Senegal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
South Africa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Togo		X		X	X					
Tunisia	X	X (waste only)	X	X		X	X	X		
Uganda	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Zambia	X	X		X	X					

conditional or unconditional grants, and other types of state financial contributions. The specific method of funding local development varies from country to country. The capacity to mobilize “own revenues” is one of the fundamental principles of decentralization.

### III.2.1. Local resource mobilization

Legislation allows African local governments to raise a panoply of resources in their own territory from direct or indirect local tax revenues, service tax, fees collected from the operation of services, economic activities or municipal asset management. Unfortunately, the law does not always list the necessary local government taxing powers to alter the volume of their revenues; which means that municipal incomes generally regarded as “own resources” are in fact controlled by central government.

This imbalance can be seen most clearly in the numerous countries that apply the French administrative model, where, in theory, there is a more diversified local taxation system, yet in practice, local governments remain devoid of taxing powers, as tax rates are set out in the law or imposed by central government. Local governments do not administer local taxation systems as such, rather they depend on taxes transferred from the state, which in some cases have become state-shared taxes (e.g. Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon). The taxing powers of local governments in Gabon, Niger and Togo are the exception to this tendency. Except for local governments in Senegal, local governments are also not empowered to set service fees and tariffs. Only in exceptional instances can local governments collect duties on certain local services or activities (as in Togo, for example) with the prior approval of the overseeing state authority.

Local governments in anglophone countries generally enjoy broader taxing powers and greater freedom to set service rates and other indirect local tariffs; such as real es-

tate tax in Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and service fees in the afore-mentioned countries and Nigeria. Nonetheless, local taxation in some countries is negligible (e.g. Nigeria and Uganda, where tax revenue as a percentage of total revenue dropped from 30% to 11% in five years after the removal of the more productive “graduated tax”). Local government powers to create indirect duties or tariffs on local activities are also exceptional (e.g. in Zambia and Mozambique). It is however, necessary to relativize the importance of these local taxing powers, bearing in mind the decisive control of central governments over revenue mobilization (such as the prior approval required for rates and tariffs in Zambia), the low levels of own source revenues (see the case of Ghana in Graph 1) and the percentage of own revenues making up a small share of the whole budget (30% on average, except in Zambia -77%- and South Africa -90%-).

The level of government responsible for collecting the revenues also varies between countries: in some locations the municipalities ensure the collection of taxes, while in others the state collects the taxes and later distributes the revenues among local governments. African francophone tax revenue systems are generally centralized, although some duties may be collected locally (e.g. Mali, Morocco, Senegal) and some countries may present certain exceptions to this rule (as is the case in Tunisia for the collection of certain taxes). However, regardless of the system in place the tax collection rates remain low in all the countries: approximately 50% in Kenya; lower still in Nigeria; 20% of real estate taxes in Tunisia (collected at the local level); and between 45-50% on average in Côte d’Ivoire or Niger (where the state ensures the collection of revenues).

The use of a shared tax system is slowly spreading as the main source of local government budget funding. Value Added Tax (VAT) is a major component of shared

taxation. VAT has been established in almost all countries, and is divided between the state and local governments in proportions that vary from one country to another. In Morocco, for example, local governments have been receiving 30% of the revenue since 1986, and about 25% in Nigeria. In Mozambique, 75% of the vehicle tax and 30% of the tourist tax goes to the local governments. In Cape Verde, there is a set of unallocated taxes, and local governments receive 7% of that revenue.

The two most pressing problems arising from this tax system management are the terms of the division, which are often very unfavorable to local governments, and the regularity of payments. The manner in which the share allocated to local governments is distributed varies considerably. In some countries, there are legal rules about the timing and amount of fund transfers. However, in most countries the central administration has discretionary decision-making power; the state may take years to pay the agreed-upon share to the local governments. Typically, the local authorities have no legal recourse to counter such delays. Over and above these difficulties, shared tax systems cannot be considered to be own revenues, as local governments hold no power over setting the tax base and rate; these resources, from both a political and economic point of view, are similar to general transfers.

### **III.2.2. State financial transfers to local governments**

Grants are organized in many ways, and also vary from country to country. Similarly, the process of transferring grant funds varies. In general, transfers can be unconditional (local governments are given free use of revenues), or conditional, in which case central government transfers are either based on pre-established objective criteria or have a certain margin of discretion (for local spending).

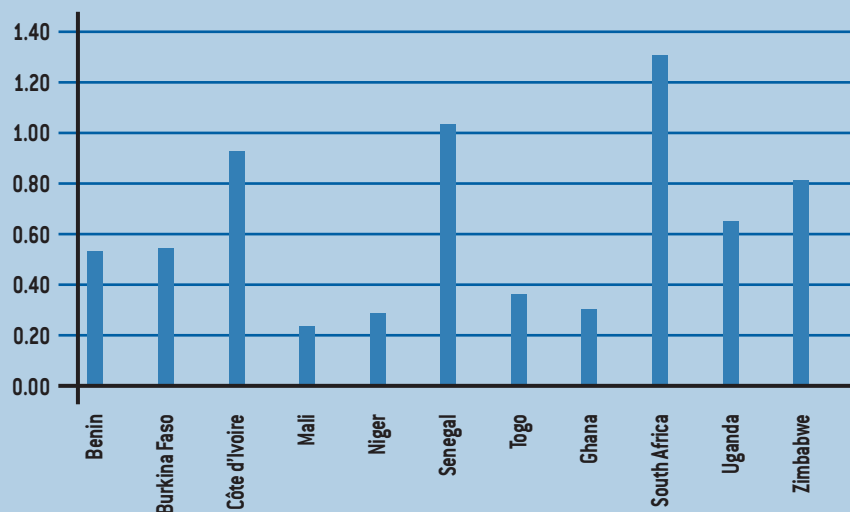
The principles of intergovernmental transfers are sometimes listed in the Constitution (including procedures and calculating criteria). For instance, the Ghanaian Constitution envisages the existence of the District Assemblies Common Fund, which should receive 5% of the total national revenue, to be distributed among the districts through a formula

*However, in most countries the central administration  
has discretionary decision-making power;  
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share to the local governments*

approved by Parliament (art. 252). This is a unique case. Apart from practical difficulties, this system has increased the financial dependency of local governments on central government. The 1999 Constitution in Nigeria provides that at least 13% of the country's revenue accruing to the Federation Account derived from natural resources should be distributed among the states, based on a sharing formula that takes the principle of origin into account (in relation to the volume of production of each state). It is up to each state legislature to determine the amount of resources that will be distributed among local governments, and to institute a joint account between the Federation and the state where Federation and state contributions for local government transfers are deposited (art. 162). With no direct constitutional safeguards over the volume of revenues earmarked for local government transfers, the Federation decided to make direct transfers to local governments and allocated a portion of VAT for this purpose.

Graph 1

## Local Resources/GDP



**Source:** (i) *Regard sur les finances locales dans les pays de l'UEMOA (2001-2004)*;

(ii) NALAD, *Fiscal Decentralization and Sub-National Government Finance*;

(iii) *Fiscal decentralization in South Africa, Ismail Momaniat*.

The graph shows that, in most countries, local government finance represents less than 1% of GDP and 5% of state-level (sub-national) expenditure.

Sometimes the law provides a formula for grant allocation. One of the best examples is that of South Africa governed by articles 213 and 214 of the Constitution. All money received by national government is paid into the National Revenue Fund (art. 213). The Division of Revenues Act provides annually for the equitable distribution of revenue amongst national, provincial and local spheres of government, and balanced division of tasks to be financed. The Act also defines the distribution of revenues amongst the provinces (regions), and finally, sets the amount of conditional purpose-specific grants for provinces and local governments, financed through the fund. The division of these grants are regulated by formulas that are also defined by law. Paragraph 2 of Article 214 in the Constitution contains the criteria to be applied to the revenue-sharing formula amongst local governments and provinces (in principle, the structure is determined every five years). While provin-

ce finances depend essentially on transfers, local government finances mainly rely on own-source revenues (taxes, tariffs and service charges).

The situation in other countries is a lot less favourable. The guarantees offered to local governments to access revenues also vary from country to country. Sectoral grants are routine in some countries, usually conditional or purpose specific. These grants are easily controlled but involve central government monitoring of local governments. This is the case in Uganda and Zimbabwe. In Tanzania the government is likely to introduce calculation of grant amounts on the basis of fixed formulas. In Zambia, central government also transfers funds through sectoral grants that are not calculated through a set formula; these transfers represent only 3% of local budgets. In a second group of countries, central government transfers mainly consist of general

disbursements to local governments for operations or transferred functions, while investments are covered by occasional grants. Global transfers offer local governments more freedom over spending, though the allocation criteria are usually vague, as in the case of Algeria, Tunisia, Gabon, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and also in Kenya (where the global transfers are combined with a sectoral grant for road works). In Algeria, the allocation of the solidarity fund grant (95% of the resources from this fund) is managed with clear eligibility criteria: for communities where wealth indices are lower than the national average. Finally, there are countries that do not have an organized system of transfers: in Niger and Togo, intergovernmental transfers are intermittent and dependent on the political situation. Similarly, particularly in UEMOA (West Africa Economic and Monetary Union) and CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa) countries, governments are often resistant to decentralizing the financial resources in keeping with the sectoral policies that absorb, even so, large flows of aid and public investment.

### **III.2.3. The financial weight of local governments**

Two indicators usefully measure the financial significance of local government: the share of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allotted for local authorities, and the actual amount of money that comes under the control of local governments. Graph 1 (p. 38) shows the actual financial weight of local governments. The sample is small because reliable data were available only for certain years in certain countries. Even so, this sample of countries at different levels of development is quite representative.

In the UEMOA countries (West Africa Economic and Monetary Union), total municipal expenditure of the area amounted to FCFA 150 billion (€228 million) in 2004, i.e. 4.8% of State expenditure of around FCFA 3103 billion (€4.7 billion). A World Bank study on

the experience of decentralization in 30 African countries revealed that expenditure controlled by local governments is around 10% in South Africa, between 5 and 10% in Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe and between 3 and 5% in Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Mozambique and Zambia. Generally speaking, the average ratio between local expenditure and national budget resources excluding donations is below 5% and the ratio between local expenditure and gross domestic product (GDP) less than 1%.

In addition, with the exception of South Africa and North Africa, local governments' resort to borrowing in other countries is at a very early stage.

In view of the weakness of their own income (the insufficient flow of intergovernmental transfers is further exacerbated by the allocation modalities and constraints on access to loan markets), it cannot be denied that African local governments will have trouble in meeting on their own the costs of their ordinary activities and the transferred powers, not to mention their responsibilities in local development and combating poverty.

One of the explicative factors is that own tax revenue and local finance depend on the macroeconomic framework –and central governments in sub-Saharan Africa face severe financial constraints. The poverty affecting large segments of the population places limits on the tax take. On top of this comes the frequent lack of political will to redistribute the tax to ensure a better support to local governments and more effective management of the fiscal chain particularly in the collection of taxes. One of the top priority claims of elected bodies is a better distribution of resources, with the aim of taking the share of own tax revenues in relation to GDP to 2% and increasing financial transfers by 5 to 10%, which would make it possible to double or even triple local resources, the current level of which jeopardizes the positive fallout expected from decentralization.

The weak financial capacity is exacerbated by persistent limitations and failings in administrative capacities and human resources.

### III.3. Administrative capacity

#### III.3.1. Human resources

The advent of decentralization has revealed a shortage of trained personnel in African countries, all of which lack qualified staff in local administrations. This dearth of trained personnel makes it all the more difficult for local governments to handle additional powers transferred to or granted them.

*Some countries such as Morocco and Mali have opted to establish a territorial civil service, with the aim of making local jobs look more attractive and of conferring on local government staff all the advantages granted to state civil servants.*

A lack of information about the qualifications of local government staff members precludes a comprehensive accounting of staff numbers and skills. Still, data provided by several countries provide an instructive sample. Data from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia show a very low percentage of the population holding staff positions in local government. In these countries, the percentage of citizens in all levels of government ranges from 0.49% to 3.11%. At the local level it varies from 0.012% to 0.46%: below one staff member per 100 inhabitants. For the countries providing data the percentages are:

- Benin: 0.49% at the national level, 0.012% at the local level.
- Côte d'Ivoire: 0.69% at the national level, 0.029% at the local level.
- Senegal: 0.73% at the national level, 0.06% at the local level.
- Morocco: 1.7% at the national level, about 0.46% at the local level.
- Tunisia: 3.86% at the national level, 0.2% at the local level.

Remedies proposed to date fall into one of two categories: capacity-building within local governments themselves, and transferring state personnel to local governments.

Table 4 illustrates the position.

#### III.3.2. Existence and level of training of the principal municipal officials

Most local governments need a minimum team to assist the mayor with his or her functions. This administrative core is made up of the secretary-general for general administrative and personnel management, the director of technical services, and the director of financial services. Municipalities in the major urban centers typically have such a team, or the means to recruit it.

The financial weakness of municipalities results in weaknesses in human resources and management skills in local government. This is a severe drawback for the implementation of decentralization policies. Strengthening project management capacities of local government should be a crucial part of all decentralization support programs.

#### III.3.3. Status of local government personnel

The most common method for addressing this shortfall of personnel is to transfer state senior civil servants to local governments by secondment or by granting leave of absence. Consequently, in many countries the mayor's technical team is comprised of senior officials drawn from the state.

Some countries, such as Morocco and Mali, have established a territorial civil service with the aim of making local jobs look more attractive, and of conferring on local government staff all the advantages granted to state civil servants. This strategy is designed to stimulate interest in local jobs that are perceived as second-rate positions. In many countries, state civil servants regard appointment to local jobs as a punishment or a disgrace.

Table 4

## Human resource situation

COUNTRY	Number of State Civil servants	Number of Local Government staff	Level of qualification	Legal system (public or private law, or mixed system)/ Career job positions	Recruitment procedure (especially for higher positions)	Existing Training programmes
<b>Benin</b>	32,882 [ 1995]	4000 from which 94% are support staff and 6% belong to management.	7% qualified for conceptual and supervisory work. The remainder at average level.	Mixed legal system	Former employees of the prefectures redirected to communes	There is no specialist institution for training local officials
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	112,707 [1994]	47,325	Category A4 (engineers, administrators) Category B3 (administrative secretaries, senior technicians, bookkeepers)	Mixed system. Governed by the service regulations for public employees and the law establishing service regulations for territorial authority staff in the case of public employees and the labour code plus the law establishing service regulations for territorial authority staff in the case of other officials.	The line ministry appoints public employees. For other officials, each commune follows its own recruitment policy depending on analysis of the function and needs expressed.	Training is organized by development partners. Moreover, each commune organizes its own training plan. There is no training initiated by the line ministry.
<b>Morocco</b>	537,466	145,736	Senior management: 12,109 Middle management: 25,020 Junior staff: 31,382 Manual workers: 76,982 Other: 223	Public and private law (employment contracts)	Competitive examination – secondment - automatic appointment by Ministry of the Interior	Regional training centres/Training division of the Ministry of the Interior/Elected local officials' initiatives
<b>Senegal</b>	71,694 [2004]	6846	Approx. 3% senior officials / 4% middle management + 90% backup and support staff	Public law for seconded State employees and private law for staff recruited by local governments	Commune staff recruited at the discretion of the local authorities	Ad hoc training programmes depending on support from development partners
<b>Tunisia</b>	390,000 including 80,000 manual workers	25,000 including 18,000 manual workers	54% managerial staff, including 70% male and 30% female 26% junior staff	Public	Competitive examination or applications or qualifications - graduates of approved training centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- initial training at training centres approved by the administration</li> <li>- further training</li> <li>- ongoing training to achieve promotion</li> <li>- advanced training courses</li> <li>- missions abroad</li> </ul>



**Various mechanisms have been tried to bring local people and community organizations into local public management, ranging from publicizing the meetings of local government bodies, required by law in many countries, to various types of debates and consultation between those bodies and local people**

Even secondment and other stop-gap strategies must be considered partial, short-term solutions. The essential issue is the lack of financial resources to pay for qualified, high-level staff in local governments.

The financial weakness of local governments leads inevitably to weak human resources and limited management capacity —both are grave handicaps in implementing decentralization policies in Africa. Building local government project management capacity should therefore be one of the priorities in all measures supporting decentralization and better local government in Africa.

## IV. Local democracy

The following table gives a picture of local democracy in each country.

### IV.1. Local political system

When putting democracy into practice at the community level, local governments often face the same difficulties as modern state systems —a variety of local, tribal and family loyalties and traditions that influence civic behavior. For example, there may be a tendency to reject the notion that "people from outside" might have a right to stand for election locally "when they are not from around here". In other places, such as Senegal, electoral law requires candidates to have party affiliation in local elections. This affiliation with established parties increases the risk that standing for election will have more to do with national party politics than with the needs and preferences of local voters. Despite such difficulties, local democracy has made undeniable progress. In many countries, one sign of increased vitality is an increase in turnover of municipal teams from one local election to another. This turnover is apparent even in countries where change in political power is rare at parliamentary,

presidential or central government levels. And indeed, the lively turnover of power increasingly seen in local elections remains almost unthinkable at top government levels in the majority of African nations.

Participatory democracy can be fostered only if the cultural bedrock already favors consultation, debate and participation in collective decision-making. In this regard the picture in Africa is mixed, with substantial progress in many countries but no movement in others, the latter including Egypt, Togo, Tunisia, Central African Republic and Chad. Overall gains in transparency and accountability remain fragile.

The first indicator of progress is the consensus regarding universal suffrage. Not only has the principle of election become widely accepted for local offices, but African local elections are also being held with a regularity unprecedented in the history of Africa<sup>4</sup>.

Another indicator regards the possibility of holding several local mandates at the same time, or holding a local mandate alongside a national one. This is highly restricted and may even be entirely forbidden. In most countries political parties continue to monopolize local and national politics, but many countries do allow independent candidates in local elections. Those nations include Mozambique, Benin, South Africa and Mauritania. In Ghana political parties are excluded from local elections entirely; the list is open only to independent candidates.

### IV.2. Citizen participation

Signs of progress toward representative democracy include publicizing official meetings and encouraging local people and community organizations to take part in open discussion of local issues. For example, in Zambia, residents are involved in the implementation of certain

4. For instance, with the exception of Mali, where elections have been postponed, the electoral timetable has been respected over the last three years in Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, South Africa and Mozambique.

Table 5

## Portrait of local democracy in each country

Country	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL			LOCAL EXECUTIVE				DIRECT DEMOCRACY		
	Voting system (Majority/ Proportional or Mixed)	Term of office	Rounds of voting	Method of appointment	Terms of office	Mayor	Collegiate	Rounds of Voting	Vote of no confidence /removal from office	
Benin	Mixed (majority and proportional)	5 years	2 rounds	Indirect	5 years	No	Yes	Several	Yes	No
Cameroon	Mixed (majority and proportional)	5 years	1 round	Indirect	5 years	No	Yes	2 for the Mayor and 1 for deputies	Yes	No
Egypt, Arab Rep. of	Relative Majority	4 years	1 round	Nomination					No	No
Gabon	Proportional	5 years	1 round	Indirect	5 years	No	Yes		Yes	No
Ghana	Majority	4 years	1 round	Indirect	4 years	No	Yes			
Guinea	Majority	5 years	1 round	Indirect	5 years				Yes	No
Côte d'Ivoire	Majority	5 years	2 rounds	Indirect	5 years	No	Yes		Yes	No
Kenya		5 years	1 round	Indirect						
Madagascar		4 years		Direct	4 years					
Mali	Majority			Indirect		No	Yes		Yes	No
Morocco	Majority	6 years	1 round	Indirect	6 years	No	Yes		Yes	No
Mozambique	Proportional	5 years	2 rounds	Direct	5 years	Yes		2 rounds	No	No
Niger	Proportional	5 years	1 round	Indirect	5 years	No	Yes		Yes	No
Nigeria	Majority	3 years	1 round	Direct	4 years	No	Yes			No
Senegal	Mixed (Majority/ Proportional or mixed)	5 years	1 round	Indirect	5 years	Yes	No		Yes	No
South Africa	Proportional	6 years	1 round	Indirect	6 years	No	Yes	1 round		No
Tanzania		5 years		Indirect	5 years	No	Yes			
Tunisia	Mixed (predominantly majority)	5 years	1 round	Indirect		Yes	Yes	1 round	No	No
Uganda		4 years	1 round	Direct	4 years	Yes	Yes	1 round		
Zambia	Mixed	5 years	1 round	Direct	5 years	Yes	No	1 round		No

development projects in basic service sectors, such as health and education. In Uganda, participation sometimes extends as far as cooperation agreements between the municipality and civil society associations; the latter are given responsibility for running a project or for monitoring and evaluating such projects. In some municipalities of Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mozambique, elected officials increasingly use community radio to keep in touch with the local population and continue exchanging views with them about local development issues. These exchanges provide an opportunity for community and religious leaders, teachers and civil society activists to play a role in guiding local people, and in improving communication between officials and residents. To make local government bodies more representative, countries such as Ghana and Niger, Uganda and South Africa have been developing instruments to bring social, economic, or cultural forces into local councils, ensuring that all sociological components of the local community are involved in the local governance system.

To ensure the representation of women, several countries have set quotas by law. In Niger, at least 10% of seats on local councils are reserved by law for female candidates. In Mozambique, the representation of women within local bodies has risen from 23% after the 1999 elections to 28% in 2004. South African legislation favors a minimum of 50% female candidates on competing lists. In Uganda, the law requires that at least one third of local council seats should be occupied by women. Women are not, however, the only demographic group whose specific representation is promoted by decentralization.

#### **IV.3. Relationship between central and decentralized government authorities**

In the majority of African countries, decentralization was imposed from the top down,

making it more a tool used by central government to control territory and urban populations and ensure the continuity of its own structures and policy than a framework for teaching and empowering residents with the goal of strengthening independent local governments.

Consequently, despite constitutional or legislative provisions and safeguards, the autonomy of local governments is restricted by central government oversight of local government bodies and their actions. However, positive developments can be seen in many countries towards slackening controls and refocusing them on legal aspects.

Local administration in Africa rests essentially on two political pillars: a deliberative body, the council, and an executive body comprised of a mayor assisted by one or more deputies. Such local bodies exercise their functions under the control of the state. These features are the norm in all African countries where decentralization is on the agenda. The differences lie in the way local bodies are appointed, and the degree of freedom allowed by the state, which controls local government bodies and their actions. In West and Central Africa, state oversight of local governments is being relaxed. However, in North Africa central control over all the activities of local governments persists with little change. Former colonial systems of centralized control are giving way to models modified by independent governments. This is a positive development in principle even though important matters such as budgets and land allocation are still subject to old, colonial-style control. Neither is jurisdictional control properly organized.

Regarding the transparency of local management and accountability, many countries have enshrined classic control mechanisms in formal statutes. In such cases, councils adopt budgets and re-

view and approve executive bodies' administrative and management accounts. These accounts must also be approved by supervisory authorities. In some countries, specialist institutions, such as the Committee on Local Government and Chiefs' Affairs in Zambia, monitor and oversee local government management. In Uganda, the amounts of financial transfers from central to local government, as well as the local development sectors for which the funds are intended, are made public. The government then encourages local people to ensure that the transferred amounts are used properly. More than that, the web site of the ministry for local government provides a public forum for discussion; citizens are encouraged to state their opinions on any aspect of local authority management.

However, in some countries, there is a large gap between legal procedures and methods of operation in practice.

#### **IV.4. Role of local government associations**

Establishing associations of elected local bodies, often called Local Government Associations, (LGAs) has become the method of choice for advancing the mutual interests of local governments in Africa. Such associations exist in almost all countries on the continent. Membership may be restricted to mayors and deputy mayors, the municipal executive, or the local authority as an institution.

LGAs may sometimes be set up in accord with categories of local government (communes and cities, regions, rural communities) and typically have a three-fold charge:

- Representing member authorities speaking with a united voice,
- Providing capacity-building services to local governments,

- Defending and promoting the interests of their members.

LGAs provide a platform for exchanging views and discovering opportunities for members. Their aim is to promote decentralization by lobbying the state as well as international development partners. In many countries, they help to implement decentralization by bringing the point of view of local officials to the attention of higher government in reports and proposals.

However, LGAs also experience resource constraints in many countries. They have to rely on contributions from their members to cover costs. The uncertainty of such resources necessarily limits the scope of the LGA's efforts.

In eastern and southern Africa, LGAs are genuine administrative bodies, but some in West Africa and Central Africa have no office or permanent staff. Where resources are minimal, LGAs are less effective in implementing decentralization.

Regional LGAs have also been set up in Central, East and Southern Africa. Some of these regional organizations are more effective than others. For example, The Association of Central African Mayors (AMAC) presently exists in name only, but the association of East African local governments is comparatively dynamic, offering a regional platform for exchanges between elected officials from member countries.<sup>5</sup>

##### **IV.4.1. United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA)**

The organization known as United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) is the Pan-African local government organization. The UCLGA represents a combination of three African local government organizations previously divided along linguistic lines: the African Union of Local Authorities (AULA) for local governments

5. *The East Africa representative on the UCLGA executive committee was appointed during an extraordinary meeting of that association, held in Kigali (Rwanda).*

**The UCLGA represents all local governments in Africa and seeks recognition from the African Union as the voice of African local governments within the Pan-African organization**

from anglophone countries, the Union des Villes Africaines (UVA) for francophone countries and the União dos municípios e Capitais Lusófono Africano (UCCLA) for Portuguese-speaking countries.

This initiative reflects a recognition of increasing globalization, a comparatively new phenomenon that cannot fail to affect local governments.<sup>6</sup> The UCLGA founding congress took place in Tshwane in May 2005, marking the starting point of the unified African municipal movement. The UCLGA represents all local governments in Africa and seeks recognition from the African Union as the voice of African local governments within the Pan-African organization.

**IV.4.2. African Conference on Decentralization and Local Development (CADDEL)**

In the spirit of African unity, African ministers set up a Pan-African platform for discussion and sharing experience on decentralization and local development in Africa.

Meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, at the second Africities summit in May 2000, African Ministers for Decentralization and finance

ministers decided to move the decentralization process forward in Africa by setting up a political body at continental level known as the African Conference on Decentralization and Local Development (CADDEL).

At that meeting, proponents of decentralization expressed the wish that the African Union should be the reference body for the new platform.

They set CADDEL the following objectives:

- Persuade governments to list decentralization among their priorities and push for greater awareness on the part of both leaders and citizens of the central role played by decentralization in the economic development process;
- Keep decentralization and local development on the national policy agendas of member states, and at continental level within the African Union;
- Make sure that African states maintain their commitment to the decentralization process;
- Act as liaison between the organization of African local government associations and their central governments for all issues involving decentralization and local development;
- Mobilize resources from development partners in order to implement decentralization and local development programmes.

6. The first Pan-African summit "Africities" took place in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) in 1998, gathering together various African municipal unions. During the 2nd Africities summit organized in Windhoek (Namibia) in 2000, the three main municipal organizations agreed upon the creation of an African Union of Cities. In 2003 a first founding assembly took place, during the 3rd Africities summit, in Yaoundé (Cameroon). The common declaration of Yaoundé was adopted with the following principles:

- to promote to local authorities of Africa the founding congress of the association "United Cities and Local Governments"
- to set up the statutes of the new Pan-African organization
- to decide on the definitive name of the organization and prepare its founding congress.

## V. Conclusion

This overall picture of decentralization and local democracy in African countries shows significant progress at the strictly institutional level. No country now publicly opposes the implementation of decentralization policies. Local governments exist in all countries, and elections are held to elect local authorities

Not only are there more local governments covering ever-increasing areas, but the qualitative development of decentralization can also be observed in the form of more self-government and progress toward local democracy in more African nations. This trend is accompanied by an unprecedented increase in the responsibilities of local governments throughout most of the continent.

The extent of such progress must, however, be set against a number of persistent obstacles that continue to hinder a real progression of decentralization in Africa.

Difficulties remain within states concerning the transfer of financial resources needed to match the devolved responsibilities. Local governments also face difficulties in increasing their own resources (aside from state-transfers and grants) at a faster pace. Ensuring the availability of qualified human resources at the local level and improving public access to local services are also fundamental issues of concern.

Tangible progress needs to be made in two key areas: the transfer of responsibilities, with adequate human and financial resources, and entrenching a culture of citizen participation, transparency and accountability. These areas of complicated yet indispensable reform are crucial for progress to be sustained, and for its inherent democratizing ideas to take root. To this end it is essential that all involved parties continue to mobilize high-level political commitment at both national and Pan-African levels.