

**AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

**33<sup>rd</sup> AAPAM Annual Roundtable  
Conference, Lilongwe, Malawi  
14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Aide Memoire**



*Theme: Strengthening Citizen Engagement through Decentralization to Enhance  
Public Service Delivery in Africa*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1. At the 32nd Roundtable Conference of the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) held in Durban, South Africa in November, 2010, it was agreed that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Roundtable Conference would focus on the theme: *Strengthening Citizen Engagement through Decentralization to Enhance Public Service Delivery in Africa*. The decision to focus on the theme arose out of the realization that a major constraint to effective implementation of national visions by African countries aimed at improving public service delivery is inadequate efforts to engage citizens in governance and development through decentralization of powers, functions and responsibilities as well as resources to autonomous local government. The 32<sup>nd</sup> AAPAM Roundtable Conference therefore took the view that the next conference be devoted to discussing measures to strengthen autonomous local government.

## **2.0. Decentralization, Citizens' Engagement and Development: Conceptual and Background Issues**

- 2.1 The concept of decentralization is often discussed from many angles with both academics and practitioners giving various definitions. Thus even as the participants of the 32nd AAPAM Roundtable Conference were calling on African countries to adopt decentralized forms of governance, given the variety of the participants' backgrounds (academics, civil society activists and public servants), the concept of decentralization was being viewed from several perspectives. It may therefore be useful to briefly provide a quick synopsis of the various conceptions of the concept.
- 2.2. According to Rondinelli, one of the most celebrated scholars and practitioners on the subject, decentralization is the transfer of legal, administrative and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from the central government to field based units of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide development authorities, functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or non-governmental organizations. In the above definition Rondinelli tries to accommodate everybody who feels that public functions cannot be effectively and efficiently undertaken from a central point. There is therefore a need to transfer legal, administrative and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from the central government to subordinate units.

- 2.3. While the foregoing definition of decentralization is broadly accepted there are differences of opinion regarding the optimal approach to decentralize power and authority from the centre to sub national level. The differences of opinion have to do with the reasons why protagonists are calling for decentralization. There are those who see decentralization as an organizational and managerial solution to issues of efficiency and effectiveness in governance and service delivery with effectiveness conceived in terms of internal characteristics and dynamics of public institutions. In this case, decentralization is related to ensuring the realization of relatively high levels of employee motivation and productivity, smooth communication between various levels of organizational hierarchy, participation in decision-making by employees at lower hierarchical levels and increased capacity to achieve organizational goals at reduced cost. Under this situation decentralization involves deconcentration of the workload from the central locations of government departments (headquarters) to offices of the organization, based outside the headquarters. It centres on transferring responsibility and authority for public functions to organizations within well-defined sub national, spatial or political boundaries such as a province, region, district, villages and neighbourhoods.
- 2.4. On the other hand, there are those who see decentralization as a governance mechanism that is intended to empower citizens to participate in decision making either directly or through their elected representatives. Invariably, this involves the devolution/ transfer of governmental power and authority through conferment of legal powers upon formally constituted local authorities to discharge specified or residual functions. It entails inter-organizational transfer of power to geographical units of local government lying outside the command structure of the central government.
- 2.5 This approach to decentralization is referred to as D-by-D. It is also argued that in addition to enhancing local self-governance as part of the democratic process, D-by-D also promotes national development. As early as 1957 an eminent agricultural economist, Sir Arthur Lewis, wrote emphatically that “if an underdeveloped country wants to achieve economic development, it must first change its system of government to provide local self-government for villages and rural districts...” He continued to say that “Basic social services such as elementary schools and adequate roads from farms to markets are indispensable prerequisites to economic development, and that such services can only be provided in adequate measure when local people have the power and responsibility to tax themselves to pay for their own basic governmental services.

- 2.6. While D-by-D would imply the inclusion of citizen engagement and participation in the governance process, some analysts caution that in practice the two concepts are not intertwined. They therefore take the view that the most effective form of decentralization is one that emphasises involving grassroots communities in conceiving, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development projects and taking decisions concerning allocation and utilization of resources for the same. They argue that engagement of citizens and communities would increase ownership and commitment to the projects being implemented and in turn make the sustainability of such projects more likely.

### **3.0. Enhancing Citizens' Engagement through Decentralized Governance in Africa: Emerging Trends**

- 3.1 For sometime now global consensus has emerged that citizen engagement enhances effectiveness in public service delivery. Countries around the globe have adopted economic and governance reform strategies to ensure citizens play a key role in deciding matters that affect their lives. At the national level countries have adopted democratic reforms to enable citizens' participation through elected representatives. However, development challenges and citizens' pressure for greater participation have demanded national governments to devise mechanisms that would enable citizens to take a more direct and active role in governance. In turn governments have responded by adopting decentralized governance as a viable mechanism to realize and enhance citizen engagement through strengthening local governments.
- 3.2 In many parts of the world decentralized governance has been realized through establishment of democratically elected institutions at regional, district and grassroot levels. This has gone hand in hand with the devolution of political, administrative and fiscal powers as well as resources and functions to those institutions. In Europe and some countries of Latin America, for instance, public sector reform efforts have been geared toward strengthening citizens' voice in governance and delivery of public services. Lessons learnt from several countries also have shown that participatory public administration is not only an effective mechanism to improve service delivery to especially poor communities, but also a new agenda in poverty reduction and social accountability.

- 3.3 In Africa the current efforts to strengthen local governance stem from the realization of the failures of the post-independence centralized states to deliver public services. By early eighties most of African leaders had realized that outcomes of centralization were weighing-up heavily on them and in most cases were almost resulting into a state failure. Under pressure for reforms from the citizens and Breton Woods institutions, African states revisited their centralization strategy by reopening avenues of citizen participation.
- 3.4 The 1990s wave of democratization intensified pressure for governance and economic reforms. As a part of public sector reform undertakings many governments reviewed their local government policies with the view of creating more autonomous and accountable local authorities. In recognition of potential benefits of decentralized governance many governments pronounced and or adopted D-by-D programmes as a mechanism of promoting poverty reduction, good governance and improvement in service delivery through strengthening citizens' engagement. However, only few countries have taken up steps to effectively implement decentralized governance. Some countries have impartially implemented it, yet there are others that have not accepted decentralization as a potential reform measure. As the result the gains of citizen engagement in promoting poverty reduction, good governance and service delivery are yet to be realized to the level it would have been expected.
- 3.5 Some countries commended to have moved a step forward by entrenching D-by-D programs in their constitution include South Africa, Rwanda, Ghana and Uganda. However, even in these countries challenges of local governance still persist. Some of them include strengthening the capacity of citizens to actively engage with local governments, increasing the responsiveness of local governments to citizens' needs, enhancing the efficiency and quality of public services in critical areas such education, water, health care, extension services and infrastructure development.
- 3.6 Decentralization models in many African countries still deny the local governments autonomy to recruit and manage staff in the local government service and the power to make local decisions and or expend resources based on local needs and priorities. In countries where a formula of sharing revenues between central and local governments is unclear or lacking many citizens' development projects have been underfunded or starved of resources leading to declining citizens' morale of participation in local development initiatives.

3.7 Decentralization has also been characterised by recentralization of power. For instance there have been cases where countries have reformed local government laws to promote local governance but enacted other pieces of legislation recentralizing powers to central government. Also while some countries have been able to transfer power from central governments the locus of decentralized power has remained to be the districts rather than grassroots. In Tanzania for instance the practice shows that it is local government council bureaucrats rather than elected representatives who are at the centre of power in the districts. A recent study has also indicated that though the government adopted a mixed model for local government planning, local government plans are largely dominated by districts and central government priorities rather than villages and neighbourhoods/hamlets.. All these dynamics have curtailed effective participation of citizens in governance processes.

3.8 The challenges elucidated above have been attributed to many factors including lack of political will by incumbent leaders to promote decentralization as a strategy of enhancing democratic participation and good governance. There have also been concerns that the civil society and the politicians at local levels have not done enough to exert civic pressure for decentralization. As a result many of decentralization reforms remain to be supply than demand driven. Other challenges considered as setbacks in promoting local governance include weak legal framework governing central-local government relations, multiplicity of employee appointing and disciplinary authorities in local governments, uncoordinated financial management including multiplicity of decentralized funds. Others include inadequate financing of local governments and weak capacity of both local government staff and politicians.

#### **4.0. Roundtable Objectives**

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Round Table Conference will focus on mobilising knowledge and garnering experiences on ways of ensuring decentralization works for citizen empowerment and service delivery improvement. The conference is therefore expected to identify and recommend the workable formula in building the nexus between decentralization and citizen engagement in achieving good governance and realizing service delivery

improvement. In order to achieve the stated objectives, the conference participants will specifically:

- a) Discuss the key conceptual and theoretical issues pertaining to decentralization and sustainable development particularly: citizens' participation, citizens' empowerment, service delivery, local good governance, financial decentralization, central-local relationships, and human resources.
- b) Identify and evaluate the efficacy of current decentralization approaches in Africa with regard to the twin objectives of establishing effective local good governance and sustainable development.
- c) Share and exchange information and experiences in the decentralization processes taking place across the continent and other regions of the world
- d) Recommend appropriate means and policy options to make decentralization work for citizens especially the poor through governance and service delivery improvement
- e) Identify the key constraints to implementing effective D-by-D programs in Africa as well as emerging good practices in tackling the constraints.

## **5.0 Expected Results**

The 33rd Roundtable is expected to have a number of outcomes, including the following:

- a) Gaining a thorough understanding of decentralization approaches in Africa and the manner they are impacting on citizens' lives
- b) Acquisition of in-depth knowledge appropriate strategies to enhance citizens' engagement in governance and public service delivery
- c) A Roundtable conference report incorporating the findings and recommendations on the appropriate and sustainable interventions of engaging citizens in governance and development through decentralization is produced

## **6.0 Round Table Sub-Themes**

In pursuit of the objectives and expected outcomes, a number of cross-cutting issues will be discussed in plenary sessions under the following topics or subthemes:

### **6.1 Decentralization and Citizens' Engagement: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives**

The main goal of this sub-theme is to provide participants an opportunity to explore and understand relationships between citizen's engagement/participation, decentralization in its various dimensions, local good governance and sustainable development. The papers presented under this sub-theme should interrogate the available theoretical and conceptual literature on the concepts and the links between them at a global and Africa level as well as providing emerging practices on a comparative basis. They should therefore be sound theoretical pieces which also bring in some practical illustrations, from across the globe as well as Africa. They should avoid being country case studies. Particular attention should be paid to examining the policy and institutional framework governing local governments showing the extent to which they guarantee the transfer of political, administrative and fiscal powers. Is decentralization coupled with recentralization (to central government) or centralization at provincial/district level? To what extent are the focuses of decentralization policies geared to transferring powers to grassroots levels?

### **6.2. Policy and Legal Frameworks for Efficacious and Effective Decentralization**

Comprehensive legal frameworks provide conducive environments for decentralized governance to take place. Paper writers will examine various legal mechanisms that are embedded in the decentralization process in the view of assessing how they are strengthening the adaptive strategies of the local people. The focus should be on how central power is divided and the linkages between decentralization and citizens' power in terms of reallocation of local resources. By changing power relationships, decentralization can enable the poor to secure sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, decentralization accompanied by an expansion of legal rights for the poor can lay down some necessary conditions to facilitate power sharing. Thus, decentralization is perceived as pivotal in helping the poor to have legal recognition of their assets, entitlements, and other activities that their livelihoods dependent on.

### **6.3. Decentralization in Africa: Assessing the Record since Independence**

The thrust of papers to be presented under this sub-theme should trace the history of decentralization and local governance in Africa with the focus on delineating where there have

been positive and negative developments. The papers to be presented need to establish the forces behind the current wave of decentralization reforms in Africa showing whether the reforms are citizens/demand or supply driven. The papers should also assess whether decentralization is promoted as a strategy to enhance good governance and reduce poverty or a political tactic to curb public pressure, international demands and or organizational difficulties.

#### **6.4 Decentralization, Citizens' Participation and Empowerment**

This sub-theme aims at aiding an understanding on whether decentralization has resulted into greater citizens' participation and empowerment. The papers should: examine approaches employed by governments to enable citizens' participation in governance and service delivery and identify structural arrangements or opportunities established to integrate community members into the analysis of local problems, decision preparation and making as well as implementation process. In doing so, the papers will have to ascertain the extent of citizens' engagement in decentralized programs of various sectors such as education, health, and agriculture. To what extent are the government and/or community projects implemented at community levels participatory? The papers will also need to examine whether community based organizations have been avenues of enhancing participation of citizens in governance processes.

#### **6.5. Decentralised Governance and Fiscal Issues**

Local government authorities play a central role in local economic development. However, they face a number of challenges, one of which is lack or inadequate tax base, power to collect and use their local revenues, and unreliable transfers from the central governments. In most developing countries, local authorities have limited autonomy in expenditure decision making and revenue raising powers. This lack of taxing and spending powers has significantly undermined accountability of local authorities to local citizens. The paper writers will focus on problems on decentralised governance in relation to financial management in local authorities, with the overall objective of assessing the influence of central-local relations on local governments' autonomy.

#### **6.6. Managing Human Resource in a Decentralized Context**

Decentralization and human resource management are seen as an essential component in the design of decentralization policies rather than a separate, stand-alone process. The common failure to address this pivotal relationship has had some significant implications in the past decentralization reforms in many developing countries. Indeed, human resource forms a crucial link between the delivery of financial resources to the government and the delivery of essential

public services to the people. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the transfer of human resources to local control is a far more complex process than the handover of facilities or equipment. On the one hand, human resources can be regarded the engines for any successful decentralization process. On the other hand, they can simply be blockers or retarders of the speed of such reforms. The paper writers will therefore need to interrogate this dynamism of devolving human resources powers to the local councils. In addition, paper writers should be able to illustrate a range of these issues and challenges involved.

### **6.7. Linking Decentralization to Local Good Governance, Service Delivery, and Poverty Reduction**

The aim of this sub-theme is to assess whether decentralization has impacted on good local governance poverty reduction efforts, and service delivery improvement. The papers will need to examine the extent to which social services are increasingly available, accessible and responsive to local needs; the extent to which the quality of services offered are improving and efficiently delivered. Concerning poverty reduction the papers should examine whether decentralization is promoting community self-help development initiatives.

As far as governance is concerned the papers should establish the extent to which decentralization has improved local accountability paying a particular attention to financial management, sharing of information between the local leaders and community members and cost-effectiveness on local development projects. The papers will also need to examine the extent to which citizens are exerting demands for accountability on decentralized governance institutions.

### **6.8. Remaining Questions and Future Directions**

The papers presented under this sub-theme should focus on identifying and examining various efforts seeming to sustain decentralized governance and citizens' empowerment.. Some of the key issues to be explored will be whether decentralization had positive effects on the administrative capacity of the local governments, whether local elected institutions are gaining bargaining power in their relationship with their next higher levels and whether decentralization process is coupled with programs of empowering citizens to actively participate in governance processes.

## **7.0 Country Case Studies**

Hybrid forms of decentralization are being tried both in advanced and developing countries, attempting to adapt to the challenges and opportunities provided by decentralized governance. In

order to enhance knowledge exchange and the sharing of learning experiences, up to six papers - four focusing on individual country experiences to strengthen citizens' engagement through decentralized governance in Africa and two on non-African countries - will be commissioned. The authors of country case studies are encouraged to share the country's specific decentralization approaches and the innovative measures that have been taken to inject higher doses of citizen participation in these processes. Case studies will elaborate on origins, norms and characteristics as well as successes made and challenges encountered in making decentralization a tool of choice in enhancing governance accountability and improving service delivery.

## 8.0 The Conduct of the Roundtable

8.1 The Roundtable conference will be organized as follows:

- i) Presentations of key papers in plenary sessions followed by discussion;
- ii) Presentations of some papers in concurrent parallel plenary sessions followed by discussions in plenary;
- iii) Break away sessions (workshops) to enable participants hold in-depth discussions on some of the issues arising out of the plenaries.

## 9.0 Expected participants

9.1 The following categories of participants are expected at the Roundtable:

1. Ministers responsible for the public service, local governments and other departments.
2. High-level public officials in areas of public and private sectors.
3. Public administration and development management scholars.
4. Resource persons from Africa and outside Africa.
5. Civic leaders (from NGOs and Civil Society organisations).
6. Representatives of Multilateral and Bilateral Development Partners
7. African Based Development and Governance Agencies- AU, ADB, ECA, NEPAD and Regional Grouping- COMESA, ECOWAS, SADEC, EAC.

## 10. Conference venue and dates

The conference will be held in **Lilongwe, Malawi from 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011** at the **Crossroads Hotel**.

	Hotel Name	Contact	E-Mail	Rates Bed &	No. of Rooms

				Breakfast	
1	SunBird Capital	P.O. Box 30018, Lilongwe 3  Tel: 265 1 773388  Fax: 265 1 771273	capitalres@sunbirdmalawi .com	Standard US\$100.00	183
				ExecutiveUS\$ 165	100
2	CrossRoads Hotel	P.O. Box X1POST DOT NET, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 750333  Fax: 265 1 750336	<a href="mailto:reservations@crossroadshotel.net">reservations@crossroadshotel.net</a>  crossroadshotel@malawi.net	Superior US\$155	100
				Deluxe US\$185	
3	Sunbird Lilongwe Hotel	P.O. Box 44, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 756333  Fax: 265 1 756580	lilongwehotels@sunbirdmalawi.com	Standard US\$140	94
				Executive US\$160	
4	Mafumu Guest House	Private Bag 177, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 750982  265 888957500  Fax: 265 1 750985	info@mafumu.com	US\$135	32
5	Pacific Hotel	Tel: 265 1 776133	reservations@pacifichotelsmw.com	Standard US\$106	
				ExecutiveUS\$ 127	

6	Bridge View Hotel	Tel: 265 1 757666		Standard	
				Executive	
7	Michiru Gardens	P.O. Box X320, Post Dot.Net, Crossroads, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 752254	info@michirugardens.com	Standard US\$60	
				Executive US\$75	
8	Riverside Hotel	P.O. Box 1268, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 750511	riverside@malawi.net	Standard US\$84	30
				Deluxe US\$97	
9	Crown Lodge	P.O. Box 1268, Lilongwe  Fax: 265 1 756508		Single US\$54	44
				Executive US\$92	
10	Malawi Institute of Management	P.O. Box 30801, Lilongwe 3  Tel: 265 1 710866  Fax: 265 1 756508	mimexecutives@mim.co.mw		
11	Korea Gardens Lodge	P.O. Box 1281, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 753467  Fax: 265 756612	info@kglodge.net	Standard US\$57	33
				Executive US\$85	
12	Country Lodge	Tel: 265 99821435	rina-jevant@hotmail.com	Standard US\$49	7
				Double US\$52	

13	Madidi Lodge	P.O. Box 205, Lilongwe  Tel: 265 1 752661	info@madidilodge.com	Standard US\$98	
				Executive US\$135	
14	Ligadzi Inn	Tel: 265 1 754143  Fax: 265 1 754166	lingadzi@sdpn.org.mw	Standard US\$69	
				Superior US\$77	

## 9.0 Papers for the Conference

The AAPAM Secretariat will commission a number of lead papers for specific sub-themes. Additional papers for the same sub-themes may be accepted provided they are not country case studies. Persons wishing to write additional paper(s) on any of the topics are invited to send abstracts of not more than 500-words of the papers they intend to write. On receipt of the abstract, the Secretariat will inform the writer if s/he can proceed with the preparation of the paper. The following deadlines shall be adhered to by non commissioned paper writers:

- a. Submission of abstracts - 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011
- b. Submission of full-draft papers - 30<sup>th</sup> August 2011
- c. Submission of completed papers after peer review - 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## 11.0 Working languages

The working language shall be English and French.

## 12.0 Participation fees

12.1 All participants shall pay registration fees at the following rates:

- |     |  |   |                   |
|-----|--|---|-------------------|
| (a) | Participants from host country                 | - | <b>US\$280.00</b> |
| (b) | Others   | - | <b>US\$370.00</b> |
| (c) | Accompanying Persons (spouses of participants) | - | <b>US\$200.00</b> |

12.2 Participation fees shall be paid at the time of registration and/or at the venue of the conference. Those wishing to pay the fees earlier may pay by bank transfer to the AAPAM Account whose details are given below:

**AAPAM A/C FCY 1103297694**  
**Kenya Commercial Bank**  
**Milimani Branch**

**P.O. Box 69695, Nairobi**  
**Tel; +254 20 2719433/2719434, 2719470**  
**Fax: +254 20 2729942**  
**SWIFT CODE: KCBLKENX**

12.3 Those paying by bank transfer shall be expected to show evidence of payment before registering for the Roundtable.

12.4 Delegates may pay the equivalent of the participation fees indicated above in other convertible currencies such as the Euro, British Pound Sterling (GBP), Canadian Dollar (CND) and South African Rand. The equivalents of the participation fees in these currencies shall be indicated in a schedule that will be available at the registration desk.

### **13.0 Hotel Accommodation**

Full information on recommended hotels shall be posted on the AAPAM website:  
[www.aapam.org](http://www.aapam.org).

### **14.0 Conference Secretariat**

Any inquiries about the conference may be directed to:

#### **AAPAM Secretariat**

The Secretary General  
African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM)  
Britak Centre, Ragati & Mara Roads  
P.O. Box 48677, 00100 GPO  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: +254 20 2730555 and 2730505  
Fax: +254 20 2731153  
Email: [aapam@aapam.org](mailto:aapam@aapam.org)