

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF DECENTRALIZATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE (DLG): THE EXPERIENCE OF SMALLER NATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about magnitude of the adoption of decentralization in smaller/poor countries called the developing world and the concerned limitations. It offers synthesized theoretical debates with the practical experience of smaller countries in decentralization on potentials and institutional constraints of decentralization as a developmental policy for developmental-service delivery to effect sustainable development. It uses Republic of South Africa/RSA and Lesotho also hinging on theoretical prospects and limitations premised on New Public Management/NPM theory adopted in DLG. The paper concludes that combined effect of accelerated growth, pervasive poverty, historical forms of marginalization, huge dependency ratios, macro-economic policies, municipals' reliance on unstable market to distribute resources and services and other various challenges to DLG have rendered it almost a failure in attaining sustainable development. Lack of resources and power devolution, rapid population growth and urbanization have worsened the problem. National economic priorities and partially devolved powers to DLGs have stifled local participation and thus local development prioritization.

Keywords: Decentralization, Developmental Local Government/DLG, Sustainable development, decentralized government for development/DGD, local government/LG.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It is an ideal attempt to reflect analytically on the magnitude of the adoption of decentralization in the smaller or poor countries usually called the developing countries/world and the concerned limitations in this article. This paper chiefly intends to offer synthesized theoretical debates with the practical experience of the smaller countries in decentralization on the potentials and institutional constraints of this developmental policy for developmental-service delivery to effect sustainable development and thus poverty alleviation. The paper debates the potential and the limitations of Decentralization and Developmental Local Government (DLG) for sustainable development. It augments justification of the adoption of democratic decentralization and development in the context of DLG still preserving the contestation that decentralization has merits but also both policy and institutional constraints. This is achieved through using the Republic of South Africa/RSA as the main example, as well as Lesotho but also greatly hinging on the theoretical prospects and limitations premised on New Public Management/NPM theory significantly adopted in DLG. This strategically extends into drawing from the problematic context and experience of Africa. Debates also reveal the tension between competing demands of the business sector for economic growth and the development/poverty alleviation/redistribution for the poor

concurrently in DLG, constituting a further argument and author's stance that decentralization needs to adopt strategic opportunities¹ to address local needs for sustainable local development while also pursuing growth.

The task firstly involves understanding a democratized 'Developmental Local Government' (DLG) and its role/opportunities/political promises and constraints, which conceptually embraces poverty reduction in Lesotho. This part basically covers DLGs' challenges in the least developed countries/LDCs, theoretical/ideological and pragmatic challenges to DLG's political success, citizen participation and LGUs' councillors' role and their challenges in DLG, politics of DLG and critical lessons for management. Secondly, the experience of decentralization in the LDCs is illustrated. Lastly, the obstacles to successful decentralization in the developing world and the account of Africa's challenges in DLG are discussed.

Let us remember that globally, the independence era brought in national realization of the need for not only political independence but reconstruction, sustainable development or autonomous rural-urban poverty alleviation governance approach characterized by national socio-economic independence. This needed the entire transformation to a new framework of DLG. This then imperatively justified the adoption of the decentralized local government here referred to as the Developmental Local Government (DLG) embodying new decentralization and development processes or poverty alleviation in general for all other developing or once colonized countries. Institutionalizing DLG as an official developmental policy framework was generally in the first phase of adoption across many developing nations in independence era characterized by clumsiness, policy vacillation and reversal. In Lesotho, the established local authorities had to be replaced by national government appointed District Coordinators (DCs) to represent the central government, interpret the over ambitious developmental programmes that lacked local participation, adequate funding/resources and proper management. This has been due to political struggles for local control and popularity between the (dictatorial) central governance and the locally elected representative authorities from the opposing political parties with local majority membership. A combination of these problems with the lack of local capacity, effective coordination and local empowerment ensured failure of the first efforts of decentralization developmental programmes for sustainable development.

The second phase of decentralization efforts lacked effective and good governance. This then revived the international advocacy for effective and good governance or democratization of local governments through decentralization with devolution and development (GoL Reports, 1998 and Parnell and Pieterse, 2002:79).

UNDERSTANDING A DEMOCRATIZED 'DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT' (DLG) AND ITS ROLE/OPPORTUNITIES/POLITICAL PROMISES AND CONSTRAINTS

DLG refers to the local government/LG committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives (see, for example, the definition and approach set out in the RSA's White Paper on Local Government, March, 1998). They are democratic semi-independent LG institutions with legislative powers to attain relevant community driven development.

¹ DLG basically needs to respond to locally prioritized developmental needs while it also pursues growth through among others thorough identification and analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential threats for control towards sustainable development in its local participatory development initiatives.

Their political authority originates from the middle level of the government, which is the provincial level or the district level in the case of Lesotho, under the central level/higher sphere within a unitary system. The democratic aspects of the DLGs include requiring, according to the national legislation, to be financially accountable, adopting integrated development, politically autonomous and having democratically elected citizens' representatives involved in the management of the local area, coordinated by the national legislation as an individual elected municipal to be in line with national developmental goals, local community participation also offering feedback together with experience to the legislation and procedures reviewing and community empowering in development processes or community based decision making. The current legislative power does not seem to make the local government units/LGUs autonomous. They are directly controlled by the central government to increase the political influence and control of the one dominant ruling political party at the local level and thus nationally. They just seem to be an appendage of the central government without sufficient legislative powers to perform or meet the above indicated democratic aspects though they have elected representatives but mainly from the ruling political party (Parnell and Pieterse, 2002:79-81, 83-84).

DLG, in principle, is also regarded as a form of democratic decentralization, whereby governments promulgate and implement revised rules and responsibilities for administrative and political personnel and on establishing the framework for local accountable political institutions as an essential prerequisite for participatory developmental local governance. This is the existence of the effective and efficient working local systems of collective action managing a locality's public affairs and is accountable to local residents. It thus embraces reforms with constitutional and statutory changes at the centre, progressive distribution of responsibilities, resources, authority and autonomy from central to the periphery/localities actually becoming effective in managing their public affairs in a community driven development manner and locally accountable. DLG is the state's design which creatively embeds the different tiers of the state into a governance framework intended to negotiate the tensions of development, reconstruction and democratization (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:1, 22).

The democratic prospects of the DLG seem to be ambitious. They include attaining good and effective governance, participatory local democratic governance, viability, capability, accountability purpose-driven municipalities and participatory development, integrated development and equitable access to resources and opportunities (Pieterse, 2002:3-10). The viability issue is basically about sustainable financial and administrative capacity of the DLGs or local councils. The implications of this include re-demarcating the spatial coverage of local authorities with an objective of encompassing both places with more of revenue sources and 'barren' ones to achieve equitable distribution of services and therefore redress spatial inequalities created by comparative advantage factors or past discriminatory policies. This is to strategically include viable and unviable areas resources-wise to form a self-sustaining municipal or local authority area. The other aspects include participatory or democratized budgeting process for viable participation and better performance in delivery. Performance budgeting dependent on departmental previous year's accomplishments in terms of implementation and outcomes is also an additional aspect. The local authorities in the same vein are enabled through various technical systems to regain control over credit control functions. Such capability has to be a transformation that achieves improved performance in service delivery. For example by introducing systems that overcome the culture of non-payment for supplied services and ensure accurate billing on the consumer and information provision concerning consumer's rights and responsibilities. Prospect in pursuit by DLG also include accountability. This refers to both national financial accounting standards and international ones conforming to national norms. The integrated development

plan also in a way promotes the prospect of oneness in purpose and thus a participatory consensus in development priorities and planning for the future and problem solving (Ibid).

The basic initiatives of DLG also include the political indicators of its success but lacking in Lesotho to be a (a) sub local authority, that is devolution of decision making power to the level *below the local authority itself* which is local people's empowerment and citizen participation, (b) politically motivated as a process, (c) area-based and (d) of multiple local authority service. Political motivation refers to addressing concerns about the role of the state, nature of professional welfare services, bureaucracy's role, the potential for community control of public services, for example. Area based refers to statutory geographical units with clear political demarcations accompanied by proper statutory framework of political decentralization. Local legal autonomy of the clear official territorial neighbourhood must be established as a political unit for the jurisdiction, distribution of developmental services, local citizen participation and self-rule. The local authority need not be limited to a single service provision as it should indeed have an independent integrated development plan and a locally funded budget to a significant extent. It should be a multi-service decentralization which has properly considered alternative ways of decentralizing encompassing physical and organizational considerations. Physical ones concern themselves with the geographical and design issues, which is geographical choices concerning the size of the areas and the definition of boundaries for clear relationship with political electoral boundaries, jurisdiction and distribution of services and clarity of political accountability including strategic locating of neighbourhood offices for accessibility to all the public. Organizational considerations touches on the scope, that is which services are to be decentralized and what are the activities to be undertaken by the neighbourhood staff, should the relinquishing of service provision be incremental or integrated and done at once and devolution of relative power to neighbourhood staff on control over (i) daily operations, (ii) strategic decisions and (iii) finances (Hambleton and Hoggett, 1986:1-3, 10-11).

While DLG process may be vulnerable to local elite political capture as is also the case in Lesotho whereby local traditional leadership, chieftaincy and local political membership of one dominant ruling party are the only ones who have occupied all the seats in the LGUs, Dasgupta and Beard (2007:231-234) perceive it as *local community self-governance with a process of community driven development* involving (1) decentralization, (2) democratization and (3) collective action which believes in groups of individuals acting in a coordinated and cooperative manner for an economic interest shared together with an agency to control reached agreements, create systems and institutions of management to curb tragic outcomes like 'free riding', shirk, opportunistic conduct, power abuse and individual funds misuse and other forms of impropriety. This is enhanced by social and economic heterogeneity, small/manageable group size, non-linear relations and mediating role by institutions. All supplemented by trust, reciprocal exchange, social networks and at times social capital (Ibid). Community driven development describes projects that increase a local community's control over the development process for local sustainable development or poverty alleviation. It is about community-based and community participatory approaches to development as also affirmed by Chambers (1997). The type of decentralization in DLG is to enhance (a) design of contextually appropriate development projects, (b) targeting of beneficiaries, (c) accountability to local residents, (d) good governance. Such decentralization is statutorily relinquishing political power to the provinces (districts in the case of Lesotho) together with financial resources for local self-governing/autonomy to pursue local developmental aspirations which were usually ignored by the central governance that formerly used to control all the resources utilization ignoring local needs. Statute reform involves in this process dismantling centralized governance control structures and levels to attain local community governance to focus on 'diversity, participation,

genuine autonomy, democratization and people's empowerment. The challenge of local elite capture is created by the fact that participants in community governance/DLG enter this process from unequal positions. In Lesotho, others enter it as chiefs while others enter it as political domineers. The powerless, voiceless and poor are not really included.

Democratization referred to embraces use of political rights by local citizens, issues of citizen participation, representation, accountability and transparency. Elite capture refers to local elites' seizure of power and control over the community governance, elitism may emanate from large land holdings, kinship, lineage, employment, political party affiliation (eminent problem in Lesotho compounded by some chieftaincy problems) or tenure in the community. Internal and external accountability procedures with strong written ethics of conduct, elections, conflict resolution agencies and participatory budgeting are essential to strengthen democratization of community governance and prevent elite capture (Dasgupta et al, 2007:231-234).

Noteworthy and contrary to Martin and Mallen (1987:39-40), DLG is greatly about political and resources devolution entailing *legislative devolution*-whereby provincial assemblies own power to determine policy, make laws and implement them within the statutory framework/selected range of subjects. Here the central authorities may (albeit rarely) veto the regional assembly, unlike in federalism where such vetoing is not provided. It is less about *executive devolution* whereby central parliament legislates for the intermediate governments which only set unoffending policies/decisions to the central only including how best to execute Central's formulated policies. It is also less about *administrative devolution*, where central parliament still legislates on all matters and arranges for administration of functions of government to be carried out within a regional setting. This only calls for (deconcentration) creation of national government departments and not locally or regionally democratic provincial assemblies or input. DLG is also less about *advisory devolution*-whereby bodies (committees for/to the central parliament) are established in the provinces to consult with various local authorities and organizations for considering appropriate policies and advise central parliament accordingly. It may then be concluded that DLG as a political institution is the lower structure of the National Government with semi-independent authorities recognized by law and elected by the local people. It is supposed to be legally responsible for the planning and implementation of specific functions. Examples are the Rural District Councils and Urban Councils. It is a form of governance with the process of involving local people in the making of political and administrative decisions which affect their livelihoods in a transparent and accountable manner. It is also a form of developmental governance determining how political and administrative decisions are made. As a process it promotes participation, recognizes the diversity of communities and encourages openness trying to eliminate corruption in managing public resources (Martin and Mallen, 1987).

In essence the promises of DLG could embrace (a) shifting public investment into social services and human capital formation, at the expense of national physical infrastructure, (b) shifting resources to smaller, poorer, rural districts, (c) distributing investment more equally across space, (d) making investment more responsive to local developmental needs, (e) increasing local investment while holding running costs steady (f) and increasing local tax revenues. The challenges to these, particularly in Lesotho, have so far been with the lack of proper political design of the process of the DLG, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation whereby deconcentration was politically more preferred than the real devolution. That is lack of political will to comprehensively launch legislative devolution instead of executive, administrative or advisory devolution (Jean-Paul, 2008).

DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' (DLGS) CHALLENGES IN THE LDCS

The new holistic development vision of DLGs is often marred by a lack of expertise and resources to deliver, especially in the rural/remote areas and small towns. (In Lesotho, approximately 80% of the population live in these areas.) Skilled personnel generally prefer being in bigger or capital cities in many nations.

The aspects of the challenges of DLG in terms of local revenue mobilization do happen to include:

- the efficiency/cost to yield of most local taxes is low, except in cities with broader commercial revenue base than the rural areas,
- inherent lack of resources unless local authorities outside urban areas are delimited at a large scale,
- trying to increase taxes by local politicians has often deepened political cynicism and distrust. The tax payers are usually unwilling to pay taxes and resist unless there is a direct benefit and pump-priming (this is the actual fear of LG in Lesotho making it unwilling to impose any taxes and/or user fees),
- local resources are also limited and unevenly distributed and relying on them thus creates spatial inequality, lack of administrative capacity increases the difficulty of developing new tax bases. Revenue autonomy may need to be distinguished from expenditure autonomy and so supportive monitoring and auditing from the central other than the source of income for autonomy may matter most (Crook Richard and Manor James, in World Bank Report, 2000:19).

Excessive centralization remains a fact of life in LDCs because little of any consequence occurs in LDCs administrative setting without knowledge and direct consent of the supervisor/leader/ruler. Lesotho practiced policy reversals and abolished such local authorities. Loyalty to supervisor is more important than meritorious performance in the LDCs. Subordinates are discouraged from being responsible and initiative. Their incompetence and corruption reinforce unwillingness of senior civil servants to delegate authority. Timidity of the seniors stifles local and regional governments. Decentralization policy reversals and national government vision imposture constitute this (Werlin, 1992).

Another challenge to DLG is that LDCs still prefer excessive centralization due to hostility to all forms of decentralization including delegation of authority to local and regional governments and financial institutions, public utilities, cooperatives, state-owned enterprises, NGOs etc. The imperative for stability, in many developing countries with some nations divided along ethnic groupings competing for political power and resources, brings strong urge for central administration and control ensuring stability. LGs are as thus only given powers to plan and manage functions but are denied adequate incentives, financial resources and qualified personnel to execute such powers. But most interestingly, in Lesotho, centralization/recentralization seems to be maintained mainly for the sake of one-ruling-dominant political party system and its entrenching and extension nationally through the politically loyal submissive only advisory local councils. LDCs' cities are often threatened by decentralization due to danger of intensifying ethnic and kinship loyalties. Colonialism left weak national identity, as such, decentralization and liberalization undermine national unity. It is sometimes feared that decentralization will open doors wider to local elites to capture local administrative and political structures in the absence of strong central authority and use structures in an antidemocratic and antiegalitarian ways. LDCs' leaders often prefer deconcentration (transferring responsibility to field staff) to devolution (empowering

LGs) because local councils tend to be dominated by field staff of central government. Positions are often owed to those controlling military/one-party systems like in Lesotho, turning distinction between deconcentration and devolution meaningless (Ibid, 1992).

LDCs' bureaucracies are often too weak to facilitate decentralization or DLG. Conducted interviews with councillors and staff confirm that in the case of Lesotho, the ministry of LG has not provided enough and effective facilitation of decentralization for local development delivery. The LGUs' staff and councillors have not had needed training in development, technical and financial management issues, not to talk of needed working facilities and space. LDCs' LGs in remote and rural areas also find it difficult to attract qualified personnel thus programmes tend to be undertaken by temporary unskilled inexperienced staff. Regional or LGs may have powers to recruit but suffer from brain drain by the central governments. This is a clear sign of a weak bureaucracy in the ministry of LG. Administrative system has declined to the lowest ebb in efficiency and integrity yet LGs and service providing agencies rely on central government's unresponsive insensitive bureaucracy that has deteriorated. Bureaucracy's incompetence is encouraged by well developed 'market for public office' at senior levels of administration. Efforts to facilitate LGs and independent agencies fail because central bureaucracies are so weak. Matching grants are often used to stimulate LGs' resource mobilization but because of the weakness of the ministries of finance, they cannot be relied upon (Werlin, 1992 and Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:240-254).

The interviews conducted readily confirm that in Lesotho there are weak mechanisms for accountability. Grants-in-aid have become generous but lose usefulness due to lack of information about what is available, slowness to release funds, 'use it or lose it' budget provisions, multiple budgetary requirements, unsuitable accounting requirements, rigid stipulation about use of funds, corrupt practices, lack of qualified personnel and inadequate supervision. The weak accountability traits including among others rent seeking, non-accountability and corrupt practices behaviour of the bureaucracy in Lesotho has also been confirmed by the very minister of Finance in Lesotho who stated that,

"Institutionalized corruption has become endemic in this country... We are looking at financial irregularities in general. This is an ongoing process... The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the forensic department in the ministry are working closely to deal with the corruption. The forensic audits will not be limited to the procurement departments only...more forensic audit firms will be hired to investigate more departments suspected of involvement in the scam (Minister of Finance, Timothy Thahane, 'Sunday Express' newspaper, Vol. 2, issue 33, November 14-20, 2010:2).

The 'Sunday Express' (November, 14-20, 2010:2) has further confirmed weak accountability as well as weakness of the ministry of finance reporting that, Lesotho has been losing millions through a procurement scam orchestrated by corrupt government officers who give government business to companies they are linked to through shares, their co-owning relatives and friends and bribery receiving for unprocedural illegal giving of tenders or business contracts. Government officers fabricate orders so that the government pays for services and goods not rendered. They have briefcase companies they use to supply the government at exorbitant prices with mark-ups as high as 400 percent on their invoices. This weakness directly affects any possible efficient implementation of decentralization in Lesotho. This is further worsened by the fact that according to the interviews, only the minister can instruct an (targeted) audit exercise in his or her

ministry. Key informants have reported that such very ministers are not innocent and immune from these very unethical practices of funds mismanagement and improper personal politically biased incompetent staff recruitment in the LGUs. As such, auditing and proper financial accounting practices have not been maintained in the ministry of LG in Lesotho. This has badly affected quality of local development delivery and proper management of funds and resources as contracts are arbitrarily offered to incompetent unknown service providers in this ministry and LGUs.

The other challenge to DLG is that, LDCs' private sector is under-developed. Some private agricultural production (e.g. tea, sugar mill) have used some of their profits to construct and maintain roads, in some cases communities through local councils have contributed monetarily enough to maintain and construct new roads through the private sector. Nonetheless, excessive centralization has undermined community initiatives, when they voluntarily want to contribute in cash, skills, local knowledge, appropriate technology and resources in coops, CBOs, construction-maintenance teams for schools/roads, at times local councils have redirected such contributions into governments' unsuccessful sponsored activities and projects (Werlin, 1992).

The other constraint to DLG in LDCs is that there are no effective bureaucracy and management practices. Effective bureaucracy is needed for weekly senior staff management meetings where progress reports are discussed and problems solved, monthly review meetings where senior staff joins junior and technical staff to discuss affairs of individual communities. Every three months one day conferences need to be held to review progress, share experiences and receive training. Where top bureaucracy/management often visits communities, talk with them and staff about programme implementation. Where use of 'problem-management' is adopted but avoiding to direct resources and time by being directly involved in community's disputes/problems instead a 'demonstrate effect' and facilitating problem-solving are used. That is where two way communication of written and oral methods are used. Day-to-day responsibilities are to be delegated by bureaucracy to village-based technical assistants and village residents, linked by elected committee structures but when bureaucracy is weak as is the case in LDCs including Lesotho, DLG is stifled. DLG needs to include methods of popular involvement, extent of quality training to participants, communication style between participants and supervisory staff, commitment to set goals by all but there is no effective bureaucracy to effect all these in LDCs including Lesotho (Werlin, 1992).

THEORETICAL/IDEOLOGICAL AND PRAGMATIC CHALLENGES TO DLG'S POLITICAL SUCCESS

In practice, national priorities are often expected to take precedence over local priorities identified by the relevant LG. This situation imposes problems of coordination, duplication and confusion on how to allocate resources.

The accountability of public services involves as well devolution of *influence and authority* and democratic local citizen participation. Such democratic local citizen participation is to have the following objectively verifiable indicators:

- stationed officials in localities finding out what is going on in the field,
- seeking out opinions of local people,
- making local people administrative agents,
- establishing elected officials at the local level as representatives of local interests,
- making neighbourhood administrators accountable to local citizens,

- giving localities control over policy and development programmes,
- giving localities control over fiscal resources (Ibid).

The political reality at times is such that the national government, particularly in the once colonized developing countries, gets tempted to clinging to influence and authority in fear of either local majority political/tribal opposition, conservative local resistant traditional leadership, ethnic divisions and dominance, or due to mainly the evil desire to stay in power 'forever'. This includes not devolving power if not directing excessive control on the local authorities and perpetuation of such means of sticking to political power and control emanating from strategic constituencies formed by wards in which the ruling party commands majority membership (very common in the 'first-past-the-post' election model or political parties dominated local authority). This stifles fair and equal citizen participation as almost then a 'political' elite capture seizes the process of participation. That means party politics' interests of power emerge to overplay and repress local development priorities and interests.

The other challenge to DLG is that while participatory development and community involvement are often effective channels for donors and NGOs, they tend to undermine local democracy because they are essentially depoliticized in the sense that they are naïve about power and power relations just viewing rural Africans as undifferentiated/homogeneous 'communities'. The donors and NGOs are often made up of non-elected bodies operating in insulation from local authority structures or with limited linkage being highly gender imbalanced, self-appointed leadership, addressing a specific development issue, ad hoc and short lived. They are externally driven and often end up in unsustainable development projects in the long-run. Group or collective action of these Community Based Organizations/CBOs is also blamed for stifling individual achievement or aspirations that may be emphasized by the villagers (Ibid, World Bank, 1992 and Ribot, 1999:27 and Lange, 2008:1124-1128).

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS/LGUS' COUNCILLORS' ROLE, THEIR CHALLENGES IN DLG

Participatory development has been in the fore in development policy issues after the 1980s' economic crisis in Latin America, Africa and South Asia. Crisis that included living conditions that had plummeted in these LDCs are blamed on the central governments for not involving the poor locals in the decision making processes. Citizen participation, LG partnerships with the civil society and advocacy for prioritizing local democratization and poverty reduction/development delivery have become dominant elements of decentralization. The belief is that participatory development is good as it facilitates participatory governance. That is bringing all the stake holders including the powerless, voiceless, vulnerable and poor together in decision making processes that affect their lives. That ultimately legitimizes state actions through locally relevant appreciated/accepted development delivery forging local compliance with national programmes and policy. The end result of such participation is also the empowerment of the citizens and civil society as well as local democratization. Citizen participation entailed in participatory development and governance embraces deliberate formal and informal actions by citizens through instituted procedures, arrangements and opportunities to attain local quality development delivery, good governance, local policy formulation and maintained good order at the LG level. It involves communication of local preferences and influence of policy making so as to help in the execution of the public good and its preservation and continuity. In the case of Lesotho, such instituted procedures, arrangements and opportunities or mechanisms for citizen participation/participatory development/governance are legally

lacking. It is left as a discretionary issue by the councillors and LGUs' staff. When mechanisms for citizen participation are examined in a number of African countries, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) (2009) notes that only 45% of respondents in Cape Verde feel that their LGUs are moderately effective mechanisms for citizen participation. As high as 70% of respondents in Egypt, 66% in Gabon and Kenya, 69% in Nigeria, 62% in Togo and 67% in Zambia rate LG low with regard to citizen participation (Oldfield and Parnell, 1998, Pieterse, 2002 and ECA study, 2009).

The desired citizen participation in DLG in the LDCs is also constrained by lack of good living conditions, sensitive, accountable and trustworthy leadership, political awareness, commitment and skills, vibrant community institutions and organizations, just and fair resource management, regular free and fair elections for councillors and village and ward elected officials, involvement of citizens in financial matters at all levels-local and national, involvement of disadvantaged groups, the very poor, the disabled, women, youth and the children. One other element that tarnishes the political promise of citizen participation is that in developing countries local people have at times been compelled to participate particularly in political meetings or deceived into participating in doubtful ventures. There is still also a lot of apathy in the developing countries. The word participation is also used as to offer inadequate development programmes some respectability. The continuation of the top down approach renders it rare. Bureaucratic, professional and political blocking often impedes citizen participation as citizens also lack material conditions. Participation has also been criticized for raising expectations that can be frustrated by the ones with more power and resources if their conservative interests are threatened. Many institutions are also too weak to support participation. It is also constrained by negative attitudes like superiority, inferiority and dependency syndrome. Participatory development is demanding as it involves more work on the participants and is difficult to measure. Local authorities tend to accept participation on trivial issues like village politics and not on vital issues involving choosing developmental priorities, deciding on major political, economic and military decisions. Participation is not in itself sufficient conditions for democracy; the statutory system has to also be effectively operational. Participation may never be given, it has to be demanded by the excluded for it to be effectively attained but the silent marginalized groups may forever be silent. Several structural limitations like lack of compensation, lack of information and skills hinder and reduce local participation.

Perfectly representative local authorities may still over-exploit resources and ignore minority interest if granted the unbridled power to do so. The local elite lack interest in including ethnic minorities in political processes as their loyalties and future election hopes are on the majority communities with different development priorities and desires than the ignored local minority interests. The often result has been that of social exclusion and marginalization of the minority groups in decision making processes. Minority groups are believed to be incapable of effective governance and are therefore discriminated upon and denied fair participation in DLG. UNDP study (2006:35-36) made a finding that the minority groups in DLG are repressed, ignored, marginalized and socially excluded on feelings that they are of "low capacity" and a "low intellectual level." While DLG could be shifting authority to lower levels of local communities' governance, it does not often result in the social inclusion of all indigenous minority and/or weak vulnerable needy groups. Due to the fear of not being re-elected, local leaders favour the dominant majority and pursue their interests. For this same reason of fear, they seldom raise any issue of tax policy and just rely on indirect taxes and grants from the central government. The fear also unfortunately usually results in no discussions of how revenues are collected and used and there are no tax payers to hold DLGs' officials accountable. Where taxes are collected and used, the rare request for public services is responded to by service provision through political patrons at local or national level. In the transfer of

financial responsibility, local politicians also lack impetus to transform the clientelistic relationship between the national government and the local people. Local taxation is constrained by locals' unwillingness to invest in a non-delivery, non-accountable, clear financial participatory plans, responsibilities and budgets and policy. They opt to invest their monies in networks and relations that improve their individual lives (Kristine, 2006).

At times legal devolution of services, power and resources from the national governance is hindered on grounds that a political locality in question is either 'politically inappropriate' or 'too small' or 'too big' population wise or geographically to manage some developmental functions. Such political hindrances by central state (re)emergence/interference consequently unfairly (re)distribute political autonomy and developmental functions to either inefficient state service delivery authorities/public enterprises/corporations or other government tiers/levels to the regression of the DLG. This is greatly a difficulty in countries formed of various states with a political sense of 'state/provincial-nationhood' like in the United Kingdom with Scotland, Wales, England and so on (obscurely/secretly seeking complete separate 'state/national' independence or federalism-absolute autonomy except for military and foreign and few other functions to the central). This has often created national governance unclear reactions and policy framework with regard to comprehensive devolution to DLGs. Apparently what may matter most is whether the Central's power base is threatened or not and hence political obscurity between regionalism/localism and nationalism degree of policy adoption. At times the central may have most of the (shared/distributed) resources thus offering an exploitable opportune moment to Central's greater dominion (Martin and Mallen, 1987).

Elected representatives/councillors are usually constrained to implement their fresh local political mandate of development priorities by the Central's stringent financial rules controlling spending levels and preventing budget expansion at their time of taking DLG's office differing with the start of the already Centrally approved fiscal year budgets. This is in view of the fact that generally the local authorities lack the capacity to raise local funds. Their role includes being representative, specialized and broad policy-maker. New councillors with current local developmental demands often have to wait long for the next fiscal year budget estimates to limitedly include new demands for financing. This frustrates the local electorate and leaves them disillusioned in DLG as election promises remain barred by national government institutional procedures and remote budget controls. A change of political control of the local council is not in proper timing with the inflexibly disciplined national bureaucratic systematic practices unresponsive, insensitive and unconscious to the local peoples' needs. This imposes barriers to implementation of effective and efficient DLG, local citizen-participation and local pro-activeness. Basically this constrains crucial decisions by the local council. This renders local programmes in vain and freedom to decide limited. Besides budget problems, institutionalization of local elections to have representative councillors is usually constrained by endless controversies as majority party at the state constrains their authority by being heavy handed and pursuing party's interests and not local interests. While local elections could promote local autonomy, this is usually clamped as it is not politically desirable to the one majority party state. It also creates an environment whereby political localities experience uneven fiscal spending and thus spatial inequalities. The fair and even distribution of conditional transfers from the central for use by locally elected authorities is also constrained by the opportunistic behaviour of the political elites. They distribute more funds to local areas with more voters for the dominant political party; in addition, localities with a higher number of swing voters also receive more resources. Resources distribution is thus based on political lines continuing to exclude the real poor local areas ultimately. This worsens poverty in the remote areas and further spatial inequality as it unevenly strengthens local councillors. This

discretionary distribution of resources to the local authorities has constrained DLG greatly in many countries (Martin and Mallen, 1987:81-82, Shuna and Yao, 2007 and Hernandez-Trillo and Jarillo-Rabling, 2008).

Local councillors are also constrained in their effective functioning by lack of experience, training and formal education in local governance as already indicated. It is important to note that party-politics also badly affect their delivery. Councillors may form the local opposing majority to the national government and thus concentrate on frustrating Central's policies ignoring local needs. They also tend to pursue interests of their local party and not implementation of the local developmental needs. At times their loyalty to local party overrides goodwill to pursue and support good locally relevant national government's policy and may vote against locally favourable decisions for party politics gain only. They often have to act in line with the wilful political desires of their political constituencies to avoid not being nominated in the next election of the party. This creates councillors into representatives not of the local interests but of the local party politics that may have slid into political party-elitism capture (political-elitist-capture) dictating or seeking to exercise dominion in the local authority. Viewed politically, local authorities tend to be a forum for LG elections used simply to preserve party machines well-oiled for general elections. Furthermore, councillors as local candidates are only chosen due to their party record and not their ability. Local councillors may also tend to hold locally meaningless debate thus discouraging the local electorate. Officers are also demoralized by the decisions irrelevant to local needs but based on insensitive party political grounds. The party politics constrain councillors in that chairmen of the local council may be chosen from the majority party ignoring to use the able members of other groups. Party-politics tend to overwhelm and overshadow real felt needs of the 'independents'. Even where such do happen to lead the local authority, party-politics at a later stage overtake either through voting system or agenda setting. The other problem with councillors is that as individuals they have own interests and may not prioritize needs of their electorate. Some have been found to lose contact and availability to their constituencies. This keeps the electorate uninformed and lacking feedback and an effective opportunity for participating in local decision-making. Participatory-decision making is also complicated by the fact that the constituents with whom the councillor keeps contact are not a fairly representative sample of the population but are mainly constituted by self-selected citizens. This puts fair representation in question. Local authorities as they operate through councillors are also constrained, as already alluded to, by the central parliament through so many legislative controls, the courts that to which they may be called for cases answering and public demands and the judicial powers of command and control by the ministers directly. This is to say the freedom of the local authorities and councillors is politically limited in effectively implementing DLG process. Fair representation by these councillors is also constrained by the fact that the delimitation of wards/constituencies boundaries is a complex process. Expertise required to undertake delimitation process is lacking, spatial issues like manageability of the ward by inclusion or exclusion of unpopulated areas and access to reliable data concerning where certain communities should best be accommodated make delimitation more complex. Wards cannot simply be bent or shaped at will. These delimitation challenges have resulted in unfair representation by the councillors as evidenced by discrepancies in ward size and the location of ward boundaries (Martin and Mallen, 1987 and Napier, 2007).

The performance of local authorities in effective developmental service delivery, other budgetary and other above constraints may further be impeded by external factors on which they lack control. These include (a) social constraints on their performance. Let us remember that DLG is meant to respond to local needs within the welfare or public utility provision context and not strictly in accordance with the market principles of responding to cash-backed needs only. At

times such needs are of too high quantity due to the large needy population sector, for instance primary education facilities for too many pupils. This usually results in poor performance of the local authorities because the social need is of great unaffordable magnitude. That is the quantity of service needs is negatively related to local authority performance. (b) The diversity of service needs in terms of differing (ethnic) groupings complicates attaining efficiency in that too many different preferences have to be addressed leading into a greater variety of services, all which increases expenses for service delivery, making effective responsiveness more difficult. That is the diversity of service needs is negatively related to the performance of the local authority. (c) There are also economic constraints on its performance. The economic level of the households in the political locality determines the number of accessing and consuming a service on offer. Poorer local communities result in reducing distribution of the service as this economically constrains them from more access and hence poor performance by the local authority in delivery. This is also compounded by the economic ability of the locality to provide more or less financial resources. Therefore, the prosperity of the local service recipients and the political locality is positively related to the local authority performance. (d) The level of discretionary resources is also exogenously influenced as it is historically determined rather driven by current needs. The scope for budgetary adjustment from one year to another is very small and constrains the performance of the local authorities in delivery. (e) Population density and size is one other variable that externally affects the performance of the local authorities. Sparse population creates lack of cost effectiveness in service delivery but too dense one also creates an overstretch on the available resources, all resulting in poor performance of the local authority. (f) Some constraints are purely political; a hostile political climate results in management being busy protecting their decisions instead of being progressive with the development plans. At times the local political environment can favour central state's support and benefit provisions from this but the locality may never receive a really improved service (Hussein, 2003).

The political interrelations within the DLG in developing countries often constitute its weaknesses as a local governance structure. The relationship between different institutions and tiers of DLG is commonly found to be complex. National governments do not adopt necessarily significant decentralization of functions to DLG structures with all forms of real political, resources and administrative devolution. Creation of certain structures at different lower/middle tiers caused confusion, whereby provincial level authorities wanted to act as local community authorities. Confusion was also seen in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities. They were not well and adequately defined and demarcated. Statuses of some of the structures were lacking in clarity and functions. Members of the parliament were often not represented or coordinated in the structures and tended to bypass such structures, worsening confusion and political conflicts. Elected local leadership in the existence of local traditional leadership caused confusion and conflicts and resistance to DLG. The chiefs resisted new democratic demands of doing things like being democratically voted into village development committees for resources allocation instead of becoming automatic chairmen (land) and frustrated DLGs implementation efforts. They were underrepresented in the middle tier and thus opposed provincial plans or district plans in their warden. Local authorities also happen to be dominated by party leadership. That created confusion in the relations of the political party and the local governance structures. Accountability got misdirected to the dominant party instead of the local population-local political elitism. These poor internal relations with confusion reduced the quality of participation to a very low level due to reluctance of local authorities to fully decentralize their powers down to the community level. The local communities also generally lacked political and public awareness their citizen rights and responsibilities. These poor internal relations are also worsened by electoral problems including apathy, vote buying, intimidation and violence during the elections, lack of clear criteria for selecting leaders, unfree and unfair party primary elections and imposed

candidates and biased electoral institutions and media and very few women being elected. The problem of interrelations against DLG tends to be more of a formidable challenge to DLG in the face of too rapid rate of urban growth creating problems of governability in urban areas, rife poverty, increasing marginalization and global competitiveness underdeveloping and exploiting weaker states and a crisis of municipal administration (Halfani, 2001).

Generally, the obvious challenges or deficiencies of DLG have been that it has not and does not meet the material and cultural needs of its communities, services that are supposed to be functionally consolidated or placed in the hands of the local authority/DLG are fragmented among several bodies thus increasing the difficulty of meeting the needs of communities and many local authorities are too small in size and revenue and consequently fall short of adequately qualified personnel and technology to execute their activities to an acceptable standard (Reddy, 1996:4).

THE POLITICS OF DLG AND THE CRITICAL LESSONS FOR MANAGEMENT

Management in LG needs to be perceived as part of the public domain. Such perceptions reflect on the nature of the DLG as political institutions established for local choice in government and as institutions for public service delivery. It is a political requirement for DLG's management to back the legitimate political processes of the authority as set within such a political-management system. These processes are dynamic and need to be understood and accepted. This dynamism poses a challenge to the management in terms of comprehension and acceptance as the local authority can change with party politics or the trend to an assertive politics, for example from;

- a politics of geographical independents to party politics,
- control by one party to control by another,
- a safe conservative/labour controlled authority to a hung authority (no party with clear majority, decisions depend on committee and council votes),
- majority party leader control to an authority in which political group asserts its power over the leader,
- politics of consensus changing to politics of conflict,
- an authority in which social and liberal democrats have little influence to an authority in which they form its administration,
- officer led authority changing to one in which councillors assert their control,
- moderate politics to radical ones.

These changes may be quick and unexpected, requiring adapting by proper attitudes as former practices can mislead the management membership. Management need to attitudinally and professionally conform to the new political processes due to the changes. It needs to be politically sensitive to the current political climate and aware of the new political manifestos and other changes and requirements. This also calls for new skills, communication and behavioural patterns understandable to the councillors in charge and in line with newly introduced conventions. It suffices to state that some African countries experienced massive resistance to the DLG policy framework by management derailing, delaying, and frustrating or simply obscuring service delivery due to their political affiliations in opposition to the ruling party. Some staff members from the ruling party tend to control and dictate terms to the local authority. At times dictatorial governments just made a 'clean-sweep' expelling all the non-affiliates to the ruling party in working positions resulting in employment opportunities and LG staff along political lines. A politicized bureaucracy may never be fair, neutral,

impartial/unbiased, efficient and competent in service distribution. These management political dimensions also include the fact that management members have to be able to properly handle public protests. Almost every developmental activity involving (re) distribution of scarce resources can raise political conflicts and thus public protests requiring hearing, listening and proper responding. It is important to also note that one of the greatest political challenges to management of the DLG is the activation of effective citizen participation followed by the citizen's access to the provided public service. These bring in the need for the quality service provision measurement through performance management and measurement (Steward and Clarke, 1988 and Pieter, 2008).

Performance measurement, which is basically utilizing the set of measures to assess the individual staff and DLG's programme performance by comparing the planned (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound objectives) versus the actual performance (outcomes/accomplishments), is politically demanded in DLG as a result of public demand on accountability and pressure for better quality service and transparency or feedback. DLG in Lesotho has systematically excluded public involvement through non-civic and non-community participation and the first-past-the-post electoral system giving all seats to one dominant ruling political party. In practice, this has cemented political loyalty to the ruling central government political ministers and political clientelism in Lesotho. As such, public participation and accountability can only be a wish in the LGUs of Lesotho. This political demand for programmes' and staff performance evaluation is often constrained by (1) the very lack of qualified or skilled staff to conduct such evaluations to improve service delivery and address public dissatisfactions, particularly in the rural councils. The staff here is unlikely to have gone for college training in public administration, planning or management. This hampers this political need and thus effective good governance. (2) The other obstacle to the public pressure for accounting is that decisions reached by the administrators are time-bound. Whatever develops afterward is out of their sight and scope and disintegration and needed maintenance of facilities (e.g. potholes on the roads, broken drainage/sewerage systems becoming a cause for danger to the public) may be outside their focus but be critical for an evaluating researcher on sustainability and safety aspects later. Courts also require the DLGs and their staff to account and thus increased political pressure for the demand for accounting by the DLGs. These are at times required as part of the DLG's funding process, or as a way of painting a picture that the DLG is professionally examined or may be forced by a legislative body for various political purposes. (3) This political demand may also be constrained by lack of accurate data or limitations in accessing such statistics especially in the developing world where data are not easy to capture. (4) The other pitfall constraining DLG's accounting as a political requirement beside lack of qualified evaluators, internal evaluations are made without supplementary external independent objective professional evaluations for validity, more accuracy and reliability in data collection and useful recommendations for effective quality service delivery enhancement. (5) Furthermore, evaluations are usually made for the convenience of the evaluator or the administrator and not for the needs of the citizen. That is participatory evaluation process or beneficiary assessment approaches are overlooked and therefore service delivery for the citizen is never improved though irrelevant evaluation records or yearly reports could be in place. (6) Recommendations of the evaluations are at times not helpful to the decision-makers. It is a report that is not usable for decision making. (7) For instance in the case of Lesotho, where poverty reduction constitutes national priority, reports need to balance between such without neglecting progress made on local needs (Terry and Coulter, 1987:3-30, Pieter, 2008 and Clemens, Charles and Todd 2007: 735 and Easterly, 2009).

It remains essential for the technocrats, development agencies, academics and all development stakeholders, particularly the bureaucracy and the central government to note that DLG is said to have succeeded in development delivery where:

- national centralized developmental restructuring of programmes took a turn and only followed locally driven developmental focus,
- local democracy was made compulsorily transparent, fair and competitive,
- DLGs faced hard budget constraints,
- the central governance was truly scaled back,
- significant tax raising powers were devolved,
- DLG followed a distinct separable components as a process of implementation in a sequential manner and not (political/donor-driven) expediency
- national governance proper behaviour before and during the handling of the process of the implementation of the DLG to invite effective support other than severe oppositions (Jean-Paul, 2008).

Furthermore, the management needs to stay focused and confined to managing basically involving deciding what is to be done and getting it done through people; that is establishing needs of the area, setting objectives, defining policy, developing plans, testing plans, formulating the programme and implementing it, monitoring and evaluating success and reviewing the set objectives. On the issue of corruption by management of local authorities, there is a conventional wisdom that DLG brings management closer to the service recipients and may likely reduce corruption, this has been disputed as it may be more than at the higher government tiers due to discretionary powers and non-effective accountability characterized by non-monitoring, non-inspection and non-auditing (Martin and Mallen, 1987 and Anand, 2008).

THE EXPERIENCE OF DECENTRALIZATION IN THE LDCS

Many LDC central governments regard decentralization as a process to enhance democracy and economic development. These low income countries have been observed to be of limited economic diversification and thus greatly vulnerable to international up and down swings in commodity prices, recession and natural disasters whereby long severe drought spells are often for the Lesotho case causing food insecurity and more poverty. This indeed has been the dilemma of LDCs having to forego benefits in economic efficiency derivable from fiscal devolution/autonomy for urgent national economic stability, disaster management and redistributive programmes for equity requiring strong central governance or re-centralization. The dilemma is worsened by the fact that the industrialized European countries that had a powerful central governance to effect decentralization contributing towards sustainable human development form an example of development success through devolution/decentralization while LDCs with weak central governance are a failure in decentralization. Table below demonstrates some of the incapacitating institutional challenges commonly prevalent in most of the developing countries but mainly using African case studies. The table affirms the argument that contrary to the developed world, where the central government is typically (powerful) institutionally capable (had effective institutional variables) to effect effective local governance, the developing (African) countries actually lacked the indicated institutional capabilities due to the adopted deconcentration instead of political-administrative-fiscal devolution and lack of effective political will to actually decentralize. All these make it difficult for decentralization to overcome its concerned challenges in the LDCs;

Table 1: Lack of Institutional Pre-requisites Effect on Local Governance Effectiveness in Africa

Variable	Chad	Botswana	Uganda	South Africa	Ghana	Nigeria	Kerya
Local autonomy and authority	Medium to high ³	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Very low
Resources available to local units of governance	Low to medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium to low ^b	Low
Effective local institutions of collective choice (i.e., local councils)	High	Medium	Medium to low	Medium to low	Low	Low	Very low
Effective, open, and accountable local political process	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium to low	Low	Very low
Effective local governance	Medium to high	Medium	Medium	Medium to low	Low	Low	Very low

Source: Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:238.

We can realize that ‘high’ (unlike in the developed world) is scarcely noticeable from the scale and table above, only two times in Chad and Botswana. This in itself provides the actual experience of the developing world in decentralization and how severely the variable institutional constraints have inhibited successful implementation of decentralization. Such constraints include mainly low or limited self-control and authority, low resources’ capacity in the LGUs and lacking effectiveness of LGUs in collective choice and openness/transparency, local political processes and local governance in general. The following table also affirms the same argument focusing on other institutional incapacities.

Table 2: More Institutional Competencies Lacking in Africa for Effective DLG

Variable	Chad	Botswana	Uganda	South Africa	Ghana	Nigeria	Kenya
Supportive national political context	Medium ^a (by default)	High to medium	Medium	Low to medium	Low to medium	Low	Very low
Effective systems of intergovernmental relations	Very low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium to low	Low
Demand for public goods and social capital at local governance level	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium to low	Medium to low	Insufficient data
Well-designed local governance institutions	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Very low
Effective local governance	Medium to high	Medium	Medium	Medium to low	Low	Low	Very low

Source: Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:238.

Many councils in LDCs are seen to be serving as servants to the master the central tier as consultative/advisory bodies only. The local structures for decision making may have been created, there could be a claim of democratization and decentralization which mainly bear deconcentration/re-centralization expansion and as thus institutionally constrained development delivery through decentralization (Tanzi, 2000).

Administrative efficiency has also been foiled by shocking reports of rampant corruption in the LGUs particularly in the municipals and the opportunistic senior politicians. Accountability and other essential elements of good governance beside the establishment of good structures and legislations for decentralization lack implementation and enforcement capacity in the LDCs (Olowu, 1995 and 2003).

Evidently from the above authors and others, the developing countries have not really addressed the constraints/challenges and required preconditions for the successful implementation of the decentralization process. This has put the efficient and effective implementation of decentralization for development delivery at risk. While, Watson (2002:5-6) prescribes requirements for such a successful implementation of decentralization, the LDCs have continuously lacked LGUs with (a) clearly defined roles, responsibilities and mandates for certain categories of service delivery; (b) adequate and reliable financial resources in order to exercise those responsibilities, with enough discretion to ensure that resource allocation is responsive to local priorities; (c) autonomy in staffing and adequate human resource management policies to ensure that staff are deployed effectively, loyal and accountable to their local authority, their councillors and the citizens they serve; (d) planning and management capacities and systems to support all the basic functions; (e) communication and accountability mechanisms linking LGUs with both the local people and the central government. There are factors critical for decentralization implementation. Furthermore, there are additional critical

success factors such as transparency of government actions, citizens' participation in service delivery and the effectiveness of civil society, all which are lacking in the LDCs. They lack a comprehensive strategic framework addressing all aspects of decentralization.

These countries have no effective political will to effect the real process of decentralization (Smoke, 2003). There is no pragmatic implementation strategy with a vision of decentralization, incrementally and strategically. Instead, there are non-enabling legal, political and financial frameworks formulated by the central government. There is no thorough creation of constitutional bodies and pressure from the civil society for delivery, there is no supportive state control and proper judiciary interventions including enlightenment, Auditor-Generals' actions are bullied by senior politicians to offset exposure of their corruption even on funds for effecting decentralization. The mass media has also been utilized limitedly if ever used to enhance citizen participation. Such a little success has been reported in only a few countries; Bolivia and RSA (Cameron, 2003).

LDCs have often adopted decentralization due to local and external pressures, including conditions linked to continued financial assistance from the World Bank, IMF and other international development agencies (Olowu, 2001 and 2003). Strikingly in contrast there are also arguments that decentralization was not adopted due to pressures, instead, central level political motives have been predominant particularly in Africa rather than concerns with efficiency in local service delivery, like expansion of political domination by single monopolistic political parties to disintegrate opposition from the grass root level composed of religious and ethnic groupings. Cases include Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Angola (Watson, 2002). One may argue that both stances qualify as justification for and thus also challenges against decentralization. In Lesotho the opposition that mainly precipitated this is the opposition that was based on both religious (protestants-the Basutoland Congress Party/BCP against the Catholic Basotho National Party/BNP government) and the commoners who used to be referred to as the 'council of the commoners'/the Congress ('Lekhotla la Bafo'/*council of the subjects/commoners*) that was rising against the domination of the ruling royal grouping heightening and entrenching exclusive undemocratic customary chieftaincy, which was the BNP mainly led by the principal/main chiefs and their conservative following. Let it be noted that Lesotho's reports (Mapetla and Rembe, 1983, GoL Reports, 1997 and Wallis, 1999) indicate that BNP (chiefs' oriented political party) in the first and second phases of decentralization sought to extend its influence and get rid of 'commoners' opposition (BCP) altogether seizing and sticking to power undemocratically while in the third and mostly in the current phase (Lesotho Congress for Democracy/LCD a split party from BCP due to internal struggles for power and party control along preferred competing personalities) the commoners/congress legally through decentralization obviously in retaliation/transformation/restructuring/reforms reversed the former deconcentration of power on chiefs tremendously back to the subjects/commoners/'ordinary people' together with the motto, 'governance! democracy! (Puso! Ea sechaba ka sechaba!'), all which also again resulted into deconcentration and the capture by the political elite. That is capture from politically organized chieftaincy (BNP) and then capture by the ruling political elite (dominant LCD). It brings us to the realization that Lesotho being a small country with a small population has limited opportunities. Politics is therefore an inept means of power and self-enrichment with severe contests mainly between the political elites/commoners and chiefs and among themselves with often power struggles and main political parties' splits for senior parties' leadership being the LCD, the newly formed All Basotho Convention (ABC, also a split party from LCD) party just three months before the 2007 elections in protest against the collapse of systems of delivery including LG and the BNP together with the remnants of the old split BCP. To

date, in 2009 not one of the above political parties has not suffered major internal splits over who should be the leader of each party.

Generally, it can be observed that both internal and external pressures, particularly economic crises and money lending international financial institutions for development especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa played to be the main factors to the flawed adoption of decentralization. Let one also safely think that decentralization in the eyes of the political elites may be declared a 'success' in line with their undeclared political missions like continued clinging to centralized power and functions (in one NGOs' conference that one attended in 2006, one political minister in conference proceedings, after giving an opening speech was put under pressure to answer why as the relevant minister of LG the central government does not really devolve power politically, administratively and financially for local development attainment, responded saying "power is so nice, it is difficult to part with and every human being is like that". To the worst shock of these NGO's delegates the minister in question had graduated in PhD in Local Governance).

The context of 'institutional constraints'² against the implementation of decentralization in LDCs, particularly in Africa, has severely affected this process. Developing countries have very weak institutions that battle to implement decentralization (Litvack , Ahmad and Bird, 1998). Institutions, like markets for land, labour and capital, systems for information, fiscal, legal and regulatory including democratic institutions and processes are powerless. Weak institutional capacity that could not implement DLG in many of the developing countries is demonstrated and confirmed by the table below;

² It is generally known that institutions constitute a set of formal and informal rules of conduct that facilitate coordination or govern relationships between individuals, when their natural conduct poses constraints to poverty alleviation/development/DLG, such impediments are termed 'institutional constraints' (Ellis, 1999:3, 4,21,280,325,327).

Table 3: Ideal versus Real Cycle of Decentralization in Developing Countries

Idealized Process by Which Local Governance Emerges from Decentralization Reforms	Frequent Actual Experience of Decentralization Reforms
1. Elite chooses to devolve authority, resources, and accountability to localities.	1. Elite announces reforms to devolve authority, resources, and accountability to localities.
↓	↓
2. Decentralization reforms are defined and promulgated.	2. Some decentralization reforms are defined and promulgated.
↓	↓
3. Redistribution of authority, resources, and accountability to localities occurs.	3. Redistribution of authority, resources, and accountability to localities is announced.
↓	↓
4. Decisionmaking institutions, broadened participation by the public, and greater accountability to localities emerge.	4. Several patterns emerge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete statutory reform blocks effective control by local authority; • Resources are retained or recaptured by central actors via “conditional” grants, continued control of civil service posted to localities, ignoring local authority’s decisions, etc.; • Resources of localities are consumed paying for salaries of officials they do not control, or for basic administrative overhead; • Local councils are ineffective because of low levels of education, poor organization, infrequent meetings, internal division, and executive dominance; • Local institutions are designed to maintain central control; and/or, • Local elites dominate local governance from behind the scenes.
↓	↓
5. Improved performance and accountability of local governance institutions reinforce local support for reformed system.	5. Poor performance and nonaccountability of local governance institutions discourages local support for them.
↓	↓
6. “Local governance” is a going concern.	6. Local governance remains weak and ineffective.
↓	↓
	7. Recentralization occurs.

Source: Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:6.

The realization is that all have been constrained by lack of institutional capacity (or institutional constraint) in that the transfer of authority, resources and accountability to LAs as well as development of an open local political process and local political-administrative institutions, contrary to the developed world, are functioning in ways that demonstrate that local priorities and needs are not actually driving local decision making. The table in a concise manner has summarized

what became eventual due to lack of institutional capacity as there is clear contrast between decentralization intentions of many developing countries and actual policy outcomes/outputs of DLG. The policy has clearly not brought the expected developmental benefits in many of such developing countries as opposed to the developed world (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:6).

OBSTACLES TO SUCCESSFUL DECENTRALIZATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

It has been observed for many decades that even though decentralization measures may seem successful at the early stages, they may face a number of limitations or challenges. Limitations experienced can be administrative or socio-political. Decentralization is often limited by the time necessary to implement the complicated reforms. It takes a great deal of time to put in place newly needed local structures. A number of legal activities to be done on a legal time frame impose legal sluggish delivery. At times there is just too much political expediency resulting in confused allocation of roles for the local authorities. These administrative flaws in terms of time can render the process of decentralization ineffective. At times decentralization process is also a game of legal rules which may become an end in themselves (Stren, 2003).

The other administrative limit is the capacity of municipalities to assume new powers and operations. Some municipalities have remained incompetent due to lack of adequate staffing and resources in the new expanded mandate. At times they have been blamed for corruption. Municipalities need to respond well ahead of time in the possible new expanded mandate by improving their staff numbers and calibre, working environment and the public image to match the new responsibilities. The initial failure from lack of capacity can result in recentralization if not being overlooked. Furthermore, municipalities need to be proactive and decentralize services like health ones in the event of widespread diseases like HIV/AIDS or unanticipated disasters. That is they need not be inundated by new expanded roles while they may privatize, delegate or devolve powers even through ad hoc/task and standing committees or communes as sub-local authorities for specific huge demanding tasks. Often times, operations are not in alignment with addressing poverty needs both in terms of functions and prioritized planned poverty targeting development projects. This is a serious flaw if local governance meant for development delivery is not sensitive to the needs of the poor but has main functions prioritizing already better serviced middle or higher class communities. It creates spatial inequalities and proneness to squalid health hazardous marginalized areas (Ibid).

The socio-political limits to decentralization have to do with the initial support for its launching. In the first wave of decentralization, ruling elites agreed with colonialists on laws supporting and establishing local authorities but when in real power they found those structures to be posing insecurity and fragility to their legitimacy and supremacy. They resorted to power consolidation and centralized the ruling system thus curtailing the LGs. Over-centralization, causing the second phase of decentralization in the developing world, having denied the local communities involvement in large development projects and thus failure in sustainability, participation and poverty alleviation still experienced non-local participation due to deconcentration instead of devolution. The third phase of decentralization seeking after devolution has been stifled by winds of globalization. Local authorities at times easily ally with powerful foreign, regional or local groups in order to strengthen themselves. This then rather exposes them to more of globalization trends and interests, predomination/influence/severe market volatility without effectively competing or having effective local

interests/representativeness. Globalization operating through the volatile free market economy has been blamed for responding only to cash-backed needs, insensitivity to real poverty with its desired inaccessible opportunities and information to the poorest. This then puts local governance at the point of irrelevance as run by free market economy. Some countries are also now seen to have re-centralized their governments again for lack of needed ministerial support to local governance- hence this paper's question of how well has decentralization been efficiently adopted and achieved sustainable development in a concerned state like Lesotho and other smaller/poorer nations, what has been their experience in decentralization regarding its prospects and challenges (Wunsch, 2001 and Stren, 2003).

According to Olowu (2003) the dilemmas of democratic decentralization encompass, reluctance to share monopoly power enjoyed from the colonial period, the misconception that DGD is a zero-sum power game in which local actors gain at the expense of the central government rather than a positive-sum power game in which all players gain in the long-run and that devolution means abdication when the central is still supposed to formulate policies, regulate, monitor and evaluate the local authorities and maintain certain aspects of development delivery. Elite capture also forms a limiting factor to decentralization in Africa. The elite in the African local areas have used their power, knowledge and influence to usurp devolved local authorities to serve own interests and oppress the other marginalized 'voiceless' groups like women and the minorities. Decentralization programmes in Africa have also failed due to the fact that they failed to specify local responsibilities or transferred responsibilities by administrative decrees or statutes. Local leadership found it easy to just transform transferred responsibilities at will. This stifled decentralization. Such responsibilities are to be part of the constitution so that they may only be amended by the central government and cannot be changed easily and at times unilaterally. Legal instruments for decentralization needed to sufficiently address transferred powers of tax collection, sharing systems on expenses and special grants or loans. Transfers are still the predominant source of LG finance in Africa.

THE ACCOUNT OF AFRICA'S CHALLENGES IN DLG

At the administrative level there has been a myriad of challenges confronting various African states (Tanzania, Zambia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Malawi and others) since early 1960s to early 1980s in the devolution of functions from the central to the DLG, still resonating with Lesotho and the RSA, the two countries with which it may be argued adopted this democratic decentralization/DLG relatively later than many others. There has always been a need and a challenge to redefine relations between the central and DLGs in Africa. A new statutory basis of DLG became a need and a challenge in the context of having to divide the roles and functions among many ministries and between these ministries and the newly created and elected DLGs. Problems of jurisdiction, overlapping and criss-cross territorial overlapping with cross-cutting of political (districts/wards/towns/reserve areas) and versus administrative demarcations, information distribution, communication channels, networking, coordination and duplication in the instance DLG's integrated development emerged. The urgent requirements of community development were also strained and demoralized by the snail pace of legal frameworks to institute legal guidance and the public sector in implementation of developmental goals. Not to talk of essential amendments for speedy and efficient service delivery, restructuring/transformation/reconstruction (Passmore, 1971).

The re-orientation of central governments' personnel became defective and an utter failure in that insufficiently qualified and experienced administrative cadre was subjected to over ambitious too short re-orientation and training workshops and courses that left the bureaucracy unchanged attitudinally and thus ill-equipped in terms of developmental management skills and mental re-orientation. Efficiency, effectiveness and participatory development management practices were not aspired as they were not imparted values, skills and performance standards. Bureaucracy and technical departments remained preferring direct rule, authoritarian and paternalistic. After the district commissioners or administrators were given the statutory task of promoting DLG, bureaucratic oppositions, objections, resistance and policy non-implementation transformed into an attitude of dislike and slow policy implementation. Continued district trainings on community development/DLG on the technical, bureaucratic, traditional and non-bureaucratic/council members leadership helped to slowly transform the facilitating leadership into accepting DLGs. These trainings/seminars on participatory development were however still occasional and limited over short periods. The units mainly responsible for training, supporting and supervising implementation of DLG policy framework lacked for a long time and were often institutionalized quite late. The Ministry of Education delayed to take up the responsibility of coordinating and make widespread trainings in extension, community development and democratic local governance. This hampered communication/information sharing/in briefing and disabled regular necessary seminars' organization for the efficient and effective implementation of the DLG policy framework. This meant the skillful handling of problems of administration, community development, finance and budgeting involved in DLG lacked for a long time at the policy initiation stage. As such inappropriate attitudes towards local population by the personnel that ought to facilitate, support and train masses in the implementation of DLG were seen as an obstacle. Supplementary and relevant higher academic training for both the district administrative and technical personnel in community development, public administration and management in democratic local government remained lacking on grounds of prohibited spending or therefore lack of funding and staffing. As such African institutions of higher learning took long to adequately address this need. This contributed to the non-delivery of the DLG policy framework (UN Report, 1965 and Passmore, 1971).

The problem of chronic staff shortages has also been in the fore front in impeding through implementation of DLG in Africa. There was a need for local government and community development expertise and administrative staff to support, advice and train councillors and relive the district authority of the overload of coordination and supervision. Attractive conditions of service and effective recruitment procedures have usually not been in place in Africa. As such, finance and functions management have been handled by inadequately skilled personnel resulting in countrywide inefficiency and poor delivery. The supporting supervisory staff available mainly takes supervisory tours or short visits turning DLG into a defective deconcentration and ineffective local councils' support and training. Adequately trained and experienced personnel lacked. This then has contributed towards an incompetent local government service as both elected representative and employees lacked expertise in running DLG. Those with higher qualifications tended to be young/immature and inexperienced and the mature ones were not suitably qualified (Ibid).

Severe scarcity in money, skilled human resources, political legitimacy, equipment, vehicles, electricity, fuel, information and reliable theory regarding pressing development problems are usually salient factors that lack sufficiency for a successful DLG process in Africa. Building political institutions is a luxury for many African countries, civil-society organizations tend to be captured by a few individuals or an individual who effectively turn it into a 'private property' for self-gain only. Participation in governance is constrained by poverty of vulnerable individuals struggling for

personal and familial survival, particularly the needy and women responsible for agricultural output. There is harsh environment whereby travel and communication are difficult and almost impossible; staff is stretched thinly confronted with labour intensive challenge of managing personal lives in extreme poverty, underemployment and family demands. Such extreme poverty is due to an absolute lack of resources and poor distribution of available ones (Chambers, 1997).

Economic and social turbulence is also blamed for constraining the process of DLG in Africa. The economic problems include currency crisis, commodity price collapse, structural-adjustment programme/government ineffectiveness and local economic insecurity. Social turbulence includes ethnic, religious or other conflicts hampering the functioning of DLGs. This creates scepticism on new political institutional arrangements. There are also cumbersome control and approval procedures for budgets and other key decisions over the DLGs (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004).

In some states like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and some parts of Somalia central governance lost control and there was state collapse. There is huge dependency-syndrome. Some political leaders cling to and retain power for far too long worsening poverty levels, economic recessions and weak bureaucracies. Rule of law is formalistic more than real, with regulations and rules meant for bribery gains not public-policy purposes. This also goes for the political institutions that are controlled elsewhere beyond the law in an obscure manner. This creates and perpetuates corruption and disable proper state control and efficient functioning of DLGs in Africa. Political parties are poorly formed at local levels, there is no local mass media, local governments' fiscal weakness and inexperienced elected leaders all combine to constrain the effective functioning of DLGs (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:1-19).

SUMMARY

There is still a need for good local governance that is responsive to the needs of the Lesotho citizens, particularly the poor if sustainable development delivery is to be realized in this country and other developing nations. Good urban and rural governance through local governance that concentrates on making cities and the rural more inclusive in direct support of marginalized groups living in poverty who are excluded from the political process by representative democracy stifled by dominant political party play are yet still missing and needed in Lesotho and other developing nations. Good urban and rural governance ensure that everyone regardless of status, gender, race, age or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities local areas have to offer. Social inclusiveness is an important goal for local governance. It is just, it is democratic and it is productive. Social inclusion is central to sustainable local development. Development thinking is also increasingly stressing the importance of human capital, that is, the important contributions all people including the poor can make to development. Decentralization has, furthermore, focused attention on the local level, as good entry point for addressing wide range of social issues including poverty. However, the participation of the 'urban and rural poor' in Lesotho local governance through LGUs (MCC, DCs and CCs) is inherently restricted by representative democracy promoting indirect participation instead of direct one. Decision making on behalf of the urban-rural poor still disempowers them in terms of (budget) prioritization and poverty specific local development projects. As such, local governance achieves naught in addressing local poverty only surmountable through direct social inclusion. The urban poor thus still remain in the low-income stratum and continue to be marginalized in actual decision making processes and hence left out in effective functioning of the political processes. Insufficient, ineffective and inefficient participation of the poor in Lesotho local governance cannot serve as a pre-

requisite for sustainable human development and poverty reduction. The local poor who lack power to pass decisions concerning their lives need not have their participation confined to sporadic opinion expression of erratic public gatherings and mere voting of councillors as is now the case.

While decentralization may have had prospects for the efficient and effective delivery of rural-urban development goals elsewhere like in Europe, in Lesotho and other developing countries, there has been peculiar socio-cultural-political institutional constraints militating against the possible prospects of such decentralization. Such challenges are found in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial legacies, traditional and political systems of these developing countries, urban and rural governance and participation in the decision making structures. The account of this paper has also affirmed the argument that there is an absence of the prerequisites for successful decentralization in Africa but. Furthermore, it can also be realized that politics also account for such prerequisites and constraints. That is the lacking political will to fully implement such a decentralization policy due to foreseeable absent political benefits/goals to the (political) bureaucrats in business and/or heavy political losses/costs. The paper has explored the various socio-political-economic-institutional constraints militating against the efficient and effective adoption of decentralization for development delivery in Lesotho and developing nations. It has illuminated the socio-systemic rituals in action against the proficient execution of this potential development-policy. It has historically revealed the degree to which decentralization has been prosperously embarked upon in the developing countries.

The combined effect of accelerated growth, pervasive poverty, historical forms of marginalization, huge dependency ratios (big family sizes with too few 'bread winners' and too many vulnerable 'dependents'/unproductive children, the unemployed and the aged without any pensions), macro-economic policies, municipalities' reliance on unstable market to distribute resources and services and other various challenges to DLG have rendered it almost a failure in alleviating rural and urban poverty through development delivery. Lack of resources and power devolution have worsened the problem including rapid population growth and urbanization. National development/economic priorities within the context of partially devolved powers to DLGs stifle local social participation and thus local development prioritization (Also see Halfani, 2001:13-24). Furthermore, the challenges that confronted DLG in Africa include problems of lack of proper reorientation of central government personnel, chronic staff shortages, thus incompetent LG developmental service delivery, inadequate and irregular training of the DLGs' personnel which therefore lacked qualified advisory and support services. Generally, factors constraining the democratic process of DLGs include lack of supportive national political context, effective systems of intergovernmental relations, demand for public goods and social capital at local governance level and well-designed local governance institutions (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004).

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