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***Decentralized Public Service Provision
In Sub-Saharan Africa - A False Start***

Lessons from the DFM Project



DECENTRALIZATION: FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Associates in Rural Development, Inc.

in collaboration with

Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University

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in Sub-Saharan Africa - a False Start**

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Prepared by:

David B. Green

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FOREWORD

In 1988 Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD), in collaboration with Indiana University's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, began a research and development effort focused on decentralized public service provision. The Decentralization: Finance and Management Project (DFM), sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), was designed to study problems associated with the failure of many development projects to achieve sustainable impacts--particularly those in rural areas managed by central government agencies. The project's research agenda has analyzed a variety of institutional arrangements and resource mobilization strategies to determine their effects on the sustainable provision of rural roads, irrigation infrastructure, health and education services, and the management of renewable natural resources. Field investigations and desk studies have also analyzed broader decentralization policies and issues relating to local government operations and finance.

In the initial years of the project, a series of state-of-the-art papers were prepared on the principal sectors of inquiry. These reports included a thorough review of the relevant literature and established a framework for field-level analysis. These early studies were the basis for two published books, several journal articles, and numerous conference papers dealing with the problems of rural infrastructure and irrigation management. In addition to these core research products, numerous policy studies, field research initiatives, and project designs and evaluations were conducted at the request of USAID missions in Asia and Africa and the central bureaus of USAID/Washington. These efforts provided project research staff the opportunity to test and refine analytic methods and to demonstrate the utility of institutional analysis to a variety of development problems.

At the conclusion of this major effort covering seven years and 15 different countries, a series of final papers has been prepared that synthesize the cumulative research findings and lessons learned from the project. These include a report summarizing four years of research and analysis on governance and management of irrigation systems in Nepal; a synthesis of several years of research on economic and institutional policy reform in Cameroon; an analysis of DFM research on decentralized public service provision in Africa; a research synthesis on local governance and management of renewable natural resources; a paper on the concept of social capital and its implications for development; and a synthesis of research on rural road maintenance. In addition, the DFM legacy includes two papers providing practical project design guidelines in the areas of rural infrastructure and natural resources and a final report summarizing the project's principal research and development accomplishments.

The DFM project staff from ARD, the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, and the Maxwell School extend their sincere appreciation for the sponsorship of this project by USAID. The Agency's research programs aimed at improving our understanding

of the development process and thereby the effectiveness of financial and technical assistance represent a significant contribution to the donor community and its partners in the developing world. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the dozens of colleagues from the academic and development assistance communities as well as the citizens and representatives of host countries who have participated in our enterprise. Our group has learned a great deal from this project, much of which is reflected in this final series of documents. We hope that this learning experience has also benefitted our collaborators in the U.S. and abroad.

I. INTRODUCTION

From its inception in 1987 the Decentralization: Finance and Management (DFM) Project has looked at development problems from an institutional analysis perspective which focuses on trying to understand rules and the incentives rules help to generate. In regard to public service delivery problems, DFM has concentrated on:

- the rules that govern how public services are provided and produced;
- the incentives that determine how, and/or whether or not people use those services; and
- evaluating the efficiency, equity, responsiveness and accountability of the service delivery process.

The project's explorations of public service delivery in sub-saharan Africa started from a simple premise -- the goal of a public service should be to increase net benefits to the target population. We have found that this is often not the case in practice. What we have found is that public services (e.g., education, health, rural roads):

have specific attributes that make their delivery prone to particular problems. These problems have been exacerbated by African state policies centralizing service delivery, thereby frustrating local initiatives, local control, and feedback mechanisms. In addition, centralizing authority over service delivery, without the benefit of effective political, legal and constitutional checks, has promoted rent-seeking behavior among service providers, at the expense of service delivery operations adapted to local needs (Garnier et al., 1992A, p. 3).

This paper synthesizes the DFM project's research on public service delivery in sub-saharan Africa by further exploring the finding stated above, by showing how people nonetheless cope to produce and provide themselves with services they deem necessary, and by recommending that governments and donors promote improved public service provision and production by allowing and encouraging greater decentralized local self-governance.¹

¹ The term "governance" denotes how decisions are made within institutional structures. That is, the way power is used to make and implement collective decisions, enforce rules and resolve conflicts. "Self-governance" therefore refers to situations when communities themselves have the authority to make these types of decisions, for themselves, in regard to their own resources and institutional arrangements, as opposed to another jurisdiction making decisions for them.

A. The Theoretical Rationale for Decentralized Provision of Public Services

It is puzzling that over-centralization is to blame for the failure of public services when in many places service delivery mechanisms have in theory been decentralized. For more than 20 years theorists and practitioners have advocated that the quality of services, management efficiency, and development equity could be improved through greater political and administrative decentralization. Decentralization, it was felt, could help to overcome limitations of national planning; streamline decision making and bureaucracy; improve officials' understandings of local problems; bring national government closer to remote areas; increase political representation for under represented groups; improve local development capacity; increase efficiency; and, increase participation in planning and administration (Rondinelli, 1987, p. 104).

In its implementation, however, it became apparent that "decentralization" had different meanings in different contexts and was being applied in different ways. Rondinelli's research provided some standard definitions for the major forms of decentralization:

deconcentration: handing over some administrative authority to lower levels within the central government; i.e., shifting workload from central offices to offices outside of the capital;

delegation: transfer of managerial responsibility for specific functions from the central government to organizations outside the bureaucracy, though the central government maintained ultimate responsibility for those functions; and

devolution: creation or strengthening of autonomous subnational units of government or the transfer to them of functions to be implemented outside of the direct control of the central government (Rondinelli, 1987, pp. 103-104).

In the early 1980s Rondinelli found many of the goals of decentralization to be unrealized. What occurred in fact was what is described by the definitions above: much of what is referred to as "decentralization" is not in practice concerned with transferring power, authority and responsibility to local governments and away from central government. In practice, decentralization meant deconcentration and delegation, but not devolution. The DFM project's experience confirms his findings -- decentralization has too often occurred in name only, thereby failing to achieve the development achievements that it was supposed to.

Why have decentralization policies failed? Several explanations have been offered: administrative incapacities of local governments; lack of an adequate or at least accessible resource base at the local level; rural, decentralized administrative areas lack the "modernity" required to spark progress; or, administrative and urban elites stifle what they perceive to be the threats posed by decentralized power bases (Wunsch and Olowu).

To a degree all of these explanations may be correct, but the DFM project's experience mostly confirms an alternate explanation proposed by Wunsch and Olowu. That is, instead of being viewed as a method to devolve authority, decentralization came to be viewed as a strategy for reaching central government goals. When instituted, programs of decentralization typically reflected certain assumptions; for example, that the central government bureaucracy had to be the major instrument to ensure successful decentralization; and, that decentralization requires ample central resources to succeed. Programs based on these assumptions led to deconcentration, not devolution.

An alternate premise, which rejects the assumptions justifying centralization of authority, is that people are capable of governing themselves, and communities represent a self-governing resource. Furthermore, it is maintained that the quality of public services will improve if those resources are nourished and encouraged. Therefore, in order to tap the resources of the community, services should be designed to use the time and place information people have by involving them, as service users, in service decisions. In order for this to happen there have to be incentives for service producers (public servants) to work with and be accountable to service users and co-producers on the development, design, and delivery of services. That is, the orientation of the public servants has to be towards the local service users, versus towards a superior in a central ministry. The DFM project's approach has been that institutional arrangements associated with service delivery should encourage devolution of authority to increase public participation, achieve greater government accountability, and improve the adequacy, accuracy and transparency of information.

B. Background: DFM Project Activities Concerned with Public Service Delivery in Sub-Saharan Africa

The DFM project's research on public service delivery presents a greater understanding of the conditions necessary to make political and administrative programs of decentralization more successful in regard to rural service delivery. There have perhaps been several historical phases of decentralization theory. One phase was based on the assumption that local governments would be better able, from a management efficiency perspective, to be sensitive and responsive to the community participation movement which was required to drive development. That is, local governments were better placed to work with people and more efficiently manage development. Another phase was promoted by the multinational development banks as a part of programs of economic structural adjustment; i.e., deficits and budgets could be reduced by reducing central government bureaucracies and having fewer people do more through decentralized institutions (local governments can do more with less when compared to central governments). Most recently, decentralization is perceived as a part of the democratization and improved governance movement; i.e. economic development is most likely to occur when communities are in a position to control devolved government units.

The DFM project during the course of seven years from 1987 to 1994 looked at all of these rationales for decentralization, in a wide variety of sectors and places, including:

- General studies on service delivery in Cape Verde, Niger and Mali;
- Primary education studies in Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Chad;
- Primary health care studies in Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Cameroon; and
- Rural roads studies in Zaire and Tanzania.

This report will synthesize and analyze what we have learned about delivery of public services in sub-saharan Africa. Section II further discusses the failures of service delivery to date and offers an explanation as to why these failures occurred. Section III describes a series of cases, based on project experience, that illustrate how in the absence of central government provision and production of services, communities have managed their own essential services. Finally, Section IV explains why some communities successfully manage their own public services (and others do not).

II. THE PROBLEM - HOW AND WHY CENTRAL STATE SERVICE PROVISION AND PRODUCTION HAS FAILED

A. Growth of the Central State

To understand the context from which public services were supposed to be delivered by African states, it is essential to understand the political and administrative heritage of those states.

To develop successful public service provision and production requires some form of institutional and social infrastructure through which those services can be delivered. Either existing institutions have to be built on, or viable new institutions must be developed in order to construct a base for successful services². Not surprisingly, as independent nations developed in sub-saharan Africa, parts of the old were combined with parts of the new. The traditional, social institutional infrastructure was ignored in favor of the hierarchical, bureaucratic colonial organization; but, it was overlaid on the existing, traditional realities.

As stated by Sandbrook, in Africa "there was rarely any organic link between the political institutions prescribed in constitutions and the indigenous institutions of the precolonial period" (Sandbrook, p. 43). What developed instead has been described as the patrimonial or neo-patrimonial state. Sandbrook's explanation is that, in Africa, the tendency towards "personalization of power" is rooted in culture and history (Sandbrook, p. 111). The primary African political unit was the village, and "nations" were formed from disparate people who did not necessarily share a common identity (Sandbrook, p. 45). "Societies with such characteristics are difficult to govern. The stage is set for a strongman to play the central integrating role. He overcomes political schisms and builds his personal rule by distributing material benefits, capitalizing on personal loyalties and coercing recalcitrants" (Sandbrook, p. 64).

What evolved were strong central leaders, and the governments they led, trying to unite a variety of societies in an effort to govern their nations in the way that colonial officials and the contemporary nation states understand the word. As Sandbrook notes, post-colonial African leaders felt they could not build their societies with "the legitimizing force of traditional institutions" because the latter were often small, fractured and acephalous. They therefore chose, as their "only common political tradition," the bureaucratic, authoritarian and centrally oriented colonial model (Sandbrook, p. 47). This central bureaucratic model ended up setting the tone for politics, administration and service provision.

² It should be noted that in this context *institutions* can refer not only to *organizations*, but also to the sets of rules that shape human interactions; i.e., "the people and the patterns of regular, repetitive interactions among them" that not only influence (in terms of production systems) the transformation of inputs into outputs, but also social interactions that structure how decisions get made. By this definition institutions include not only governments, private firms and voluntary organizations, but also families and communities.

What has occurred too frequently is that these systems, built on personal rule and personal loyalty instead of broad-based agreement and rule-based legitimacy, collapsed due to the corruption of those in the system, and the system's lack of credibility for those who are outside of it. In terms of its impact on economic development, "this decay, manifest in political instability, systematic corruption and maladministration, introduces irrationality into economic life" (Sandbrook, pp. 12-13).

Bates articulates a related argument -- political elites used agricultural policy to feather their own nests and build constituencies through distribution of resources (often donor resources). According to Bates, government policy, both agricultural policy and that which determines public services, is decided as a result of pursuing social and political objectives, versus service provision and problem solving objectives. For example, in regard to agricultural input subsidy programs, "The resources allocated through these programs have been channeled to those whose support is politically useful or economically rewarding to the state -- that is, to members of the elite" (Bates, p. 56). Those responsible for agricultural programs found themselves in positions of authority controlling valuable resources that could be distributed to gain favor and to generate a political following (Bates, p. 99).

When programs were used primarily to build a political clientele, state-oriented, non-market interventionist strategies were chosen to implement them. These strategies opened greater opportunities for creating political clienteles because they were based on the exercise of discretion. The correlation between public service programs and systems of rule that rely on patrimonial favors is the exercise of discretion through patronage. The patron-client relation is lubricated through the largesse of the public sector (Wunsch and Olowu, p. 150). Thus power and authority were further centralized in the institutions that were responsible for implementing programs and delivering public services.

The more openly communicated rationale for advancement of a centralist or statist approach to economic development was that the basic constraints to economic development in a developing economy (e.g., lack of an industrial or entrepreneurial class, inadequate capital, and poor basic infrastructure) had to be overcome through central state intervention because there was no other body either available or capable (Wunsch and Olowu). This rationale only furthered the process of centralization that accompanied neo-patrimonial rule.

In theory, a strong and active role pursued by the central state in Africa was supposed to lead to economic expansion. In practice this did not happen because even with strong central powers, economic expansion was not actively and effectively promoted by a competent and legitimate public service. According to Sandbrook, "a rational and predictable administration encourages capitalist accumulation" (Sandbrook, p. 38). In Africa, however, the post-independence public service was instead based on a system of patrimonial rule and patronage and tended towards corruption and lack of legitimacy. The result, he says, was collapse of any institution that truly resembles a responsible government. Instead, politics was solely concerned with contesting who would get to divide the spoils, and public administration revolved around personal enrichment.

Whether the centralized model of politics and administration worked during economically robust times is certainly debatable. That it failed miserably during continent-wide economic collapse seems to be historic fact. What followed was the era of structural adjustment and government programs of decentralization encouraged in an effort to cut costs and divest the central government of services it could no longer even nominally afford.

What has become clear, however, is that these government programs of decentralization were promoted based on the known model; that is, centralized versus devolved government. This legacy of central state authority does not create an atmosphere that is truly conducive to any meaningful devolution of authority and responsibility. Rather, the model is characterized by:

- conservative and hierarchical bureaucratic traditions;
- the unwillingness of the center to relinquish power in any meaningful way;
- a lack of confidence in the citizenry's capabilities to govern and manage their own affairs and services;
- central fiscal control and scarce national budget resources; and
- a general lack of support for devolution.

Furthermore, the "rapid-progress-into-modernity" style of economic development that was promoted by the centralized model was concerned to a large degree with construction of physical infrastructure (e.g., highways, and large-scale irrigation systems). Development of the institutional capacities which are required for delivery of services were often ignored.

The influence of this mix of events on public services has been a series of constraints that have confounded the efforts of programs and policies that were in theory supposed to develop capacities for decentralized administration of services. The next section describes those constraints and illustrates them with experiences from the DFM project.

B. Constraints to Decentralized Service Delivery

1. Centrally Mandated Local Government Systems are Still Tied to the Central State

Too often local governments are merely extensions of the central state. Support of the central state and its policies is their mandate, as opposed to provision of services for local residents.

The offices of the central administration often developed as the primary provider of services because it was believed the state was the only institution in the newly independent nation that was capable of providing "modern" services. Furthermore, in regard to rural infrastructure development, it was felt that only the government can limit free riding, capture economies of scale, and make best use of the technical expertise required to build, operate and maintain a jointly consumed infrastructure (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne, p. 154).

Education provides a good example of how post-colonial African governments sought to provide services. Educational opportunities, services and infrastructure were expanded rapidly in order to meet primary education needs and social needs, to facilitate nation-building, to meet civil service manpower needs, and to boost economic development (on the theory that an educated work force was required for economic expansion).

The state became the major provider and producer of education at all levels because the task was huge -- massive school construction programs, teacher training operations and bulk purchase of books would have been difficult or impossible for local producers of education to finance. The state also wanted to be perceived as a major agent of modernization (Garnier, et al., 1992A, p. 49).

In other words, services were jump started as part and parcel of the attempt to immediately build a "state" in the modern image. Developing nations tried to do everything at once; the goals of universal primary education and subsidized universities became entrenched. Unfortunately no feedback mechanisms existed to "warn educators that what they were trying to do in 20 years had taken 100 everywhere else under more conducive circumstances" (Garnier, et al., 1992A, p. 50).

In the 1980s the collapsing African economies brought attention to the deterioration in public services, including education. This deterioration was exacerbated by the fact that services were dominated by the center. Parents and students felt they had little opportunity to influence the education services they received, and often resorted to simply removing themselves from a system which was delivering a poor product and for which they felt they had no responsibility.

In response to the economic collapse and the demands of structural adjustment programs, programs of administrative and political decentralization were advocated. In this context, however, decentralization often referred to "popular mobilization for national objectives rather than for objectives as determined by local populations" (Hall, et al., 1991, p. 63). That is, decentralized local governments were still controlled by the center.

To demonstrate their effectiveness to their constituencies, and to provide services, local politicians and administrators look to the center for access to the centrally controlled funds derived from indirect and non-tax sources (table 1). In Ivory Coast, one municipality visited lobbied to get its local health center upgraded to the level of a rural hospital in order

Table 1: SOURCES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL REVENUES

	1988	1989	1990
<u>GHANA</u>			
Asante Akim South			
Central Govt. Funding	44.44%	34.54%	9.41%
Own-Source Funding	55.56%	65.45%	90.58%
Bongo			
Central Govt. Funding	50.90%	41.36%	48.96%
Own-Source Funding	49.10%	58.64%	51.04%
North Tongu			
Central Govt. Funding	6.71%	27.73%	33.07%
Own-Source Funding	93.29%	72.27%	66.93%
<u>IVORY COAST</u>			
Koun-Fao			
Central Govt. Funding	83.52%	85.85%	84.19%
Own-Source Funding	16.48%	14.14%	15.81%
Koulbly			
Central Govt. Funding	88.24%	90.21%	89.73%
Own-Source Funding	11.77%	9.79%	10.27%
Sirasso			
Central Govt. Funding	90.37%	90.81%	89.97%
Own-Source Funding	9.63%	9.19%	10.03%
<u>NIGERIA</u>			
Atakumose			
Central Govt. Funding	89.60%	90.60%	93.60%
Own-Source Funding	10.40%	9.40%	6.40%
Barakin Ladi			
Central Govt. Funding	91.60%	93.10%	95.40%
Own-Source Funding	8.40%	6.90%	4.60%
Bodinga			
Central Govt. Funding	94.30%	93.30%	93.30%
Own-Source Funding	5.70%	6.70%	6.70%
Oji River			
Central Govt. Funding	78.30%	93.90%	94.40%
Own-Source Funding	21.70%	6.10%	5.60%

All figures are based on 1990 field research. Central government funding is based on grants; own-source revenues include shared taxes and local development contributions. From, "Decentralization: Improving Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa."

to get a doctor posted (whose salary would be paid by the Ministry of Health), even at the cost of the municipal funds required for building construction and renovation, and even though the existing facility was under-utilized. In Nigeria, 11 of 35 communities in Oyo State were building new health centers with the expectation that state or central government would cover the salaries of locally appointed staff. For both economic and prestige reasons, the incentives are such that municipal officials are more concerned with getting funds from the national government than with designing and developing a health plan specifically geared towards meeting local health needs.

This system creates a problem of "fiscal illusions." That is, government service is judged based on a person's ability to get "someone else's money" mobilized to provide resources for an area, versus one's ability to help get problems solved. This illusion leads to irresponsible behavior in regard to the connections between taxes and benefits, and between providing and receiving services (Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne, p. 157). The decentralization that has occurred has been procedurally oriented, as opposed to shifting effective problem solving to a local level. Moving responsibility for bureaucratic procedures from the center to a district can hardly be expected to improve the quality of a public service. For example, one district education officer in Ghana reported that the decentralization of the education service has meant that the originals of reports now go to the district assembly, with only copies sent to the regional Ghana Education Service. Research found that Ghana Education Service district offices only carry out established procedures at the district level. Decentralized systems are supposed to free creativity for greater problem solving. In fact, not much if any innovation has resulted from programs of administrative decentralization aimed as much at diffusing the costs previously borne by the center as at problem solving.

A peculiar problem exists in Nigeria and other nations blessed with valuable natural resources, like oil. Local governments in these countries essentially ignore local sources of revenue because of substantial allocations of centrally controlled funds. In these cases, when funds are disbursed without regard to local revenue raising efforts, local government authorities do not develop their own sources. If local funding is raised, the central funds received overwhelm it and make it virtually superfluous. In Nigeria, for example, all attention is focused on getting the maximum resources possible from the center. It is hard to envision a truly decentralized system when such is the case. Cases like Nigeria's illustrate how local governments are still closely tied to the centralizing model, through either administrative fiat, or budgetary reality.

2. *Programs of Decentralization Have Not Led to Reduction in the Number of Mandated Services*

Over the years, systems of patrimonial rule have led to a steady deterioration of administrative capacity (Sandbrook, 1986, p. 127). This progressive decline in combination with economic collapse has resulted in a circumstance where some African states exist virtually in name only, nearly incapable of fulfilling their ambitious self-prescribed roles. In many countries the state has never been strong enough to compel universal cooperation,

especially among segments of the rural population. With their inability to provide basic services, the central administration has become an insignificant factor and segments of the population, especially rural, have simply disengaged (Wunsch and Olowu, p. 5).

At the same time, however, the highly centralized administrative and political model has meant that lower levels of government are often not allowed to try to fill the resulting gaps. Furthermore, over-centralization has been destructive of local self-organizing capabilities. What results is a stalemated state where the central apparatus is administratively and financially incapable of providing services, but has structured arrangements so the lower levels are nearly prohibited from taking care of themselves. Programs of decentralization were in theory supposed to address this situation. In many cases, however, the systems and services the central government requires the local governments to adhere to and provide make it difficult at best for those governments to solve local problems and meet locally defined needs.

Fiscal arrangements are a major part of the problem. Historically, national governments have been reluctant to compete with local jurisdictions for what was viewed as a limited tax base, so national policies restricted local government taxing authority. Even when there is local revenue collection, it is often sent first to the central ministries to be pooled and redistributed. Thus, local access to revenue is controlled which makes it difficult to have local authority over services (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne, 1993, p. 150). As a result, central regulation is not really reduced and though local governments may have new responsibilities they are limited in their ability to meet them.

Through policies of decentralization, local governments have at times been afforded greater revenue raising authority. With these revenues, however, they are required to house and office the personnel they are compelled to have to support the bureaucracies designed for them by the central ministries. Revenue is overwhelmingly spent on administration, with precious little available for services. Research in Niger, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Nigeria demonstrated that though the autonomous local governments may be able to raise revenues more efficiently than the central government, citizens still receive little in the way of service in return for their taxes.

Additionally, national governments often require the local governments to provide specific services and dictate the manner in which the services will be delivered, including the organization of the bureaucracy. In Ghana, the recently formed district governments do not have the flexibility to organize themselves in ways that make the best sense for their constituents. Their centrally legislated mandates make all of the more than 100 district governments in Ghana, regardless of their location, demographics or economic conditions, responsible for the same 22 departments³ and the same 86 specifically described tasks (table 2). The central Ghanaian ministries award promotions, and fix salary levels, provide funding

³ The 1988 local government act mandated 22 departments. That act has since been revised and local governments now have the option for as few as 11 departments.

and determine policies and procedures. Local governments in Niger use their scarce operating and investment funds for personnel over whom they have little or no control and who reportedly contribute little to the social and economic health of the community (Hall, 1992, p. 52). Many other central governments do the same. This makes the costs of service provision in rural areas much higher than it would need to be if wage rates were determined locally. In Ivory Coast, the Ministry of the Interior can veto commune budgets, suspend elected officials, and reverse decisions made by elected officials.

For their part, when forced to pay for both mandated responsibilities and bureaucracies with limited funding, local governments have no choice but to fund their overhead and personnel versus their operational costs. In Ghana, district governments have been quite efficient in raising taxes from new revenue bases, but these funds overwhelmingly go towards personnel as opposed to services. The situation is the same in Tanzania where local roads offices have some decentralized authority, but what funding they have is used for administrative versus operational costs. Operational funds for roads are currently often provided through foreign assistance in Tanzania. Approximately 75 per cent of the recurrent health budget in 1984 in Ivory Coast was spent on personnel. In Mali parents report that enrollments are low because of the lack of adequate and accessible facilities, yet expenditures are typically lower for educational materials than for personnel costs. And, in many locations, field staff sit idly in offices because there is no fuel, or no operating vehicle, with which to make their rounds.

Finally, there is the problem that at times the local governments are simply not prepared to manage, either financially or administratively, the new responsibilities they have received as a result of decentralization. In Tanzania, the central Ministry of Works (for very practical reasons) has limited the portion of the road network it will be responsible for. This means however that the regions and the districts are now responsible for a much larger portion of the road network. Especially at the district level the length of the network far exceeds their present technical and financial capabilities.

In sum, many local government units have experienced significantly increased responsibilities as a result of programs of decentralization. Yet these governments are modeled both by, and after, their central governments. They have little if any flexibility to determine how their mandates should be fulfilled, and opt to meet their administrative and personnel responsibilities, as defined by the national authorities. These expenditures result in a decreased ability to meet their service responsibilities. As a result, local governments function more as "central government outposts than as autonomous self-governing bodies" (Garnier, et al., 1992A, p. 4). What was found in Ghana likely applies to other countries in the process of decentralizing:

Table 2: EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS		
COUNTRY	RELEVANT LEGISLATION	LGU Functions
Nigeria	Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Promulgation) Decree 1989	<p>16 main functions including: economic planning; rate collection establishment, maintenance, and regulation of markets, cemeteries, public shelters, etc.; construction and maintenance; vital statistics and registration; control and regulation of advertising, shops, pets, etc.; licensing.</p> <p>3 functions in association with the state (education, agriculture and natural resources development, and health)</p> <p>"Such other functions as may be conferred upon a local government by the House of Assembly and the state"</p>
Ivory Coast	Law 80-1180	<p>Local government services (including roads, town planning, environment, public hygiene and sanitation, water supply and cemeteries)</p> <p>Socio-cultural and services (including education, public health, welfare, housing, sports culture)</p> <p>Economic services (including loans for agriculture, and livestock farming, forestry, hunting and fishing, mineral resources, transportation, communication, industry and trade, arts and crafts, tourism)</p>
Ghana	Peoples National Defense Council Law 207	The enabling legislation that establishes the Districts and District Assemblies specifies 86 functions. A random sample of examples include: public health; inspection and control of slaughterhouses; control of social establishments; approval of building demolition; building, equipping and maintaining all schools; child and family care; soil and water conservation; establishment and maintenance of tree nurseries; promotion and development of sports

From, "Decentralization: Improving Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa"

The inability of the districts to finance development investments places them at great risk of losing their political credibility. Unless local governments begin to be seen by their constituencies as able to meaningfully respond to some of their demands, local interest and support for the decentralized political process will likely wane (Fiadjoe et al., pp. 11-8).

3. *Services Designed at the Center Do Not Reflect or Accommodate Local Requirements*

When services and the local governments that are supposed to provide and produce them are designed and controlled from the center, they are often poorly matched to the needs of the population they are supposed to serve. Bureaucracies fail when they lack "local" knowledge, communicate poorly, and are unresponsive. When a bureaucracy which is supposed to deliver services at a sub-national level is designed and controlled from above, the communication problems are magnified. Research in Mali found the influence of central authority stifling: "Local time and place information is not systematically collected and utilized in the design, implementation, or execution of public services, creating a serious source of inefficiency" (Hall, et al., 1991, p. 2).

The consequences of services that are poorly designed and unresponsive to local requirements include inefficiencies, inconvenience, and ultimately the decision to simply not partake of the service. In Ghana, for example, the central Ministry of Health designed a compartmentalized approach to district level service delivery, as opposed to an integrated one. That is, different services (e.g., growth monitoring, nutrition education, immunization, and curative care) were offered through different clinics on different days. This discouraged those requiring multiple services from seeking them because it meant having to come and go on successive days. In rural areas this could amount to significant travel time and travel costs. If designed with more district-level information in hand, it is likely rural health systems would be more conscious of the impact of travel costs on the users.

A similar case exists in the education sector in northern Ghana. The district education service's inability to set its own schedule means school is in session during the rainy season when children's labor is most needed to farm. School calendars are established at the national level. Instead of being allowed the flexibility to adjust schedules, districts are unable, for example, to take advantage of relatively inactive periods during the dry season when children might be more available to attend school.

Funding problems also result when service programs are designed and controlled from above instead of from below. In Nigeria there are no officially recognized responsibilities accorded to any level of government below the local government authority, yet there are fewer than 600 of these for the entire population of approximately 90 million. This means all official funding is generated or passed through these large local governments. The decentralization program made the local governments responsible for a greater number of services. Many of the local governments could not fiscally absorb these increased

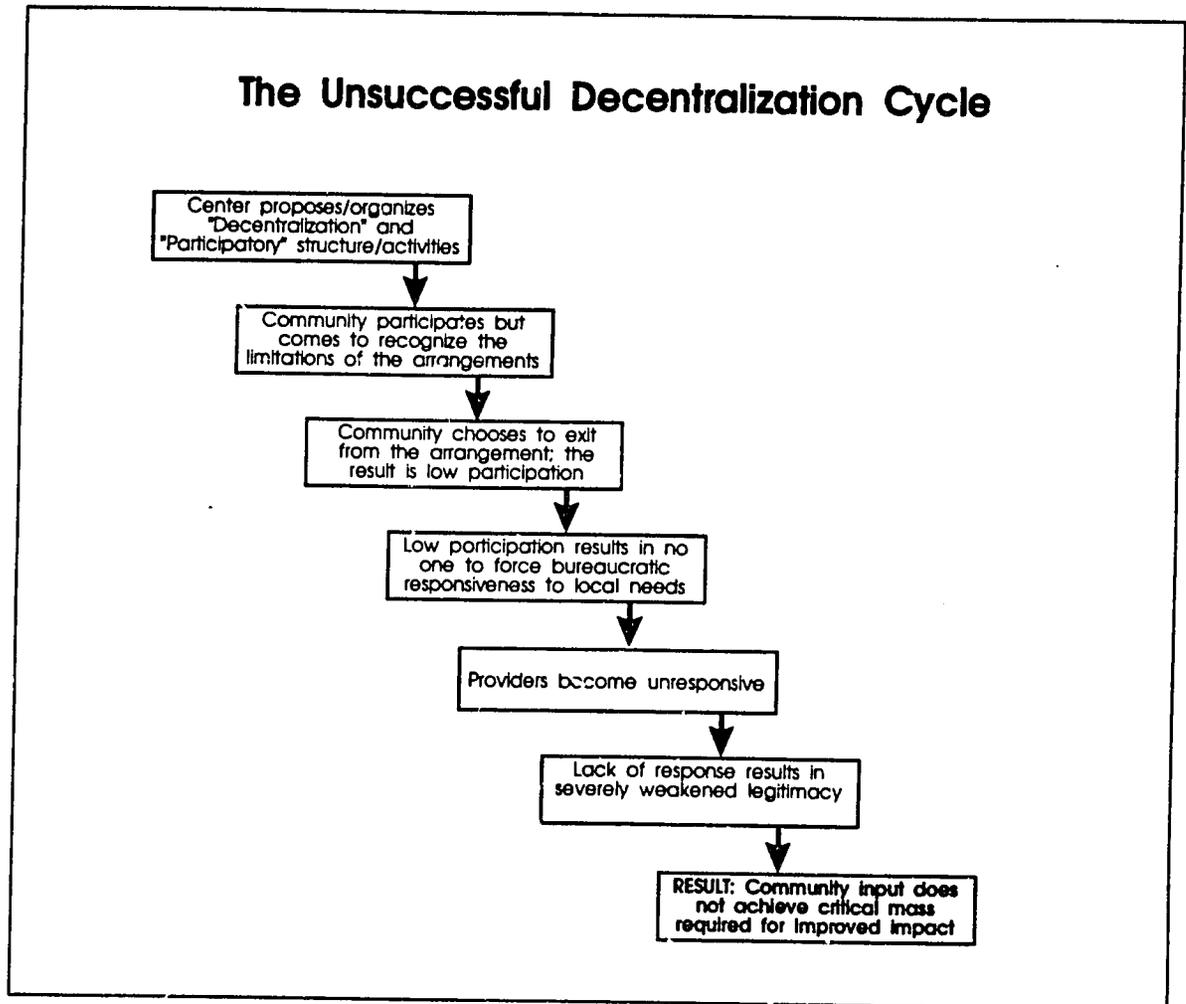
responsibilities. As previously discussed, Nigerian local governments are overwhelmingly dependent on federal transfers, and with the increased number of responsibilities these transfers were clearly insufficient. Furthermore, what transfers were received were not well related to the specific needs of the various local governments. Governments that differ in size, location, etc. confront different problems, and therefore require unique services (with varying costs) to solve them. In Nigeria, however, the "basic formulas used to allocate funds for education and health are not sensitive to the costs to the local government authorities (LGAs) of these particular services" (Ayo, et al., 1993, p. 129).

Honest attempts at increasing the roles and responsibilities of service users can be unsuccessful if the institutional arrangements weigh against local control. The Nigerian Village Health Committees have achieved some positive results, but the "participation through committees" structure is limited. Meeting fatigue has set in with the realization that participation has not advanced beyond committees and meetings: "beneficiaries are not involved in program design or implementation. The forms and structures exist, but there are few incentives, if any, for LGA officials to involve genuinely those who benefit from those services" (Ikhide, et al., 1994, p. 57).

A similar case existed in Cameroon where restructuring of the health service included instituting participatory mechanisms. These mechanisms are however projectized and the obstacles to these health co-management committees illustrate the problems associated with structured participation: complex statutes that are difficult for illiterates, and often educated people, to understand; logistical/procedural complexities; popular perception that membership on committees is based on political influence instead of on technical knowledge; participation on committees is seen as a job which should be compensated versus as a voluntary duty and a responsibility that comes with being a member of the community; the participatory structure is seen as part of a donor project instead of being a part of an integral community activity; there is limited involvement of women and other non-elites; and, there is a basic lack of understanding and acceptance of the process on the part of MOH officials (Gellar and Ndonko, 1993).

All of these problems illustrate the pitfalls associated with approaching participation as an "activity" that will somehow happen if a project has enough participation-related components. Participation is more likely to result due to incentives that are created when institutional structures promote community involvement. The examples from Nigeria and Cameroon are illustrative of many "decentralization" and "participatory" activities. Though on the surface their intentions promote greater local control, community members and services users quickly see that the institutional arrangements are still in the hands of the center. As a result, participation in the activities or services is low, so there is no constituency to force service providers to be accountable; the providers become totally unresponsive which forever weakens any legitimacy the decentralized or participatory structure might have had.

The Unsuccessful Decentralization Cycle



4. *With Deterioration of Services, Citizens Refuse to Pay Taxes*

Local governments, despite the promise of decentralization, have not been effective. As a result, citizens have grown accustomed to their inadequacy and see no sense in contributing much to them in the way of taxes. This pattern typically feeds a vicious cycle: taxpayers do not contribute because they do not get much in return (and in fact have low expectations). This makes it more difficult for the local government to provide services.

Research indicates that the cycle must be broken at the point of service provision. If governments demonstrate a commitment to service delivery and problem solving, and establish their credibility, legitimacy and responsiveness to citizen demands, citizens become more willing to pay their taxes. The success of user fees is dependent on much the same theory; i.e., the user charge succeeds when it creates a strong link between payment and benefit. Citizens want to feel they have some control over how their money is spent before they will willingly part with it. For example, in Mali:

The lack of a clear link between taxes paid and services received is the most evident cause of difficulty in mobilizing resources through tax mechanisms. Nevertheless residents of communities consulted indicated a general acceptance of taxation for service provision so long as local communities were accorded authority to oversee utilization of tax monies (Thomson and Tall, p. 8).

Niger confirms the experience of Mali. In Niger there is a growing unwillingness to accept tax liabilities because they seem arbitrary. Also, the lack of information (especially in local languages) about tax systems, revenue raising, tax liabilities, and the tax-service linkage, provides a significant constraint to revenue mobilization. This constraint affects both the public's willingness to pay and the tax collector's ability to make a credible case for payment.

As a result, in Niger (and likely elsewhere), lack of confidence in the public tax and service systems leads to an expansion of the informal sector of the economy, and shrinkage of the formal sector, as more and more enterprises avoid tax responsibilities. This transformation adds to the public fiscal woes. As national fiscal crises deepen, and central governments can no longer pay for services and the bureaucracies established to provide them, expenditure responsibilities (including personnel and associated costs) are transferred without consultation to local governments, thus compounding their mandated services burden.

C. Conclusion

This chapter described the context through which current programs of decentralized service delivery have developed in sub-saharan Africa. Patterns of centralization have resulted in deconcentrated, as opposed to devolved, institutions that favor the centralization of authority. At the same time, unitary African nations have formally eliminated local institutions even though in some villages it is traditional leaders who provide whatever community leadership, joint problem solving and conflict resolution that is accomplished. From an historical perspective, the traditional social infrastructure was destroyed and replaced with a central state, which with economic collapse became a nearly non-functional state, especially in regard to service delivery.

Furthermore, when services are provided, their real purpose is often the satisfaction of short-term political goals. As Bates describes for the agricultural sector, policy is often derived to cope with political problems whose origins are actually outside of the sector. It is highly likely that public service policy is formulated in much the same way; that is, decisions about how and where services are delivered are based on concerns other than the "problem solving" concerns services are supposed to be designed around. Service programs present opportunities for political and financial gain through rent seeking. The placement of health centers, for example, may have far more to do with political patronage than with improving health services. These financial and political motives can end up controlling the programs.

Those with responsibility to provide the service use them to satisfy their allies. Service decisions too often end up being made to secure particular improvements that meet special interest needs, not general needs.

Bureaucratic centralism has been explained as an attempt by central authorities to control the potential rivalry of local governments, and it has been justified as a necessary engine to drive economic expansion. Ultimately, in reference to its impact on problem solving through provision of public services, the result has been the same:

1. little or no room has been allowed for local governments and/or local institutions to be creative in regard to problem solving;
2. at the same time, the national government's ability to deliver services has collapsed; and
3. when resources are available for services, incentives have encouraged the types of rent seeking Bates describes.

The result has been that service delivery, even when theoretically provided through decentralized local governments, is constrained due to a number of factors:

- centrally mandated local government systems continue to be tied to the central state;
- central authorities tend to mandate what services must be offered, and how they must be delivered;
- services designed at the center do not reflect local requirements; and
- with a decline in the quality of services delivered, citizens have refused to contribute their resources.

In the next chapter we will turn to the ways in which people have tried to cope with these constraints.

III. COPING MECHANISMS

Attempts to cope with the collapse of public services, and the economic crises that contributed to that collapse, have occurred on both the national and local fronts. Locally, communities have attempted to solve problems and generate their own services in the absence of formerly government provided services. On the national and international level states have attempted to restructure their economies so that they operate efficiently, in part by revising how public services are produced and provided. This section focuses on the local coping mechanisms, but opens with a brief discussion of structural adjustment as a national-level coping mechanism.

A. Structural Adjustment Programs - National and International Coping Mechanisms

To expand their developing national economies, many unitary states in sub-Saharan Africa perceived (or were advised) that they needed to raise revenues through levies and taxes on the most viable sector of their economies, agriculture. Establishment of central marketing boards was favored because they provided a convenient vehicle for capturing resources. To maximize the resources available to the government, agricultural producer prices were kept low. Eventually this led to a decrease in agricultural production because of the reduced price incentives to farmers. In turn, agricultural exports declined as did government revenues while the import bills for food increased. What followed were deep economic problems associated with imbalanced budgets, foreign exchange deficits, and over-valued exchange rates. The economic catastrophe which resulted from this pattern is what structural adjustment programs (SAPs) were designed to cure.

Part of the problem that SAPs are designed to remedy is the amount of resources dedicated to support of the national bureaucracy. The typical solution is reduction in the number of central programs and central government personnel, with an increased reliance (at least on paper) on decentralized local governments and their service provision potential. Though the percent of central resources dedicated to public services is often reduced through SAPs, in theory this reduction is supposed to be compensated by more efficient local provision of services, and more market-based production of services. In this respect, SAPs and their accompanying programs of decentralization are supposed to provide a means to cope with the collapse of the central government's ability to provide services.

After more than a decade of adjustment policies, opinions as to their effectiveness differ. Those favoring SAPs point to the number of countries that have adopted adjustment policies, and claim that as a result of SAPs economic growth has resumed and continues to progress; the movement in producer prices for farmers has been positive; the gross domestic product rates have increased; inflation rates have been halved; deficits have declined; military expenditures have been slashed; exports have increased; per capita food production is up; and, currency rates reflect their market value (Friedman, 1994; Jaycox, 1993).

Those who question the positive impact of SAPs say that health and education indicators (especially of children) have declined, that local control of resources and decision making has been reduced through privatization, and that nations have lost control of their own policies (Friedman, 1994; Armstrong, 1993; Brittain, 1993).

The DFM project's research, which has looked most closely at the community level impact of SAPs, indicates more government austerity as a result of structural adjustment, but no obvious improved efficiency. In Niger, the observable impact of the adjustment program was judged to be "ambiguous at best." In Ivory Coast, attempts to implement structural adjustment highlighted how politically unattractive these programs can be. As a result they are inadequately instituted and end up not working. In Nigeria, SAPs were perceived as measures imposed by the center, and were resisted. In Ghana, citizens aware of their country's position as a "darling" of the World Bank wondered where the benefits of SAP were to be found because they did not experience them in their day-to-day existence.

The market approach to development, as exemplified by SAPs, evolved as an alternative to the statist approach. It tends, however, to divorce economic reform strategy from the political process and therefore requires a strong central state to force reforms through. In addition, market reforms are typically macro-oriented and can ignore the multiple foci of micro-level decision making that occurs in diverse societies.

Research in Ghana, Nigeria and Ivory Coast indicated that the macro-level orientation of structural adjustment programs actually tended to re-enforce rather than erode the central authorities:

With the advent of constraints on central government policy making through conditional lending for economic reform, economic policies and service delivery policies are now made by a new centralized, extra-constitutional process involving two authorities: the leaders of the respective countries and the international financing agencies. Resulting policies may be appropriate, but still they are not subject to constitutional limitations and they are easily reversible. Local bureaucrats may regard some of the central directives with skepticism, but cannot ignore them. The number of top-down policies emanating from the capital has certainly increased the workload of local bureaucrats. Since career paths are controlled from the center, bureaucrats have incentives to complete work for central organizations, at the expense of efforts to address local problems (Garnier, et al., p. 22).

SAPs and accompanying programs of decentralization have advocated greater reliance on local government units to correct highly centralized financing, and inefficient and swollen bureaucracies. But for all of the reasons described in section II, and because they are still dependent on the center, the service delivery capabilities of local governments have not been realized.

In terms of their ability to revitalize an economy and make it work again, SAPs and programs of decentralization may in fact be a remedy for a non-functional state. Their policies are, however, tenuous because of the shallowness of their constituency -- in terms of their impact on the majority of the population, they merely represent a substitution of the rules of the head of state with those of the international lenders. A fundamental problem with SAPs is that they assume all situations can be remedied with the same market solution, without regard to existing and underlying physical, material, and community conditions. The next section will look at how communities themselves develop solutions to their own problems.

B. Local Coping Mechanisms

If structural adjustment programs are not a universal solution, then what are the alternatives? Perhaps the fundamental question here is: If given the opportunity, how would citizens design their own local governments and service provision mechanisms? Research conducted through the DFM project has found that local alternatives typically concentrate on problem solving and capitalize on local resources. This section will describe several of those local alternatives.

Citizens can improve the services they receive either indirectly through their governments (i.e., through taxes they pay and through the people they elect), and/or by taking a greater role in service provision and production by, for example, building or repairing a school or a road, or by helping a child with homework. In a time of limited funds, co-provision and co-production of services by citizens can represent an untapped resource. Institutions and governance arrangements can either enable citizens' inputs or impede them; they can provide incentives to co-produce or not.

Central design and provision of services is typically justified by the claim that citizens are uninterested and/or incapable of recognizing and solving their own problems. An alternate view is that people take an interest in their own development and can and will work together to resolve community issues. When this occurs it can be classified as self-governance; i.e., communities have the authority to make and implement decisions, enforce rules and resolve conflicts. Self-governance requires:

- services built on a scale to match natural communities (versus large "efficient to manage" services and jurisdictions);
- latitude to define services and mobilize resources;
- true political devolution of power that cannot unilaterally be taken away; and
- local governments that are more accountable to their citizens than to the central governments.

If these conditions exist, communities and their local governments can become vehicles for unleashing the power of people for their own development. In order to understand how these conditions help to promote local self-governance, it is useful to look at examples of communities that have dealt effectively with local collective problems. These positive examples demonstrate the capacity of communities to identify and solve problems, often through the design and implementation of public services.

Examples are available throughout sub-saharan Africa. In the Cape Verdian village of Mato Baixo, residents stated that individuals have to take care of themselves and their families, and community concerns such as roads and schools are the responsibility of the state. At the same time, however, the society does have a tradition of mutual assistance efforts for agriculture called *djunta mon* and *djuda* which rely on reciprocity as the underlying principle that makes the system work. Other building blocks include rotational savings systems, charity systems, and funeral associations. These various systems "suggest that residents can be resourceful in mobilizing resources to achieve an objective if it brings direct benefits to those involved" (Hobgood, Thomson, et al., 1993, Chap. 6, p. 8). Furthermore,

This multitude of organizations suggests the community has both a strong need for local institutions and a demonstrated capacity to make them work. These local structures are by no means perfect, but they do enable the community to deal with important production and governance problems, whether as a unified group or through sub-units (Hobgood, Thomson, et al., 1993, Chap. 7, p. 7).

Research in Ghana indicated that, "Whatever development was occurring was for the most part locally funded and/or organized: a meeting area in Odubi, animal watering dugouts in Namoo, and a water project in Mafi Kumasi." Furthermore, "The dynamism in the villages, however, depended much more on the residents, their leaders, and their history than on any official government ties between the village and the district" (Fiadjoe, et al., 1992 p. I-4). Some Ghanaian communities have traditions of taboo days where no farm work is done. These days are now often devoted to community labor activities. Such traditions demonstrate an institutional capacity to mobilize resources for development activities.

The Igbo states of Nigeria have long traditions of community development associations (CDAs) which mobilize resources and sanction individuals for lack of participation. Individuals who reportedly might not pay their taxes will contribute to CDAs that typically implement a project where participants see a very direct result and quicker payoff for the resources they contribute.

Even in Zaire, despite that country's financial problems, research demonstrated a willingness of citizens to contribute to non-governmental, community directed services. This willingness was attributed to, "the lack or inaccessibility of public services as well as to popular trust that the funds raised will serve a useful purpose" (Siegel, Hall and McNeil, 1989, p. 9). Resources appear to be available to be channeled, and people are willing to part

with them, if services are available in return. Improved services therefore require not so much an increase in the tax burden, but rather re-direction of it.

Putnam and Ostrom refer to this latent capacity of communities to organize and mobilize resources for solution of local problems as social capital -- the "shared knowledge, understandings and patterns of interactions," based on trust and reciprocity, that individuals bring to productive activities (Ostrom 1993, p. 3). Putnam hypothesizes that, "The social capital embodied in norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government" (Putnam, 1993, p. 3).

Social capital matters for two reasons:

1. it means people know how to do things; they know how to work together to solve problems because they have done it before and because they have institutional capacity that can be built on to get tasks accomplished; and
2. because of social capital networks, people trust one another, not only in terms of having faith that work will be done and people will not be cheated, but also in terms of being confident that if someone does cheat, legal and/or social sanctions will be used against them.

Putnam goes on to say that "Social capital is coming to be seen as a vital ingredient in economic development around the world. Scores of studies of rural development have shown that a vigorous network of indigenous grassroots associations can be as essential to growth as physical investment, appropriate technology or getting the price right" (Putnam, 1993, p. 4).

To answer the question previously posed, it is likely that if citizens had the opportunities to design their own governance units they would more likely resemble their traditional organizations and institutions, which take advantage of their social capital, than their present local government units.

When official programs of decentralization have been instituted, the wrong models have been used. Officials trained in central hierarchical bureaucracies, despite what might be their best intentions, duplicate what they know. As a result, a central ministry model gets replicated in rural areas. Alternative models are needed which reflect and build on existing social capital and institutional infrastructure. The following examples describe some possible alternatives to central government provided and produced services.

Community Development Associations (CDAs)

The organizational and management capacities of many communities are exhibited through their various development institutions collectively known as CDAs. Research in West Africa in particular reconfirmed the importance of CDAs. Through these associations, communities showed (with varying degrees of sophistication) their capabilities to mobilize

themselves and their resources. The focus of their efforts are often construction or repair of roads and schools. CDAs have processes for setting priorities, organizing labor, collecting informal taxes and monitoring progress of projects. Some are rudimentary and some are sophisticated, as are their projects. Regardless, they are usually respected and utilized, offer a service provision alternative, and represent social capital that can be utilized (Fiadjoe, et al., 1992; Ayo, et al., 1993; West and Ostrom, 1991).

There are many local organizations in Mali, for example, that are active in provision and production of public goods and services in rural areas including cooperatives, and village associations. The successful ones seem to exhibit some of the following characteristics:

- they have developed their own institutional arrangements and have grown at their own pace;
- the rules of the CDA are clear and understood by all members, at least in part due to the proximity of the association to its members;
- rules are enforceable due to the power of social sanctions;
- decision-makers are accountable to the membership; and
- the organization is autonomous in the management of its resources and in the determination of its priorities (Gellar, et al., 1990; Hall, et al. 1991; Thomson, 1991).

In regard to the relationship between CDAs and local governments, two issues are important. First, it is important that governments support the efforts of local associations, and promote an environment within which they can flourish. Secondly, governments should use CDAs as models for development and should treat them as parallel problem solving units (i.e. special "governments") that fulfill particular needs and often provide essential services.

Education Services

Perhaps nowhere are the service provision capabilities of a community exhibited better than in the primary education sector. Throughout Africa, from the colonial era to the present, communities have taken on the responsibility to construct, maintain and staff local schools.

With independence, however, the state's responsibility for primary education expanded until citizens viewed the provision of education as solely being a governmental responsibility. In Ivory Coast, for example, the belief that the provision of education is the state's responsibility is fundamental to the concept of education. To ease the costs of production, the state highly standardizes the product (education) and allows no room for adaption to local requirements or changing realities. The curriculum is standard and extremely rigid.

In Ivory Coast and elsewhere, economic collapse reduced the state's ability to provide education services at the same time that employment prospects also diminished. A common reaction was for people to wonder why they should bother to have education when there were no jobs available which required education, and when subsistence farming seemingly did not require an education. With the payoff of an education appearing to be so uncertain, the costs to having a child spend his or her time in school (as opposed to being involved in some other productive enterprise) became higher.

The reaction to the collapse in quality and the seemingly diminished need for education has been the same in many places:

When conditions deteriorate beyond a certain point, few significant benefits derive from the state's expenditure, and parents decide that such a poor service is not worth paying for. They withdraw their child from school and refuse to provide funds they might make available if the school provided adequate learning conditions. This occurred in Ghana; enrollment stagnated in the 1980s when quality was at its lowest. In Nigeria, enrollment dropped from a high of 14.7 million to 11.5 million in 1987 (Garnier, et al., 1992A, p. 47).

Withdrawal from the educational system in this manner is perhaps the ultimate and most drastic coping mechanism, but one which is in everyone's interest to avoid. Communities and families do seem to try to avoid completely exiting from educational systems. In Niger, for example, though the importance of education diminished with a reduction in the number of jobs that required education, communities continued to participate in school construction activities, and school cooperatives continued to raise funds. Rather than completely remove themselves from the education system, families made adjustments. One common and very practical adjustment is for families to determine which member will get an education (versus staying on the farm or learning a trade, for example) and then concentrate education resources on that individual. Another adjustment occurs at the community level. In recent years communities have countered the effects of deteriorated quality and exiting by re-establishing their control over their schools (Fiadjoe, et al., 1992; Ayo, et al., 1993; Garnier, et al., 1992B).

Research has found that efforts to decentralize decision making authority toward communities often yield improvements in one or another characteristic of schooling. These positive outcomes seem to come from two crucial factors. First, the demand for schooling outstrips the state's fiscal capabilities. Thus, communities are obliged to directly devote their resources to paying for education. Secondly, the state's actions in response to community initiatives should ideally hasten the broadening of responsibility, and at the very least should not impede those initiatives (Fass, 1994).

When education, or any other service, is not valued it is hard to generate participation. With greater community involvement and authority it becomes more likely that the education service offered will better reflect what the population deems as needed and wanted; the goals

of education become more closely focused. For example, adult literacy campaigns represent an effort to provide a specific service in a mode that is conducive to the recipient of that service.

In Mali literacy centers run by citizens were found to be very well stocked and maintained in comparison to state run primary schools. In addition, Malian villages have used functional literacy programs as building blocks for other development efforts.

The Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in Gambia offered what is considered to be a successful alternative to state-run schools. Their success has been attributed to:

- CLCs offered classes in local languages that parents could participate in;
- CLCs were community, not state property;
- CLCs were organized by parents and community instructors, not head teachers;
- the CLC stayed open at the end of the day for functional literacy classes and other clubs designed to involve non-enrolled community members;
- community instructors were encouraged to fit into and become part of the community, as opposed to being viewed as outside hired teachers;
- the communities themselves controlled the instructors' salary; and
- instructors were provided relatively brief training, but that training was affordable by the community and was targeted to their roles as community instructors (Thomson and Coulibaly, 1993).

Chad's experience with community-based education is particularly noteworthy. In the past 15 years, growth of primary school enrollment in Chad is almost exclusively due to development of community schools. Villages swelled with populations leaving Ndjamena due to the civil war. These immigrants represented an infusion of social capital that had ideas about self-organizing schools at the same time that the state proved incapable of providing education services (for which they were formerly solely responsible). Also, these immigrants demonstrated a use for education beyond just acquisition of a government job. It was no longer likely that government jobs would be available, which was previously the primary justification for seeking an education. The immigrants, however, demonstrated that education also provided advantages in commerce and in dealing with the government. Eventually, the community schools became catalysts for other decentralized services and self-governance activities.

When Chad community schools burgeoned, the state initially required that they have at least one state-paid teacher. Soon the state could not keep up with the demand for teachers and communities continued to develop their schools anyway. Chad community schools still look to the state for funding, but mostly as a means to supplement what the communities are doing for themselves, as opposed to being the primary source of support. The state is still to a degree looked to for legitimacy and for approval of the quality of education provided (Fass, 1994).

With changing economic climates, the reasons and incentives for education have changed. Educational institutions need to be flexible and adaptable to meet those changing needs. They have to be responsive to their "clients" so they can continue to meet felt needs, and can assure that they elicit the co-production that is required for education to be successful. Schools run by communities are more likely to be able to meet their needs in a flexible way, as compared to schools run by standards set at a distant capital.

The role of the state does not disappear in education or other public services, but it does change. The state is needed to assist and facilitate the work of the communities, to provide legal recognition and legitimacy, and to facilitate information exchanges.

Successful education requires a "critical nexus" between schools, parents, local governments and local economies; we hypothesize that devolved authority can promote this nexus. It is not enough to have communities only responsible, for example, for school buildings. There must also be mechanisms to encourage co-production. Government rules need to encourage citizens to engage in self-managed and self-governed education service provision as one way to overcome gaps in state provided services.

C. Conclusion

This section has looked at the ways in which communities have adapted to a deterioration in the quality and quantity of public services delivered via the state in sub-saharan Africa. We have focussed on community level coping mechanisms because of the limits of nationally implemented structural adjustment programs (SAPs) to address local level service issues. SAPs, whether judged good or bad, effective or ineffective, are aimed at improving macro-level economic conditions. They are not geared towards specific local level needs. And, though typically incorporating programs for decentralization, they sometimes in practice centralize instead of decentralize authority.

How then to accommodate the micro-level? How can services be delivered to the local level in an era of tight budgets? In part, the answer lies in greater reliance on indigenous institutions and existing social capital, and giving indigenous institutions opportunities to evolve into legally recognized "modern" institutions. The social capital of a community, the way in which people interact and cooperate to identify and solve problems, represents a resource to be tapped. Policies and programs could promote and use social

capital, in part through existing institutions, for example CDAs. Community efforts to provide primary education demonstrate that social capital can be mobilized when the state is unable to adequately provide these services.

Services are more likely to solve problems and increase net benefits when people are involved to the degree that they identify problems and design the services needed to address them. When offered services they deem inadequate, users have typically avoided using them. Instead they have developed informal economies. Coping with the crisis has often meant avoiding the state: "In the context of economic deterioration and a corrupt and incapacitated state, local self-reliance is the prime survival strategy for the majority." This involves improving informal economies to meet basic needs, and using more indigenous technologies, crafts, and techniques to provide the goods and services formerly supplied by the state (Sandbrook, 1986, p. 148).

Exiting, that is, choosing to not partake of the government provided service at all, may not be a bad alternative as long as people's problems get solved. However, as Sandbrook also notes, "we must not let romantic notions carry us away" (Sandbrook, 1986, p. 151). Sustainable development requires not only local self-reliance but also a supportive and responsive national economic and political environment.

What is most likely effective is a combination of roles, efforts, and resources. For example, a common form of popular contribution to service provision is mobilization of labor for infrastructure creation, e.g. road work, school construction, and construction of health facilities. State involvement is quite helpful when solving the technical and information problems associated with creation, and operation and maintenance, of that infrastructure; for example, providing equipment and technical know-how for roads at river crossings.

What then are the most useful roles for the community, local governments, and national governments? What works and why does it work? What policies can modify existing incentives or create new ones to prompt both cooperation and co-production?

In the village of Mafi Kumasi in Ghana, communal activities occur on traditional taboo days; that is, days when individuals are prohibited from working on their individual farms. There are fines for those who do not participate and those fines are locally enforced. The village has successfully managed to generate its own, and tap other resources, for construction and implementation of a water system, a latrine project, an electricity program, and schools. The community attributes its success to good information exchange, education and training, self-enforcement of self-designated sanctions, stability, association with former residents, natural wealth, fund raising that is directly tied to service demands, and tradition based authority.

How can the example of Mafi Kumasi be duplicated? What conditions explain its success? Answering these questions is the subject of the next section.

IV. THE PRINCIPLES OF A GOVERNANCE FOCUSED APPROACH TO PROBLEM SOLVING: PROVISION, PRODUCTION, INSTITUTIONS AND POLYCENTRISM

A. Introduction

This section tries to explain what factors would contribute to the success of self-governed public service arrangements, such as those described in Section III. To reiterate, our basic approach has been to judge services on the basis of whether or not they help solve problems. Some of the issues that have impeded services and problem solving are described in Section II. Our theory is that improving the way in which societies organize themselves and the institutions that manage their collective resources, problems, and decision making -- that is, the way societies govern themselves -- resolves some of these issues. This improvement in governance can in part be achieved through greater devolution of authority.

When it is operating well, governance, in regard to improved public services, may involve:

1. promotion and enhancement of the self-defined aims and values of the community that requires the service;
2. transparency and pluralism in the policy options and choices weighed to solve the problem in question;
3. an emphasis on accountability, legitimacy and responsiveness to the public on the part of the public servants tasked with helping to deliver the service;
4. generation of sets of rules by those who agree to follow them; and
5. using these rules as the basis for a rule-ordered relationship between the community and the government (public servants) (Ikhide, et al., 1994, p. 9).

Perhaps most important is that service delivery arrangements "institutionalize rule governed relationships among citizens and officials" in order to sustain these values (Ikhide, et al., p. 10). Too often governance is misunderstood as a process that is conducted by governments, rather than being a process "carried on by citizens through diverse organizations empowered and limited by institutions or rules of law adopted and modified by a people." This misunderstanding has led to bureaucracies and "organizations" rather than "rules, institutions and citizens" becoming the dominant structures of governance (Wunsch and Olowu, p. 289).

In terms of public services the impact of this misunderstanding was that governments and people alike assumed that the organization of government was solely responsible for producing and providing health, education, roads, etc. Economic shocks and political collapses then left people with no services except for those that they have been able to organize (self-govern) themselves.

To promote self-governance and achieve successful service delivery, the following should be used as principles in service design and delivery.

- **The nature of the good or service has to be accounted for in design.**

Problems occur in different sizes and scopes and the people affected by these problems form "publics" of corresponding sizes and scope in an effort to solve these problems. The actions and solutions developed to address a problem must be based specifically on the problem in question, not on a standard approach.

- **A variety of institutions will be required to meet service needs.**

Designing services with specific locales and problems in mind will likely mean the institutions that support those services will have to be specific for the service and the place. As a result, a variety of institutional arrangements may be required.

- **A polycentric approach promotes options, flexibility and sustainability.**

When services are designed and developed centrally with production ease and efficiency as the primary goals, they often do not account for local variances, and as a result fail. To meet local needs, institutional flexibility promoted by a polycentric order (i.e., one where many decision making centers exist which operate with a high degree of autonomy, but which contract and cooperate, and refer to a third party mechanism to resolve disputes between or among themselves) will be required.

- **To be able to operate, institutions will need legal support and recognition.**

Self-governance will require legal support and recognition for the variety of institutions needed to meet a variety of demands.

In the following subsections we exam more closely each of these principles.

B. An Approach to Public Service Design and Delivery

1. *The Nature of the Good or Service Has to be Accounted for In Design*

Goods, and services, display different characteristics or attributes. Depending on these attributes, goods and services are typically characterized as either private or public.

Private goods are those "used primarily by single individuals, or firms which can exclude others from consuming the goods; and potential users of such goods have considerable choice as to whether to consume" (Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne, p. 73).

Public goods are used by many individuals, and it is very difficult and often costly to exclude users. Public goods yield benefits that can be jointly and simultaneously consumed, consumption of the good cannot be withheld, individuals might not even have a choice to make about their consumption, and it is hard to measure use of the good and the benefits that accrue from that use.

In addition, there are also mixed goods and services that exhibit both private and public attributes; for example, education services are directly of benefit to the student who takes advantage of them, but the public can also benefit from that individual's development (for example, when the tax base increases as improved skills result in entrepreneurial activity).

In reference to public goods and services, what we have referred to as "delivery" of those goods or services can actually be divided into two components, provision and production. Provision refers to decisions made about the kinds of goods and services to provide, the quantity and quality to provide, the degree of regulation associated with the service, how to arrange for production, how to finance, and how to monitor the performance of producers. These decisions about consuming, financing, arranging and monitoring are typically made through some kind of public choice mechanism (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne, pp. 74-75).

Production is concerned with the more technical aspects of converting inputs into outputs; that is, making a product or rendering a service.

When delivering a public service, efficiencies can at times be gained, and quality improved, by assigning provision and production activities among various institutional entities. Production and provision decisions should be made based on the service and the circumstances. We will not expand further on the relationship between the attributes of services, and decisions about how they are best provided and produced.⁴ For our purposes what is important is to recognize that it is because services have these complexities (i.e. they

⁴ For in-depth discussions of the attributes of goods, and provision and production, see Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne; and, Ostrom, Feeny, and Picht.

have various attributes, multiple entities can be associated with their provision and production, they can be delivered in a variety of ways, and their delivery can be constrained by many physical, environmental and fiscal factors) that high quality and efficient delivery of services demands institutional options and flexibility. The characteristics of the service determine how best to deliver it, and the institutional arrangements associated with that delivery need to be responsive to those characteristics.

2. *A Variety of Institutions will be Required to Meet Service Needs*

Because public services differ in their attributes, and the environments within which they are delivered, diverse institutions may be required to handle similar services in disparate circumstances. Many institutions playing an assortment of roles may be involved in provision and production of a single service. These institutions, arranged in various overlapping, parallel, or perhaps nested ways, may be required to achieve greater problem resolution and to better match citizen-consumer preferences.

Conceptualizing public services as industries helps to illuminate the variety of institutional arrangements involved with delivery of those services. Roads are a good example of a public service that operates essentially as an industry. When roads are working well it is the result of many actors cooperating and playing many roles, versus all roles being played by the state. For example banks, contractors, state agencies, donors and users may all be involved in road construction, maintenance and repair. The trick is getting the institutional arrangements correct so all these actors work together. With many public services the simplest part of the delivery equation is the technical side. We know how to build, repair and maintain roads. It is the social and institutional side that is difficult to get right.

Efforts to make public service delivery efficient, often through centralization of programs, have sometimes failed because of their inability to adapt to the various needs of various locales. Research indicates that such was not always the case:

one cannot help but be struck by the variety of institutional solutions to these common social problems within the traditional cultures compared to the paucity and uniformity of the options currently available in the modern sectors of the same societies (Ostrom, Feeny and Picht, p. 12).

A number of issues will likely be raised when adopting a multi-institution approach to problem solving. For example,

- How are economies of scale, gained through a degree of centralization, to be balanced with the participatory advantages gained from small institutions?
- What decision-making processes will be required to determine what problems are better solved by whom?

- What is the proper division of responsibilities between community, local, and national level governments?
- To what degree do citizens need to be able to form special governments, and who should make that decision?
- How are disputes among the various institutions to be resolved?

Programs developed to promote decentralization, and the improvements in service quality and efficiency that are to be gained through decentralization, can be said to succeed or fail based on the degree to which they are able to answer these questions. In a general sense what is required are polycentric institutional arrangements that will foster variety, flexibility and options for problem solving.

3. *A Polycentric Approach Promotes Options, Flexibility and Sustainability*

Centralized organizations are bureaucratically attractive because they are based on neat, orderly hierarchies that are perceived to be more easily controlled. Multiple institutions in a decentralized system present a messier and harder to control or understand picture. Most of the "order" of a polycentric system (that is, one with multiple centers for decision making) is emergent rather than located in the structure of the system itself. Centralized and unitary systems, however, are not conducive to the institutional growth, adaptation and flexibility that is required to deliver public services in complex environments.

Multiple institutions in a polycentric system reflect an attempt to deal with the fact that public services have to address many different problems and the different publics those problems create. As previously described, "publics" are those people affected by a problem; different problems have different publics, in terms of size, composition and character. Public problems require collective action by some government(s). What has typically happened, however, is that the options for problem solving are limited:

To obtain services of public utility necessary to make sustained development possible, people need far more governments than they now have, scaled to conform to the geographic domains of problems of vastly different sizes (J. Thomson, 1991, p. 9).

Polycentricity and institutional diversity promote an approach to local government and service delivery that is targeted to the needs of specific localities. A polycentric system is based on:

1. many autonomous units formally independent of one another,
2. choosing to act in ways that take account of others,

3. through processes of cooperation, competition, conflict and conflict resolution (V. Ostrom, 1991 p. 225).

Such relationships are complex and are built on many decision making centers formally independent of each other. They therefore require lots of information exchanges, dialogue and maintenance. Such an approach would be very expensive and likely beyond the means of most states if establishment of multiple service institutions is seen as the sole responsibility of the state. That is why the need to explore a variety of service delivery options is so important, including utilizing existing social capital.

Polycentric provision of services is likely to increase allocative efficiency because there is greater homogeneity of demand in small groups. National governments are more likely to offer homogeneous services and therefore overspend in some cases and underspend in others. "A polycentric decision-making process can more effectively determine the local demand for these goods and services than can a highly centralized bureaucracy" (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne, p. 182).

In theory, different service districts of varying sizes could be established for each of the many types of services provided by the public sector. The boundaries of each of these districts would be drawn in a way that "minimizes the variability of demands within the district and increases the variability of demands across districts" (ibid). It must be recognized that the number of districts that are practical is limited by transaction costs, and the tradeoff that needs to be made between the economic efficiency of small districts, and the technical efficiency of larger ones (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne, p. 183). These limits only strengthen the argument for flexibility and cooperation in order to get the various institutional actors operating together. Polycentricity should open opportunities for local governments to become creative in solving local problems; for example, special districting and/or service arrangements with other jurisdictions.

Properly supported within a legitimizing environment, polycentric institutional arrangements may well increase the potential for a dynamic public service economy with many producers and services.

4. To Be Able to Operate, Institutions Will Need Legal Support and Recognition

Informal polycentricity could be said to be wide spread if one recognizes all of the examples of local "coping mechanisms," where communities have mobilized their social capital to provide services, as "governments" that respond to locally identified problems. The question that must be asked then is how much more efficient could these mechanisms be if they were legitimized. That is, how much more effective would they be in regard to problem identification, and design and implementation of solutions, if the links between recognized local governments and local institutions became more cooperative? What if the focus of the relationship between communities and the state became support to local initiatives, as opposed to that of "the government governing the governed"?

Though the operational process of decentralization continues, to date local action has actually been impeded because of a lack of authority to take action on locally identified issues. Research in the Sahel indicates that:

If a single conclusion about the operational process is possible, it is that the problem in the Sahel is of a constitutional order. Efforts to operationally, managerially decentralize will not suffice under prevailing rules and practice. Extensive new permission will have to be granted, within the constitutional order, that encourages citizens to form experimental forms of government for local problem resolution. Meanwhile, informal organization and non-governmental organization experimentation will need encouragement and most likely protection from instinctively predatory and self-protecting bureaucracies (Hobgood, 1992, p. I-10).

To make a polycentric approach happen, local institutions have to be seen by the state as legitimate partners in management, governance and development. Legitimizing local institutions will help to make their operations as efficient and cost effective as possible, will assure that they have the authority to make and enforce rules, and will clarify the various roles of the institutional actors.

Greater legitimacy for local institutions would make service delivery more efficient in several ways. For one, if local institutions were promoted they would likely offer alternatives to state provided services when they deemed those services to be inadequate. Locally produced and provided services might be less expensive than those offered by the state. The state could potentially offer incentives for communities to produce services that were more cost-effective than those provided by the state. Communities would be more likely to take these risks and invest their resources if they were assured that their decisions would be supported. Also, the state could facilitate development of options by creating an open and transparent environment that kept transaction and information costs low.

Additionally, problems of rural public services (and infrastructure) are often "exacerbated by an absence of institutional arrangements that facilitate and encourage beneficiaries of localized, rural infrastructure to find ways of financing, constructing, operating and maintaining their own projects" (Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne, p. 217). A legal environment that supported local efforts and encouraged investment of time, energy and resources would prompt communities to find their own creative solutions to problems instead of seeking national government help (for which they have to compete with all other localities).

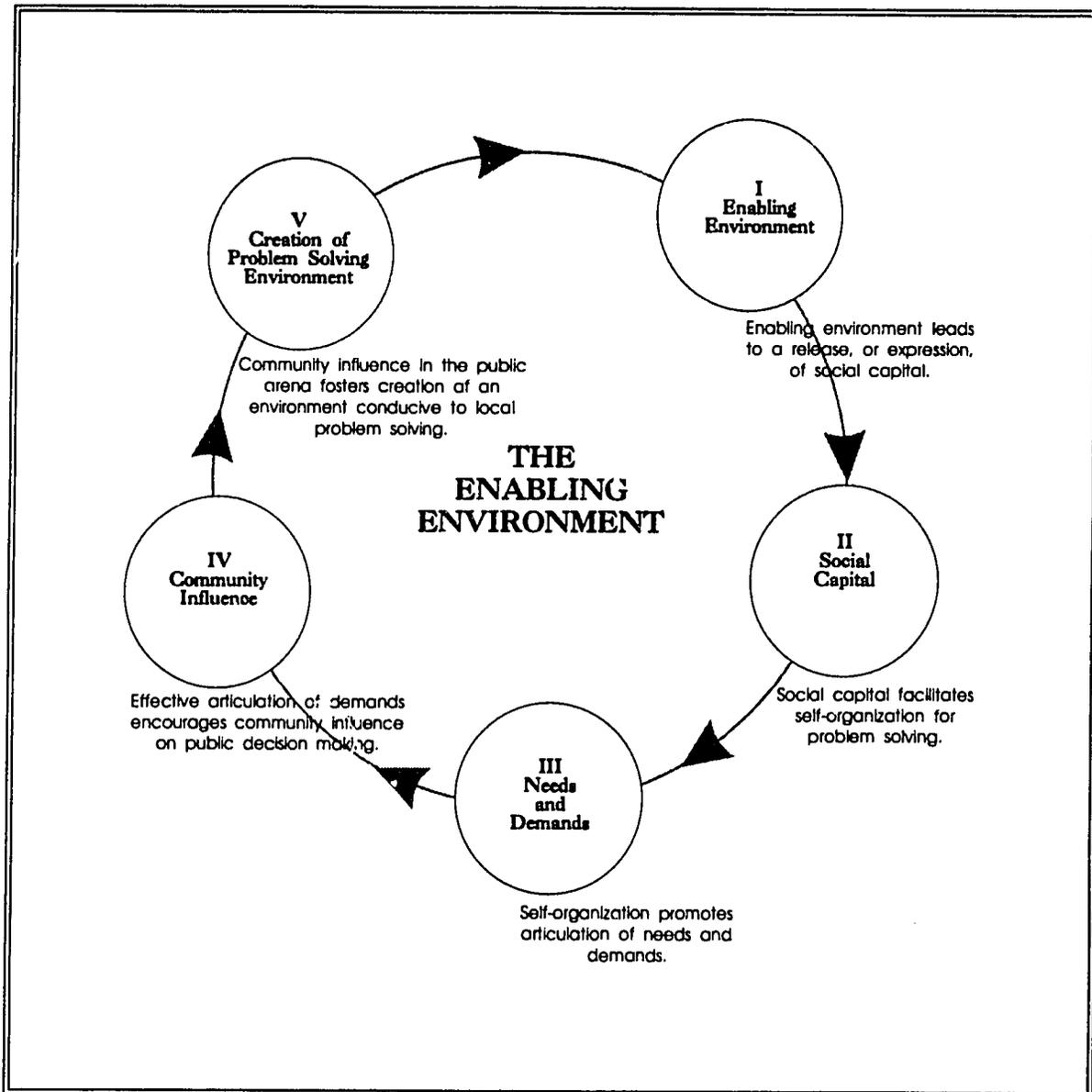
An indispensable condition for promoting self-governance and the commitment of time and effort that it requires, is that people and/or their representatives can make the rules they deem necessary to solve their problems, and that they have the right to enforce those rules. In Cape Verde, for example, in the absence of that authority, residents are reluctant to assume greater authority for public services since they know they lack the capacity to compel

community members to bear their fair share. They hesitate to attempt self-organized activities until they know whether they will be approved by the government or not (Hobgood, Thomson, et al., 1993). With legitimacy, local organizations would be prompted to play a greater role in problem solving as long as they felt assured that the rules they made would be recognized. Furthermore, the state could play a supportive role by providing an overlapping jurisdiction that would mediate conflicts generated as a result of those rules.

Officials at a central level will have to understand, however, that polycentric orders are noisy and conflict ridden. In a strict hierarchy conflicts are submerged and may simmer for a long time unseen by those at the top. One of the reasons that central officials frequently do not support genuine decentralized arrangements is that they usually lead to a greater degree of conflict -- especially if it has been pent up for a long time. Investments in conflict resolution, rather than repression, are a necessary step in establishing polycentric systems.

Finally, a legitimized atmosphere will foster discussion between various institutions and governments, as equal partners, about which actors should play which roles, based on their comparative advantages and efficiencies. And, an open atmosphere of dialogue between partners who are equally recognized by the law will provide for holding accountable those that do not fulfill their ends of legally acknowledged agreements. There is a need to define the rules, authorities, and responsibilities of various government levels so that citizens can know which officials to hold responsible.

In economic hard times, services that are dependent on central government funding suffer markedly from irregular payments and cutbacks. That alternatives to central funding are absolute necessities is well accepted. What is less clear is how much responsibility the center is willing to relinquish in regard to resource control. Devolution and legal recognition of alternative service delivery institutions may require, for example, nation-wide fiscal and tax reform. To make devolution of service delivery responsibilities work will require training and motivation of both the national and local actors. Certainly at the community level, this motivation exists and expresses itself through, for example, adult literacy programs, and church and school construction activities. To be mobilized for further self-governance will require the active support of the state, in part through creation of an enabling environment that recognizes the importance of local institutions and allows them to take problem solving actions.



C. Conclusions

As stated from the beginning of this report, public services are intended to increase the net benefits to a population and to help that population solve problems. These are the simple criteria by which the quality of a service should be evaluated.

The lessons learned from DFM Project field activities in many sub-saharan countries, covering many public service sectors, indicate that problem solving can be improved through a strategy that focuses as much on governance as on technology.

To improve governance in regard to public service delivery requires an approach that focuses on the nature of the good or service being delivered, and avoidance of standardized models; recognition of the complexity of the problems being faced, and the variety of institutional mechanisms that will be needed to solve those problems; creation of polycentric arrangements so that the variety of institutions required can work together in a cooperative manner; and, encouragement of a supportive legal environment.

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