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IMPROVING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

SUMMARY REPORT

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STATEMENT OF WORK

In September 1994, at the request of the Democracy and Governance Section of the Office of Operations and New Initiatives (ONI) of USAID's Bureau for Africa, the Associates in Rural Development, Inc./Management Systems International, Inc. (ARD/MSI) core team on African governance undertook to conduct a secondary analysis and synthesis of a series of assessments it had carried out in five African countries--Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Niger and Tanzania, with additional information from a shorter study conducted in Zambia. The purpose of this study was to produce "a comparative analysis of democratic governance transitions in a number of African countries" leading to an approach to "prioritizing USAID assistance to sustainable development, and to some empirically-based 'lessons learned'." This study was designed to help the Africa Bureau "learn much more about the combined implications of these separate assessments, improve its own policy and strategic formulation of how to support sustainable democratic governance, and contribute to the formulation of strategy and programming for the entire agency by providing systematic analysis to the Global Bureau and PPC." Specifically the study called for the review of a whole set of processes or dimensions of democratic development, to be treated "in a total integrated conceptual framework."

ARD/MSI under the guidance of its former Senior Governance Expert for the African Governance Project, Robert Charlick, assembled a team of experts who had worked on various country assessments, bringing a variety of skills, approaches and field experience. Together this team produced an extensive report, providing detail only hinted at in this summary. The present document focuses more directly on policy and strategic implications of our comparative analysis. Our unifying framework is the notion that democratic governance develops in pieces, through processes that all, in various ways, help broaden political participation and improve accountability. Here we briefly summarize major points of our substantive chapters and offer recommendations and a strategic approach to supporting democratic governance under difficult conditions.

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IMPROVING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA
SUMMARY, LESSONS LEARNED, AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Introduction: Whither Africa? Optimists and Pessimists

For the past five years political scientists and policy-makers in Africa and in Europe and the United States have been talking and writing about a sea change in African politics in favor of democracy. To a significant degree this change was generated by African elites both in government and in civil society who saw governance reform and democratization as essential to avoid further marginalization of Africa and to curtail abuses of those who had thwarted the interests of the majority through their personal, narrow and often arbitrary exercise of power (Kpundeh 1992). Many donors enthusiastically welcomed and supported this change which they hoped would improve "governance" and the prospects for economic development and make African governments more democratic and accountable. From 1992 to 1995 about half of Africa's countries held competitive elections for their top leadership. These elections were generally certified as relatively free and fair, placing the countries' political systems, in the eyes of many, in the democratic category.

During this period there was no lack of pessimists, from those who doubted the durability of these transitions (Sorensen 1993), to those who feared that premature democratic openings would intensify ethnic conflict and promote parochial cultural orientations antithetic to development and progress on a broad scale (Ake 1991; Lemarchand 1992; Zolberg 1992; Ihonvbere 1995; White 1995). Recent events in Niger and Guinea and the ongoing tragedies of Rwanda and Burundi seem to confirm the worst fears and predictions. Yet, despite reversals and even substantial setbacks, the overall pattern of progress in African governance is undeniable, particularly from the perspective of how most Africa governments functioned in the 1980s, and through the prism of a multi-dimensional conception of change.

A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Governance Reform

Some Definitions

USAID and other donors are publicly committed to improving governance and democratizing political processes for two interrelated reasons. First, USAID's overall international development goal is to promote "**sustainable development**" (USAID 1994), *encompassing broad-based and environmentally sustainable growth, popular accountability and empowered participation.* In this view, democracy is part of the desired end state. Second, USAID shares with many other donors the belief that democracy and particularly popular empowerment are vital means through which achievements in other dimensions of sustainable development, notably broad-based, environmentally sound growth, can be achieved.

Several key terms should be defined. In this study **governance** is understood to be *the way a human society organizes itself to solve shared or public problems, to make collective decisions and advance common interests* (Charlick 1992; Charlick, Fox et al. 1994; Fox 1996). Governance involves the manner in which power is distributed and exercised in this process of managing public resources to solve public problems. **Democracy** is a *particular pattern of governance designed to increase the likelihood that governance processes will serve the people, usually through open political competition, through the broadening of legitimate political participation and through the establishment of legal principles and practices which limit the capacity of rulers to subvert these developments.* From this perspective democracy is not a single or unidimensional entity. Democratic governance is not necessarily **good governance**. Good governance is generally viewed as *the management of public resources in ways that are effective, efficient and responsive to real societal needs, involving both accountability and transparency (World Bank 1992).* Democracy may or may not improve governance in all of these ways, although it should render governments more accountable. As they are committed to sustainable development, the governance goal of donors like USAID should be *to maximize the convergence of good governance and democracy, so that public processes are both effective and capable of being held accountable for serving the people.* The convergence of these two we call simply **democratic governance,** but it would be more accurate to call it effective democratic governance. A governmental system which embodies both we call a **democratic developmental regime**– a regime *capable of promoting development, while incorporating basic democratic principles.* Such a governmental system would constitute a good partner for external agencies which are attempting to promote sustainable development, and the weakness or absence of such a partner limits the effectiveness of development assistance

Not all democratic regimes are the same. One importance difference, stressed in this study, is the degree to which rules governing the accountability of officeholders are institutionalized, and who is able to exercise these rules. A distinction is made between **elite or limited democracies,** in which *political participation beyond periodic elections is virtually monopolized by elites and in which most limitations on the exercise of power are exerted laterally among elites,* and **representative democracies,** which involve *greater participation by non-elites and some vertical accountability over officeholders.* Elite democracies are further divided into those that are pacted and those which are not. In **pacted democracies** rules *governing intra-elite conflict and use of power are well established and accepted, implying an agreement on the part of elites to limit their discretion and winner-take-all behavior vis-à-vis one another* (Di Palma, 1990; O'Donnell, 1986).

Assessing and Understanding Democratic Progress: Eight Processes

Political scientists usually say that a ***transition*** is the interval between one regime (or set of governance rules) and another (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). They normally say that a democratic transition is complete after a watershed event, usually a successful competitive election whose results are widely accepted, has taken place (Bratton and van de Walle 1993). Progress or success, in this case, is based on advances in one dimension or process of governance --competitive

selection of leaders. Another way to look at progress is to identify a range of ways in which democratic governance can be furthered, chiefly by making accountability more effective and participation broader. Elections are only one way of expanding accountability and participation and hence of improving democratic governance. This concept of progress or improvement of democratic governance is closer to what most political scientists understand as the consolidation or deepening of democracy, and what they sometimes call the "second transition."

This study adopts this understanding of democratic progress and examines evidence for improvements in democratic governance in "pieces," as the emergence and institutionalization of different processes for enhancing accountability and participation (Sklar 1987; Schmitter 1992; Oakerson 1995; Sklar 1996). We identify eight governance processes through which progress can be made to improve accountability and participation:

- **the electoral and representational process,** whereby public involvement in the choice of leaders is expressed and political parties can develop and compete to structure those choices;

- **the public deliberative process**, whereby political actors can exercise institutionalized roles to consider law independently, raise questions about executive policies and performance, and even connect lawmaking to the broader public through representational and constituency roles;

- **the public adjudication process**, whereby applications of law and exercise of executive and police powers can be considered independently and objectively guided by ordinary and organic (constitutional) law and precedent;

- **the multi-level governmental process,** whereby the organization of formal government into several levels of authority can provide for the limitation of authority of each, the expansion of participation in governance, and the sharing of governance with less burden falling exclusively on centralized government.

These four processes encourage accountability within the elite (both incumbent and opposition). All imply also the possibility of expanding participation at least to counter-elites and sometimes beyond (as in the case of constituency-based representation in parliaments).

Three other processes focus more directly on broadening participation with some but lesser emphasis on promoting public accountability:

- **the pressure group process**, whereby people with common interests can bring their concerns and demands to the attention of government in the search for favorable action;

- **the concertation process,** whereby various interest groups (such as business people, workers, farmers, and consumers) concerned with economic management and policy-making can

jointly bring their demands to the attention of governmental authorities and can negotiate with government; and,

- **the self-governance process,** whereby some political space is left to nongovernmental associations, such as churches, community associations, women's networks and other informal associations, to govern themselves and, within the structure of the law, resolve public problems at their level. This is an aspect of what we have called **shared governance**.

In addition to these seven processes, there is one overriding process which we call the **constitutional process.** Constitution-making not only codifies agreements among significant political actors; constitutions specify how authority is to be distributed and represent understandings about ways in which conflict over the operation of all other governance processes are to be resolved. Moreover, constitutions establish fundamental law and, at least theoretically, enshrine as beyond the reach of ordinary law principles of basic rights critical to democratic practice, such as the rights of association and expression.

The approach taken in this study is to view improvements in democratic governance as the development of these eight processes or dimensions, and to evaluate them in terms of how well they improve accountability and broaden participation. This approach suggests a variety of ways in which accountability and participation are enhanced. Different societies will develop these processes at different rates and in different ways.

Implications of Configurations of Democratic Governance for Sustainable Development

Understanding how these dimensions combine permits the analyst to determine where problems are likely to exist in the country's system of governance at a given time, and hence where opportunities may exist to assist in further improvements. The development of processes of democracy in different combinations (patterns or configurations) are likely to have markedly different implications for sustainable development. If the goal of a development agency such as USAID is to promote sustainable development, then it is important to understand how these political processes are likely to effect the potential for broad-based and sustainable economic development.

Much of what we must learn about unique processes of improving governance must come from practice and observation in complex situations. Table I (see, p.7) presents only a simplified typology of how democratic processes combine and what are likely consequences for sustainable development.

Contexts and Contingency Analysis

Contextual factors greatly affect how advanced in specific democratic governance processes combine, whether a given society is likely to forge an elite pact or develop a more broad-based democratic system, and whether the society will stabilize and institutionalize any of these advances.

Social science theory suggests a number of factors that affect how successful a society is likely to be in improving and stabilizing democratic governance. The most important context variables cited in the literature are:

- level and type of economic development (Lipset 1959; Huntington 1991);

- degree of socioeconomic differentiation, i.e. extent and power of middle and working classes (Moore 1966; Mainwaring, O'Donnell et al. 1992; Rueschemeyer, Stephens et al. 1992);

- degree to which patrimonial or bargaining cultures exist among elites (Ake 1991, Huntington 1991);

- prior experience with democratic institutions at national level (Huntington 1991, Bratton and van de Walle 1994);

- the configuration of forces in the fall of the previous regime: incumbent dominated, counter-elite dominated, mass mobilization (Huntington 1991; O'Donnell 1992; Bratton and van de Walle 1994);

- strength of local-level institutions and habits of association;

- degree to which external actors who promote democratic development have influence over national elites; and,

- economic performance of predecessor and successor regimes (Huntington 1991)

Context factors set some broad parameters for understanding both the likely distribution of power, based on interests and resources, and probable constraints and opportunities, such as the institutional history of parties and pressure groups and the degree to which democratic processes have developed.

From a review of factors historically associated with the emergence of elite (or pacted) democracies and with more representative democratic systems, and from a survey of conditions which

pertain in the countries studied, it is clear that much social science theory would rank these countries as among the least likely in the world to develop and sustain democratic practice in national government. For the policy-maker two implications follow:

- Promoting democratic governance in these contexts will require a long-term perspective and a tolerance for high risk of failure of particular efforts; and,

- While apparently unfavorable context factors cannot be ignored, specific conditions suggest ways to support conscious human activity (what we call human agency) to mitigate negative conditions and encourage positive ones. This is the role of strategy which is discussed below.

TABLE 1

PATTERNS OR CONFIGURATIONS OF DEMOCRACIES

Accountability	Participation- Degree of Inclusiveness	
	low	high
low	**Weakly institutionalized limited elite democracies** Processes of intra-elite accountability (such as independent deliberation and adjudication, and well accepted electoral rules) are weakly developed and constitutional rules are ambiguous or widely challenged. Processes of broadened participation (such as pressure groups, and concertation) are weakly developed. Legally authorized self-governance is weakly developed. Meta (constitutional) regime-weak. Developmental implications: weak and soft state, unable to stimulate or facilitate development. Probability of corruption and ineffective use of resources is high. Examples: Niger, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ghana.	**Mass democracies with weakly institutionalized states** Intra-elite accountability processes are weakly developed, although the party system may be fairly strong. Constitutional rules are largely ineffective. Processes of broadened participation (such as pressure groups and self-governance de facto are stronger and more institutionalized, but concertation negotiations with the state are weak Developmental implication: strong but uncoordinated local and regional development possible, but limited by absence of reliable state mechanisms. Local governance may be more or less participatory, but can also be based on local elite rule (privatization of resources).
moderate to high	**More institutionalized (pacted) elite democracies** Intra-elite accountability processes are more fully developed, as are constitutional rules and agreements. Processes for broadening participation and mass accountability are weak, as is, generally, legally sanctioned self-governance. Development implications: fairly strong and centralized state; limited capacity to stimulate local development or resolve societal conflicts. Examples: Botswana, Mali (?)	**Representative democracies with stronger states** Both intra-elite processes and processes for broadening participation are more fully developed and accepted. Constitutional rules may be contested but are difficult to change and are widely accepted. Strengthen and legal acceptance of self-governance can vary Developmental implications: Most capable of promoting development agenda and facilitating local development, but governance processes are often slow with high transaction costs.

Assessment of Democratic Transitions in Five African Countries

Substantive chapters of our comparative work review the development of democratic governance processes in five countries. This section briefly reviews the main findings of these chapters.

The Constitutional Process

General Observations:

1. Constitutions contribute to accountability by distributing authority and thereby providing incentives and disincentives to those in positions to exercise state power Constitutions are only one way in which accountability can be increased. Constitutional *rule* are not self-enforcing; they are effective only if they can be invoked and enforced.

2. Constitutions operate in a specific environment which includes historically shared cultural norms of behavior, and circumstances under which authority is exercised. There are no standard forms of constitutions that can be counted on to produce the same outcome in different settings.

3. Constitutional rules are not set forever. There must be a learning process whereby political actors come to understand what works in the institutional framework provided, what must be changed and how to affect change within an overall framework of stability. Constitutions work only if change can take place legally but not too easily or at the whim of a new majority.

4. Constitution-making is a major way in which elite pacts are negotiated and expressed Constitutions help assure all actors of some predictability in the behavior of winners and of losers--and that today's losers may become tomorrow's winners.

5. Constitutional settlements also help set conditions for broadening popular participation and for exercising popular accountability through assurances that basic rights can be exercised without undue costs.

6. Constitutions are therefore vital tools for consolidating an array of democratic processes, and they do so to differing degrees.

Country-Specific Observations:

1. In the countries studied, constitution-making varied considerably in how much it involved politically relevant actors in new social understandings and agreements. The process was fairly extensive in Madagascar. In Niger and Mali it involved only elites. Ghana's constitution-making

process was the most closely orchestrated from the top down, but resulted in substantial public involvement and in a document which dealt with a number of political conflicts. Tanzania's constitutional reform, also narrowly orchestrated (by the ruling CCM party), does not represent a new social compact.

2. For a variety of reasons, the new constitutional rules of the African countries studied have not been effective in checking the power of the executive. Specifically, they have failed to limit executive dominance of the legislature. Where a single party still dominates both the executive and the legislative branches, constitutional authority of legislatures has been weak. This is particularly true where the legislature has exclusive power to amend and where, in the French legal tradition, constitutional rules become operational only when they are translated into specific law. Most constitutions, particularly those influenced by the mixed presidential/parliamentary system of the French Fifth Republic, are heavily biased in favor of executive power.

3. With few exceptions constitutional provisions for independent judiciaries have thus far provided judges with insufficient incentives and protections to act independently of political leaders. Ghana's judiciary has been the most notable exception, although in Niger, Madagascar and even Tanzania there is evidence that judges have increasing regard for the rule of law and want to defend their institutional prerogatives.

4. In the countries studied, constitutional provisions have not been extensively used to design electoral systems. Either parliaments or executives may influence decisively the rules which most directly affect representation, such as the drawing of constituencies. Only to a limited degree do these constitutions defend the fairness and representativeness of electoral rules.

5. Through assurances of freedom of association and expression, African constitutions have advanced the capacity of counter-elites and even of non-elites to make demands on government and to expose excesses of authority. But insofar as executives have dominated parliaments, they have successfully sponsored legislation to limit these rights--press laws, registration acts, etc. Only in Ghana does the constitution restrict such "claw back" legislation.

6. By helping create more favorable legal environments for nongovernmental organizations and informal associations, African constitutions have contributed to self-governance. They have done little, however, to promote decentralization.

Decentralization: Multi-tiered Government and Expanded Participation and Accountability

General Observation:

According to the theoretical literature and to recent surveys of decentralization experiences (Manor 1995), decentralization improves democratic governance by enhancing participation, strengthening the perception of leaders that mass opinion matters, and making local government more responsive. This seems to be true even when the character of decentralization is ambiguous in terms of how much real authority is devolved to elected local government.

Country Specific Observation:

1. Not much legally mandated decentralization has yet taken place in the countries studied But communities and other local-level societal units have developed considerable governance functions, largely for survival in the face of nonfunctioning states. It is problematic to call this trend de facto "decentralization".

2. The impact of legal decentralization that has occurred in Ghana has been limited by insufficient resources and authority to manage revenues, and by insufficient authority over personnel at the district level and beyond. Decentralization has not noticeably increased participation or accountability thus far.

3. If Ghana is any guide, even limited decentralization seems to contribute to democratic governance by establishing the concept of representation. In Niger and in Mali, where representation is to be on an "at-large" basis and where constituencies are large, the effect of representation is likely to be less.

4. Thus far, decentralization has had a limited impact on linking local communities to formal government because community and self-governing associations have no authorized roles but those mandated and created by the ruling party and state. This is the case of Ghana, where local government has been functioning for eight years. Thus far decentralization has not helped reduce the gap between local people and government. What relationship does exist between these levels is based purely on efforts to obtain patronage.

5. Mali appears to be moving toward meaningful decentralization. It is being planned with considerable consultation with community leaders. Local governments may gain significant taxing authority which may prove flexible enough to permit them to link with genuine local-level associations Legislation currently before parliament will determine exactly how these matters will be resolved.

6. Our studies raise two other important issues concerning short-term effects of decentralization. First, given the nature of local-level political life, effective local government would not necessarily be inclusive or participatory. Local-level leadership is often based on gerontocracy and patriarchy. On the other hand, local associational life in rural Africa often does provide means of holding leaders and other members accountable (Thomson and Coulibaly 1994). Second, there is still considerable question whether many leaders and members of local associations who have been ignored by government want to be linked to government should they have the opportunity. Government is still often viewed as predatory and based on alien cultural norms (Ekeh 1975; Hyden 1980; Lemarchand 1992; Ellis 1995). Although empirical evidence of effective legally mandated decentralization in Africa is still slim, there is reason to doubt that decentralization will be a panacea or even, in the short term, a major factor in deepening and consolidating democracy.

Parties and Electoral Systems

General Observation:

Elections are supposed to reduce intra-elite conflict by providing a relatively fair means of establishing strength, while not totally disenfranchising the losers. Political parties are supposed to increase democratic participation and to mediate many social conflicts by channeling and aggregating demands of diverse groups into a limited number of mediated options. Parties are also supposed to broaden political participation by providing meaningful choices among distinct sets of interests. Parties contribute to intra-elite accountability by providing the means by which a loyal opposition can be organized and can challenge the behavior of incumbents.

Country-Specific Observations:

1. Even the poorest Africa countries with the most unfavorable conditions for stabilizing democratic governance, including all of those in this study, have been able to manage relatively free and fair elections. Only in Ghana and Tanzania, where elections were managed by an incumbent elite, was the fairness of the electoral process, though not the final outcome, in serious doubt.

2. Thus far elections have played much less of a role thus far than was hoped in increasing elite and mass accountability. Winners and losers have shown by their actions following the elections that they do not accept many of the limitations democratic constitutions and other institutional arrangements place on their behavior. To consolidate their power they have tended to pursue stratagems that openly contradict the norms of democratic institutions.

3. It is too early to discern how specific electoral rules are working to increase or limit accountability and representation, but in some cases electoral formula appear to have been expressly designed to favor one elite group or party over another. This appears to be the case of the Malien

system of election to National Parliament by multi-member, winner-take- all constituencies which greatly exaggerate ADEMA's representation in parliament.

4. The legitimacy of elections as conflict-resolving mechanisms is also problematic in a number of cases. National electoral commissions have not been sufficiently neutral in Tanzania and certainly not in Zanzibar, or in Ghana).

5. In the countries studied, political parties thus far have done little to structure meaningful electoral choices because they have tended to fragment into personal organizations. Parties are so highly fragmented that in most instances party identity and differences are associated more with mercenary gain than with clearly distinct long-term interests. This has done little to increase participation, even defined as electoral turnout, and offers little prospect of improving either lateral (intra-elite) or vertical (mass) accountability.

6. Only in Ghana do prospects for a stable party system based on a choice of interests appear to be emerging. If so it is because Ghana has a more favorable socioeconomic environment than the other five countries, with better developed middle and working classes, higher rates of income and literacy, and a democratization process taking place in the context of at least moderately successful economic growth.

Media

1. All of the countries studied have experienced a remarkable growth in independent media

2. Print media have played an especially important role in challenging previous authoritarian regimes.

3. The media continue to serve as watchdogs of government action and as a source of political education for elites and counter-elites. Only in Tanzania with print media, and in Mali with rural radio do the media impact non-elites to any significant degree.

4. The watchdog and leadership accountability roles of the media reflect less and less the functioning of independent news sources and increasingly, media alignment with parties, interest groups and commercial interests of media owners. These biases, along with general financial weakness, may render the media in future less useful as a source of honest questions and information that increase public accountability.

Formal Pressure Groups

1. In all of the countries studied pressure groups, particularly those associated with formally organized economic interests, played a significant role in movements to overturn authoritarian governments.

2. Their capacity to do so is due in part to economic liberalization which freed formal civil society to a significant degree,

3. Currently these interest groups are so weak that it is difficult to view them as an important continuing sources of pressure for democratic reform. There is evidence, however, that as economic liberalization proceeds these groups are rebuilding and getting stronger.

4. There are several reasons why economic interest groups, particularly business groups, are limited in their capacity to influence governmental policy: First, economic liberalization has not yet proceeded far enough to produce a strong business class (bourgeoisie) in most African countries. Second, business associations and organized labor still depend heavily on government. In several countries, especially Tanzania and Mali, this dependence is made worse by the continued dominance of the state by a single party, producing a single market for public procurement. Moreover, business interests are badly divided between commercial and manufacturing groups which favor very different governmental policies..

5. As a pressure group, labor is still very weak because it is still just emerging from decades of government domination, and unions have little trust from their membership. In the countries studied, unions, like business, depend on government employment. Unions are further weakened by the very large size of the informal labor sector they do *not* represent.

6. In the countries studied, associations of farmers are just re-emerging from state domination and have not yet developed the capacity to lobby the state effectively. In Mali, there are signs that associations of cash crop producers are beginning to develop lobbying capacity over locally specific conditions, at least vis-a-vis the firms and para-statal enterprises with which they work.

Non Elite Civil Society Organizations

General Observations:

1. So far, nonformal and local associations have been most effective in asserting their right to self-governance, to provide basic services to their members and, increasingly to play a role in managing common resources such as forests and watersheds. These developments have come from a more favorable enabling environment, combined with the de facto disengagement of formal governments from many of these processes.

2. Civil society associations have been much less successful at broadening participation beyond the local level, or in influencing governmental actors or making them more responsive and accountable. This is as much because there has been no profound change in the behavior of government, as it is due to characteristics and weaknesses of local civil society associations themselves. Non elites in local associational life still tend to see formal government as either predatory or detached from them, rather than as potential partners in the resolution of local problems.

Country-Specific Observations:

1. Civil society associations at the local and intermediate levels have benefited considerably from political liberalization which has made it possible for them to function legally. In all of the countries studied there has been dramatic growth in the density and variety of these associations.

2. These associations themselves played no significant role in this liberalization process or in the collapse of the previous authoritarian regimes, and were generally excluded from transition processes such as National Conferences.

3. Local associational life is still limited by legal restrictions dating from the colonial period, and by continued efforts on the part of most governments studied to control them

4. Genuine associations must compete with the remanent of state-mandated associations such as top-down cooperatives in Niger, and Parent-Student Associations in Mali).

5. Associations are in danger of losing their autonomy as political parties and traditional authorities attempt to take control of them. To the degree that this is happening, it weakens their independent capacity to play governance roles and to broaden political participation individually and in higher-level associations.

6. Thus far, local-level associations in the countries studied have had little success in forming intermediary groups, such as federations, to increase their power and better defend their interests This process is just starting to occur in Mali with the formation of several farmer "unions."

7. Thus far, local associations are linked to higher-level governance processes mainly through international nongovernmental organizations, like World Education and CLUSA and through a few national public interest NGOs.. This pattern, which many see as transitional, poses serious problems in the short-run inasmuch as interests of elite national NGOs or even I/NGOs are not the same as those of local association members.

Women and Democratization

General Observations:

1. The involvement of women in democratic politics cuts across all eight of the processes outlined above. It is vitally important to democratization, offering unique opportunities to support non elite accountability and participation.

2. In the 1990s many countries saw an unprecedented degree of mobilization of independent women's organizations in supporting women electoral candidates, in training women leaders, in carrying out civic education, in working for legal changes in the status of women in the constitution-making process among other activities. Yet all too often women found themselves thrust by other opposition forces into the shadows as male representatives have dominated the leadership of political parties and movements seeking political reform.

Country-Specific Observations:

1. Women have generally found it easier than men to take advantage of political liberalization because of their considerable experience of maintaining social and economic networks and the organizational skills they developed, especially in Tanzania and Mali.

2. Because women were frequently excluded from elite networks and patronage machines, they had less at stake in maintaining the old order and were more open to change. Patterns of authority and organization they developed were more supportive of democratic accountability and inclusiveness, especially in local associational life.

3. Newly emerging women's associations are more likely to assert their autonomy from elite political actors such as political parties, since they associate such linkages with subordination, political marginalization and the narrowing of their agendas. Not all women's associations, however, are free of external political and administrative control, e.g., 31th December Women's Movement in Ghana and the Women's Union (UWT) in Tanzania. There are even instances where newly formed associations of elite women are attempting to establish central control over local branches in ways that remind women of previous practices (RFN in Niger).

4. Women's associations operating in a newly liberalized environment have expanded their functions beyond providing social services and enhancing economic initiatives. They have begun attempting to link up with and influence national policy makers on such issues as women's rights, land tenure problems, and sexual harassment. Nonpartisan organizations have emerged to encourage women's participation in the electoral process , educating women about political participation in a multiparty context, training and assisting women candidates and lobbying parties to endorse more women candidates. Women's organizations have also been active in bringing gender perspectives to

bear on constitution-making processes in countries like Zambia and Malawi They have done this through a combination of umbrella organizations, such as the Tanzania Gender Networking Program and the National Women's Lobby Group in Zambia and through specialized associations of women professionals including lawyers and journalists.

5. The success of these efforts is still very modest. Governments often see these associations as a threat and maintain legal structures which seriously constrain their operation as well as that of other nongovernmental organizations

6. Women's organizations have contributed to broadening political participation among women both as voters and as office seekers. Because they are under pressure from political parties to affiliate and become wings (a subordinated status in the past), women's organizations usually try to remain nonpartisan, but do so with increasing difficulty.

7. Women's issues continued to be marginalized in a multiparty context. The burden of articulating women's issues still falls largely on women and male parliamentarians are not always ready to take seriously their concerns. Legislative democratization has been only marginally helpful since women members of parliament are often not closely connected to women's organizations, especially in countries where there are reserved seats for women..

8. Above all, women's involvement in political life has begun to alter the notion of what politics is all about, focusing on resolving specific issues of communities, neighborhoods and families, rather than on capturing power and the control of the state. Women's mobilization has an immediacy to it. Women are most likely to be embroiled in local day-to-day struggles over access to community and household resources. Women are making their most important contributions to democratic consolidation as they work to bring about improvements to the quality of life of their families, households, neighborhoods and communities. Whatever headway is made at the national level in women's leadership is ultimately contingent on democratizing gender relations in the home and in the local communities.

Findings: General Conclusions And Lessons From Country Studies[1]

The African Context

1. Even by the standards of "developing" countries" the socioeconomic context in the countries studies is very unfavorable (see Table 2, p.18). The economies of these countries have been declining or at best growing very slowly over the last decade, leaving low levels of economic development most Africans still living in poverty. Compounding the problem of democratic consolidation is the fact that most of the transitions studied took place in a context of disastrous economic performance by predecessor regimes.

2. The kind of growth which these societies has undergone has left them, with the exception of Zambia, with tiny industrial working classes, with workers mainly employed in public sector jobs. Even with a decade of economic liberalization, the ownership class (bourgeoisie) is weakly developed, mainly commercial, heavily dependent on public contracts. The vast major of the population is rural and agrarian. All of these factors mitigate against democratic development. The only positive socioeconomic condition is that, for the most part, no large land-owning class dominates agriculture in these countries.

3. This pattern of socioeconomic development means that elite political conflict is mainly over control of the state as a resource, and is not deeply rooted in different economic interests. In this context it has been difficult to forge consensual pacts among elite factions based on the compromise and guarantee of these distinct economic interests.

4. In all of the countries studied, patrimonialism still dominates along with winner-take-all behavior, and 'bargaining cultures" have barely begun to emerge at the national level With the exception of Ghana none of the countries studies has had much experience with democratic politics and institutions associated with democratic practice, such as democratically-based political parties, are poorly developed.

5. The persistence of informal local-level institutions and traditions of association in parts of Mali, Madagascar and Ghana is a favorable element for building broader-based democracy,

6. The level of aid-dependence of these societies is generally high, contributing to the potential of donors to have influence on democratic development, if they are able to coordinate their actions On the other hand, economic interest in these countries on the part of donor states is not high, judging by the extraordinarily low level of foreign investment, as compared to investment in East Asian.

TABLE 2
INDICATORS OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Ghana	Mali	Niger	Tan-zania	Mada-gascar	Zambia	SSA	East Asia
Human Development @ Index (1992, 1.0 = best)	.482	.222	.207	.364	.432	425	389	57
Per capita GNP 1991-93 US $ (1987)	390	201	283	166	207	263	450	1460
GDP Growth Rate (%) 1981-87 1988-93 1993	 2.7 4.1 3.7	 2.3 3.0 7.7	 -2.5 .4 1.4	 2.1 5.6 NA	 -0.1 .7 1.9	 .1 .6 6.8	 1 2 1.5 .9	 7 8 7 6 6.3
GDP Growth per Capita 1988-93 (%)	1.2	5.7	-2.4	2.3	-1 7	8	-1 3	5 7
GDP from Industry 1992 (%)	16	13	17	12	14	47	34	38
Industrial Growth 1988-93 (%)	5.0	2.0	1.6*	5.6	.3	2.3	1.2	9 1
Debt Service Ratio 1993	25.7	8.5	25.0	26.6	15 6	38 1	18 5	13 5
Official Development Assistance % GNP 1991	11.3	18.5	16.5	39.2	16.4	14.0*	10.0	.7
Direct Foreign Investment 1991 US $ Millions	0	4	0	0	14	0		544+
Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births, 1991	81	130	123	92	93	107	96	38
% Urban 1991	33	20	20	34	25	51	29	29
% work force in industry	11.1	2.0	3.0	5.0	6.0	8.0	8.0	15

Keys: SSA= Africa South of the Sahara, including South Africa and Nigeria.
East Asia= excludes China and Indonesia.
* Niger= Industrial Growth, 1992; Zambia AID 1990..
Sources: UNDP, Human Development Report 1995 NY: United Nations, 1995, 1992 data. Last column is "all less developed countries," not East Asia, here..
World Bank World Development Report, 1993, Table 23. East Asia figure is for Philippines
Global Coalition for Africa, 1994 Annual Report, Washington, D.C.: GCA, 1995

General Conclusions and Lessons

1. Our studies confirm that it is difficult for a number of processes of democratic governance to advance and to sustain democratic governance in contexts as unfavorable as these. Many African regimes have not made even a successful first step.

2. All six countries made significant progress since 1991 on at least some processes of democracy. Compared to the situation of the mid-1980s, this progress should not be underestimated

3. Risks of failure or of significant reversal are considerable. Expectations in any particular programmatic cycle should be modest. Success should be measured against prior practice, over a range of processes of democratization, in terms of how much more accountable and participatory governments are.

4. Progress has been uneven in different democratic processes. The greatest progress has been made in the enabling environment, providing greater de facto and de jure freedom of expression, communication and association. This includes the de facto opening of political space for local and non elite associational life to operate and to participate in some forms of governance (chiefly self-governance or local-level governance).

5. Observing the pattern which results from uneven progress among processes helps us understand how governance is currently functioning and what opportunities may exist to further aspects of democratic governance in a particular country.

6. Although general patterns emerge from our cases, understanding the status of governance reform and planning effectively to assist in this process requires a considerable amount of country-specific information. No boilerplate approach can capture the situation or point to consistently useful assistance strategies.

7. Initial reforms of the political system were dominated by elites, often incumbent elites. This left in place and still operational much of the political behavior of the predecessor authoritarian regimes, and provided only limited incentives to alter rules governing a variety of political processes which could expand participation and improve accountability.

8. Where elite civil society actors played a significant role in the initial transition, they too tended to be dominated by actors whose political behavior generally followed the patterns displayed by incumbent elites.

9. State dominance of the political system has changed very little with democratization, reflecting the continued dominant position of national and state-oriented elites. State actors and

formal governance institutions continue to dominate both the broader civil society and local political actors, limiting their capacities for institutionalized participation and influence.

10. Intra-elite accountability has improved somewhat as courts and legislatures have re-emerged from decades of dormancy. Yet neither these institutions nor formal constitutions yet provide sufficient checks on the exercise of power by elites controlling executive power to give counter-elites much assurance of the viability of the democratic pact.

11. Improving democratic governance involves, above all, altering behavior, but behavior is linked to institution which structure incentives and sanctions and to attitudes. Behavior can be altered when actors perceive sufficient incentives to change, and/or when strong disincentives for maintaining behaviors exist. Given the elite-dominated character of most emerging African democracies, the most important changes required for sustainable improvement in democratic governance are:

- modification of "winner-take-all" behavior, making it possible to resolve conflicts without resort to force or to non-democratic means; and,

- modification of patronage (neo-patrimonialism) as the dominant form of political allocation and of participation in a political system, through the growth of other, more group-interest based means of influencing allocation of public resources.

12. Formal associations of civil society played significant roles in the collapse of the old regime, and can be expected to become increasingly important with further economic liberalization. Although they have been fairly ineffective thus far in influencing governmental policies or in holding governmental officials accountable, they must be seen as a lynchpin to efforts to negotiate and stabilize elite pacts.

13. Assisting elite civil society associations is important in the medium term, but should emphasize finding common ground between government and civil society rather than stressing contestation and resistance. For example, it may be possible to formulate an explicit deal which could benefit both government and business, such as an agreement that business to support taxes in exchange for greater economic reforms and less controls.

14. In the short to medium term, supporting counter-elite civil society as a way to improve accountability and participation has limitations, particularly if the goal is to promote broad-based and environmentally sound economic growth and popular empowerment. Counter-elite associations do not broaden participation very much, and hence do not alter political behavior or norms significantly.

15. Support for women's associations, even for elite associations, is a particularly important way to foster broader participation and changes in political behavior and attitudes..

16. Support for local-level associational life and for intermediary organizations which help coordinate and aggregate the interests and activities of local-level actors is an important supplementary way of helping to consolidate democratic processes beyond the elite level. Assistance at this level poses some serious problems, however.

a. It takes considerable time, particularly where the density and diversity of local associations have been most negatively affected by decades of statist policies. To operate at this level requires a long time horizon and considerable tolerance for failure or reversal in the short-term.

b. Local-level associations are not necessarily democratic in terms of the practices and norms of their leaders. Many local-level associations are neither democratically governed nor inclusive. They must be encouraged to be more so. Support for women's local-level associations is a particularly useful way not only of building local organizational capacity but also more participatory and democratic values and structures.

c. Local-level associations may relate to government chiefly with suspicion or resistance. Strategies for broadening participation and accountability by working at the local level should combine efforts by donors to maintain and improve the legal and political space for local associations with approaches to finding common ground between government and these associations that both will consider beneficial. One example would be to promote an agreement under which local people would support payment of taxes in exchange for guarantees of rights of association and self-governance over specific resources.

d. Working with local associations can only rarely involve "working on democracy" directly. People alter their behavior most readily when they confront and try to address specific problems. This is particularly true of women's involvement at the local and community levels Donors can best promote democratic governance through assistance to resolving specific problems, such as providing for education, health, and the management of natural resources Assistance programs for promoting democratic governance at the local level should be woven throughout the country assistance program and into all of a mission's strategic objectives.

17. External involvement and assistance was critical to the first phase of transition External assistance is likely to continue to be vital, if not sufficient to further improvements in democratic governance in Africa.

18. External actors must improve their assistance to supporting democratic governance in Africa by adopting a more strategic approach to their assistance. External assistance in this domain has proven very uneven and ad hoc, and thus less effective than it might be.

Strategic Orientations

Overall Strategic Orientations

Formulating strategy is a matter of determining how best to achieve certain goals. This involves a clear understanding of interests and goals; of the level of resources investors are willing to put at stake and of the options which exist to achieve these goals; an assessment of specific circumstances which are likely to affect results of pursuing a particular option; and an approach to reducing risk or improving outcomes.

Goal Assessment: For this analysis, it is assumed that USAID's overall goal is sustainable development, and that improving democratic governance is understood to play a vital role in this overall process. The first decision USAID must make is whether a given country is to be considered a "sustainable development country," i.e, a country where there is a reasonable prospect that sustainable development can be effectively assisted. USAID should consistently apply a set of minimum conditions to make the preliminary decision whether to consider investing in improving democratic development beyond one-shot Human Rights or initial electoral assistance.

Resource Investment: This analysis also assumes that the amount of resources which USAID is willing to invest in promoting democratic governance as part of sustainable development in Africa will be quite limited. If this is the case USAID should seriously consider focusing its investments by establishing clear thresholds below which it will be unwilling to invest more than token sums in this enterprise. It should avoid investments in democratic governance to countries where risks of failure are great, as they will be in all countries under the SD threshold.

Arraying the Options: There are three general options for supporting improvements in democratic governance in Africa or elsewhere:

Fostering Economic Growth: Sustained economic growth will ultimately provide the underpinnings for a more genuinely plural democratic society and polity. Growth will help develop economic (or class-based) interest groups increasingly capable of defending their own rights and interests and of demanding governance which serves the interest of more people. Although highly inequitable growth will not insure improved democratic governance, in the long term growth is critical because without it broadly-based growth, vital to producing shifts in power needed to sustain the empowered demand for more accountable and responsive governance is impossible. Growth can also lessen the burdens of demands for performance on a system which is democratizing, thus enabling greater levels of support. An economic growth-oriented approach does not try to improve democratic governance in the short-run, but relies on growth to stimulate conditions which will make democratic processes more effective.

Since the mid-1980s the option to promote economic growth has been associated with policies to further liberalize economies, to promote legal and policy environments which allow private economic actors to flourish and to reduce state intervention in market processes such as price and production decisions. While it is widely believed that this package of reforms can stimulate growth, it is questionable whether the decision to choose only this option is politically sustainable and whether it will ultimately produce broad-based, environmentally sustainable economic growth.

Fostering Democratic Elite Behavior: This option addresses a judgment that *without* an elite pact, breakdowns and reversals of progress made on any democratic process are likely making progress on any element of sustainable development unlikely. Pacted regimes, on the other hand, do appear to be better at producing economic growth than weak and unpacted elite-dominated regimes.

Opportunities may exist in specific instances for external actors to assist in elite pacting by encouraging the relevant actors to formulate and institutionalize minimum agreements on sharing power and on securing the primary security interests of key actors. Generally, national elites accept the need for such arrangements only after they perceive that consequences (internal and external) of instability and democratic reversal have become too costly. In Africa, donors may play a significant role in such perceptions, but this requires a high level of donor coordination and determination. For USAID, an elite pacting approach will usually require close coordination with other higher-leverage bilateral and multilateral donors. Where this can be realized, there are a number of things, ranging from facilitating elite dialogues , to supporting counter-elite civil society including a vigorous media, to assisting in designing institutional arrangements which limit the use of discretion by those in power and give more assurance to groups in the pact that their interests will be reasonably well protected.

The option of promoting elite pacts also has its difficulties. It may help stabilize regimes in the short-term, but it does little to broaden empowerment or vertical accountability (beyond intra-elite accountability). It leave those in control with little incentive to broaden participation to others or to adopt policies which broaden the basis of economic growth, and provide incentives for environmentally-sustainable growth. Over time elite-pacted democracies lose their legitimacy and effectiveness because they do not become more inclusive. Focusing on elite pacts can only be justified in the long-term if there is reason to believe that the stability they provide can promote economic growth, thus contributing to legitimacy, and that elites eventually come to accept the necessity for improvements in other dimensions of democratization, including mass participation.

Strengthening Civil Society: There are reasons to doubt that supporting and helping elite democracy will lead to a sufficient broadening of participation and benefits of economic growth to support sustainable development. The option to focus on strengthening civil society attempts to deal directly with this problem. In reality, it may involve three different kinds of support, each with different implications:

- **Supporting Counter-elites:** Supporting formal associations of professions, journalists, labor, business, and commercial farmers, as well as specifically "civic" actors, such as human rights associations, anti-corruption associations and voter education and monitoring groups is essentially a way of increasing pluralism and intra-elite competition and accountability. This kind of civil society support approach will rarely be done in isolation of other options It can and probably should be an important ingredient in growth-oriented and elite pact approaches to improving governance and sustainable development

- **Strengthening Civil Society Beyond Elite Actors**: An approach which supports civil society groups normally marginalized by elite pacts, such as organized and informal labor, farmers and other rural producers, women and ethnic minorities, is a way to expand participation in national political life directly by helping to link these groups to policy-making. It is, no doubt, more difficult and problematic in terms of the resources and capacities of the groups being aided. Yet, without the active involvement of these groups, and their support of the political process, democratic governance and sustainable development outcomes are likely to be very limited.

- **Strengthening self-governing associations**: Supporting civil society at the local level involves sharing governance in two distinct ways, First, such associations can help perform a variety of vital development tasks, including the provision of services. Second, such associations can link local people to the political and policy process, usually through intermediaries such as federations of local associations, which can then interact with local or even national government. Both of these benefits, however, depend on altering the character of the state sufficiently to permit and authorize such sharing of governance. There must be a minimum acceptable enabling environment to permit this kind of activity to take place at acceptable transaction costs. Thus, even this kind of civil society support approach cannot usually succeed if it affects political decisions and processes exclusively at the local level.

Strategic Questions: Strategy formulation should be guided by a combination of theory and specific concrete realities, if it is to produce strategy which is better than ad hoc responses yet remain relevant to policy makers. Strategic thinking should be guided by three kinds of questions:

- What does political science and broader social science theory tell us about the likely opportunities and constraints of promoting democratic patterns of behavior in this general context?

- What specific variations in the context of a particular society, including the relative distribution of power and the basis of that power and existing habits of association and trust, offer opportunities for assisting in improving democratic governance which transcend the presumed limits of the general context?

- What problems of public management do people in a specific society perceive to be important, and how can a reform agenda for governance be forged around such an agenda in that society?

Strategizing from general patterns and from a learning process: While no simple blueprint is useful, strategic priorities can be formulated which should improve the choice of assistance approaches and interventions based on general patterns observed, on an awareness of how they fit into a broader social science literature, and on a detailed understanding of country-specific developments. At the same time a strategic approach to improving democratic governance cannot be a one-time prescription. It must encourage a learning process for all parties involved--elite and non-elite nationals and foreign assistance officials.

Developing a Democratic Governance Support Strategy in a Specific Country

Following the general guidance offered above, there are three specific steps which should be followed in formulating a democratic governance support strategy for a specific country: Assessment; consultation and the formulation of a reform agenda, and strategic choice of options.

Assessment of the Country-Specific Conditions and Guidance

A strategic approach to supporting democratic governance must start with a verification of specific conditions and an analysis of obstacles and opportunities these imply. An assessment of where a given country stands in terms of context variables can be quickly and fairly easily done, revealing where basic cleavages in the society occur, how much relative potential power various actors have and what their basic interests are. Key information will be how the pattern of economic development has affected the development of classes, gender categories, and professional interest groups, how it has affected splits within such groups as the working class and private ownership class (bourgeoisie), as well as salient of ethnic, regional and religious identities and interests are. What should be established at the outset is the extent of past democratic governance in national institutions, the residual effect of this experience, and the capacity of local level associations to engage in problem-solving and self-governance.

An initial assessment should then identify specific changes that have occurred and the degree to which democratic governance processes are institutionalized, providing for accountability in such areas as elections through the operation of legislatures and judiciaries with some independent power; and establishing multi-levels of formal government with different competencies. To be determined, as well, is the degree to which a variety of institutions in political and civil society, such as political parties, and interest groups operate to broaden participation and to make the elite more accountable. Finally, it is important to assess the capacity of local associations to engage in self-governance, and the legal standing of such groups to do so and to link to governmental institutions.

Based on this kind of information, it should be possible to:

- determine the general type of governance system operating;

- identify the main types of governance problems and obstacles typical of this type of system, and manifest in this specific case; and,

- describe any particularly favorable conditions which exist in the society and which differentiate it from the general pattern. These conditions can become the focal point of opportunities to strengthen democratic governance.

Country Consultation and Construction of a Reform Agenda

Armed with this information, the donor or group of donors can invite discussions at several levels of society with partners in ministries concerned with implementing technical programs, with donor project managers; with leaders in elite associational life; and with leaders of women's and other local-level associations and with community leaders. From these discussions will emerge specific problems people consider critical and an understanding of what their governance implications are. Assessments can provide a useful way to start discussions, particularly among government and elite civil society actors. So can a widely perceived public problem and the frustrations of dealing with it that many actors experience Often the best approach is to focus on one or more very specific issues, such as problems producers experience in marketing their products or in obtaining credit or productive inputs, or which formal sector merchants experience in dealing with licensing, taxation and informal competition.. Discussions can also begin with a broader and more direct governance problem such as provision of local services, or with problems of tax revenues. Wherever the discussion begins, if it is well conducted it will quickly reveal underlying governance problems which limit participation and effective problem-solving.

Based on these discussions, donors and nationals can formulate a reform agenda to deal with specific obstacles. This agenda should locate the key obstacles and identify key resources currently underutilized. A reform agenda developed at any level will connect issues and constraints at various levels of the political system, offering not only a technical vision of what needs to be done but a broader picture of how issues of public accountability and

participation condition what can be done and what might be done should some of these mechanisms improve.

Selecting Strategic Priorities-- A Decision Tree Approach

What follows can easily be misinterpreted. The notion of a decision tree is that it structures contingent choices. The strategic orientations outlined above are not negated by this approach. They should still be followed. But each case will call for a somewhat different specific program, guided by particular contextual factors, by a careful assessment, and by the nature of the reform agenda which emerges from the host-country consultation process.

Nonetheless, a review of comparative literature in political science and political sociology and the experience gained from working on improving democratic governance in Africa suggest ways to structure strategic choices more systematically. This approach may at least serve to raise important questions about the suitability of assistance opportunities which arise on an ad hoc basis without reference to a more general framework linked to promoting sustainable development.

[See Table 3 -- Strategic Decision Tree, p. 30]

The first step as discussed above will be to determine whether a country fits USAID's general classification as a "sustainable development country." It would help in strategy development if these criteria were more explicit and consistently applied.

Next, planners should consider how the options for supporting democratic governance, discussed above, should be combined in a specific country situation. A number of choices might be considered:

Emphasis on Economic Growth: In some instances USAID may determine that a growth-oriented strategy is warranted, since significant opportunities appear to exist to promote growth while democratic governance is in its very early stages. Characteristic of this stage is the fact that consultations with host nationals produce little agreement on the desirability and feasibility of a governance reform agenda The selection of a growth-only option should be rare in Africa, where patterns of authoritarian governance offer little prospect for reasonably accountable management of economic resources for growth, and still less for broad-based growth.

In general, a focus on growth should be accompanied by commitment to foster long-term governance reform through support to counter-elites and local-level civil society. Where the governance environment rules out these kinds of activities, USAID may prefer simply to restrict its assistance to humanitarian and short-term human rights.

Emphasis on Growth and Counter-Elite Reform: For many of Africa's political systems, the first step toward promoting sustainable development must be the

stabilization of the national political process through the forging of elite pacts. For African political systems which have made progress on at least some dimensions of democratic governance, assisting with elite pacting and helping design national rules and institutions to support such pacts should be high on the donor's strategic priorities. Growth will help, and should be encouraged through sound macro-economic policies. When, however, the requirements of growth are seen to be at odds with the forging and maintenance of a minimum viable elite pact, donors should be aware of the tradeoffs and sensitive to the costs of failed pacts. This is particularly a problem for pacts which involve the interests of organized labor, often dominated by unions of civil servants. It is also a serious problem for pacts which must include and deal with the interests of the military. The most common means of supporting elite pacting will be support for counter elite civil society, particularly for "civics" and the media.

Simultaneous Emphasis on Counter-Elite and Local Civil Society Development

With a minimum security pact in place donors should examine the possibilities of assisting the development of civil society beyond working with national elites in formal associations. When, however, should the focus be on building and linking self--governing associational life, on helping marginalized non-elites develop greater power and voice? When should emphasis be put on decentralization and on meaningful devolution to local-level governments working with local associations?

The thrust of the argument developed in this work is that, although these activities are ultimately vital to deepening democracy so that its does not die a slow death as it losers more and more public support, there are contexts in which a primary emphasis on this level of intervention is a poor investment. In conditions as unfavorable as those prevailing in much of Africa, heavy investments in these activities should normally follow the establishment of a minimally stable pacted democratic regime.

The exception to this general guidance is important. Donors focusing on stabilizing national pacts should at the same time promote enabling rules which facilitate the growth of democratic self-governing associations at the primary and secondary levels (groupings or federations), and direct support should be mainly the task of I/NGOs and PVOs which can take a very long time frame and can manage many small investments.

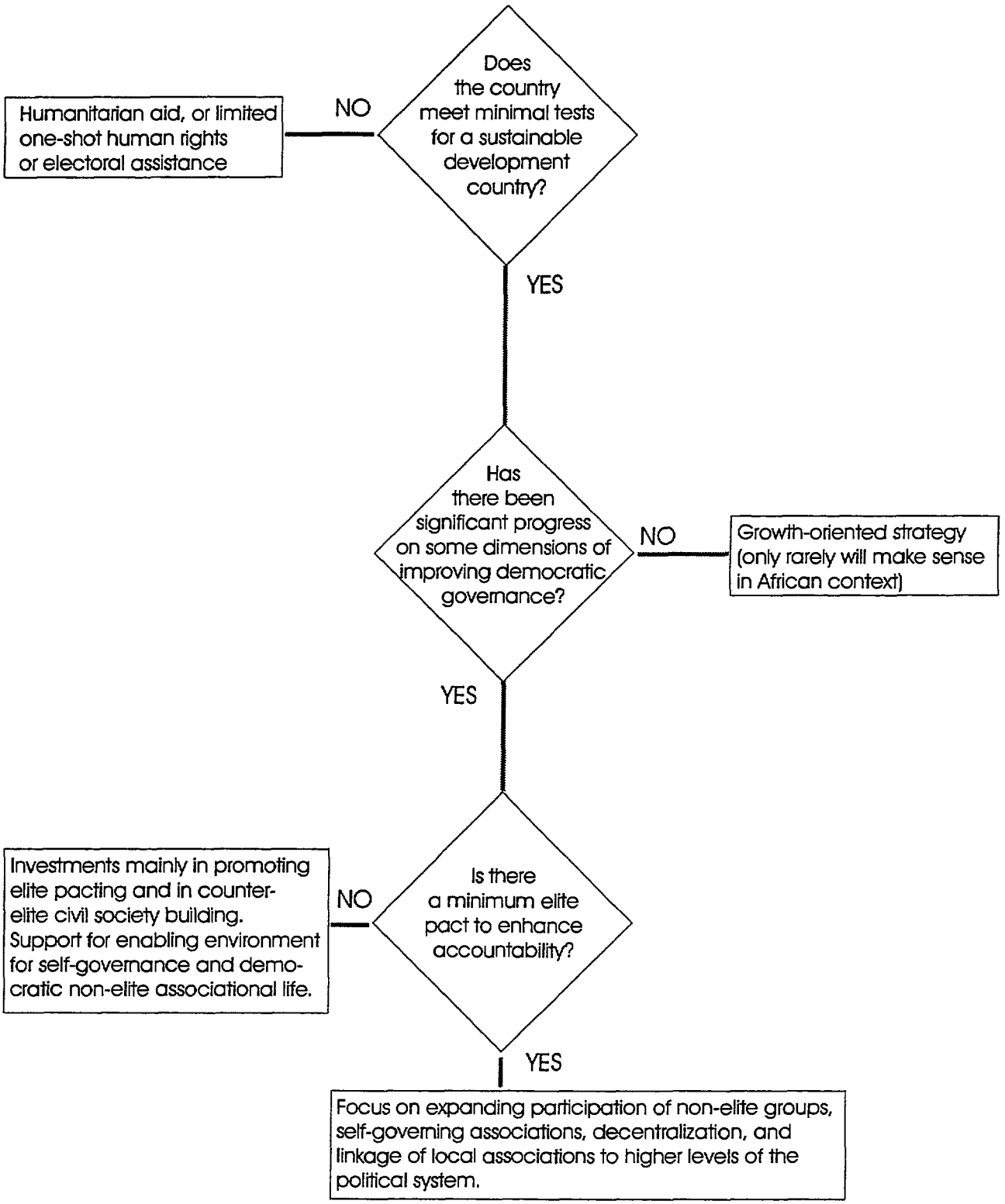
Emphasis on Local Civil Society Development

The decision to emphasize local associational life in the absence of good opportunities to stabilize elite accountability is a questionable one which should be subject to very careful analysis. This type of strategy can be justified for bilateral donors if they can take a very long time perspective and are willing to accept high risks of failure and misuse of resources Normally international NGOS or PVOs with long time horizons may pursue such strategies when they risk relatively low levels of resources. The decision to adopt such an approach is improved somewhat when a determination has been made that considerable community or

informal association experience exists with self-governance, and where national governments do not constrain such activities de facto because of their own inability or unwillingness to operate at this level. Until the overall governance environment improves, however, it is unlikely that such a strategy can improve democratic governance above the local level, thus truncating and marginalizing it.

TABLE 3

Strategic Decision Tree Approach to Improving Democratic Governance



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ENDNOTES

1. For other analyses of "Lessons Learned" in promoting democracy, both in transitions and in consolidation, see Barkan, 1996, Ellis, 1996; Global Coalition for Africa, Chege, 1995.