# participating in effective urban governance

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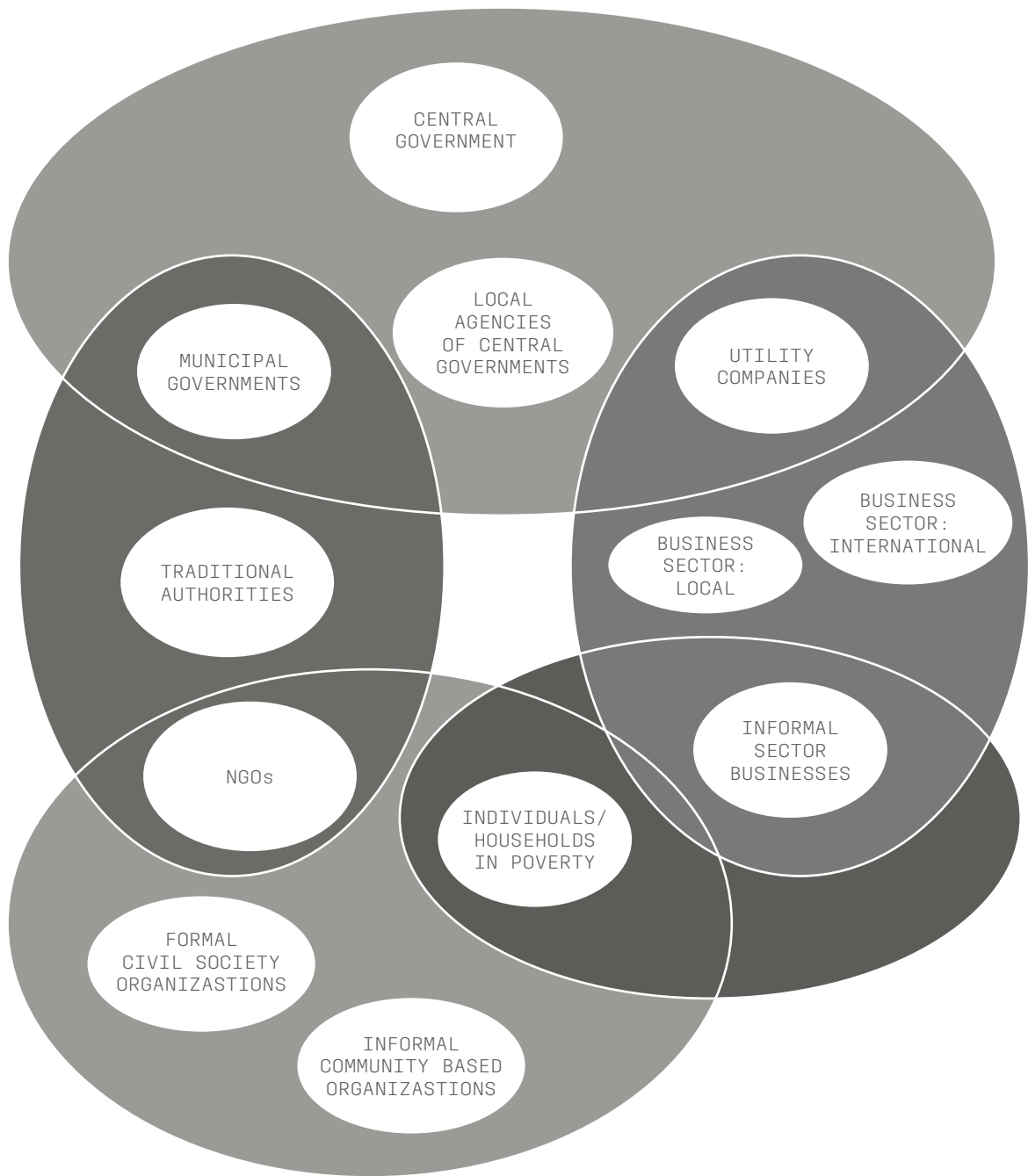Tel: +27 (0)21 650 2881

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POLICY BRIEF                                    09

AFRICAN
URBAN
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INITIATIVE

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# HOW CAN AFRICAN URBAN AUTHORITIES TRANSFORM LOCAL GOVERNANCE PRACTICES TO MANAGE THE PRESSURES OF GROWING CITIES WHILE ENSURING THAT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION ARE CENTRAL TO SHORT- AND LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT AGENDAS?

CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT

LOCAL
AGENCIES
OF CENTRAL
GOVERNMENTS

MUNICIPAL
GOVERNMENTS

UTILITY
COMPANIES

BUSINESS
SECTOR:
INTERNATIONAL

TRADITIONAL
AUTHORITIES

BUSINESS
SECTOR:
LOCAL

NGOs

INFORMAL
SECTOR
BUSINESSES

INDIVIDUALS/
HOUSEHOLDS
IN POVERTY

FORMAL
CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZASTIONS

INFORMAL
COMMUNITY BASED
ORGANIZASTIONS

**ACTORS & INSTITUTIONS IN URBAN GOVERNANCE**

Source: Devas, N. 2004. Urban governance, voice and poverty
in the developing world. London: Earthscan. P. 25

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City authorities across Africa face the massive challenge
of effectively managing the day-to-day running of cities
with a limited tax base, often unclear mandates resulting
from partially implemented decentralisation policies, and
a large population of vulnerable citizens lacking basic
services. Urban governance refers to the process through
which the city government interacts and works alongside a
range of urban stakeholders beyond the state to deliver
the services and infrastructure required for a city to
function. Local governments can make progress towards
improving urban governance by engaging in a communities,
civil society and the private sector on the urban
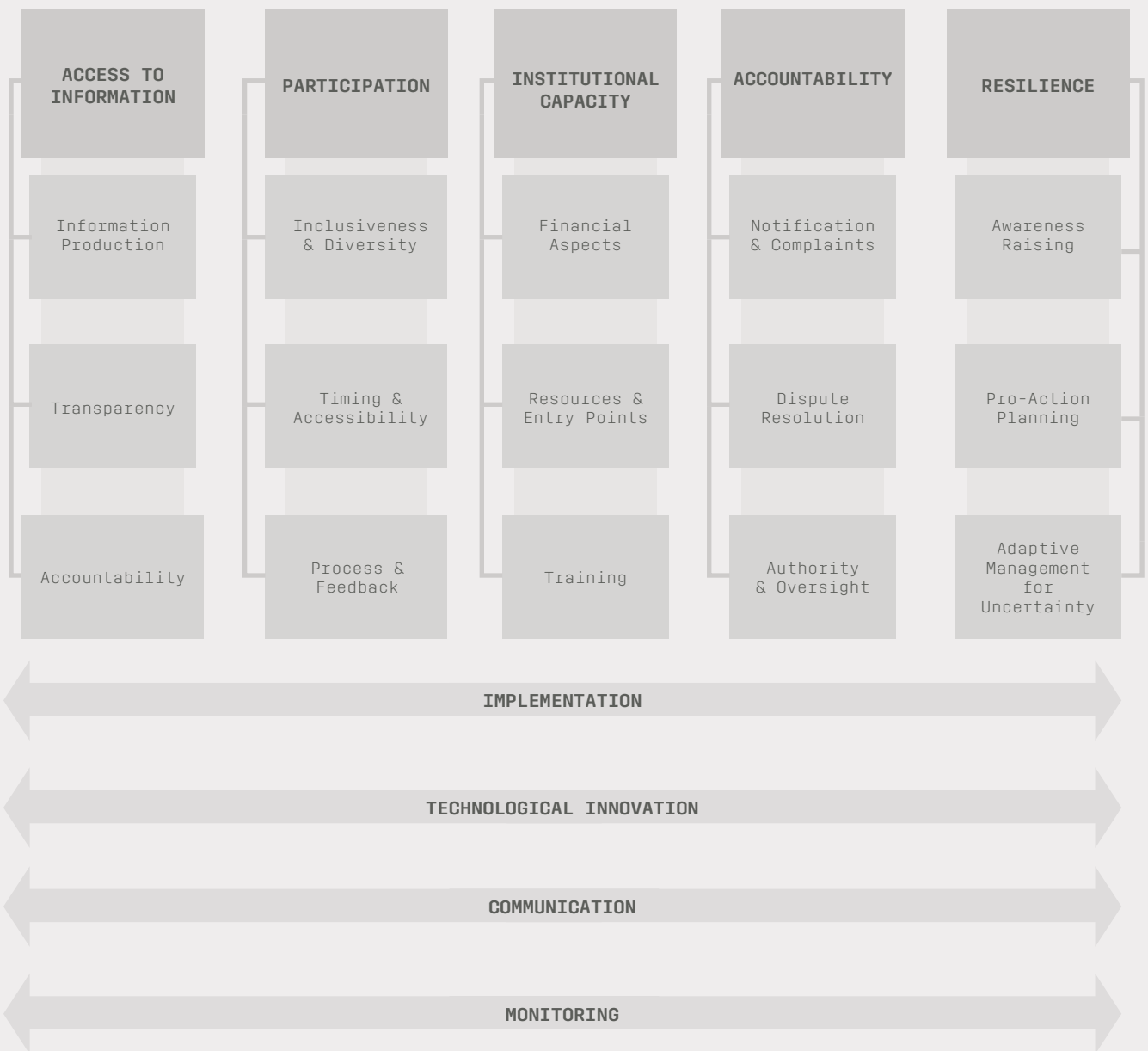management agenda and shared priorities.

Transforming governance practices at the urban scale will
require city authorities to rethink current institutional
frameworks with the purpose of enhancing strategic
investment and ensuring the delivery of basic services.
The process of reimagining institutional mechanisms for
service delivery will require participation from an
engaged and informed community, including individuals from
the informal sector, civil society, the private sector
and other arms of government. Using mechanisms such as
participatory budgeting and creating forums to construct a
shared vision of citywide development will increase local
government's legitimacy and expand its resource base for
building inclusive and sustainable cities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers and government officials need to:

• Develop clear institutional frameworks and policies that empower local authorities to manage the city's day-to-day affairs in a manner that is transparent, efficient, and reflected in short- and long-term plans for city development.

• Seek and enable partnerships with all stakeholders. This includes ensuring that marginalised residents can participate in civic decision-making, and incentivising local authorities to include public input in agenda setting.

• Support open debates, participatory planning and participatory budgeting on local governance issues.

| ACCESS TO INFORMATION | PARTICIPATION | INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY | ACCOUNTABILITY | RESILIENCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information Production | Inclusiveness & Diversity | Financial Aspects | Notification & Complaints | Awareness Raising |
| Transparency | Timing & Accessibility | Resources & Entry Points | Dispute Resolution | Pro-Action Planning |
| Accountability | Process & Feedback | Training | Authority & Oversight | Adaptive Management for Uncertainty |

IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

COMMUNICATION

MONITORING

## HOW CAN WE MAKE CITIES WORK FOR PEOPLE?

A framework for thinking about urban governance.
Original graphic by Maria Tigre. www.thecityfix.com

# INTRODUCTION

The combined challenges of rapid urbanization, infrastructure and service delivery backlogs, and changes associated with globalization have revealed the inability of traditional local government to meet urban Africa's governance needs. To address the effects of globalisation, which include the loss of key industries, migration and new technological demands, city authorities need to navigate local and international systems and interact with stakeholders within and outside government.[1] At the same time, cities must address the needs of rapidly growing populations. Basic requirements such as consistent access to clean water, sanitation, affordable housing, electricity and public transportation remain limited throughout African cities.[2] With 61%[3] of urban employment – and 90% of predicted future employment[4] – occurring in the informal sector, a viable tax base is unlikely. Existing local tax instruments are low-yielding and difficult to collect, resulting in shortfalls to pay and retain skilled municipal staff.[5]

Most city governments in Africa are constrained by outdated bylaws, limited management capacity and inadequate financial resources. They are generally the sole providers of basic services,[6] and key decisions tend to be made by a small and often ill-equipped group of officials with minimal participation from or accountability to citizens.[7]

Attempts to improve local governance in Africa have mostly failed to improve efficiency, transparency or accountability.[8] Where decision-making does reflect local interests, it rarely includes the priorities of the poor because citizen participation remains weak.[9] Decentralisation efforts mostly result in increased administrative responsibilities for city government,[10] confusion caused by overlapping mandates,[11] and a lack of resources or taxation powers[12] for effective implementation.

## What is Urban Governance?

Governance is not government. Governance is the process of city functioning, including all stakeholders,[13] and spanning the formal and informal.[14] Although local government plays a vital role in urban governance,[15] cities are also affected by the market and the private sector, national government agencies and the actions of civil society. How these elements interact constitutes city governance. Governance is morally neutral,[16] but there are certain qualities that enable the provision of services such as a clean environment, public safety, mobility and adequate shelter.

These qualities include:

Sustainability; Equity; Efficiency and effectiveness; Transparency; Accountability; Rule of law; Strategic vision; Responsiveness; Civic engagement and participation.[17]

[1] Pieterse 2000: 1

[2] Resnick 2014: S4, citing UN-Habitat 2010

[3] Resnick 2014: S4

[4] African Development Bank 2013

[5] Devas 2004: 100

[6] Devas 2004: 120

[7] Devas 2004: 95

[8] Devas 2004: 30; Resnick 2014: S6

[9] Devas 2004: 30

[10] Pieterse 2000: 10

[11] Resnick 2014: S4

### Room to manoeuvre: integrated strategic frameworks

Although urban authorities work within the constraints of existing national frameworks and policies, a city government's internal organisation has the autonomy to engage with non governmental networks and transform governance practices at a city level. An improved framework for city development can significantly contribute to achieving more efficient and transparent management.[18]

City government should continuously engage with national and regional government about the reforms needed to maximise local autonomy and initiatives.[19] The mandates of local government departments need to be well articulated and regularly redefined to respond to changes in the local economy and demographics, as well as changes to the responsibilities of private and other non-state participants.

The traditional[20] hierarchical model where municipal departments work in isolation should be replaced with a more strategic model that fosters engagement with citizens (especially the poor), civil society, the private sector (both formal and informal), and central and regional government.[21] This type of framework requires an interdepartmental planning process and cross-departmental task teams to implement coordinated services.[22] This will create a sense of shared purpose among officials and compel leaders to define precise objectives for which they can be held accountable.[23] Human resource systems within local authorities should include performance management reviews and be positioned within a larger monitoring and evaluation system for progressive learning.[24]

Metropolitan governance should also be looked at, given current policy imperatives to focus on the sustainable development of secondary cities. As major urban centres are expected to collaborate with neighbouring cities to provide common infrastructure, new governance approaches need to consider these relationships. In addition, given cities' roles as service providers to rural areas, governance arrangements in small towns should also incorporate rural-urban linkages.

## Promoting sound governance

City officials should take practical steps to realise the qualities of strong governance such as transparency, accountability, equity, and civic engagement and participation. Three ways in which local authorities can put an inclusive governance agenda into action include participatory budgeting, fostering open debates and building partnerships for inclusivity.

## Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting means including urban citizens from all income brackets in the city budgeting process. Encouraging public participation increases transparency and accountability, and improves citizens' understanding of the competing issues involved

## PARTICIPATORY PLANNING FOR DECENTRALISATION

Following the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the Government of Rwanda adopted a national decentralisation plan comprising three interlinked policies (decentralisation, community development and fiscal decentralisation) that jointly provided the legal basis for local governance. Implemented in three phases, Rwanda's decentralisation has depended heavily on social inclusion and consensus-building processes. It involves many participatory local governance initiatives, including:

• The Vision 2020 Umerenge programme, which focuses on people's empowerment and participation in decision-making on issues that affect them most.

• The Ubudehe programme, which involves community planning and implementation – local communities identify their priorities and work to address them together.

• Increased "imihigo" (performance) contracts. Based on a traditional practice of public goal-setting and evaluation, local priorities are set through a participatory process and translated into performance contracts with local government.

Rwanda's decentralisation efforts have resulted in profound and rapid institutional changes, including the consolidation of districts (from 106 to 30), which are the primary local authority responsible for policy-making and legislation. Districts are empowered to source revenue, with the discretion to set tax rates, determine the tax base, and administer the collection of taxes, fees and user charges. They are financially and legally independent, and responsible for coordinating service delivery. Lessons learnt from this process so far highlight that:

• Well-designed participatory processes are essential to fostering local participation and accountability, and can create demand-side governance in support of decentralisation.

• The creation and financing of community-identified projects leads to enhanced social cohesion.

• Intensive and sustained institutional capacity-building at central and local levels is vital and must be undertaken over the long term with deep government commitment. This includes providing training and technical assistance for priority-setting, project planning, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and local development planning and budgeting.

• Successful community participation programmes will lead to rapid changes, and authorities and systems must be flexible and willing to adapt to evolving circumstances and priorities.

Source: Local Democracy; World Bank 2015

[12] Devas 2004: 98; Pieterse 2000: 10

[13] Beall 2000

[14] Pieterse 2000: 12

[15] Devas 2004: 1-2

[16] Pieterse 2000: 12

[17] United Nations Development Programme 1997

[18] Pieterse 2000: 22

[19] Ibid.

[20] Pieterse 2000: 24

[21] Pieterse 2000: 25

[22] Pieterse 2000: 26

[23] Pieterse 2000: 25

[24] Pieterse 2000: 27

[25] Devas 2004: 116-117; Pieterse 2000: 80

[26] Pieterse 2000: 80

[27] Devas 2004: 116-117

[28] Ibid.

[29] Pieterse 2000: 33

[30] Pieterse 2000: 74

[31] Devas 2004: 26

[32] Devas 2004: 118

[33] Pieterse 2000: 74

[34] Pieterse 2000: 30

[35] Ibid.

[36] Pieterse 2000: 87-88

[37] Pieterse 2000: 27

[38] Pieterse 2000: 74

in budgeting decisions.[25] Working at community, neighbourhood and regional levels, refined lists of priorities can emerge from discussions on budget options and resource availability.[26] In this process, community-elected delegates meet with city officials, allowing engagement and an exchange of information about budgets. Priorities are consolidated based on feasibility, citywide needs and resources.[27] Although the city is not obliged to implement the resulting budget, the process has been shown to yield greater expenditure on social programmes and local infrastructure.[28]

## Open debates on local governance issues

Open debate by all members of society is a vital part of sound governance. It also underlies democratic decision-making, which is critical to a shift towards a more strategic, participatory model. Local government can maintain the public sphere as a space for debate through various mechanisms, including citizen scorecards; public access to municipal records;[29] policy roundtables; and advisory committees, citizen juries and citizen charters.[30] By empowering citizens to communicate their needs and priorities to local government, city officials are better positioned to respond to citizen concerns.

## Partnerships for inclusivity and accountability

Local and national government officials should prioritise partnerships to engage civil society, academia and the private sector in supporting accountable and inclusive urban development.[31] Informed partners are engaged partners, thus civic education is a vital part

of increased participation. Cities should have an appropriate and inclusive communications strategy to increase public awareness of municipal plans by making public announcements on city performance and providing access to plans, budgets and audited accounts. Documents should be comprehensible and accurately reflect the city's financial position.[32] Municipal officials and political representatives should also keep their constituencies informed, and encourage questions and debate.[33]

Private-sector engagement should foster strategic partnerships and promote corporate citizenship.[34] Local government can use the business community's managerial expertise, financial resources, credit, training infrastructure and ability to promote messages to improve local economic development. Partnerships can be formalised by developing protocols and mechanisms so that business can provide managerial training and support to the city.[35]

Through consultations and referendums, local authorities can also involve a diverse range of stakeholders in creating a shared vision for the city and its development. The process can start with a general vision for a citywide strategy or take a more modest approach, focusing on a thematic issue such as making the city safe for women.[36]

Formal policies encouraging participation and partnerships can also make it easier for civil society and the private sector to claim their rights and hold municipal staff accountable.[37]

# CONCLUSION

A more accountable, responsive and participative approach to governance is urgently required. African cities must address the needs of their citizens, supply basic services and ensure economic competitiveness in a globalised world. The old hierarchical model is inadequate for Africa's cities to thrive. Active participation from all sectors of society is required to meet the challenges of rapid urbanisation and globalisation. To do this, local government should reform institutional frameworks so that departments work in an integrated and strategic manner, improving the function of day-to-day affairs.

Participation and engagement with all stakeholders is also vital and can be encouraged through various mechanisms. Civic participation improves the legitimacy of local government in citizens' eyes, resulting in residents being more likely to pay tax, increase their engagement, take responsibility for sustaining infrastructure, and build a culture of inclusivity and equity.[38]

Successful urban governance nurtures and harnesses the contributions of all urban stakeholders for the good of the city.

> "
> # The old hierarchical model is inadequate for Africa's cities to thrive
> "

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