

Discovering institutions that work for poor people

# Developmental leadership?

## A study of local leadership in sub-Saharan Africa

**Hybrid governance** arrangements are a blend of formal ('parchment') institutions and informal (de facto and locally rooted) norms.

### Examples of hybrid governance

**Malawi:** Local (peri-)urban leaders, Town Chiefs, are a blend of informal and formal authority. They are successfully filling a vacuum in local governance by promoting social cohesion and stability among ethnically heterogeneous populations, and contributing to the production of a number of public goods, including justice, peace, and infrastructural development.

**Rwanda:** Imaginative governance measures appear to be improving local public service provision. The revival of the traditional practise of *imihigo* (a pledge warriors made to their kings) in the form of performance contracts between elected officials and the President seems to contribute to enforcing local government accountability.

**Uganda:** Historical evidence, based on rich ethnographies and monographs, indicates that local leadership was more effective, accountable and responsive at various points in the past. There is some suggestion that democratic decentralisation has stifled informal local initiatives to enforce communal tasks key to the provision of public goods such as sanitation.

The Local Governance and Leadership research programme aims to provide African governments and their donors with evidence of how hybrid local governance forms can be effective at correcting the under provision of vital public goods. National development and poverty reduction strategies require effective local public goods provision. Yet contemporary policy approaches to local governance in sub-Saharan Africa tend to dismiss the role of informal institutions in providing these basic services. This gap explains in part why the delivery of public goods has been so problematic.

Hybrid forms of leadership that result from a blend of formal and informal institutions are found at local levels throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Our research aims to identify and investigate the particular forms of hybrid governance that may be more effective at delivering essential local goods and services.

Research will focus on how different governance modes operate, how they relate to their respective communities and stakeholders, and how they interact with each other. The implications this has for legitimacy, authority, accountability and performance will be explored.

Historical studies and ethnographic fieldwork are currently being undertaken in seven countries, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda.

Evidence will be generated on various modes of local governance producing the following public goods:

- potable water and sanitation,
- facilitation of market exchange and enterprise
- public order and security
- safe childbirth

Funds permitting, we aim to expand the number of case studies in line with our research framework and within the logic of our comparative research design.

For further information, visit [www.institutions-africa.org](http://www.institutions-africa.org) or contact the Local governance and leadership research stream leader: **Dr Diana Cammack** ([cammack@mweb.co.za](mailto:cammack@mweb.co.za))

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