Local Development in West Africa - How to Make it Inclusive for All?

«Even if development is shaped at the national level, it must primarily be implemented locally through daily practice.» (Local elected official)
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With the push towards decentralization, local governments are gradually emerging as development agents. Overarching development policies are shaped at a national level while public policies are devised and implemented at the local level by local authorities. This film showcases local stakeholders’ contribution to development. It aims to answer the question posed by many local government representatives: «How to make local development policies inclusive for all?» “Making it INCLUSIVE” means not only enabling the citizens to partake in consultation and decision-making processes, but also offering them equal access to services. Within this framework the most vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, are treated on a par with others.
For many years UN-Habitat, the United Nations Agency for towns and cities, has been observing and supporting the development paradigm shift taking place on the African continent. In this momentum, which imposes economic, social and political changes and forges new relationships between the public realm, the private sector and civil society, UN-Habitat encourages change in the way key societal decisions are made, priorities are determined, resources allocated, and public goods and services are delivered and accessed. This refers otherwise to the way cities or territories are governed.

More critical attention is now given to the notion of ‘participation’ with a view to enhancing citizenship, promoting efficiency, and fostering empowerment and inclusiveness, but also trust in local government. However, the prevalence of barriers - structural or otherwise - which either limit or totally exclude some social groups from participating in community life tends to undermine the effectiveness of citizen collective voice. Such barriers remain a crucial problem, particularly regarding disability issues and inclusion as a whole. In the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability is characterized by the interaction of long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, with various barriers that may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Making local development inclusive for all therefore amounts to breaking these barriers so that everyone participates in, and has access to, development. In other words, all individuals, in their diversity, participating in decision-making processes and community life, and benefiting equally from the quality services that result from equitable and inclusive development.

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Inclusive Local Development and Inclusive Local Governance

Inclusive Local Development is a development process based on locally-driven governance exercised in a concerted and inclusive way.

What is governance?
Goverance is about the processes by which public policy decisions are made and implemented. It is the result of interactions, relationships and networks between the different sectors (government, public sector, private sector and civil society) and involves decisions, negotiation, and different power relations between stakeholders to determine who gets what, when and how. (UNDP, 2009)

What is local governance?
In a context of decentralization, local governance describes the same processes at a local community level, which means a coherent geographical space or catchment area in which stakeholders can identify their daily lives and where there is often a corresponding administrative unit.

Local governments constitute an institutional building block, the main point of contact. However, local governance also brings onboard a set of state and non-state institutions, mechanisms and processes, through which public goods and services are delivered to citizens and through which citizens can articulate their interests and needs. (UNDP, 2009)

Decentralization

Decentralization concerns the transfer of expertise and resources from the state to local authorities. As part of this process, specific laws and regulations give local authorities autonomy in decision-making and financial management.

It is through this decision-making process that citizens can be consulted. Local public life is therefore led by local authorities (elected officials and technical advisors), in consultation with citizens, but also local development agents such as public and private service providers, professionals and other civil society organizations.

Some areas of administration are transferred to local communities (e.g., planning, urban planning and housing, basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation, and social affairs, culture, leisure and transportation, etc.). These prerogatives are enshrined in national decentralization laws. Parallel to decentralization, there is devolution (deconcentration) of state services and this allows public facilities to be brought closer to the people. The central state is then represented locally by governors, prefects,...
sub-prefects, and/or Directors of Administration and Technical Services; depending on the different countries’ administrative organizations.

Decentralisation and deconcentration are jointly implemented and stakeholders collaborate. Local public policy decision are made and implemented autonomously by local governments according to the principle of subsidiarity. The State and its decentralised services are responsible for ensuring consistency between these local policies and national policies.

In West Africa, decentralization processes launched since the 1990s place local stakeholders at the heart of the development process.

What is inclusive local governance?

Effective or ‘good’ local governance is brought about by a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level (UNDP, 2007). Local governance is actually effective and efficient when it is inclusive, that is to say when it enables all citizens and groups to have equal opportunities to articulate their interests and needs. By integrating marginalised groups, such as the people with disabilities, women, minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS, governance is exercised respecting human rights; including the rights of people with disabilities.

From inclusive local governance to inclusive local development

Inclusive local governance refers to public decision-making consultation methods and mechanisms that help implement inclusive local development policies.

Development should meet the prerequisites set within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), or in a broader perspective, as conceptualised through the concept of human development.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

- MDG 1: Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- MDG 2: Education
- MDG 3: Gender equality
- MDG 4: Child Mortality
- MDG 5: Reproductive Health
- MDG 6: Combating HIV
- MDG 7: Environmental Sustainability
- MDG 8: Global Partnership for Development
Human development

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Human development is the expansion of people's freedoms and capabilities to lead lives that they value and have reason to value. It is about expanding choices. Freedoms and capabilities are a more expansive notion than basic needs." (UNDP, 2011)

In line with the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) and the reflection initiated for post-2015 development agenda, UNDP emphasizes empowerment, equity and sustainability in expanding people's choices.

These choices include having access to a range of services needed to meet basic needs and beyond. Access to services includes access to water, health, employment, education, transportation, information, culture and sport...

Promoting universal access to social services thus makes an important contribution to consolidating and achieving development gains. (United Nations, 2012)

Inclusive local development implies both the idea of a multi-stakeholder dialogue at a local level and the development of public policies with the ultimate goal of providing access to services and social facilities for all.

Experiences of inclusive local development in West Africa

The right of persons with disabilities to Inclusion and Development

In 2006, the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) became a reality. It does not create new rights, but it builds on the vision of an inclusive society where people with disabilities can enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities as others, according to the principle of equality of opportunity. The CRPD came into force in 2008 after its ratification by 20 countries.

Several articles of the Convention enshrine the idea of Inclusive Local Development.

Art.3 General Principles

a. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
b. Non-discrimination;
c. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
d. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
e. Equality of opportunity;
Accessibility;
Equality between men and women;
Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Art.4 line 3: commitment to consultation and active involvement of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations, in the development and implementation of legislation and policies.

Art.8 Awareness: 1. c) Promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities; 2. A) To promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities.

Art.9 Accessibility: engagement to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access to facilities and services.

Art. 19 Living independently and being included in society: right to full inclusion and participation in the community; access to and responsiveness of services and facilities to the needs of the persons with disabilities.

Art. 29 Participation in political and public life: guarantee of political rights to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others.

Art.32 International cooperation: making international development programmes inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

West Africa

As of July 31, 2012, there were 153 signatories and 119 ratifications of the convention. Among the 54 African Union member countries, 29 have already signed and ratified, with 5 direct ratifications and 8 other ratifications pending.

In West Africa, the vast majority of ECOWAS countries have ratified the convention.

www.un.org/disabilities

DECISIPH members countries
* Countries of Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS)
Inclusive Local Development practices have been implemented in these countries with tangible effects. The DECISIPH project supports such initiatives in Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Some of those identified for their good practices are showcased in this film.

**The DECISIPH Project**

The DECISIPH project (Rights Equality Citizenship Inclusion Solidarity with People with Disabilities) - or SIR (Social Inclusion and Rights) - is coordinated in Dakar by Handicap International for a period of six years (2008-2013).

It specifically aims to strengthen rights and citizenship of people with disabilities in eight countries in West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

It seeks to raise the awareness of national and local stakeholders and to build their response capabilities, in order to enable them to develop coordinated activities, with the ultimate goal of reducing barriers to the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society.

**Handicap International**

Handicap International is an international aid organisation working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. Working alongside persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations, Handicap International takes action and raises awareness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

**Positive experiences in West Africa**

This film is aimed at local government representatives and staffs, as well as devolved state services. By depicting practical examples of Inclusive Local Development, the purpose is to show that including everyone in the decision-making process and policy development is an attainable goal. The construction of facilities accessible to people with disabilities does not cost more for the community and contributes to the welfare of wider community. These consultation processes then facilitate access to local services for all.

**What you’ve seen/not seen...**

- **Bogande (Burkina Faso):** participation of people with disabilities in town council consultation framework
- **Bougouni (Mali):** tripartite convention for cooperation between authorities and Disabled Peoples Organisations
- **Dapaong (Togo):** inclusive quadrilogue: Experiences of multi-stakeholder frameworks
- **Cotonou (Benin):** communal participatory diagnosis of the situation of persons with disabilities

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Inclusive Local Development is a concerted local development process between local stakeholders
Inclusive Local Development facilitates citizen participation for all

Pikine (Senegal): raising the awareness of medical staff at the Pikine Health Committee

Senegal: sports programme translated in sign language on a local TV station

Inclusive Local Development facilitates access to basic services for all

Mandialkuy, District of Tominian (Mali): water and sanitation accessibility

Ségou (Mali): construction of school with integrative classrooms

Dapaong (Togo): integration of children with disabilities in a mainstream school

The inclusion of all citizens does not necessarily incur extra costs

Zabré (Burkina Faso): training sessions and radio programmes on electoral process

Bougouni (Mali): participation of People with disabilities in decision-making

People with disabilities represent 15% of the voting population and participate in community development

Niamey (Niger): single window for all

San (Mali): accessible city hall

Podor (Senegal): social Integration centre

Authorities should mainstream disability in the services they deliver

Ziguinchor (Senegal): participatory budget

Niamey (Niger): communal action plan

The authorities should take account of the needs of the people with disabilities in their action plans
Niamey (Niger): inclusive decision-making consultation

Bla (Mali): consultation frameworks between the municipality and village chiefs

Mali: people with disabilities are members of the management committee and the Board of ASACO (Community Health Association)

Oussouye (Senegal): integration of people with disabilities in health committees

The authorities should ensure the participation of people with disabilities in decision-making

Niamey (Niger): exemption from start-up costs for the set-up of Disabled Peoples Organisations extended to all municipalities in the region

Local pilot experiments are domesticated nationwide

For further information on these experiences: regional-decisp@hi-sen.org

Burkina Faso: law 12: physical accessibility to basic services required (schools, health centres, etc.)

Togo: directives adopted by the Ministry of Local Development to facilitate the mainstreaming of disability in the training manuals of community-based development organizations

Liberia: facilitation of financial access to healthcare

Sierra Leone: recruitment of people with disabilities into police forces

National laws enforced locally
Further reading:

www.proadiph.org
www.makingitwork-crdp.org
www.un.org/disabilities
http://www.un.org/fr/millenniumgoals/

DECISIPH, 2010, Making it Work: Good practices for Inclusive Local Governance in West Africa

UNDP, 2007, Supporting Capacities for Integrated Local Development

UNDP – Oslo Governance Centre, 2009, Guide to Measuring Local Governance
