



Delivering development through local leadership in the Commonwealth

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Acknowledgements

C L G F R E S E A R C H S E R I E S

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Foreword

By Carl Wright, Secretary-General, CLGF

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Local leadership is an essential part of local government throughout the Commonwealth. Like other areas of public policy, local governance is undergoing constant reform and re-assessment in search of excellence. From this process comes a growing realisation that local partnerships – between local, provincial and national leaders, with civil society and with the private sector, are the way to inclusive governance and development.

There is a richness of experiences in local governance among the 53 countries of the Commonwealth. The background paper prepared by Professors Geddes and Sullivan for CLGF captures much of the diversity entailed and poses valuable and pertinent questions about how the agenda on local leadership and development can be taken forward.

It will be up to the participants at the 4th Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Auckland – mayors and elected local leaders, ministers and officials and other stakeholders – to rise to the challenge of identifying good practice and translating this into concrete policies, applicable in the cities, towns and villages across the Commonwealth. The specific issues raised in the paper for consideration provide a valuable starting point and will, I hope, be carefully reviewed by all participants.

New Zealand, as the report demonstrates, is itself a good place to start. Participants at the CLGF Conference will gain useful insights into the New Zealand practices, by learning about local good practices, attending study visits and meeting with local councils during their stay. Likewise other Commonwealth countries like Canada, and their Inclusive Cities Canada Initiative, offer further examples of good practice. Pakistan has demonstrated how the numbers of people involved in making decisions about the development of their locality can be vastly expanded. In another case from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, readers can learn about an initiative involving local government to build a more resilient community. These are just a few of the examples touched upon in the paper.

CLGF is already active in building the leadership capacity of local government, and this conference seeks to draw on the experiences in preparation for rolling out further capacity building in this area. In the South Pacific the CLGF office is actively engaged in coordinating and implementing

a training programme in conjunction with UN-Habitat. Policy workshops in other regions of the Commonwealth have also been held to address the importance of local leadership.

The CLGF conference is unique in that it brings together key policy makers from all the spheres of government and other stakeholders in an informal and yet informative setting. It also has a potentially significant impact on government policy-making in that its recommendations are taken up for consideration not only by CLGF members at local, provincial and national level, but will also be formally submitted to Commonwealth Heads of Government when they meet in Kampala in November 2007 under the Chairmanship of President Museveni.

CLGF and its Board members will give careful consideration to the outcomes of the Auckland Conference and ensure that they are widely disseminated among our members and partners: Local democracy is a dynamic process and I am sure that the deliberations at Auckland will contribute to that process and will allow CLGF to develop and further strengthen its programmes in support of local government in the Commonwealth.

In conclusion I would wish to express warm appreciation to the authors for their excellent work and to Infrastructure Canada, the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat for having made available the resources for the production of this important paper.



Carl Wright
Secretary-General
Commonwealth Local Government Forum

Executive summary

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- 1.** The importance of effective local leadership was acknowledged by the CLGF and Commonwealth Heads of Government in the adoption and endorsement of the Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance which declared that 'Effective leadership is central to strong local democracy... (and)...to enable local government to deliver quality services to the local community'.
- 2.** This paper provides a background to the discussions about local leadership that are the subject of the 2007 Commonwealth Local Government Conference. While recognising differences between countries, it offers a common framework of understanding about the potential of local leadership to support the goals of developmental local government and the key challenges facing different stakeholders in achieving that potential. It describes the core elements of local leadership, the individual and institutional capacity necessary to exercise it, and considers the core governance challenges associated with the exercise of local leadership, as well as providing key pointers for discussion at the Auckland conference.
- 3.** Local leadership is defined as 'the pursuit of community well-being through the facilitation of strategic interventions that would not otherwise have happened and which are informed by and accountable to the public'. It has three core components: focusing attention on key community priorities; galvanising a range of actors to contribute to delivering these priorities; and involving citizens in the process of priority identification and delivery.
- 4.** The new and challenging context of 'globalisation' (including pressures of economic competitiveness but also related trends such as migration and urbanisation caused by economic change, and the threat to environmental sustainability posed by climate change), demand strong local governance and local leadership but also pose new challenges for it.
- 5.** The challenges facing local governance are formidable. They include:
 - the nature of the problems that concern local people, from poverty to economic development, from community safety to effective local services
 - the variety of organisations with a 'stake' in how resources are allocated and services delivered locally, from businesses and local community organisations to the World Bank and international NGOs
 - the diversity of the communities within local government areas and the prevalence of informal institutions and practices that facilitate their everyday living
 - the multiplicity of ways in which different communities seek to express their views on issues that concern them
 - the limited powers and resources available to many local governments, and the questions about their capacity and legitimacy.
- 6.** However, if the challenges are formidable, the value of investing in local leadership lies in the long term benefits that are associated with its effective application. These include:
 - increased capacity to achieve improved community well-being
 - more effective involvement of citizens and communities in decision making and co-production of services
 - improved accountability to local people
 - greater citizen and community satisfaction with local government
 - increased scope for innovation and creativity
 - more efficient use of local resources
 - a realignment of intergovernmental relations in favour of devolved administration.
- 7.** Local leadership must be strategic and innovative. It is unlikely that past policies will prove relevant to new contexts, and a key task for local leadership is to develop creative solutions to the challenging problems they face. Individual leaders must be innovative of their own roles, or risk being replaced.

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8. Effective local leadership must, first, engage the whole local authority in pursuit of strategic objectives. However, the problems which face local areas today will only be addressed, and opportunities grasped, when local leadership can mobilise many actors and interests to work in partnership, creating the collaborative capacity to attain shared goals. Collaborative capacity has a number of dimensions, from strategic capacity to operational capacity and community capacity.
9. Effective leadership in a partnership context will be distributed leadership in which many categories of local leader play a part. However, leadership from local government will find itself in the role of 'primus inter pares' – first amongst equals, and have the task of encouraging and developing leadership capacity from other sectors.
10. In some Commonwealth countries it is common to refer to the new approach to local leadership as 'community leadership'. This does not mean that leadership should somehow emerge from 'the community' but that leadership in the local authority should be exercised on behalf of, and in close relationships with, local citizens and communities. 'Local leadership', in this sense, is seen as an essential response to the criticism of local government in the past which has argued that its leadership has become out of touch with citizens.
11. This paper demonstrates that, across the Commonwealth, important steps are being taken by local government to enhance its local leadership role, but that there still remain serious challenges. These challenges arise not merely because effective local leadership still needs to be further developed, but because the new model of local governance itself brings potential problems. These concern accountability; inclusion; resources; and decentralisation.
12. The new local leadership seeks to enhance the accountability of local governance. Key to this is the engagement of a range of partners and stakeholders, and mechanisms for the participation of citizens and communities. However the many stakeholders involved in local partnership working have different concepts and practices of accountability, and these 'multiple accountabilities' must be made to work together in an effective way, rather than cutting across each other. At the same time, community and citizen engagement mechanisms which widen the channels of accountability between local leaders and citizens must engage all citizens equally (women for example). The danger that corruption can still flourish despite the accountability arrangements of new local governance, if local 'stakeholder governance' turns out to be governance by an elite with limited accountability, must be guarded against.
13. For numerous commentators, the acid test of the new governance, including its local leadership, is whether it can perform better than traditional government structures in tackling poverty and promoting the inclusion of the poor, the disadvantaged and the excluded. The challenge for local governance and local leaders is to ensure, not only that processes of participation and engagement engage the marginalised and excluded, but that inclusive processes translate into inclusive outcomes which reduce disparities and generate development.
14. Inadequate resourcing of local government can undermine efforts to energising local leadership. The legitimacy of local leaders depends upon their ability to deliver local services, which require adequate resourcing. Adequate resourcing of local government is also crucial if local leaders are both to seize the economic opportunities which globalisation may offer and to deal with the inequalities which come in its wake.
15. In many Commonwealth countries, the limits to the decentralisation of powers and resources exacerbate the problems faced by local leaders. In addition, where local governments cover large areas and populations, there is a strong case for some decentralisation of functions and power to a more local, often neighbourhood level, bringing local government and its leaders closer to citizens.
16. Developing local leadership has important implications for many actors, from those at local level to international institutions.
17. Local government plays a pivotal role in the development and exercise of local leadership, because

of its democratically elected status and its overarching remit in the locality. There are five clear roles for local government to play in the development and exercise of local leadership: as convenor; strategist; communicator; protector of democratic accountability and exemplar of good practice. Local government needs to guard against its exercise of local leadership becoming local dominance.

18. Local voluntary and community based organisations, faith-based organisations and 'traditional' institutions can play important roles in distributed patterns of local leadership as sites of 'alternative' authority, as advocates of marginalised communities, and as capacity builders of community participants. The relationship between these and democratic local government requires close attention and management.

19. The private sector and its organisations, such as chambers of commerce, can both play a direct role in local leadership and also resource capacity building of leadership potential in other sectors.

20. National and regional governments can be crucial in either enabling or hindering the development of strong local leadership. An enabling role has a number of important components, from the provision of resources and commitment to decentralisation, to disseminating good practice and a regulatory role to discourage corruption and bad practice.

21. International institutions can also have a very significant impact. It is important that they have a good understanding of local contexts, and support but not supplant local leadership.

The conference will be seeking to address a number of key questions, including those listed below. You may wish to give some thought to these in preparation for the conference. Further issues for consideration can be found throughout the text.

- How can local leadership be best promoted and by which bodies?
- How can the local population be better supported to engage meaningfully in local governance?
- How can effective local leadership make best use of the operation of formal institutions and informal relationships?
- What are the key benefits of effective local leadership? For local government? For central government?
- What are the costs – or threats – of effective local leadership? For local local government? For central government?
- How can local leaders foster creativity and innovation?
- Can local governments be first amongst equals and what problems might this pose in practice?
- How can local government ensure that local community leadership programmes are connected into wider strategic decision making processes?
- How can local leaders manage multiple accountabilities effectively?
- How viable or desirable is decentralisation within a municipality?
- How can central government manage the tensions between civil society and democratic local government?
- Do international NGOs have a positive impact on local leadership?

Introduction

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This paper provides a background to the discussions about local leadership that are the subject of the 2007 Commonwealth Local Government Conference. The importance of effective local leadership was acknowledged by the CLGF in the publication of the Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance (CLGF, 2005) which declared that,

'Effective leadership is central to strong local democracy. It is important to strengthen and build the capacity of councillors, officers, and local governance institutions to ensure that local democracy can enable local government to deliver quality services to the local community. Community leadership is an important and growing role for local government in the creation of sustainable communities' (Page 9).

This paper provides a common basis of understanding about the potential of local leadership to support the goals of developmental local government and the key challenges facing different stakeholders in achieving that potential. It describes the core elements of local leadership and the individual and institutional capacity necessary to exercise it, as well as providing insights into country variation. The paper also discusses the different ways in which local leadership can contribute to development goals, including the use of mechanisms such as integrated planning, participatory decision making, multi-agency partnerships for delivery and asset management, again highlighting these with examples from across the Commonwealth. Throughout the paper attention is paid to the interaction of citizens and communities with the exercise of local leadership, in order to demonstrate how local leadership can achieve sustainability and well-being through inclusion. This agenda is a challenging one and the paper considers the core governance challenges associated with the exercise of local leadership, as well as providing key pointers for discussion at the Auckland conference.

A working definition of local leadership

The term 'leadership' has become ubiquitous in public management literature and policy guidance although clarity about what is meant by 'leadership' is frequently absent. This paper is concerned with exploring a particular kind of

leadership – referred to as 'local leadership' or 'community leadership' in different parts of the Commonwealth – and identifying the contribution it might make to achieving development in local areas¹. Here we provide a working definition of what we understand 'local leadership' to be based on contributions from research studies and the worlds of policy and practice.

In the local government context leadership has been defined as 'the ability to overcome resistance to particular courses of action, notably to cause others to agree to something they were not necessarily initially predisposed to' (Leach & Wilson, 2000:49). It entails 'blending and using available resources to effect change or to prevent a certain course of events' (Stone, 1995:98). Often leadership in local government has focused on individuals; elected and/or appointed officials who, through a combination of personality traits and skills, are able to ask, require, persuade, influence and motivate staff, citizens, business and other interests to act in such a way that they might not otherwise. Traditional formulations of the exercise of leadership were based on conceiving it as a relationship between 'strong' individual leaders and relatively compliant followers set within established rules and norms of government. While this relationship continues to be important and useful in some circumstances, challenges to the role of government in society and the emergence of the 'new governance' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2006) have stimulated new thinking about local leadership practice.

This new thinking:

- reverses the traditional leader/follower relationship, placing citizens and communities in the lead, with local government acting as their agent in communicating and securing their aspirations
- emphasises the particular responsibilities that democratically elected local government has in governing, including balancing contested community priorities, managing conflicts, brokering agreement, offering a strategic perspective and pursuing the public good (sometimes in opposition to community demands)
- acknowledges that local government cannot achieve

1. The term 'local leadership' is used throughout this paper to avoid confusion that may arise from the competing understandings of 'community leadership' that exist between Commonwealth countries

Box 1. Local leadership at different levels

My understanding is that elected members...provide leadership in their communities to enable their communities to participate fully in the decision making processes. Now, lots of communities are not the slightest bit interested in being involved at the strategic level. They are only really interested in what happens, which directly affects them...But...getting them to see that although they are a very important village of 200 people...in order to have the kind of services that they want and a quality of life that they want, then actually cooperating with their neighbours in a wider sense might be the best way forward for getting some of the things which they want in their communities.

Local councillor, England

Source: Sullivan and Sweeting 2005:42

these aspirations alone but is dependent upon securing the cooperation of other actors (public, private, voluntary and community) through the exercise of influence in its relationships with them

- highlights the unique capacity of local government to provide a platform for a course of action proposed by one or more stakeholders and to facilitate wider community awareness, deliberation and support
- considers effective leadership to be 'distributed leadership', that is, present in individuals across all sectors and at all levels, and associated with institutions (local government, strategic partnerships) as well as individuals.

This new thinking has informed developments in local leadership, a working definition of which is, 'the pursuit of community wellbeing through the facilitation of strategic interventions that would not otherwise have happened and which are informed by and accountable to the public' (Sullivan and Sweeting, 2005:35).

Local leadership comprises three core components:

- **Focusing attention on key community priorities.** This requires local government to demonstrate the capacity to set a shared strategic direction and to represent community priorities beyond the locality, for example to other spheres of government or to international funders.

Box 2. Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance

Constitutional and legal recognition for local democracy: local democracy should enjoy constitutional and legal recognition.

The ability to elect local representatives: citizens should be able to elect their local representatives in conditions of political freedom.

Partnerships between spheres of government: there should be cooperation and partnership among local, regional/provincial and national spheres of government.

Defined legislative framework: local democracy should ensure local government has appropriate powers in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

Opportunity to participate in local decision-making: all citizens should be able to participate actively in the local democratic process.

Open local government – accountability: local government should be accountable to the community it serves.

Open local government – transparency: the local decision making process should be open and transparent.

Openness to scrutiny: the work of the executive should be subject to scrutiny.

Inclusiveness: the process of local decision-making must reflect the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of the entire community.

Adequate and equitable resource allocation: in order to respond to the needs of the local community.

Equitable service delivery: the distribution of services should reflect the diverse needs of the local community.

Building strong local democracy and good governance: commitment to continuous capacity development of democratic local government.

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- **Galvanising a range of actors to contribute to delivering these priorities.** This necessitates local government generating and/or harnessing sufficient collaborative capacity amongst public, private and non-governmental actors to secure coordinated action in localities, as well as supporting the development of new approaches (innovation) in taking action.
- **Involving citizens in the process of priority identification and delivery.** Local government must be competent and capable to seek out and include the diversity of citizen 'voices' and stimulate citizen action (adapted from Sullivan and Sweeting, 2005:23).

Examples of some or all of these components of local leadership can be found in all types of governance arrangements in the Commonwealth. This paper draws on some of these experiences to illustrate the possibilities, opportunities and challenges facing local government in developing a comprehensive local leadership.

Local leadership can be exercised in two distinct but related ways (Sullivan, 2007). Firstly, local leadership can be exercised across the local authority area as a whole, for example in the development and delivery of an overarching strategic plan. Secondly, local leadership can be exercised in relation to specific communities within the locality, either by focusing on specific neighbourhoods, townships or villages or by focusing on particular communities of interest or identity, and locating influence over decisions at the closest point to citizens on the basis that citizens' community knowledge and experience will secure more appropriate interventions and outcomes. These two forms of local leadership are not mutually exclusive, rather they represent two sides of the local leadership coin, potentially reinforcing in their effect providing means exist to ensure that the two forms of local leadership interact with each other. One way in which this interaction can occur is through the work of local government officials, either elected or appointed. In England particular attention has been given to understanding the contribution of elected councillors in facilitating these interactions (Box 1).

The challenge for local government

As indicated above, local government has a particular responsibility in the exercise of local leadership. This is based on local government's status as a democratically elected institution with a close relationship to local electors

and a remit for taking action 'on the ground'. As such it is expected to have (or to be able to develop) the capacity and legitimacy to fulfil this responsibility. The principles contained in the Aberdeen Agenda (CLGF, 2005) provide a framework for understanding the conditions associated with the exercise of effective local leadership (Box 2).

The relationship between effective local leadership, local democracy and good governance is a complex one. Effective local leadership is both a contributor to local democracy and good governance and an outcome of the conditions created by their operation. Whatever the causal relationships effective local leadership is associated with:

- a local government organisation that is empowered to act, has appropriate structures, processes and culture
- a local government workforce with relevant skills and competences
- both of which combine in support of elected representatives who are able to facilitate the involvement of local citizens and communities as well as construct effective relationships with other actors and sources of authority from the public, private and non-governmental sectors (formal and informal).

This prescription will be reflected wholly or in part in many Commonwealth countries, though there will be variation in the importance afforded to different elements and the way in which they are configured based on context, history, and traditions.

Key discussion points:

1. What are the core components of effective local leadership in your context?
2. How far can/should leadership be distributed in localities?
3. What are the key challenges for local government in adapting to this new leadership environment?
4. How can you lead your local government to adapt to the new environment?
5. How can central government best promote local government leadership?

The context: international trends & developments influencing local leadership

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It is apparent that, not only across the Commonwealth but more widely, local government is now facing a new and challenging context and environment (Geddes, 2005). Those trends commonly referred to under the heading of 'globalisation', including pressures of economic competitiveness but also related trends such as migration and urbanisation caused by economic change, and the threat to environmental sustainability posed by climate change, demand good leadership but also pose new challenges for it (Box 3).

In many Commonwealth countries, this new and changing context has particular implications for leadership in traditional communities, and poses new challenges in building positive relationships between traditional forms of authority and new models of local governance. This issue is perhaps particularly acute in those localities where migration from rural to urban areas has created major problems of slums and squatter settlements in which local leadership is often either lacking or contested, as evidence from the CLGF Regional Symposia on Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005a) and the Pacific (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005b) make clear. Storey (2005, 75-6) summarises clearly the developmental challenges facing local and other leaders in the Pacific region:

'Like many cities of the developing world, housing, services, infrastructure, poverty and the environment are all significant issues. Marginalisation, conflict and growing inequalities also threaten to undermine social cohesion in complex cultural environments.' He then identifies a number of trends that will intensify existing challenges:

- Continued population growth, with limited out-migration opportunities
- Peri-urban settlements will comprise the majority of population growth, constituting the future Pacific city
- Lack of affordable and private housing leading to squatter settlements becoming a more significant part of the urban landscape
- Increasing inequality and poverty with employment opportunities mainly in the informal sector
- Worsening environmental conditions.
- Infrastructure and services reaching only the minority of the urban population
- Increasing crime and violence undermining attempts to create urban unity
- Inadequate institutional capacity and human resources to address these issues.

As Storey notes, aspects of these problems are unique to the Pacific, but other aspects are typical of other parts of the developing world. Moreover, while there are important differences of degree, many of these problems – including crime and fear of crime, the lack of affordable housing, growing inequality and environmental concerns – also confront the developed world.

Box 3. Leadership challenges in Commonwealth countries

In Trinidad and Tobago, 'the urgent need (is) to promote development in an era of globalisation and liberalisation, whereupon the limited competitive advantages that local communities may have within their small societies are literally wiped away in the wider capitalistic markets. It is with this backdrop that the issue of local leadership and local development in Trinidad and Tobago must be discussed.'

Source: Ragoonath 2006

In Canada 'cities are assuming greater roles than ever before because of demographic changes resulting from immigration and urbanisation, the downloading of responsibilities by senior governments, and the effects of globalisation. The growth of social and economic disparities, the racialisation of poverty and its concentration in urban neighbourhoods, and a decaying physical infrastructure have all put pressures on cities and communities.'

Source: Freiler 2006

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Swilling et al (2000) draw on the experience of African nations to challenge the dominant European and North American discourses about 'the way cities should be governed' and in so doing provide important insights with implications for local leadership. They argue that by observing African cities through a European lens, the observer necessarily gains a distorted view; one which highlights the 'apparent absence of "good" institutions' but does not focus on the 'rather solid arrangements that take place over a broad set of diverse actors, territories and identities' (p 310). These informal yet embedded arrangements are 'relational webs', social practices that operate in and around households, informal networks, businesses, NGOs and government bodies, and which are essential 'in a context where strict adherence to public responsibilities could undercut survival' (p.312). The authors contrast the way in which relational governance is valorised by local leaders in Europe and North America as a response to complexity and uncertainty, with the way in which 'local governments in highly relational environments like Southern Africa tend to deny...what may be their greatest strength, namely the implicit conditions with urban communities for a relational approach to governing' (p .322).

These, then, are the formidable problems which confront local leadership as part of the wider system of governance. They are problems about outcomes (how to improve conditions) and about processes (how to make decisions about improving conditions), and they require local leadership capable of responding in a way that is appropriate to the local context.

Within wider systems of governance, a notable feature of the past two decades or so has been decentralising reforms, as a result of which in many countries local governments (and cities in particular) have been endowed with substantially more power by their central governments (Stren, 2003) thus enhancing the resources and capacity at the disposal of local leaderships. However, in the first place, the trend towards decentralisation has been very patchy. Thus in previous research for the CLGF, Storey and N Duncan have shown very clearly the wide variations in the extent of decentralisation in different countries in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. In other parts of the Commonwealth including India, New Zealand and South Africa important constitutional changes have affected the whole of local government extending its influence and

responsibilities, while parts of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (specifically England and Wales) have combined decentralisation to municipalities with a refocusing of activities at the regional level. Moreover, a quite common feature of decentralisation initiatives is that the decentralisation of responsibilities is not accompanied by the provision of equivalent resources – national governments want 'more for less' from local governments in developed and developing countries of the Commonwealth. Another important issue is that, as Blair (2000) and Duncan R (2005) both point out, 'there is very little cross-country evidence that more decentralisation improves the quality of governance' (Duncan, p61). Blair further cautions that decentralisation may merely strengthen the power of elites, unless there are effective arrangements for wider participation and accountability within a framework of democratic local governance. Practices such as participatory budgeting are helping to strengthen downward accountability and place checks and balances on the power of local elites.

These observations reinforce the importance of understanding good governance as the consequence of the interaction of various strategies, institutions, practices and actors, rather than the outcome of a single policy, however comprehensively applied.

Meaningful decentralisation (devolution of power and resources) needs to combine with robust local leadership and strong lines of accountability if it is to facilitate inclusive and effective governance and sidestep dangers including 'elite capture'.

Tendler (1997) develops this point in a rather different way arguing that one of the fundamental mistakes associated with decentralisation is the diminution of the role of central government; improved services, outcomes and local governance are more likely to arise from the maintenance of a 'three-way dynamic' between central government, local government and civil society. This is because the mistrust central government has for local government and the mutual antagonism that can exist between them can be productive, particularly where central government can play the role of 'outsider', challenging local municipalities' ways of working and raising awareness amongst citizens and communities about appropriate service standards and governance practices, so enabling them to act as more

informed scrutineers of local delivery. Tandler does not argue that central government is free from 'clientelism' and 'incompetence', rather she declares that it is not relevant to the point she is trying to make, which is that the presence of a powerful and 'mistrustful outsider' in localities improved both governance and outcomes. While Tandler's evidence comes from Brazil, this approach resonates strongly in other contexts, for example it amply describes one of the strategies used by the Labour Government in its ongoing programme of local government reform in England.

To sum up, the challenges for local governance and leadership in an increasingly complex environment are formidable. They include:

- the nature of the problems that concern local people, from poverty to economic development, from community safety to effective local services
- the range of forces impacting on local government including globalisation and urbanisation
- the variety of organisations with a 'stake' in how resources are allocated and services delivered locally, from businesses and local community organisations to the World Bank and international NGOs
- the diversity of the communities within local government areas and the prevalence of informal institutions and practices that facilitate their everyday living

- the multiplicity of ways in which different communities seek to express their views on issues that concern them;
- the limited powers and resources available to many local governments, and the questions about their capacity and legitimacy.

Key discussion points:

1. What are the key challenges facing local leadership in your context?
2. How can the local population be better supported to engage meaningfully in local governance?
3. How can effective local leadership make best use of the operation of formal institutions and informal relationships?
4. How can central government work with local government to support the development of effective local leadership?



Local leadership – the tangible benefits

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If the challenges are formidable, the value of investing in local leadership lies in the long term benefits that are associated with its effective application. These include:

- increased capacity to achieve improved community well-being (more appropriate interventions, improved services)
- more effective involvement of citizens and communities in decision making and co-production of services
- improved accountability of decision makers and service deliverers to local people
- greater citizen and community satisfaction with local government and institutions of local governance
- greater legitimacy of local government with stakeholders at all levels
- stronger and clearer articulation of local priorities and concerns
- more coherent and 'joined-up' local governance
- increased scope for innovation and creativity
- more efficient use of local resources
- more productive interactions with other tiers and spheres of governance
- a realignment of intergovernmental relations in favour of devolved administrations.

While these benefits are attractive it is important to emphasise that global and national imperatives are making effective local leadership an essential part of the functioning of modern local governance, rather than an optional extra. Modern local governance envisages the local authority working with its communities (however constituted) and its partners, including its partners in national government, to tackle the complex issues which all governance systems must face up to. It is because new modes of governance recognise the need for 'joining up', and for strategic direction in the face of a complex and rapidly changing environment, that effective leadership (at all levels) is now seen to be so crucial.

The next section of the paper goes on to discuss what effective local leadership means in practice.

Key discussion points:

1. Which are the key benefits of effective local leadership?
 - For local government?
 - For central government?
2. What are the costs?
 - To local government?
 - To central government?



Local leadership in practice

C L G F R E S E A R C H S E R I E S

In the introduction we suggested that effective local leadership has three main components:

- Setting a strategic direction which reflects key community priorities
- Building collaborative capacity by galvanising a range of actors in order to deliver these priorities
- Involving citizens including the diversity of community voices.

We will use these headings to explore the different dimensions of local leadership in practice.

Setting a strategic direction which reflects key community priorities

The first prerequisite of effective local leadership is that it must be strategic. It must be able to avoid the problem of 'not seeing the wood for the trees' and ensure that there is a focus on the real priorities for the local area which are recognised by citizens and the various interests in the local community.

In Fiji, local councils are demonstrating a strategic approach in attempting to cope with the challenges of squatting, identified earlier in this paper as one of the main challenges facing local leadership in developing countries (Box 4).

Box 4. Strategic leadership in Fiji

With their limited revenue sources, slow growth of the national economy, and large amounts owing to the Councils in unpaid rates and fees, Fijian Councils are facing great difficulties in providing services to the large and growing squatter settlements. Moreover as little Council revenue is generated from these settlements initiatives are needed to reduce this burden on the Councils.

Research shows that Councils are displaying leadership in attempting to cope with the challenges of squatting. Realising that the squatters are "here to stay" and will not be moving back to the rural areas, the main concerns of the Councils are to make land, housing and public services available to the new urban dwellers and to help in providing employment opportunities. As most land in Fiji is under customary ownership, an important issue is how to make land available for housing within the custom system. Nasinu and Labasa Councils have taken initiatives to develop long-term leasehold arrangements with landowners for the development of alternative housing for squatters. This provides a win-win situation for the squatters, the Councils and the landowners: the squatters have secure tenure and will have pride in the ownership of their assets; the Councils will be providing services to rate paying households; and the landowners receive a market price for leasing their land.

Crown land is the other main source of land in urban areas that can be made available for permanent housing for squatters. Both Nasinu and Labasa Councils have collaborated with the National Government to make Crown land available for alternative housing for squatters.

The Councils are also taking the lead in supporting the well-being of those in squatter settlements beyond the provision of housing by focusing on employment and health and social problems. In relation to employment Nasinu Council is working with a businessman to develop a commercial area that should provide retail facilities for the townspeople as well as employment. Labasa Council is helping to foster cottage industries to provide employment in rural areas in the hope of slowing the rural-urban drift.

In respect of social and health problems in squatter settlements Nasinu Council is fostering community actions to assist police in the control of crime, and to assist other government authorities in the management of social problems such as prostitution and drug use. Labasa Council is taking measures to control the spread of typhoid within squatter settlements.

As a result of these initiatives, the Town Councils believe that the national government is now looking at squatter problem more seriously and joint ventures are stemming from discussions held between them.

Source: Bibi 2006

Box 5. Local and national leadership and community strategic planning

The Local Government Act 2002 in New Zealand has led to a focus on partnership and on an integrated approach to community strategy. Government has envisaged a new local government paradigm which addresses not only the interdependency of public and private actors but also strengthens citizen involvement in decision making, through partnership between central and local government but also, in order to achieve sustainable social, economic and environmental outcomes, with community organisations and with Maori populations. This approach is embodied in long term council community plans (LTCCPs), on which councils are required to consult widely. However, early experience suggested difficulties in the engagement of government departments in the process, as a result of which a range of inter-agency initiatives involving councils and local agencies have been established. These range from ambitious models like the Wellington Leaders' Forum, involving the political leadership of the subregion's councils and government department heads, to less formal meetings. While issues still remain, there are grounds for optimism about the future.

Source: Reid 2006

The Fijian case amply illustrates the importance of local leadership being able to identify the key priority to be tackled but then also facilitating action on related issues in order that wider benefits may be secured. It also illustrates how in the current context of major social and economic change associated with globalisation and liberalisation, strategic leadership must be innovative. It is unlikely that past policies will prove relevant to new contexts, and a key task for local leadership is to develop creative solutions to the challenging problems they face. Innovative leadership is also necessary in ensuring that policies do indeed meet the needs of local people.

The importance of engagement between local and central government on strategic issues is exemplified by the case of New Zealand, where government's desire to reform and empower local government has coincided with increasing concern about the growth of policy and operational silos in the core public service (Reid, 2006).

The importance of thinking strategically for future generations as well as present ones is emphasised by a UK White Paper (Box 6).

In Australia, as in New Zealand, Ghana and other countries such as South Africa there is an integrated local planning

mechanism to encourage a joined up strategic approach. In the early 1990s, the Australian Local Government Association urged councils to explore the concept of 'Integrated Local Area Planning', under which local government would play a leadership role in bringing together agencies from all three spheres of government, plus community and private sector organisations, to tackle key issues facing local areas. This concept flowed from a concern that without local leadership and coordination, government programs often adopt a 'one size fits all' approach and fail to address the specific circumstances and needs of different local communities. An innovative strategy developed in one locality is the Marrickville River Life Project (Box 7).

Marrickville is sharing its experience with councils across Australia. It is compiling model guidelines for sustainable water management that will be provided to local government in all metropolitan areas. The Marrickville USWIM project thus demonstrates the importance of creative local government leadership in both formulating and applying good practice techniques to address critical development issues. It also illustrates how engaging the community ensures that strategies are well informed and appropriate to local needs, and thus receive the support necessary to bring about effective implementation.

Box 6. Local leadership for social, economic and environmental well-being

Strong community leadership means providing the economic infrastructure needed by local businesses to compete successfully on the local, regional or wider stage. It means developing social capital by supporting civic engagement and networks of neighbourhood organisations. It means enhancing environmental quality by reducing waste, energy use and air pollution and improving public space. And it means safeguarding the interests of future members of the community. Many decisions made now will have long term implications. These need to be identified, understood and designed into local policies. These are not separate goals: sustainable development means addressing all of them at the same time.

Source: DTLR 2001:7

Box.7 Integrated Local Area Planning in Australia

The Riverlife Urban Stormwater Integrated Management (USWIM) project is a joint venture between Marrickville Council, New South Wales, and Monash University. Its goal is to integrate sustainable urban water management into all levels of the council's management structure, and to develop new guidelines for collaborative water planning with local communities that can be adopted by local government generally. This issue is a priority because of the serious pollution that has affected rivers and waterways and also because of the likelihood of droughts producing severe water shortages in the future.

Marrickville has a population of 76,000 and by Australian standards is quite densely developed. Marrickville Council has a strong record of engaging with its local community (30% of whom are recent migrants). The Council's Community Plan informed by community engagement has as one of its key objectives to 'make Marrickville a centrepiece of inner-city ecologically sustainable development and environmentally sensitive principles through education, planning, programs, cooperation, and promotion of responsible individual and corporate conduct.' The USWIM is one way in which the Council aims to achieve this objective.

USWIM is implementing good practice urban water management techniques in partnership with the local community. Improving stormwater management and hence river water quality is particularly challenging in a densely developed older urban area with ageing infrastructure. By engaging the local community the council aims to promote measures to cut water consumption, re-use stormwater and reduce pollution in ways that reflect people's own ideas, knowledge and values, and that are therefore widely understood and supported. The Council began by convening a community planning forum in one of the five sub-catchments (Illawarra Road) which resulted in a Community Water Vision 2050 and a Sustainable Water Action Plan based on community input and containing measurable interim and long term goals.

To implement the Action Plan the council has sponsored an Illawarra Road Sustainable Water Working Group made up of local citizens, and has also established an Integrated Water Management Group within its own organisation to coordinate the activities of the various departments involved. This inter-departmental group is focused on community engagement, corporate water savings, water-sensitive urban design and revising planning controls. Related initiatives include appointing Sustainable Water Ambassadors (local residents who are champions of better water management); a Sustainable Water Showcase to demonstrate how to use water more efficiently, including stormwater harvesting and re-use; and an education program targeted at ethnic communities.

The Council's partnership with Monash University is supporting ongoing research into improved planning and new technologies for water management, including producing detailed water budgets for sub-catchments, comparing future scenarios and exploring alternative engineering solutions.

Source: Sansom 2006

Key discussion points:

1. What kinds of policy instruments are most useful for supporting the exercise of effective strategic leadership?
2. How can local leaders foster creativity and innovation?
3. How can local leaders make the most of learning from past experience (e.g. developing links between actions and outcomes, recognising the impact of serendipity)?

Building collaborative capacity by galvanising a range of actors in order to deliver strategic priorities

Effective local leadership must, first, engage the whole local authority in pursuit of strategic objectives. In the UK, the Labour Government's programme of local government 'modernisation' has sought to improve local authorities' capacity to identify and deliver improved outcomes for local people, through the redesign and delivery of services, combined with the development of other strategic interventions. This has been stimulated in part by a series of

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specific legislative and policy initiatives (many of which were informed by policy developments in New Zealand) including: the duty of community strategy, the power to promote economic, social and environmental well-being, the requirement to introduce new political management structures, the development of local area agreements between localities and central government, and the introduction of local strategic partnerships to provide the institutional infrastructure for engaging with key partners and local communities. In combination these reforms have legitimised a change in focus of local authority councillors and officials and stimulated changes in organisational structures and processes to support this.

However, it is a central characteristic of the new local governance that problems which face local areas will only be addressed, and opportunities grasped, when many actors and interests are mobilised. A key role for local leadership is therefore to build the collaborative capacity which is needed to achieve shared goals. Collaborative capacity 'refers to the level of activity or degree of change a collaborative relationship is able to sustain without any partner losing a sense of security in the relationship'. (Hudson et al, 1999, pp. 245-6). It is required in a number of ways in the collaboration including:

- **Strategic capacity.** Agents in collaboration will have their own particular mission and purposes. Achieving added value through collaboration necessitates the identification of a distinct collaborative mission that aligns agents' agendas, and specifies collaborative interventions and their means of delivery. Strategic capacity is necessary to enable partners to act collectively to determine their mission and framework for collaborative action coupled with the necessary infrastructure support.
- **Governance capacity.** This concerns the development of mechanisms to secure the 'good governance' of collaborative action. This necessitates the establishment of an appropriate constitutional form that can manage any resource flows. It also requires the development of appropriate accountability mechanisms, so that the activities of the collaboration are transparent and open to scrutiny by relevant stakeholders.
- **Operational capacity.** This refers to the ways in which partners make use of any mechanisms at their disposal

– such as pooled budgets, joint appointments, lead commissioning – to maximise the collaboration effort in order to deliver new types of services or projects.

- **Practice capacity.** This focuses on the skills and abilities of professionals and others, ensuring that those whose interventions will be essential to the achievement of collaborative advantage are equipped with the necessary skills and support.
- **Community capacity.** Involving 'the public' as services users or community members is a core element of many collaborative initiatives. Consequently, collaborations need to be attuned to the needs of the public in their engagement, supporting the involvement of communities and citizens in opportunities opened up by the collaboration (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

Effective local leadership must be 'leadership in a partnership context'. This poses a challenge to local leaders, as it requires a different approach to leadership than that exercised in a traditionally structured local authority (see Box 8).

As suggested by the research into LSPs in England, leadership in a partnership context must be distributed leadership in which many categories of local leader play a part. This is the case, for example, in Ghana (Box 9).

The example of Ghana demonstrates a number of points, alongside the necessity for local leadership to involve a range of interests. In particular, in many Commonwealth countries, it will be necessary, as in Ghana, for local leaderships to include both leaders from formal institutions such as local government and other public bodies, and traditional leaders; and leaders from the private and community sectors as well as from the public sector. However, the Ghana example also shows that leadership in some of these sectors is often not well developed. Consequently, leadership from local government will find itself in the role of 'primus inter pares' – first amongst equals, and have the task of encouraging and developing leadership capacity from other sectors.

The limitations that are imposed on action to promote community well-being from an absence of local leadership in formal and traditional institutions are illustrated by the study of an urban safety project in Papua New Guinea (Box 10).

Box 8. Leadership in Partnership in England

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in England bring together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together. Local partners working through an LSP are expected to act strategically to deliver decisions and actions which join up partners' activities across a range of issues, enabling each of them to meet their own targets and goals and tackle cross-cutting issues more effectively. LSPs are regarded as key to improving social cohesion, the relationship between different communities in an area and their relationship with statutory authorities.

Formally, the primary leadership of the LSP lies with the Chair. In a majority of cases the chair is taken by the local authority; and in the great majority of these by an elected member, usually but not by any means always the Council Leader. However, while the predominance of local authority chairs reflects the importance of leadership from the local authority, the fact that nearly half the chairs are from other partners is also a powerful statement about the importance given to avoiding local authority dominance and recognising that leadership can come from many directions.

Leadership is, however, a much more complex issue than the question of who chairs the LSP. A partnership offers no automatic connection between 'leadership' and 'follower-ship' – in other words when an LSP commands 'jump' it is not clear that anyone necessarily jumps. Leadership is therefore necessary to create the linkages between the outcomes agreed by the partners, the strategy adopted to achieve those outcomes, and the delivery systems available through partner organisations. Once those linkages have been created, leadership will be necessary to 'turn on the current' so that energy and resources flow sufficiently robustly to make things happen. There are thus three identifiable elements to LSP leadership:

- **Dialogue** to agree outcomes
- **Strategy** to identify how these outcomes might be achieved
- **Delivery**; taking action.

At the same time, leadership is needed in three 'fields':

- **Political** leadership – supplying democratic legitimacy and the resources and power of the local authority
- Leadership from **partner** organisations – ensuring that partners are able and willing to deliver to partnership aims
- **Community** leadership – securing the consent and active engagement of the wider community.

All three areas of leadership are unlikely to be carried by the same individual, and perhaps the most successfully led LSPs have a number of key 'leaders' working closely together. The case studies emphasise, though, the **central role of the local authority**. The extent to which an LSP achieves a balance of power between partners appears to depend first and foremost on how willing the local authority is to lead, but to do so in an inclusive manner. Leadership is a crucial element in determining the capacity of LSPs, but the exercise of leadership within strategic partnerships remains extremely challenging.

Sources: ODPM/DfT 2006 National evaluation of LSPs: Formative evaluation and action research programme, 2002-2005.

Warwick Business School/Liverpool John Moores, OPM/UWE, London: ODPM, p37-38

Box 9. Distributed leadership in Ghana

Six major categories of local leaders can be identified in Ghana. They are:

1. the political leadership including members of parliament, assemblies and substructures
2. the administrative leadership consisting mainly of heads of district-level departments
3. the traditional leadership including chiefs, other authorities and traditional religious leaders
4. the leadership of organised religion and faith-based organisations
5. the leadership of local private sector, economic and occupational groupings, and
6. representatives of communities on district service committees and leaders of project management committees.

These categories of leaders are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The political leadership would consist of the mayor or chief executive of the assembly and the assembly members. Seventy per cent of the members are selected by adult suffrage to represent electoral areas. The remaining 30% are appointed by the government, in consultation with various interest groups to enhance certain types of expertise in assembly decision-making. Members of parliament (MPs) who represent constituencies in the national legislature are non-voting members of assemblies. Other political actors with less direct or discernable influence at the local level are the constituency representatives of the major political parties. Because by law, the assembly is non-partisan, political parties are limited in the overt exercise of influence, though the MPs are partisan.

Traditional authorities are those selected to lead various communities and ethnic groups based on historical, religious and socio-cultural factors. Arrangements vary from traditional theocracies as amongst the Gas to federations as practiced by the Ashantis. There are also different degrees of influence and hierarchies amongst traditional rulers ranging from clan heads to paramount chiefs. There are gender differences with some groups having queens and queen-mothers of royal rank but unequal to their male counterparts. There are different methods of succession – matrilineal as well as patrilineal – ascension to skins and stools. Traditional authorities commonly hold public resources (particularly land and other natural resources) in trust for their people and are expected represent their interests in negotiations as well as ensure equitable access for indigenes to these resources. They have critical capacities with implications for local governance such as community mobilisation, access to resources, influencing and exacting accountability.

As Christianity, Islam and other 'foreign' religions win converts, their leadership and faith-based organisations within localities wield considerable influence. Following the efforts of civil society in development and welfare initiatives, faith-based organisations have come to play a critical role in local level development.

Given the high proportion of informal sector operations, formal private sector groupings are mostly absent, with the National Chamber of Commerce and Industries and Association of Ghana Industries present only at the regional level. Therefore, the leadership of local businesses and local economic and occupational groupings are influential. The leadership of local transport unions, market commodity associations and service providers have been influential in fostering local level development by assisting in revenue mobilisation, civic awareness-raising and management of public services.

The last category of leaders, representatives of communities on district service committees and leaders of project management committees, are distinct from the political leadership in that they represent formalised efforts at promoting participation. Interest group representatives such as women and various religious groups is required by law on district oversight and management committees in the education and health sectors. Other initiatives in water and sanitation management bodies and district health insurance have quotas. Projects initiated under various programmes by international development agencies such as ActionAid have established community management committees.

Source: Ofei-Aboagye 2006

Box 10. Challenges to leadership in partnership in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea has two main forms of local government: urban and rural councils, which operate within a wider system of provincial government. Leadership in PNG comprises both modern (politicians and bureaucrats) and traditional ('big-men' and chiefs) types of leaders. Many local leaders (especially councillors) are involved in patron-client relations with national parliamentarians. The national government delegates powers and responsibilities for community development and service delivery to local and provincial governments. At the community level, local councils operate in partnership with provincial governments and other agencies to support community schools, water supplies, tourism facilities, parks and wildlife areas. Local councils also collaborate with provincial governments in promoting women's education and empowerment programs. In Port Moresby, the nation's capital city, community development projects and commercial business have been impeded by escalating levels of crime and violence, by deteriorating physical infrastructure and lack of utilities, and by rising cost of goods and services. Port Moresby's image as a dangerous city has adversely affected the country's tourist trade and foreign investment.

The impact of crime on people and the economy has raised considerable concern among government officials, NGO workers and development aid experts. Fruitful collaboration between such enterprising people (backed by their respective organisations) has resulted in the development of an urban safety program – the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi or 'let's look after Moresby' project. The project was initiated by the National Capital District Commission (NCDC), the local authority directly responsible for managing the affairs of the nation's capital city with the support of AusAID-funded Law and Justice Sector Program (managed by ACIL Australia). The NCDC works closely with the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC), which is 'an independent organisation that brings together civil society, the private sector and government partners to develop policy and directly influence government decision making for the long term development of Papua New Guinea' (CIMC Mission Statement).

The primary aim of this project is to make Port Moresby a safe and friendly city for people to live in. The general objectives of the initiative were designed to address major problems areas:

- Professional Police – to change the image of a brutal police force to one that is professional, disciplined and highly respected
- Restorative Justice – to address both victim and offender
- Governance – to ensure that public resources are managed and distributed in an equitable, transparent, and accountable manner
- Urban Planning and Development – to enforce efficient control in licensing and building approvals
- Liquor Licensing and Entertainment – to regulate the industry so that proper health and decency standards are maintained
- Informal Sector – to encourage small businesses within the informal sector to help address unemployment, while at the same time regulating the sector to discourage illicit activities
- Public Transport – to ensure that taxis and buses are clean, reliable and safe for passengers
- Public Awareness – to educate people to appreciate their capital city, respect public property, and treat each other with decency.

Two major constraints have been identified as adversely affecting the project's impact. These are: lack of leadership to drive government policies, especially at the community level; and a 'don't care' attitude in both community and bureaucracy. A major public awareness and educational program is being implemented through media advertisements to try and change public perceptions and behaviour. Addressing the lack of leadership is a challenging task with implications for a number of levels of government. The capital's government (NCDC) is itself overcoming a history of mismanagement and corruption which has reduced public confidence in its ability to lead. Ongoing administrative reforms are improving governance practice, senior management is enforcing rules and procedures; managers are engaging in program budgeting and ensuring that budgets are respected. Local government, which should provide the link between the NCDC and the community has not been operational in NCD since 1995. This problem is further compounded by lack of traditional forms of leadership in urban squatter settlements and suburbs, and diminished legitimacy of both modern and traditional authority in urban villages.

Source: Ketan 2006

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Box 11. Partnership with communities in Uganda

The City Community Challenges (C3) Project was started in 2000 with support from the UK Department for International Development (DfID), equally split between Uganda and Zambia, to test out innovative ways of reducing urban poverty through community initiatives. The key objectives of the project were to: (i) contribute to improvement of incomes, livelihoods and opportunities of poor people (ii) address the capacity weaknesses of poor communities (iii) promote sustainable poverty eradication initiatives through creation of appropriate institutional arrangements and planning processes, and leverage matching resources, and, (iv) enhance collaboration between communities, local governments, NGOs and other local players including the private sector. It was also intended, in developmental terms, to establish an effective mechanism through which development agencies could support small-scale community initiated projects in partnership with local authorities.

The project had a unique methodology including the following elements:

- The funds used in the project were used to leverage matching funds in kind or other inputs. For example, the beneficiaries of the houses contributed provide their own labour during construction of their houses, thus linking participation to ownership to ensure sustainability
- The beneficiaries were identified by the communities from among themselves using their own indicators of poverty. Thus C3 interventions took different shapes in different locations – from shelters to micro enterprises
- C3 promoted a partnership ethos because it drew in NGOs, businesses, local governments and other local actors, and a variety of national actors (e.g. central government ministries, training and research institutes, the Uganda Local Authorities Association, etc.) who participated as part of the National Coordination Committee.

In Uganda the project was piloted in Kawempe and Mpumudde Divisions of Kampala City and Jinja Municipality, respectively. The beneficiary communities in those divisions determined the nature of investments: those in Kawempe Division opted for micro-finance schemes to enable them to go into business while their counterparts in Mpumudde Division preferred a housing scheme to address the problem of shelter.

Source: Kiyaga-Nsubuga 2006

In Papua New Guinea the paucity of local leadership and the apparent apathy of local people reinforced each other in limiting the impact of what was otherwise conceived to be an important and innovative project (Ketan, 2006). A number of impediments to the emergence of effective local leadership were identified. These included partial implementation of decentralisation (which limited the amount of power and resources devolved), a culture of poor and ineffective government at all levels, lack of legitimacy of government amongst communities and their consequent limited engagement in governance. This case example is important for demonstrating the vital importance of effective local leadership but also for highlighting the significance of community ownership in making sustainable change. The following example from Uganda describes how efforts have been made to tackle poverty through community participatory initiatives involving a range of local stakeholders (Box 11).

The C3 project in Uganda is an example of an approach in

which local leadership has two key roles – working with partners and stakeholders, but also supporting and facilitating community participation. The next section considers the latter dimension of local leadership.

Key discussion points:

1. What support might local leaders need in building 'collaborative capacity' amongst stakeholders?
2. How can impediments to effective local leadership be overcome?
3. Are local governments 'first among equals' and what problems might this pose in practice?
4. What role can central government play in creating and supporting these new relationships?

Box 12. Community participation in Pakistan

In Pakistan, community driven development based on local democracy has been made a fundamental principle of the new local governance arrangements. To convert the policies and plans into reality and to ensure community participation Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) were introduced. The Provincial Local Government Ordinances (2001) provide a formal mechanism for the non-elected citizens to participate in the development process through Citizen Community Boards. Every local government is required to reserve 25 % of their development budget for use exclusively through the CCBs. This has created the enabling environment for community participation by requiring local governments to involve CCBs in their development projects, planning and expenditure. Under the CCB mechanism the communities are given responsibility for the identification, execution, monitoring and operation of approved projects. The result is that communities have been empowered, through financial support from the government, to solve their local problems themselves.

Communities have shown keen interest in development of their areas through CCB schemes. Communities are interested in investing in projects related to agriculture, street paving, water supply, drainage, education, women's development, education and health. The number of CCBs registered since December 2003 has grown exponentially, so that the 24,828 CCBs involve approximately 620,700 non-elected citizens. They are implementing community level schemes to improve the quality of life locally. There is, however, evidence that the take up of the CCBs varies across the provinces and furthermore the number and value of projects varies enormously.

To address this, a capacity building and awareness campaign has been launched to support community participation, which will consolidate the local government system and improve the service delivery. To facilitate the process of mobilising CCBs and to ensure the utilisation of development funds reserved for the CCBs the local governments are being supported by a number of institutions, including the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (DTCE) established by the Government of Pakistan in collaboration with the international donors, the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), another Government institution, and the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) a development organisation working with communities throughout Pakistan. Other NGOs are also actively promoting the formation of CCBs to access the development funds reserved for CCBs, while local governments have established offices for community development.

The CCB programme has enabled village communities and leaders to get to know local government officials and how to interact powerfully with local government, providing a framework for the active involvement of communities in the activities of the local governments on a sustainable basis. However, a real challenge that remains is to encourage women to form CCBs, as they remain a small number.

Source: National Reconstruction Bureau 2006

Involving citizens including the diversity of community voices

In some Commonwealth countries (including New Zealand), it is common to refer to the approach to local leadership now seen to be necessary as 'community leadership'. This does not mean that leadership should somehow emerge from 'the community' but that leadership in the local authority should be exercised on behalf of, and in close relationships with, local citizens and communities. 'Local leadership', in this sense, is seen as an essential response to the criticism of local government in the

past which has argued that its leadership has become out of touch with citizens. Local 'community' leadership in this sense is thus closely aligned with the recognition of the importance of public consultation, participation and engagement in the processes of local governance. In particular, it is widely acknowledged that local leadership must recognise, and empower, the diversity of citizens and communities within a local area. In all Commonwealth countries, this means paying particular attention to the poor and socially excluded groups, as the following examples demonstrate (Box 12-13).

Box 13. Inclusive Cities Canada initiative

Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative (ICC) is a unique partnership of elected municipal politicians and community leaders working collaboratively to build more inclusive communities across Canada. Under the guidance of civic panels, comprised of municipal government and community leaders, ICC conducted local social inclusion audits in five cities to identify priorities for local and national public policy in key areas – making local democracy work, affirming urban diversity, investing in local social infrastructure, and reducing disparities in living conditions.

Inclusive Cities Canada grew out of previous work between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Laidlaw Foundation. In 2002, community soundings were held in 10 cities across Canada to provide community perspectives on social issues and the civic capacities required to address them. The resulting report recommended the creation of civic panels to undertake social inclusion 'audits' (inquiries) to assess the state of inclusiveness in cities. With a 36-month grant from the federal government, ICC was established in 2003 as an initiative of five voluntary social planning organisations in collaboration with the FCM's social infrastructure committee. The goals were to:

- Strengthen the civic capacity of cities to enhance social inclusion
- Ensure that community voices of diversity were recognised as core voices of the new Canada
- Promote senior government investments in local social infrastructure
- Create opportunities for mutual learning on promising inclusive initiatives and practices.

To guide the work locally, civic panels were established in the partner cities, co-chaired by a municipal mayor or a city councillor and a community leader. Panels consisted of between 8 to 14 members from various civic sectors who reflected the diversity of the community. The civic panels were staffed by the social planning partners and linked horizontally through a national steering committee, again co-chaired by a municipal leader and a community leader, and a 3-person national resource team, including the national coordinator.

ICC developed a common framework that identified five dimensions of an inclusive city: institutional recognition of diversity, opportunities for human development, quality of civic engagement, cohesiveness of living conditions, and adequacy of community services. The civic panels guided the local research which involved the participation of over 1,250 participants in focus groups and local soundings. In 2005, ICC released five local reports and a report of cross-Canada findings and recommendations. These were the focus of a national symposium that brought together local and federal government officials and politicians, as well as diverse community members from across Canada.

Currently, the future of the cross-Canada alliance is uncertain. The federal government grant to ICC has expired; funding is being sought to continue the work locally and/or regionally to build on ICC's accomplishments. These include:

- Creating opportunities for diverse community voices – those of urban Aboriginals, new immigrants, people with disabilities – to be recognised, heard, and to contribute to national social policy
- Nurturing ongoing commitments and structures in partner cities (e.g. Edmonton Office of Diversity and Inclusion); City of Burlington Inclusivity Advisory Committee and the exploration of neighbourhood councils
- Promoting inclusion through 'civic citizenship' by expanding the municipal franchise to youth aged 16 and over and to non-citizen city residents.

Source: Freiler 2006

In Canada (Freiler, 2005) municipalities play a dual role: they provide important community services and they act as local democracies. In Canada's larger cities, local governments have played a leadership role in providing services such as child care, public health, and housing. Many municipalities are also pioneering approaches to civic engagement, community safety, and equity and inclusion. Some, however, have not played a significant social role, focusing primarily on physical infrastructure and more traditional services such as police, libraries, and parks and recreation programs.

In the past decade, local governments have become increasingly important to the well-being of Canadians. Cities are assuming greater roles than ever before because of demographic changes resulting from immigration and urbanisation, the downloading of responsibilities by senior governments, and the effects of globalisation. The growth of social and economic disparities, the racialisation of poverty and its concentration in urban neighbourhoods, and a decaying physical infrastructure have all put pressures on cities and communities.

Because local governments are created by provincial legislation in Canada, they are not treated as equal partners with the provincial and federal governments that are entrenched in the constitution. Despite being closest to the people, the most trusted by the public, and at the front lines in responding to issues, local governments are struggling to meet their growing responsibilities. Recognition is mounting that municipal governments require increased taxing powers, enhanced governing capacities, and major public investments in social and physical infrastructure. However, in response to challenges and opportunities, local governments are forging partnerships with other funders and with voluntary and private sector organisations to address common goals such as neighbourhood revitalisation, affordable housing, environmental sustainability, community crime prevention, and economic development. Local governments sometimes act as convenors; other times as partners in strategies initiated by others. The Inclusive Cities Canada initiative illustrates this (Box 13).

Further examples can be mentioned. In Queensland, Australia, the Labour state leadership in the early 2000s developed 'a service delivery model involving government working in partnership with communities to determine needs, devising strategies for meeting those needs,

implementing activities consistent with those strategies, and ultimately monitoring results. The emphasis is on community empowerment and not on traditional functional programme delivery'.

This approach, which has been described as networked or associational governance (Smyth, Reddel and Jones, 2005) has been reflected in a number of economic, social and integrated economic and social policy initiatives.

All these examples have important lessons. In terms of local leadership, they show that an ongoing commitment to the community with sustained investments in local leadership and development is critical. They also make it very clear that, while local leadership from local government is essential, local governments are not the only source of local leadership. Local councillors and senior officials must play their leadership roles in close partnership with many other potential community leaders.

Key discussion points:

1. In what ways can local government help communities to lead?
2. How can local government ensure that local community leadership programmes are connected into wider strategic decision making processes?
3. What are the most effective ways of involving poor and excluded communities in local leadership?
4. How can central government help make this happen?

Key issues and challenges

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The previous section has demonstrated that, across the Commonwealth, important steps are being taken by local government to enhance its local leadership role, but that there still remain serious challenges. These challenges arise not merely because effective local leadership still needs to be further developed, but because the new model of local governance itself brings potential problems. The issues and challenges thus concern a number of aspects of the governance arrangements within which local leadership operates. The new local governance regimes that are emerging alter the roles and responsibilities of state and civil society actors and the power relations between them. These new arrangements are intended to promote better governance which, while difficult to define precisely, may be seen to be shaped by several overlapping principles (Batterbury and Fernando, 2006) which are applicable at all levels from the global to the local: openness; participation; accountability; effectiveness and coherence. Here we will consider these challenges under four headings:

- Accountability
- Inclusion
- Resources
- Decentralisation

Accountability

The new local leadership seeks to enhance the accountability of local governance and tackle the limited accountability of 'traditional' local government. Key to the accountability of local governance is the engagement of a range of partners and stakeholders, and mechanisms for the participation of citizens and communities. By increasing the awareness and understanding of 'the public' it is hoped that they will become more informed scrutineers of local governance, so strengthening the 'downwards' accountability chain (from decision makers to communities). The attitudes and practices of local leaders are crucial both in promoting the accountability of the local governance processes in which they play prominent roles, and also in ensuring that they are themselves accountable.

However, neither of these can be taken for granted. Indeed, some elements of new local governance

arrangements give potential cause for concern about the effectiveness of accountability. The many stakeholders involved in local partnership working have different concepts and practices of accountability, some stronger than others. A key issue must therefore be to ensure that these 'multiple accountabilities' are recognised, strengthened where necessary, and made to work together in an effective way, rather than several different accountabilities cutting across each other in a potentially conflicting manner. At the same time, community and citizen engagement mechanisms potentially widen the channels of accountability between local leaders and citizens, but they do not necessarily engage all citizens equally (women for example). At the worst, it is acknowledged that corruption can still flourish despite the accountability arrangements of new local governance – either if local 'stakeholder governance' turns out to be governance by an elite with limited accountability, or if community engagement leads to the emergence of new 'political entrepreneurs' bridging the gap between local leaderships and citizens and communities, who again are inadequately accountable (Batterbury and Fernando, 2006).

Blair (2000) draws attention to a range of mechanisms that can support the development of accountability in local governance. Importantly he identifies the need for robust mechanisms of accountability to be operating in 'traditional' local government institutions such as elections, political parties, formal grievance procedures, alongside other mechanisms that can play a role in securing accountability in 'traditional' institutions as well as in the newer institutions of local governance, including the role of civil society and the media, and the contribution of opinion surveys and public meetings. The message that strong accountability in new forms of local governance must be underpinned by effective accountability of existing institutions, rather than being perceived as an alternative to it, is an important one for local leaders.

Both the potential and the difficulties of accountability within a partnership framework are illustrated by the experience of English Local Strategic Partnerships.

From a Commonwealth perspective, England is a relative latecomer to partnership-focussed local governance, however; it has been able to innovate and evaluate. Some of the key learning points include:

Box 14. Accountability and Local Strategic Partnerships

Accountability encompasses aspects of leadership, legitimacy and democracy. LSPs recognise that their accountability is problematic: that some see them as the self-appointed 'great and the good'. Three forms of accountability (downward, horizontal and vertical) are discussed below.

Downwards accountability. The positive engagement of councillors can be key to LSP success and accountability. Though rarely institutionalised, frontbench councillors can report back to Council overview and scrutiny committees that connect LSPs to political structures. Councillors also champion local issues and citizen concerns. However, practice varies and a minority of councillors perceive LSPs as threats to their 'democratic mandate'. Some LSPs incorporate strong community networks and others ensure they target 'hard to reach' and vulnerable peoples' needs and opinions. However, LSP redress mechanisms are rare and there is confusion on whether mechanisms such as local government ombudsmen are empowered to deal with LSP matters. Furthermore, there are few examples of LSP policy referenda or participatory budgeting and most Community Strategy consultations are not satisfactorily robust. Despite many LSPs claiming that they make use of public engagement to a 'significant extent' in developing their Community Strategy, downwards accountability remains problematic as indicated by the fact that only 55% of LSPs claimed their LSP is accountable to the public.

Horizontal accountability. Four out of five LSPs feel that they are accountable to their partners. However, as the 2002 Local Government White Paper recognised most local public sector agencies had not re-organised, nor provided budgetary freedoms, performance and line-management mechanisms to fully engage with LSPs. Local authority 'freedoms and flexibilities' and LAA 'enabling mechanisms' are addressing this problem, and legislation is being introduced to require named agencies to address the Community Strategy and LAA (and consequentially require agencies to work with the LSP).

Upwards accountability. 40% of LSPs consider they are accountable to government. Interpretation is, however, complex as low upwards accountability may indicate successful decentralisation - what LSPs are designed to deliver. Despite lacking formal links, government has steered LSPs (particularly those in poorer areas, which research show have greater accountability), for example, introducing performance management frameworks - which most LSPs had failed to introduce satisfactorily (or at least quickly enough) themselves. Furthermore, the nine regional government offices act as LSP 'critical friends', undertaking 6-monthly reviews and reporting back to ministers.

Accountability provided by the LSP. LSPs can be seen as agents of accountability per se. For instance, an LSP may facilitate a police operation plan take account of data and needs identified by social workers, educational establishments and community groups etc. The Community Strategy acts as an evidenced and agreed vision steering partner agencies' activities. Furthermore, aligning plans, budgets and performance regimes results in scrutiny of agencies' own business by a wider range of organisations. For example, through LSPs local Councils are making their project budgets, plans and activities accessible to more organisations than previously. Similarly (though few possess hard-edged sanctions) LSPs chase partners on actions and targets. LSPs can also help small organisations engage with larger service providers so more stakeholders contribute to local governance. Thus through use of evidence, collective action, scrutiny, peer pressure and performance management LSPs enhance the accountability of a wide range of partner agencies.

Source: Carter 2006

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- Partnerships take time to establish and so does their accountability
- To meaningfully enhance accountability partnerships have to work across a multitude of fronts: positive councillor engagement; strong performance management; professional standards; robust evidencing of local needs; applied public engagement, and transparent intra-organisational structures
- Accountability needs to be proportional to function, influence and risk.
- Despite the importance of bespoke decentralised models, accountability needs to be professionalised and incorporate some standardisation, which central government has a duty to promote
- Accountability has been enhanced through LSPs being part of a 'whole system' of governance that connect them with other local and regional agencies and mainstream government reporting mechanisms.

Key discussion point:

1. How can local leaders develop a framework for managing multiple accountabilities effectively?
2. Does central government have a role in supporting this?

Inclusion

For numerous commentators, the acid test of the new governance, including its local leadership, is whether it can perform better than traditional government structures in tackling poverty and promoting the inclusion of the poor, the disadvantaged and the excluded (Blair, 2000; Devas, 2000; IDS, 2005; Stren, 2003). The impact of globalisation and the search for competitiveness is associated with widening disparities in many if not all Commonwealth countries; with issues concerned with the inclusion of large numbers of poor migrants as well as deprived indigenous communities in the more prosperous states, and with the uncontrolled – and sometimes seemingly uncontrollable – processes of peri-urbanisation and slum creation in less developed countries. In many Commonwealth countries, issues of inequality and exclusion are intimately bound up with the relationship between formal government and its

leadership and traditional communities and their leaderships, and it is recognised that a central challenge is to find processes through which these twin leaderships work with each other in a positive way. Our case studies contain examples of these positive interactions. For example the assembly system developed in Ghana allows for representatives of 6 major categories of local leaders (political, administrative, traditional, faith based, private sector and service/project) to be included. In the Central Region of Ghana a sub-committee of the district assembly has enabled a range of stakeholders (including businesses) to implement a Decent-Work programme, which has helped the growth of local businesses and improved employment for people working in the informal sector; women and those with HIV/AIDs. Similarly, in Fiji local town councils have worked through traditional land ownership regimes in order to make housing provision available to squatter settlers.

More generally, the challenge for local governance and local leaders is to ensure, not only that processes of participation and engagement engage the marginalised and excluded, but that inclusive processes translate into inclusive outcomes which reduce disparities. This implies that the broad thrust of policies need to be slanted towards the poor and disadvantaged, implying that innovative initiatives such as have been described in this paper need to be mainstreamed, escaping from what is often a marginal and peripheral status.

Key discussion point:

1. How can inclusive processes translate in to inclusive development outcomes?

Resources

One of the rationales behind the drive for new approaches to local governance has been the view that there should be a significant shift in the role of local governments from a 'delivery' to an 'enabling' function, and that the role of local politicians as local leaders will be enhanced if they spend less time on the minutiae of service delivery and more time on the more strategic aspects of local leadership. This view seems to be widely accepted across the Commonwealth, and there is now a trend towards innovation and partnership in service delivery where this is seen to meet community needs more effectively (Sohail, 2004; Sansom,

2005). In this paper we have highlighted examples of the role of local leadership in promoting innovative, partnership-based approaches to service delivery.

However, this trend should not obscure the fact that the inadequate resourcing of local government undermines efforts to modernise local leadership. There are a number of dimensions to this issue. Firstly, the legitimacy of local government leaders (both councillors and senior officials) rests not only on the elected status of councillors but also on the fact that local governments deliver a range of services. Evidence from England suggests that the capacity for and credibility of local government leadership are contingent upon the institution first being fit to fulfil its core responsibilities. In the words of one respondent, 'you can't be a serious community leader if you can't empty the bins' (Sullivan and Sweeting, 2005).

In fact these two dimensions are linked – popular electoral participation – or the lack of it – is closely related to the perception that local governments have significant functions, not merely of regulation or coordination but of delivery. The more this function is reduced the more it undermines the legitimacy of council leaders. We can conclude that sufficient resources to provide efficient and appropriate services to local communities (often in conjunction with other partners, some of whom are of course better placed to deliver some services) must underpin effective local leadership.

Adequate resourcing of local government is crucial both to seize the economic opportunities which globalisation may offer and to deal with the inequalities which come in its wake. It is clear from recent Indian experience that urban infrastructures are particularly important in the global competition for foreign direct investment, and local leadership can play a key role in generating the resources for infrastructural investment (Mathur, 2003). But urban infrastructure is equally important in ensuring that the poor have access to a range of services, and local leadership is crucial to balancing the demands of growth and distribution. Currently however, as one major cross-national study concludes, 'the lack of financial resources is perhaps the factor which most inhibits city governments from addressing the needs of the poor' (Devas, 2000).

Finally, resources are needed for the specific purpose of developing stronger local leadership. This is discussed further in Section 8.

Key discussion point:

1. How can the move from delivery to enabling enhance and/or diminish effective local leadership?

Decentralisation

In many Commonwealth countries, lack of resources characterises government as a whole, from the national to the local level. But undoubtedly the limits to the decentralisation of powers and resources exacerbate the problems faced by local leaders. Recent reviews undertaken for CLGF have highlighted the very different degrees of decentralisation to local government in both the Pacific and the Caribbean regions (Duncan C; Duncan R; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2004 a and b). As Stren (2003) points out, while there has undoubtedly been a trend towards decentralisation in the developing world over recent decades, that trend has been halting, patchy and prone to reversal in places. The same is true in many developed countries, where ideas such as that of a 'new localism' in which local governments and leaderships have real autonomy and 'freedom within boundaries' often remains an ambition rather than a reality (Wilson and Stoker, 2004). As with an absence of resources, if decentralisation to the local level remains limited, local leadership will be hamstrung.

Decentralisation issues also arise, however, within the local level, and are of considerable importance to local leadership. Where local governments cover large areas and populations, there is a strong case for some decentralisation of functions and power to a lower, often neighbourhood level, bringing local government closer to citizens. Lowndes and Sullivan (2006) identify four rationales for decentralisation to neighbourhoods:

- The civic rationale is that neighbourhood units of governance provide more and better opportunities for citizens to participate effectively in decisions
- The social rationale claims that the neighbourhood is the most appropriate arena for a citizen-focused approach to governance and that that neighbourhood governance offers the best prospect for 'joining-up' local action to provide a more integrated approach to citizen well-being

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- The political rationale is based on claims that citizens can access neighbourhood governance more easily and are more knowledgeable about the issues at stake, that leaders at the neighbourhood level are more likely to be responsive to citizen views, and to have direct experience of the matters at hand and that citizens are better able to hold leaders to account because leaders' deliberations and actions are more visible to citizens, as are the consequences of their decision-making
- The economic rationale is based upon the proposition that neighbourhood governance can make more efficient and effective use of available resources.

Evidence from a range of research studies reveal that neighbourhood decentralisation can lead to greater satisfaction with service quality, closer involvement of citizens in decision taking and improvements in service coordination. However, the evidence also reinforces a point we made earlier in this paper; that decentralisation on its own is an insufficient strategy. It needs to be accompanied by structural reforms that offer a clear role for the corporate centre in ensuring that core principles and standards of the local authority are maintained, for example with respect to promoting community cohesion. It also requires improvements in the capacity of actors to fulfil the roles offered to them. This applies to community members, the workforce and local councillors (Sullivan and Howard, 2005, Randle, 2005).

One cross-national study concluded that it was vital that local councillors maintained a direct link with their electorate and had executive roles if they were to have a positive impact on the poor (Devas, 2000). Overall, as evidence from our case studies suggests, there is no single 'best' way of providing local leadership. What is essential is that institutions are both 'fit for purpose' and accommodating of traditional forms of authority alongside more modern governance arrangements. This seems to point clearly to local leadership being 'distributed' been centres of authority in different ways depending on local contexts and circumstances. A key task for local leaders is then to ensure that this 'distributed leadership' functions effectively and in complementary rather than competing ways.

What can be said with most certainty in this debate is that the domination of local government by centrally elected officials is very unlikely to produce accountable and inclusive local leadership (Devas, 2000).

Key discussion points:

1. What roles should local councillors play in order to ensure effective local leadership?
2. How viable or desirable is decentralisation within the municipality?



Developing local leadership – roles and responsibilities

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Many actors, from the local to the international, have roles to play in developing stronger local leadership.

Local actors

Local government plays a pivotal role in the development and exercise of local leadership, because of its democratically elected status and its overarching remit in the locality. There are five clear roles for local government to play in the development and exercise of local leadership:

- **Convenor.** Local government is likely to need to invest human and other resources in identifying and bringing key stakeholders together to address local concerns. While some stakeholders are likely to see this kind of activity as central to their remit e.g. other public bodies, other stakeholders might need convincing of the value of coming together; either because of a lack of capacity on their part, e.g. the private sector; or because of previous bad experiences, e.g. the voluntary and community sector. Consequently local government will need to make a case for participation. Local government will be best placed to do this where it can demonstrate that it has a strong grasp on key local concerns, is aware of the different interests of the various stakeholders and can see the world from their perspective and can identify opportunities for productive partnership working. Another important dimension to the role of convenor is the ability to manage conflicts and tensions that arise in relationships. Key individuals such as local government managers and elected leaders (of mayors) have a key role to play in forging good relationships with local stakeholders and giving credibility to the contribution of local leadership.
- **Strategist.** Local government will usually be best placed of local actors to have an overview of the needs and priorities of the locality and the positive and negative pressures that will impact in the medium to long term. It may also be able to access professional and technical support to help in the drawing up of strategies and action plans, e.g. access to data, strategic planning and project management capacity. This will enable it to work with stakeholders, for example, 'to formulate a realistic vision of the community's social and economic development' (Sorenson and Epps, 1996).
- **Communicator.** The exercise of local leadership is dependent upon effective communication between key

stakeholders and with local citizens and communities. Local government has an important role to play in ensuring that key partners communicate effectively in the preparation and implementation of programmes of action, and that communities are kept up to date with progress towards key priorities (that they will have been instrumental in developing).

- **Protector of democratic accountability.** Accountability is one of the key challenges facing local leaders in a complex environment where multiple accountabilities may be in play at any given time. Local government is accountable to the public in a number of ways (e.g. elections, public participation programmes, service reviews). It is important that local government draws on its experience of democratic accountability to devise formal (and possibly informal) mechanisms through which local citizens and communities are able to hold local leaders to account, where these leaders are working in partnership for public purpose.
- **Exemplar of good practice.** Local government should be prepared to lead by example in the promotion of effective leadership. This includes making appropriate changes to its structures, processes and most importantly, cultures in order to foster openness and responsiveness to partners and the public. Evidence suggests that achieving this kind of culture change involves devolving decision making to as near the 'front line' as possible, developing effective means of engaging with and involving local citizens and communities in local decision making (particularly those in marginalised communities, and distributing leadership across elected and appointed officials in local government (Newman, 1996; Sullivan and Sweeting, 2005).

In an environment where collaboration and partnership working are increasingly important for the achievement of community well-being, a wide range of public bodies and authorities are likely to be called on to work together. As we have indicated throughout this paper the kind of local leadership that is most likely to be needed in this environment, is distributed leadership which needs to be distributed throughout organisations and within partnership arrangements. Consequently other public service bodies and authorities will also need to demonstrate leadership capabilities that can be effective in

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partnership situations – elements of the convening role will be appropriate here as will the ability to fulfil the communication role.

For its part local government needs to guard against its exercise of local leadership becoming local dominance as this will alienate local partners and diminish community involvement. This is a key issue for English local government in its role in local strategic partnerships as is illustrated below:

Local government is, almost inevitably, *primus inter pares* – first among equals – among LSP partners, and so its role and engagement is of particular importance... Experience of the issues, willingness to commit resources, democratic leadership, and the statutory community leadership responsibility all combine to reinforce the community leadership role of local government but also to emphasise the potential danger of excessive local government control. There is evidence of ambivalence not only by many local authorities themselves but also by other partners about the local government role, especially around the tension between constructive leadership and local government dominance (ODPM, 2005:1.8)

In order to operate as effective local leaders, key stakeholders (at local and national/provincial levels) need to have an agreed awareness and understanding of the nature of local leadership, which should be widely promoted.

In some cases local leaders' legitimacy may be contested by other stakeholders. Where this is based on local leaders' lack of capacity, capacity building work will need to be undertaken. Where it is based on historical conflicts between interests alternative approaches may need to be developed, such as broadening the range of local leaders that are involved.

Local leaders need to have the capacity (or awareness of their capacity needs and some means of meeting them) to act as leaders and the freedom and resources at their disposal to exercise this capacity. This requires clarity about the purposes and foci of local leadership, e.g. strategic leadership of the whole authority, championing of particular community aspirations, and the development of appropriate organisational and collaborative infrastructure to support each; and also awareness of the potential and limits of their existing powers in terms of their capacity to exercise local leadership.

Local leaders play a very important role in facilitating culture change and translating pressures from higher tiers of government/governance into drivers that correspond with the local way of doing things.

Key discussion points:

1. Does local government have the capacity to play these roles?
2. Are there other roles that need to be included?
3. What kinds of support might local government need to develop these roles?
4. What role is there for central government in developing these roles and building capacity?

Local voluntary and community based organisations, faith based organisations, 'traditional' institutions

The presence of local voluntary and community based organisations, faith based organisations, and 'traditional' institutions in the case studies and wider research that inform this paper provide important evidence of the different and important roles these stakeholders play in the development and expression of local leadership.

- Sites of 'alternative' authority. The changes in the governance environment that we have discussed in this paper mean that a 'modern' local democracy is more likely to need to address particular tensions inherent in its operation including: the tension between representative and participative modes of democracy; between 'heroic' and 'relational' forms of local leadership; and between 'command' and collaborative forms of governing.

In some of our case studies local leadership was formally acknowledged across a range of spheres (e.g. Ghana). This means that for local communities there are often different sites of authority that can command support, including so-called 'traditional authority'. This may be uncomfortable and difficult for democratic local government institutions (although the cases suggest it is not necessarily so) as it means that the authority of local government can be challenged and alternative leaders appealed to to represent particular interests.

Box 15. Public-Private Partnerships to increase employment opportunities

Nasinu and Labasa Town Councils are utilising the Public-Private Partnership Act (2006) to help develop urban areas. Under this partnership the Nasinu Town Council is working with businessman Rajendra Prasad (owner of a chain of Supermarkets) to develop 20 commercial lots. The partnership will allow the business sector to grow as well as provide employment in the area. It will also facilitate the town's growing need for more businesses in the vicinity so that people do not have to travel to neighbouring Suva City or Nausori Town to shop. The council will benefit by collecting rates from its services while the supermarket will be able to collect rentals from vendors. Squatters will find enhanced opportunities for employment.

Source: Bibi 2006

Evidence from our case studies and other research demonstrates the ways in which local communities and citizens can contribute directly to local leadership, not merely by electing representatives. It also emphasises the importance of recognising informal as well as formal leadership (IDS, 2005) and the negotiated nature of good leadership.

- Advocates of marginalised communities. Local civil society organisations play an important role in advocating on behalf of poor and marginalised communities (often women), getting their voices heard in deliberations about priorities and strategies and drawing on their own professional and technical resources to influence the development of strategic plans in favour of marginalised groups.
- Capacity builders of community participants. Local civil society organisations play a central role in working with community members to develop their confidence and their capabilities to speak out for themselves and co-produce outcomes with public and private partners (e.g. providing business skills training to community members as part of the C3 project in Uganda).

Often local civil society bodies operate with very limited resources and are themselves in need of resourcing and capacity building to develop their own contribution as local leaders.

Key discussion points:

1. Does the local voluntary and community sector have the capacity to play these roles?
2. Are there other roles that need to be included?
3. What kinds of support might the sector need to develop these roles?

4. How can central government manage the tensions between these sectors and democratic local government?

The private sector, local chambers of commerce

The local private sector may be involved in local leadership in a number of ways. Local business people may become mayors and draw on their business networks in designing and implementing programmes. Local businesses may also be drawn into collaboration with local government either individually or through their local chambers of commerce (as in Uganda).

Local private sector bodies often find participation in local leadership difficult because of the financial constraints they operate under and the limited resources they have to commit to such activities (ODPM/DfT, 2006) or because they see their interests as being served elsewhere (Devas, 2000). This is not to suggest that local private sector bodies are not active in partnerships to support economic and social development; rather that their participation is often in delivering rather than leading, although there are some notable exceptions e.g. the role played by a local businessman in Nasinu, Fiji (Box 15).

Devas (2000) points out that while businesses have a major influence on the lives of the poor, this can take effect in two ways, businesses can support employment and economic development through programmes of social responsibility, but they can also secure influence over local leaders for their own purposes. Devas also highlights the apparent failure to engage in addressing the needs of the poorest communities of the trade union movement; identifying how in the case of public sector unions, their actions to support their members can in fact impact adversely on service delivery.

One area where private sector bodies (including local businesses and large multi-national corporations) have

Box 16. Central Government Role in Enabling/Promoting Local Leadership in Ghana

Central government initiatives to promote or enable local leadership include the following:

Collaborating with development partners to create assembly-based, local learning, resource and information centers for community leaders to access information and gain skills for community development. These include the Communication Information Centres under the Land Administration Programme, the Community Learning Centres under the Community-Based Rural Development Programme and similar initiatives under the Social Investment Fund.

Training and other capacity building for local authorities and local leaders (such as traditional authorities and local entrepreneurs) to develop and implement programmes and deliver services. Provision of core development financing to ensure certain minimum levels of development. This has been mainly through the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) which requires a minimum of 5% of national income being made available to local authorities for development funding. Provision of guidelines for relevant planning and allocation of resources to ensure certain minimum standards of performance and priorities within the national framework. These include the planning guidelines by the NDPC alluded to earlier and the guidelines for the allocation of the Common Fund.

Provision of legal requirements for community consultation and involvement. These include the provisions for community consultation in the local government act; the requirements for public hearing and bottom-up planning in the national planning systems act; and the requirements for community/interest group representation on service structures. These mandatory requirements provide opportunities for community input into district plans as well as channels for feedback from the political and administrative leadership to communities.

Provision of new mechanisms from the centre to keep the citizenry informed. These include the annual people's assemblies conducted at the national, regional and district levels for public officials to undertake annual accounting and to allow the citizenry to ask pertinent questions. There are also websites to provide information on resource transfers such as on the District Assemblies Common Fund. Increasingly, government has made information on transfers to the districts such as on HIPC resources available to civil society organisations and research institutions. That information has been used by the district HIPC Watch Committees.

Improved soliciting of input from the public: there are advertisements for public memoranda for inputs into the national and district budget processes, legal reviews and invitations to environmental impact assessments. The constraints to electronic and print-based interactions are that non-literate and remote communities would have difficulties in access.

Source: Ofei-Aboagye 2006

been keen to take leadership roles is in 'growth coalitions', public-private partnerships designed with the specific purpose of stimulating economic development in a city or region. Examples of these exist in many cities in Commonwealth countries including Leeds, Bangalore and Johannesburg. However, growth coalitions have been criticised for either not considering the needs of the poor or for promoting the hotly contested concept of 'trickle down' in defence of their activities.

In order to encourage the further participation of local businesses in local leadership activity national business

associations and chambers of commerce could publicise and support good business local leadership practice, discourage bad practice (also by publicising it) and encourage local businesses to resource local leadership capacity building as part of their role in promoting social responsibility. A powerful lead could be given by local government associations holding meetings with the national chambers of commerce to emphasise the potential contribution of business to local governance and the benefits to business of their engagement.

Key discussion points:

1. Does the local private sector have the capacity to play these roles?
2. Are there other roles that need to be included?
3. What kinds of support might the sector need to develop these roles? Which bodies can provide this support?

National/provincial actors

As has been stated throughout this paper national or provincial governments can enable or hinder local leadership. Enabling it means:

- Resourcing local government adequately so that it has the capacity to develop and exercise its leadership role. This is not a once-and-for-all settlement but a relationship that needs to be renegotiated over time as contexts and imperatives change and new expectations and aspirations are placed on local government. This dynamic relationship is well described by the Canadian case study earlier in this paper
- Decentralisation of functions and political decentralisation to local councillors so that they have power to act on local issues and be held accountable locally for them
- Making use of legal and policy levers to stimulate local government leadership. In England the duty of community strategy, the freedom to establish local strategic partnerships, and the power of well-being have all supported local government in its exercise of local leadership
- Resourcing local leadership capacity building to enable local councillors and managers to develop their skills. In England specific capacity building funds were identified by national government to support the development of local capacity building through direct training programmes (for councillors, middle managers) and consortium based bids for resources to support particular developments, e.g. support for partnership capacity building
- Publicising and disseminating good practice to stimulate local leadership more widely. In Papua New Guinea the

Urban Local Level Government Association has disseminated the experience of a major urban safety programme in Port Moresby in the hope of generating interest in other cities and towns in the country

- Regulating local leadership to discourage corruption and bad practice, e.g. producing codes of conduct
- Ensuring that the agendas of other public bodies within its jurisdiction are aligned with and not contrary to the agenda for local government agenda
- Responding positively to proposed innovations that come from local leaderships, e.g. proposals from town councils in Fiji to purchase Crown land for use in developing affordable housing for squatter settlers.

The case study from Ghana provides a good illustration of the many ways in which national/provincial governments can enable the development of local leadership in the ways highlighted above (Box 16).

As some of our examples illustrate, a number of these functions can be undertaken in partnership with national local government associations and relevant national professional bodies.

Key discussion points:

1. Do national/provincial actors perform in these enabling ways?
2. Are there other contributions they could make?

International actors – international development agencies and NGOs

International actors can make a significant impact on local governance because of the resources they wield, both financial and technical. In a number of our case studies international NGOs were instrumental in setting up and supporting the development of local initiatives for community well-being. For example the UK's Department for International Development was a core funder of the City Community Challenges project in Uganda, AusAID supports the Urban Safety project running in Papua New Guinea's capital city and NZAID is a partner in joint ventures initiated by Labasa Town

C L G F R E S E A R C H S E R I E S

Council in Fiji to support housing developments for squatter settlers.

Research suggests that given the huge impact international NGOs can make on the localities and countries that they work in it is important that they 'have the best possible understanding of (local) social, political and institutional contexts; to avoid 'hogging' the political space; to be much more consistent and less cavalier about advancing new policies without regard to local capacity to implement them; to be aware of their impact on local relationships and incentives, including the risk of aid dependency; and to be much less naïve about politics' (IDS, 2005:5). In the context of this paper, this message suggests that international actors should avoid substituting for local leadership and do more to support the development and practice of good local leadership.

Key discussion points:

1. Do international development agencies/NGOs have a positive impact on local leadership?
2. What other contributions could they make?



Taking forward the agenda: local leadership, development and the Commonwealth framework

C L G F R E S E A R C H S E R I E S

Taking forward the local leadership agenda across the Commonwealth implies both generating wider awareness and understanding of the role of local leadership in today's context, and also building local leadership capacity.

Traditionally, programmes to build managerial and leadership capacity in local government have focussed primarily on the skills, knowledge and competencies needed to lead within the local authority organisation. The new local leadership requires a wider capability to lead in collaboration with partners and communities. Working with communities implies a range of attitudes, such as learning to think about services from users' perspectives, recognising the ways in which community groups' work, enabling and supporting community leaders. Working with partners implies being aware of different interests, working with partners as equal but different, leading through influence rather than control, developing strategic priorities which meet the needs of all partners (Hartley, 2002).

In some countries, there are leadership development programmes along these lines both within individual local authorities and provided by local government associations and or national governments, such as the Leadership Academy for councillors in England run by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). (www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk).

The Municipal Association of Victoria in Australia has worked with its local authorities to develop a competency framework for councillors to help them build their capacity to act as effective local leaders (Box 17)

One English local authority restructured its senior management arrangements in order to be able to act in a more strategic and corporate way:

What we decided some time ago is... change the format of the management team, [from a large group of heads of service], so that we would have strategic directors... And they do work together now more corporately than ever before I think. It's being able to see the bigger picture and not just working within their own directorates and silos... So it's the new chief executive, the strategic directors and ...probably the portfolio team, you know the executive team working together very well and understanding I think, why we have to work together so strategically (Council leader in Sullivan and Sweeting, 2005:45).

Some local councils have invested heavily in developing the 'community champion' role. The London borough of Newham has devised an 'influential councillor' programme, which aims to identify the contribution made by ordinary councillors in an authority with an elected mayor. This programme is about:

'Empowering them to be involved in local authority decisions that affect their communities, enabling them to develop their community leadership role by engaging with local partners and other agencies with an interest in the local area, encouraging them to facilitate community action through their role as the focal point of the Community Forum and developing clearer lines of accountability to communities through systematic feedback and interaction with community members' (cited in Sullivan and Howard, 2005:49).

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum can play an important role in disseminating good practice in local leadership development, and encouraging governments to consider programmes such as the IDeA's Leadership Academy.



Box 17. Competencies for councillors in Victoria, Australia**Leadership**

- Works cohesively with other stakeholders including councillors, community groups and the administration
- Shows respect and develops trust through transparent actions, inclusive behaviour and strong communication skills
- Acknowledges the diverse needs of all interested parties.

Governance

- Understands the legislative framework applicable to local government, in particular how to operate within the legal boundaries set out by the Act and other key legislation
- Is well-informed on issues in order to make timely, effective, accountable and legal decisions that are transparent to the community.

Relationship Management

- Engages with and is an advocate for the municipality, fellow councillors, council administration staff and other government representatives
- Listens, understands and reflects competing views in the decision making process
- Follows Council protocols and policies, including those for the media. Articulates the decisions made by the council to its constituents in a clear and understandable manner.

Environmental and asset management

- Displays stewardship of council assets through strategic decision making on resource management
- Ensures that appropriate resources are provided to ensure assets are maintained in a sustainable manner. In doing so ensures consideration for the built, social, cultural, economic and natural environments.

Financial Management

- Deliberates on strategic resource plans and adopts budgets with a long-term perspective
- Works with council staff to understand the financial position of the council.

Strategy

- Demonstrates a long-term strategic focus
- Is inclusive of stakeholders' views in the decision-making process
- Sets the goals and objectives for the council, with a balanced and long-term view
- Understands the day-to-day implications of Council's strategy for the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the municipality.

Land use planning

- Understands the purpose of land use planning for the municipality, and how it relates to both the council's strategic direction and the State's planning policies
- Utilises the statutory framework effectively to review permit applications. Demonstrates an understanding of the alignment between land use planning and the strategic planning activities of the council.

Source: Municipal Association of Victoria 2006. www.mav.asn.au

Next steps

C L G F R E S E A R C H S E R I E S

The discussions that will take place at the CLGF conference in Auckland on Delivering development through local leadership will inform CLGF policy and permit it to refine the themes arising in this paper and hopefully answer some of the questions posed. CLGF will be seeking to develop a workplan that includes local leadership as a key component. At the centre of this is sharing the various practices that are found across the Commonwealth – some highlighted here, and many more to be highlighted at the conference.

CLGF is particularly keen to help deploy the power of local leadership to energise the drive towards realising the MDGs – a key challenge for local government and central government alike – over the coming years. It is the focus that comes with robust strategic planning, community involvement and local government leadership that will drive the delivery of these key developmental goals. The greater engagement with the key issues affecting local leadership – such as how gains can be made, and what challenges lie ahead – the more equipped local government will be to deliver on its responsibilities to its citizens.



CLGF: action for local government

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) works to promote and strengthen effective democratic local government throughout the Commonwealth and to encourage the exchange of good practice in local government structures and services.

Its key objectives are to:

- Promote democratic values and good local governance
- Exchange experience among local government practitioners
- Strengthen local government capacity, and
- Develop a Commonwealth-wide network of local government.

CLGF works through:

- Conferences and events
- Technical support to members through programmes such as the Good Practice Scheme
- Ongoing research and information on local government in all Commonwealth countries and key topics and issues for local government highlighted by members
- Advice and support for local elections and systems
- Election monitoring
- Capacity-building support for councillors and councils.

The voice of local government in the Commonwealth

CLGF ensures that local government's voice is heard within the Commonwealth. It represents local government at Commonwealth level, and works closely with other Commonwealth and international organisations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Union and the United Nations, notably UN-Habitat. As an accredited Commonwealth organisation, CLGF is invited to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings and key ministerial and other meetings. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings have endorsed its activities.

Becoming a member of CLGF

CLGF has more than 180 members in 40 Commonwealth countries. Members include:

- Local government associations
- Individual local authorities
- Ministries with responsibility for local government.

Professional bodies, research institutions and other organisations with an interest in local government can join as associate members.

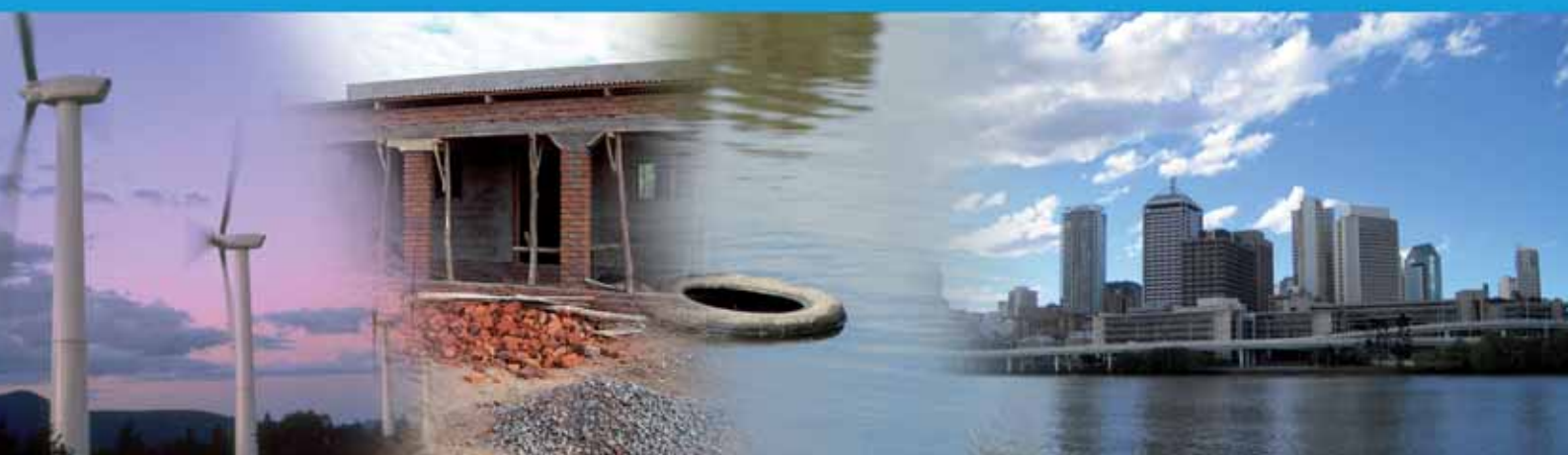
As a member of CLGF you will:

- Elect Board members and help determine CLGF policy and priorities at the biennial General Meeting
- Receive a quarterly newsletter about CLGF and other Commonwealth activities and events
- Be able to attend CLGF conferences, including the biennial Commonwealth Local Government Conference and regional events at special member rates
- Have access to CLGF's wide network including many thousands of local authorities
- Receive the annual Commonwealth Local Government Handbook and other publications
- Have access to CLGF's expert database for advice and support
- Be eligible to apply to join the Good Practice Scheme, to work with partners in other countries on particular technical and capacity-building projects and exchange of skills
- Be part of an international network promoting local government and democracy throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

Your organisation must be based in a Commonwealth country to be eligible to join CLGF.

For further information check out our website on www.clgf.org.uk,
or e-mail us on info@clgf.org.uk.





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