

Local Governance and Accountability in Africa

Insights from Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda

Executive Summary

1. INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Transparency and Accountability in Africa (LOGTAFAs) project focuses on local governance and downward accountability. It applies an analytical framework to examine the role of local governments and civil society in ensuring transparency, participation, voice and responsiveness in local government planning, budgeting, service delivery, procurement, audit, monitoring and evaluation. The project is based on in-depth work in three African countries: Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda.

This report presents the findings of the LOGTAFAs project. It is divided into three parts. Part I offers a comparative analysis of the state of decentralization in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda. It does so by assessing the level of local discretion and accountability in political, administrative and fiscal domains in the three countries. Part II focuses on the Evaluative Framework (LOGTAFAs EF) developed to identify and assess good governance practices at the local level. It presents an application of the LOGTAFAs EF as an assessment tool through the Local Governance Competition of Excellence (COPEGOL) program launched in three pilot countries. Finally, using the LOGTAFAs EF, Part III presents case studies of good governance initiatives identified in sampled collectivities.¹

2. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GUINEA, BURKINA FASO AND RWANDA

The first part of the report consists of a deliberative analysis of the current state of decentralization in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda. We use a diagnostic framework developed by Yilmaz, Beris and Serrano-Berthet (2008) to assess whether the decentralization process in the pilot countries led to greater discretion and accountability of local governments.

2.1. The Decentralization Process: A Comparative Perspective

In **Guinea**, decentralization was declared a state objective in 1985. After decades of centralized governance, Guinean leadership considered decentralization a suitable way of revitalizing the country by giving people the opportunity to participate in decision making processes and their own development.

Reforms expanded geographically. Decentralization was first piloted in five rural municipalities (*Communes Rurales de Développement-CRD*) between 1988 and 1990. It was then extended to 115 CRD and 33 urban municipalities (*Commune Urbaine - CU*), until the remaining territory was communalized ("*communalisation integrale*") in 1992. Guinea was the first country in the region to implant decentralized entities throughout its territory.

In 2006, a new "*Code des Collectivités Locales*" (CCL) was adopted. It confirms rural and urban municipalities as the main channel for service delivery. However, it perpetuates the French colonial

¹ In this report, the word "collectivities" is used to refer to decentralized entities in general. It includes the rural and urban municipalities (Burkina Faso), the rural community of development, the urban commune (Guinea), and the district (Rwanda).

legacy of administrative centralization by maintaining close state control (known as *tutelle*) over municipalities' regulatory power, administrative responsibilities and financial management.

Burkina Faso's commitment to decentralization is also about two decades old. A new constitution adopted in 1991 made decentralization a major organizing principle for political life in the country. After years of military rule, decentralization was seen as a way to strengthen democratization by promoting citizen participation in the management of public affairs, improve public delivery of basic services and strengthen local governance.

In contrast to Guinea, Burkina Faso opted for two decentralized levels: the region and the municipality. Like its neighbor, it differentiated two types of municipalities, urban and rural, and followed an incremental approach to decentralization reform. In Burkina Faso, however, the incremental approach was not only territorial, but also substantial. The rationale for the gradual implementation was that local governments lacked the capacity to carry out their newly assigned responsibilities. Therefore, concrete implementation of decentralization first affected urban municipalities, where local officials had greater capacity. In 2004, Parliament adopted the *Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales* (CGCT). Similarly to the Guinean CCL, the CGCT constitutes a comprehensive legal framework stating in detail the responsibilities to be transferred to local governments. Yet, it also retains strong oversight powers for *tutelle* structures inherited from the French Colonial system.

The rationale and process for decentralization in **Rwanda** starkly differs from those in the two West African countries. Kigali adopted the National Decentralization Policy (NDP) in May 2000 as a result of a nationwide consultative process aiming at identifying the underlying causes of genocide and devising durable solutions. Decentralization was to achieve three main goals: good governance, pro-poor service delivery and sustainable socio-economic development. Indeed, bad governance, extreme poverty and exclusive political processes were pointed out as some of the main causes of the genocide². On the basis of these findings, and within the government's long - term Vision 2020 and poverty reduction strategy, Rwanda designed and adopted an ambitious decentralization program.

In contrast to Guinea and Burkina Faso, Rwanda followed a "big bang" approach to decentralization. Reforms sought first to substantially increase political, administrative and fiscal discretionary powers of all districts, and then strengthen their capacity and accountability towards citizens. Decentralization policy is presented in several documents including the *Decentralization Strategic Framework* issued in August 2007 and the related *Decentralization Implementation Program* issued as a final draft in February 2008.

2.2. Local Governance Structure

In these three countries, local governments have a distinct legislature and executive. Some countries have set up additional structures to assist local governments in advancing local development. For example, in Burkina, rural municipalities are endowed with development councils (*Conseil Villageois de Développement* - CVD) constituted by the local legislature. Under the authority of the municipal council, they are in charge of contributing to promoting local development in their villages. Similarly, in Rwanda, an essential component of the decentralized framework is the District Development Committee (CDC).

² Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs, National Decentralization Policy, May 2000, Kigali. See also, World Bank, "Toward a Conflict-Sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategy", June 2005.

Democratically elected, this technical organ is responsible for coordinating development activities. Table 1 details deconcentrated and decentralized governance structures in each country.

Table 1: Deconcentration and Decentralization Systems in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda

	Guinea	Burkina Faso	Rwanda
Central Government Ministry	Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MDDL) Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs (MTAPA)	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MATD)	Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Social Affairs (MINALOC)
DECONCENTRATED SYSTEM			
Level 1	7 Regions + City of Conakry	13 Regions	5 Provinces (4 + City of Kigali)
Level 2	33 Prefectures	45 Provinces	416 Sectors
Level 3	304 Sub-Prefectures	350 Departments	2148 Cells
Level 4	590 Quarters (administrative sub-division of CU) 2444 Districts administrative sub-divisions of CRD)		15000 Villages
Appointed by	Governor appointed by President.	Governor is appointed by decree adopted by council of ministers based on proposition by MATD.	Governor is appointed by the President upon approval by the Senate. Mayor of Kigali is elected by electoral college from among Kigali City Councilors.
	Prefect appointed by President.	High Commissary is appointed by decree adopted by council of ministers based on proposition by MATD.	Sector Executive Secretary is hired by District Council through competition, with approval of Sector Council.
	Sub-Prefect appointed by MTAPA	Prefect is appointed by decree adopted by council of ministers based on proposition by MATD.	Cell Coordinator is elected from within the Cell Council.
	Chief of Quarter appointed by Prefect. President of District appointed by Prefect.		
Council	Regional Administrative Council assisted by 2 consultative bodies: Regional Development Committee (CPD) and Regional and Decentralization Commission. Prefectural Administrative Council assisted by 1 consultative body; Prefectural Development Council (CORD) Quarter council is directly elected by people. District council is directly elected by people.	N/A	Provincial Coordination Committee (Chair: Governor) made up of district mayors and other members appointed by prime minister, as well as women and youth representatives indirectly elected. Council of the City of Kigali is indirectly elected by people. Sector Council is directly and indirectly elected by people. Cell Council comprises of all residents of the Cell who are at least 18 years of age.
DECENTRALIZED SYSTEM			
Level 1		13 Regions	*30 Districts
Level 2	38 Urban Municipalities (CU) 305 Rural Municipalities (CRD)	49 Urban Municipalities 302 Rural Municipalities	

Elected by	Municipalities are governed by a directly elected Council and a Mayor elected by and within the Council.	Regional Council is indirectly elected by municipal councilors. It is headed by the Council President	District council is directly and indirectly elected by people. Mayor is chosen amongst District councilors by elector college composed of Sector and District Councilors. For coordinating development, the District is assisted by the CDC whose members are directly elected.
		Municipalities are governed by a directly elected Council and a Mayor elected by and within the Council. In rural municipalities, villages are endowed with CVD constituted by the municipal council.	

Source: Author, adapted from ESW 2009.

In Guinea and Burkina Faso, the new Codes do not foresee any institutional role for traditional authorities. Nevertheless, in practice, their involvement in local affairs is notable, as they participate in council sessions, influence electoral outcomes, and mediate local conflicts.

2.3. Political Direction and Accountability

Theoretically, the three countries have autonomous local governments with separated local executive and legislative branches. They have opted for a parliamentary type of institutional arrangement where the executive leader is elected from among the council members, by the council itself (Guinea and Burkina Faso) or by an electoral college (Rwanda).³

In both West African countries, however, reality often differs from what is written on paper. Despite a “strong council” legal arrangement, local legislature’s authority is *de facto* fragile. The head of the executive often decides policy and has a great symbolic role in representing the collectivity. In Burkina Faso, the latter convokes and presides over council sessions. Besides, we observe single party dominance in local chambers, strong influence of the national party on local elections, and limited participation of vulnerable groups in party system.⁴ In Burkina Faso, local chambers’ clout is further reduced by the powers of chiefs.

In all three countries, there are several impediments to the watchdog function of municipal councilors, such as no pay, low literacy levels, ignorance of councilors’ roles and responsibilities, and lack of capacity to scrutinize planning, budgeting and procurement processes. Furthermore, in Guinea and Burkina Faso, there is no affirmative action ensuring representation of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and citizens lack formal channels to express grievances. Though the situation is better in Rwanda, where the government has introduced efficient mechanisms of social accountability, civil society lacks the capacity to exploit such opportunities and to provide the necessary degree of check-and-balances over local government actions.

³ The mayor is chosen among district councillors by an electoral college composed of sector and district councillors.

⁴ This latter point is bound to change in Burkina Faso with the recent adoption of a bill on a gender quota requiring parties to have women constitute at least 30 percent of their lists of candidates.

2.4. Administrative Direction and Accountability

In Guinea and Burkina Faso, administrative decentralization is very limited. Central government retains large *ex-ante* controls on most sub-national governments' decisions, through the exercise of *tutelle* powers. The procurement process is restricted and subject to central oversight. Though, in both countries, decentralization codes foresee the creation of a local public service, control over civil servants is nonexistent in practice. By contrast, Rwandan districts are given significant discretion to make administrative decisions within their jurisdiction.

In both West African countries, accountability towards citizens is low, oriented upward rather than downward. Although public accountability structures exist, their performance and credibility are mixed at best, while social accountability approaches are hampered by a culture of administrative secrecy (Burkina) and skills shortage within community-based organizations (Guinea and Burkina Faso). In comparison, in Rwanda, the level of downward accountability is relatively greater, due to a number of initiatives to engage citizens in monitoring administrative decisions and actions.

2.5. Fiscal Direction and Accountability

In both western African countries, local governments have scant discretion over their fiscal policy. Transfers from the state, when they are implemented, are insufficient and unpredictable. In Rwanda, though intergovernmental transfers are predictable and transparent, financial discretion is still relatively low because nearly all of the resources dispensed to local government are earmarked for specific sector activities. In all three countries, downward accountability is low due to weak internal and external controls and insufficient citizen scrutiny of local budget processes.

3. THE LOGTAFA EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK

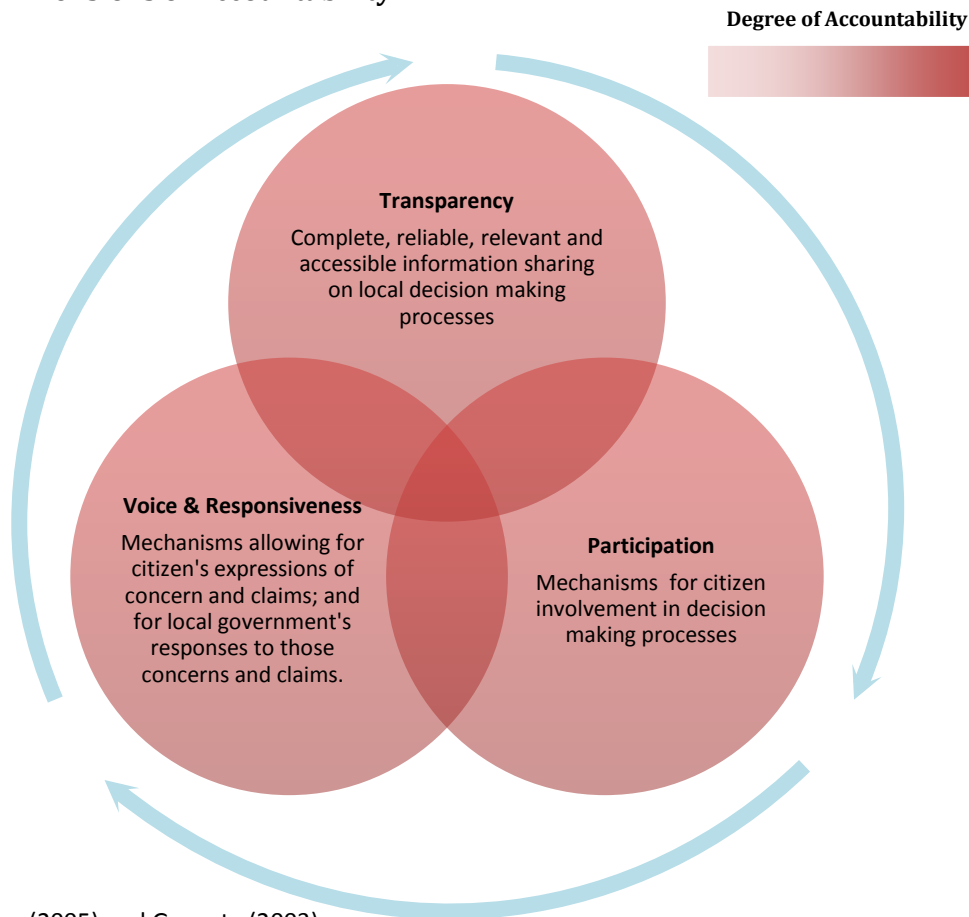
After the analysis of the actual state of decentralization in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda, the second part of the report presents the evaluative framework designed in order to identify and assess good practices implemented by local governments in planning, budgeting, procurement, delivery, audit, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, it presents an interesting application of the LOGTAFA EF as an assessment tool through the Local Governance Competition of Excellence (COPEGOL) organized in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Rwanda.

3.1. LOGTAFA Evaluative Framework

Good practices are assessed using a specially designed evaluative framework (EF). The LOGTAFA EF focuses on four levels of evaluation: accountability, socio-economic impact, innovation, and sustainability, each weighted equally.

Though each dimension is important to consolidate accountability, a dimension's contribution to accountability can only be maximized in interaction with the others. Theoretically, the links between each dimension mutually reinforce each other. In reality, the links between the three dimensions are more complex. This model is a useful conceptual representation that helps understand and visualize determinants of accountability. This model is at the center of the LOGTAFA EF.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Accountability



Based on Blagescu (2005) and Gaventa (2003)

Accountability. In the LOGTAFAs EF, accountability has three dimensions: transparency, participation, voice and responsiveness. An accountable local government should integrate those three dimensions in all its policies and practices.

Socio-Economic Impact. The inclusion of socio-economic impact in the LOGTAFAs EF stems from discussions with local actors on their own understanding of good governance. The EF was indeed designed to integrate local perceptions and values about good governance (see Table 2). During field work, local actors confirmed transparency, participation and voice/responsiveness as core evaluation criteria for their assessment of governance. In addition, they emphasized the socio-economic impact of local government actions as a key indicator of good governance.

The LOGTAFAs EF therefore values a practice that directly or indirectly contributes to the socio-economic development of the collectivity. In practice, this is the level of appreciation where indicators differ the most between countries due to their specific socio-historical context. In the Guinea EF, the socio-economic impact of the practice is assessed in terms of its coverage, its impact on local development capacity, and its impact on social inclusion and peace. But, in Rwanda, for instance, environmental and equity indicators are also included. In Burkina Faso, an indicator on citizens' perceptions of corruption levels replaces the indicator on social peace.

Innovation. The inclusion of the criterion of “innovation” in the LOGTAFAs EF is also the result of consultations with stakeholders in pilot countries. During the interviews, local actors highlighted the importance of the legal conformity of local government decisions in their definition of good governance.

In the LOGTAFAs EF, “legality” is integrated into a broader evaluation criterion called “innovation”. Our understanding is that the practice is innovative if it goes beyond the legal requirements of the Code or other regulations. The LOGTAFAs EF values practices that comply with existing legislation (score of 1). However, the EF scores even higher practices that surpass legal requirements (score of 2). In other words, the EF values innovation. The most innovative practices are those which fill a legal gap and could inspire the enactment of a new law (score of 3).

Sustainability. Finally, discussions between the World Bank and the three research teams led to the inclusion of sustainability as an evaluation criterion to assess good governance practices. The idea is that a good practice of governance should be sustainable over time, not dependent on transient personalities or resources. Indicators to measure this potential are the degree of technical feasibility, the degree of financial feasibility, and the degree of formalization of the practice.

Box 1 - Local Actors’ Perceptions of Good Governance

Local Governments’ Perceptions

- significant information sharing with population (transparency)
- transparency in financial management (transparency)
- good collaboration between elected representative and population (participation)
- good management of public affairs (integrity)
- citizens’ involvement in local actions and decisions (participation)
- conformity of local governments’ actions with the code (legality)
- taking into account people’s opinions by the council (voice/responsiveness)
- joint analysis of problems (participation)

Local Citizens’ Perceptions

- transparency in financial management (transparency)
- construction of infrastructure (economic impact)
- report on actions to citizens (responsiveness)
- professional ethics (integrity)
- information shared with citizens through letters, invitations or radio announcements (transparency)
- respect of citizens’ rights (legality)
- good collaboration between citizens and elected representatives (participation)
- good social climate (social impact)
- good management of public affairs (integrity)

Deconcentrated Administration’s Perceptions

- transparency in planning and management (transparency)
- information between citizens and elected representatives, and between elected representatives and administration (transparency)
- professional ethics (integrity)
- freedom of expression for citizens (voice)
- rational use of public resources and fight against corruption (integrity)
- respect of state authority (legality)
- trust between citizens and their local government (social impact)

As shown in Box 1, local actors also underlined the importance of local governments’ integrity and professionalism in their perceptions of good governance. However, this criterion could not be included in most frameworks due to its complexity to measure.⁵

3.2. Putting the EF into Practice: COPEGOL

Between June and August 2008, the World Bank, in collaboration with several donors and local government associations, launched a Competition pour l’Excellence dans la Gouvernance Locale (COPEGOL) in three pilot countries – Guinea, Rwanda and Burkina Faso.⁶ Despite a coup d’état in Guinea and administrative constraints in some local governments, COPEGOL has been a success. Strong ownership and dedication to the competition by the local government associations and by the Ministry of Decentralization have contributed. The competition generated great enthusiasm around decentralization and the governance agenda in the pilot countries. It offered recognition to winning local governments whose practices became a source of inspiration for their counterparts. Award ceremonies drew hundreds of guests, including local government authorities, governors, government officials, members of parliament, civil society representatives, international partners and the media.

COPEGOL proved that good governance practices do exist, even in countries that score low on traditional governance indexes. Examples of award recipients included the Rwamagana District which won first place for an innovative, income-generating rabbit breeding and banana growing project. In just one year, the initiative allowed hundreds of families to increase their incomes thereby increasing opportunities for children to attend school. The local government of Remera Sector (one of the poorest neighborhoods in Kigali) won a prize for its successful partnership with the resident communities in planning, financing and building a bridge which now allows continuous passage during flooding. In Guinea, practices receiving awards included participatory planning and budgeting initiatives, budget transparency activities, and inventive partnerships between communities and local government for local development projects.

Table 3 presents the categories of practices submitted to the competition by local governments in the pilot countries. It is interesting to note that although submissions were accepted in all the relevant steps of local decision-making process, few or no submissions were submitted in the fields of audit and monitoring and evaluation, indicating that those are the areas of weakest local governance.

Table 3: Categories of Submissions to COPEGOL (percent)

	Guinea	Rwanda	Burkina
Planning	56	-	67
Budgeting	16	-	11
Procurement	11	-	-
Service Delivery	13	79	22
M&E	4	21	-
Audit	-	-	-

⁵ The “integrity” criterion is included in the Burkina Faso EF through an indicator on corruption perceptions. Though theoretically this is a valid indicator, in practice, the team was unable to carry out the perception survey required to measure such an indicator. In Guinea, local government’s integrity and credibility is partly included in the EF through an indicator of sustainability of the practice.

⁶ For more information on COPEGOL, see www.worldbank.org/copegol.

In Rwanda and Guinea, COPEGOL was included in Local Government Association work program for next year. The Ministry of Decentralization (as well as the Ministry of Finance and Education in Rwanda) has also promised support. In the three countries, local government associations are also exploring options to secure private sector financial contributions. Those initiatives are promising indicators for the sustainability of COPEGOL beyond World Bank support.

4. DISSEMINATION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

The third part of the report seeks to demonstrate that, despite an environment characterized by administrative and capacity constraints, as well as a culture of low accountability to citizens (as shown in PART I), local governments in pilot countries were able to initiate and sustain good governance practices. It does so through case studies of good practices in planning, budgeting, procurement, delivery, audit, monitoring and evaluation in the three pilot countries. Good practices are assessed using the LOGTAFAs Evaluative Framework. The LOGTAFAs EF enabled the identification of good governance practices in most decision-making processes. In general, good practices were mainly found in planning, budgeting, and service delivery processes. Good practices in the domains of procurement, audit, and monitoring and evaluation were less frequent. The report showcases the 10 most notable practices across the six decision-making processes. All case-study practices scored at least 70 percent on the LOGTAFAs EF.

4.1. Planning

In all three countries, local governments follow a participatory approach to development planning. The extent of citizen participation varies from country to country, and from collectivity to collectivity. Citizen involvement in the planning process is particularly high in Rwanda where citizens are actively involved at each step of the process through the CDC. In Guinea, the code requires local governments to inform citizens about, and consult them on, the socio-economic diagnosis and the draft Local Development Plan (PDL). In reality, local governments widely comply with these obligations, especially in rural areas where the participatory planning approach is led by the PACV. In contrast, in Burkina Faso, the planning document (PDC) is conceived by specialized consultancy firms that work with *ad hoc* municipal commissions, with limited involvement of the local population.

Good practices in planning go beyond information and consultation of population. They consist of the formal establishment of a constructive and permanent dialogue between local government and civil society. Citizens are not only invited to give their opinion on local development needs and priorities; they also actively partner with local councils to plan, coordinate and support activities. This report presents the case of a successful collaboration between the local government and citizens of Timbi Madina (Guinea). The practice reinforced the local government's role as the coordinating anchor for development actions, and consequently made it more visible and credible. Coherence in development actions also dramatically improved.

4.2 Budgeting

In the countries under examination, financial management and revenue collection constitute the main challenges for local governments. Difficulties are generally linked to the weak capacity of local officials, low level of fiscal discretion, and difficult collaboration between local governments and tutelle authorities (Guinea and Burkina Faso). In addition, some citizens are reluctant to pay taxes because they do not believe their contributions will be put to good use. Good practices identified generally revolve around ways to improve financial management and resource mobilization.

This is the case of Sabadou Baranama (Guinea) where the newly elected local government developed practices to increase transparency and voice/responsiveness of budgets and accounts. As a result, the level of trust between the local government and its constituency increased, making mobilization of people and their contributions for development actions much easier. The report also presents the experience of the municipality of Fada (Burkina Faso) which managed to increase local revenue by more than 35 percent by increasing civil society participation in tax collection.

4.3 Procurement

In Guinea and Burkina Faso, no good procurement practices could be found in the sampled municipalities. As explained in Part I, local governments in those countries are usually unaware of the existing legislation and do not know how to carry out a proper procurement process. As a result, deconcentrated services often take over the process, with limited involvement of local councils. The situation is better in Rwanda, where each district, within the limits of its capacity, carries out its own tenders through a multi-actor Tender Committee.

For example, the Rwamagana District' Tender Committee seeks to enhance community ownership of the procurement process by increasing citizen involvement in preparing the procurement plan, providing goods or executing works, and monitoring goods and services procured. As a result, the tendering process has gained credibility and now attracts more local bidders, therefore stimulating local entrepreneurship. The practice also empowers citizens by deeply involving them in the procurement process and creates a sense of ownership of procured works among the community.

4.3 Service Delivery

In the pilot countries, good practices flourish under service delivery. Within the sampled collectivities, research teams mainly identified good practices in various sectors (education, road and water). In all instances, local governments partnered with civil society for more transparent and efficient delivery of services. In Kayonza (Rwanda), for example, water users' participation in exploitation and management of water facilities improved service delivery. Access to safe portable water almost doubles in two years. Condition of water infrastructure improved and water loss from leakages also decreased which led to constant water supply.

As explained in Part I, appropriate complaint handling mechanisms are largely lacking in Guinea and Burkina Faso. Putting them in place will be crucial for the success of decentralization in those countries. In Guinea, some municipalities managed to set up such mechanisms. This is illustrated by the case of Kindia which successfully established a conflict management committee to settle transhumance conflicts arising in the municipality.

4.5 Audit

In the sampled collectivities, audits were seldom performed. When they occurred, they were initiated and conducted by central government authorities. Audit reports were not shared with the population. The only good practice case was performed by a youth association in Sougueta, Guinea. According to the respondents, the financial control by the youth association largely explains why no abuse of funds has occurred. The practice has developed and strengthened the level of trust between the local government

and its young constituency. As a result, youth readily volunteer to work on community actions (e.g. school building, water conveyance project, cleaning of public places) that improve living standards of all inhabitants of Sougueta.

4.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Generally speaking, monitoring and evaluation is not widespread due to lack of resources and skills. However, good practices could be identified in each country. In some municipalities of Guinea and Burkina Faso, community radio programs help citizens oversee public management of local affairs in a context of oral tradition and illiteracy. Radio broadcasts in Kouroussa (Guinea) and Koudougou (Burkina) have contributed to raising the bar for transparency, participation and accountability in the view of citizens and local government. In Rwanda, the *Imihigo* is the most innovative and efficient tool for monitoring and evaluating local government actions. It also serves as a means to put public pressure on the LG team so it delivers on its commitments and feels more accountable to its constituency.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Our analysis shows that actual decentralization is still in its infancy in Guinea and Burkina Faso due to local governments' low level of discretion in political, administrative and fiscal domains, and acute capacity gaps. While the decentralization process is relatively more advanced in Rwanda, its districts are still constrained by fiscal limitations and skill shortages. In all countries, there is little downward accountability. Despite a highly constrained environment and a political culture that does not necessarily promote downward accountability, local governments were able to initiate and sustain good practices in planning, budgeting, procurement, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and—though more rarely—audit.

Though the specific factors underlying the emergence of good practices vary from place to place, we find that there are common factors essential to the emergence of most practices identified by this study. These factors relate to: (i) local government capacity, political will and harmony, (ii) civil society cohesion and dynamism, and (iii) external partner support.

5.1.1 A capable, willing and harmonious local government

Local leaders' capacity. Local leaders' capacity has been pointed out as a crucial factor for the emergence of good practices in most collectivities. In Rwanda, the capacity requirement is always fulfilled since the law imposed high qualification criteria for candidates seeking positions in Districts. In Guinea and Burkina Faso, where there is no such legal requirement, most practices were initiated by local leaders that were literate and educated, with some professional experience (ex-public officials), and had, according to the respondents, a strong capacity to mobilize and listen to the population and to obtain external financing.

Political will. Political will is essential to the initiation and sustainability of any good practice. It is the strong support of the mayor and his deputies that anchors the practice in local management. In Guinea and Burkina Faso, where the power of *tutelle* authorities is strong, local leaders also include deconcentrated actors. When deconcentrated services are involved and support the practice, it is more

likely to endure. Acknowledgement by higher authorities gives practices greater legitimacy and is crucial to their sustainability.

Council harmony. An interesting finding is that political competition does not appear to be a determining factor in the emergence of good governance practices. On the contrary, more good practices were found in collectivities where councils are dominated by a political majority rather than in those where political rivalries prevailed. Harmony within the municipal council is therefore another important factor for the initiation of good governance practices. In Rwanda, the risk of political tensions within the council is lessened as political parties are not allowed to compete for seats in district councils. However, the presence of independent candidates does not eliminate the risks for paralyzing discords among councilors. There, too, good *entente* among local representatives is likely to be an enabling factor for the development of innovative experiences.

5.1.2 A cohesive and dynamic civil society

Social cohesion. Social cohesion is the *capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization.*⁷ A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community whose members feel they should take action to reduce inequalities so that various divisions (economic, cultural or social) remain manageable and do not grow so as to threaten social stability. In all three countries, social cohesion appears to be an important underlying factor for good governance practices. In Rwanda, social cohesion is facilitated by a culture that favors community solidarity. Rwandese traditions and customs promote a spirit of collaboration and communal actions for solving of social problems. Traditional institutions such as *ubudehe* (participatory planning), *umuganda* (community services) or *imihigo* (local performance contracts) encourage community members to frequently interact, discuss issues, jointly find solutions and work together to implement them. Though such traditions are not found in Guinea and Burkina Faso, respondents in those countries emphasized the necessity of social cohesion, expressed as “*bonne entente*” or “*bonne cohabitation entre les populations*” (people must get along), “*esprit de solidarite*” (spirit of solidarity) for the emergence of good practices.

Dynamic civil society. In all three countries, the dynamism of civil society was often critical for the initiation and sustainability of good practices. In most good practices, civil society assumes its role of countervailing power and holds local government accountable. It also relays information to the public and contributes to management of local affairs. The active involvement of the media (community radio in Kouroussa, Guinea and Koudougou, Burkina Faso), local NGOs (JADF initiative, Rwanda), the private sector (Fada, Burkina Faso), the youth (Souguéta and Sabadou Baranama, Guinea), water users (Piela, Burkina Faso and Kayonza, Rwanda) and the herder and cultivator associations (Kindia, Guinea) were decisive for the emergence and success of the related practices. It is interesting to note that, in the sampled collectivities, traditional authorities did not play a critical role in the emergence of good practices.

External partner support. The presence of international and bilateral donors at the local level supporting decentralization facilitated some good practices. For example, in Guinea, interventions from PDLG, PDSO, PACV, USAID and Guinea 44 enabled the establishment of mechanisms of transparency and participatory approaches for local management that created a conducive environment for the

⁷ Council of Europe, European Committee for Social Cohesion, *Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion*. Strasbourg, 2004. The revised strategy was approved by the Committee of Ministers at the 878th meeting of Deputies on March 31, 2004.

emergence of good practices. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, interventions by bilateral donors, such as Swiss or German cooperation, created a climate favoring more accountability. Local leaders could then exploit this advantageous climate to initiate and develop their good practices.

5.2 Recommendations

In these three countries, decentralization is an important component of the development strategy. We propose recommendations to reinforce decentralization and promote good local governance, in particular the emergence and institutionalization of good practices such as those described in this study.

Promote sharing of good practices. Many practices were initiated by local representatives or civil society without external guidance or financial support. This demonstrates that a change towards good governance begins with good will and appropriate behavior. Instead of focusing on texts and procedures, governments should support practices described in the present study and share them with other collectivities. Identified good practices are indeed remarkable sources of inspiration for all local governments. Since they are home-grown, initiated by local actors themselves, they are also more likely to suit the local needs and expectations as well as social, political, and cultural setting.

Innovative initiatives and good practices by decentralizing entities should be publicized, shared, and celebrated. Dissemination and sharing of successful experiences should be a widespread and regular exercise, so that a best practices culture—marked by constant assessment, continuous learning and continual improvement of local governance—can thrive in decentralizing countries.

There are multiple ways to foster cross-learning of best practices among local governments. For example, innovative approaches by local representatives could be circulated in weekly (electronic) newsletters, monthly best practice publications, or on a website run by the local government association or the relevant ministry. In Rwanda, for example, the MINALOC issues a quarterly magazine called the "IMIHIGO magazine" that focuses on lesson learning among districts and sectors, and is produced at a relatively low cost. Another option to share experiences is to take advantage of national conventions on local governance (such as "*Les journées de la commune*" in Burkina Faso, "*La quinzaine de la decentralization*" in Guinea, and "Innovation Day" in Rwanda) to hold workshops featuring panels of local representatives who can discuss their good practices on specific issues. Finally, this study shows that a competition scheme such as COPEGOL is also a great way to solicit, identify, promote and share best practices. The closing reward ceremony provides national recognition to local innovators while constituting a capacity-building opportunity for their peers who can learn from these experiences and try to replicate them in their own context.

Reinforce local governments' discretion. In Guinea and Burkina Faso, achieving actual decentralization requires that local governments have greater autonomy to make regulatory decisions, conduct tenders, manage their workforce, and to raise their own revenues. Ultimately, this implies loosening central control (*tutelle*) over local affairs while concretizing the transfer of administrative and fiscal powers envisaged by legal regulations.

In Rwanda, districts could also benefit from increased financial discretion as the current scale of revenue generation is too limited to allow them to meet their mandated expenditures responsibility. This could be attained through higher levels of non-earmarked transfers or through some form of block grant whose amount could be freely determined by local government according to their specific priorities.

Strengthen local government capacity. Local government capacity is generally inadequate, especially in terms of administrative and financial management. This severely hinders local deputies' ability to carry out their responsibilities. In reaction to this shortcoming, the Rwandan government has started to implement District Capacity Building Plans which should help improve local governments' technical and procedural skills. Conakry and Ouagadougou should follow suit and design a clear strategy for building capacity at the local level through training and other methods. Central governments should continue to support local governments by educating them about their roles and responsibilities, as well as building up their administrative and financial capacity so they can make use of discretionary powers transferred to them. Lack of capacity at the local level should not serve as a pretext for insufficient discretion.

Strengthen civil society's capacity and awareness. In general, civil society lacks the technical and material capacity to uphold its roles of partner and watchdog of local development. In all three countries, this is especially pronounced in the financial domain as the ability to monitor fiscal processes requires specialized knowledge about accounting and budgetary processes. More importantly, in Guinea and Burkina Faso, there is a need to raise citizen awareness on what decentralization is about and what it implies in terms of their role in holding their government accountable and in participating in local management. In those two countries, it is particularly important to target the youth and women who currently don't have enough say in decision-making at any level of government.

Promote participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation. Even where citizens participate in development planning and in discussions with local governments, their involvement in monitoring activities coming out of those processes is limited. Especially in Guinea and Burkina Faso, there are too few formal mechanisms allowing citizens to follow local initiatives and to assess their councilors' performances. Civil society should be involved in providing independent monitoring and evaluation in numerous areas, including infrastructure construction, service quality, and budgets. As mentioned above, performing these functions will require significant capacity building on the part of the civil society so that it can play its oversight role by demanding information, overseeing government performance, providing policy recommendations, and advocating changes.