

Report of Survey of Councillors

Undertaken for The Department of State for Local Government and Lands,
Government of The Gambia



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT



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The Department of State for Local Government and Lands, Government of The Gambia

Foreword

On behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat, I am pleased to release this report undertaken in cooperation with the Department of State for Local Government and Lands, Government of The Gambia. The Report represents rapid-response-research conducted during a workshop of the councillors held in February 2009. This was the first ever national congress of all the councillors in the country.

This Report is intended to advance the Government's Decentralisation Programme. It will also serve government and associated development partners by setting a baseline for future comparative study of social change as a result of local government reforms in The Gambia. The Government is to be congratulated for its initiative.



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Introduction:

This rapid-response-survey was conducted to characterise the current cohort of councillors in The Gambia. The current cohort represents the second cohort of councillors whose office term began in January 2008. The first cohort served their four year term during 2004-2008. No profile is available for the first cohort of councillors. The survey was administered at the first ever meeting of all councillors, a three-day training workshop, jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of The Gambia from 23-25 February, 2009. All 110 councillors, out of a total national strength of 114 (96.5%) participated in the training workshop. All the participants (100%) responded to the rapid assessment questions which form part of this survey.

This survey comprises of following six parts:

1. General profile of councillors
2. Activities/responsibilities of councillors
3. Division of responsibilities between councillors and the local government councillors
4. Personal effectiveness survey
5. Regional differences in achieving MDGs in The Gambia.
6. Decentralisation matrix

Based on the results, a statistically 'typical', 'average' councillor in The Gambia in 2009 can be characterised as a 41 year old male who completed secondary level education, works full time as a councillor over 38 hours per week, lives off of his allowance only without any other secondary income, serves his first term in office and represents 16,000 people.

Part 1 General Profile of Councillors

Table 1 depicts the questionnaire administered to the councillors.

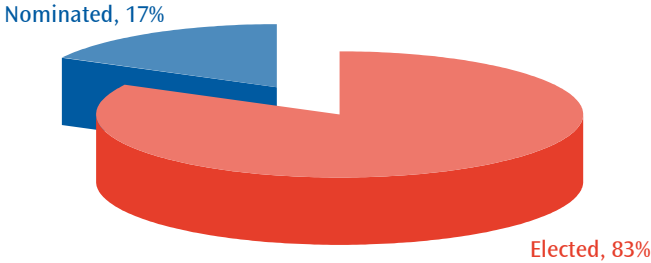
Table 1 Survey questions for Councillors' Profile

<p>1. What is your role?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a governor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am an appointed official working in a governors' office</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am an elected councillor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a nominated councillor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am an elected mayor or area chairperson</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am an appointed local council official</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a member of the National Assembly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am working for the Dept of State for Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other. please specify:</p>
<p>2. What is your gender?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p>
<p>3. What is your age?</p>
<p>4. What is your educational background?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed primary</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed secondary</p> <p>University degree (including diploma, courses enrolled etc)</p>
<p>5. Where do you work?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In the public sector</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> For a private sector company</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Retired</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain)</p>
<p>6. Average number of hours per week you spend on work as a councillor</p>
<p>7. Are you on your 1st or 2nd term as a councillor?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1st term</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2nd term</p>
<p>8. What is the population size of the area you serve?</p>

Survey Result

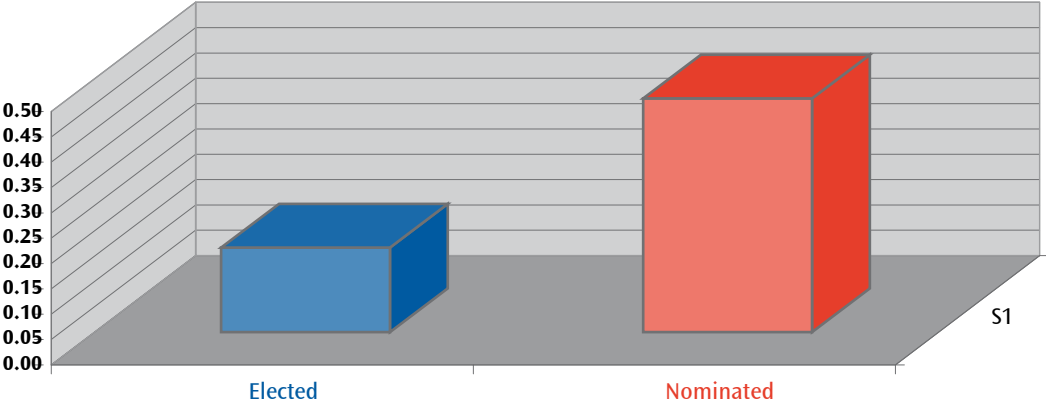
Succession: All 110 councillors answered the succession question. The majority (91; 83%) of the councillors is elected by their constituency; the rest (19; 17%) is nominated. *Figure 1.*

Figure 1 Proportion of elected and nominated councillors



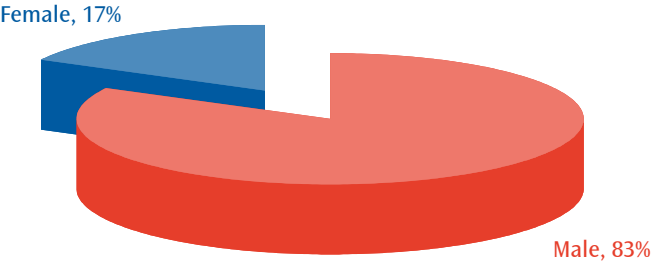
The nominated female councillors represent women; the nominated male councillors represent youth, chiefs and other social groups. The female/male ratio of the nominated group ($6/13=0.46$) is higher than that of the elected group ($13/78 =0.17$) and the entire cohort ($19/91=0.21$). *Figure 2*

Figure 2 Female/Male councillors’ ratio in the elected and in the nominated sub-cohort



Gender: All 110 councillors answered the gender question. The majority of councillors are male (83%). The female/male ratio is $19/91 (=0.21)$. *Figure 3*

Figure 3 Proportion of male and female councillors in the total cohort

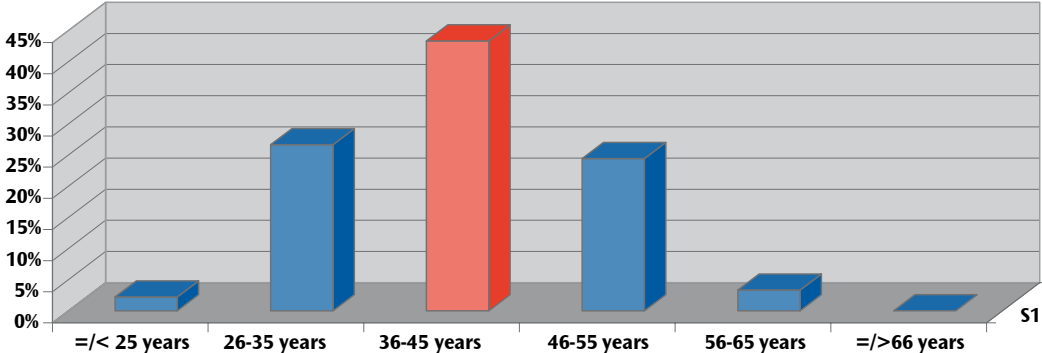


Age: Ninety councillors (out of 110) answered the age question. 17 councillors did not specify their age, just put ‘adult’ as the answer; 3 councillors did not answer to the age question at all. The average age of the councillors is 41 years. The youngest councillor is 24 years old, the oldest 59 according to the submitted answers. However, the most senior councillor is actually 63 years old (personal



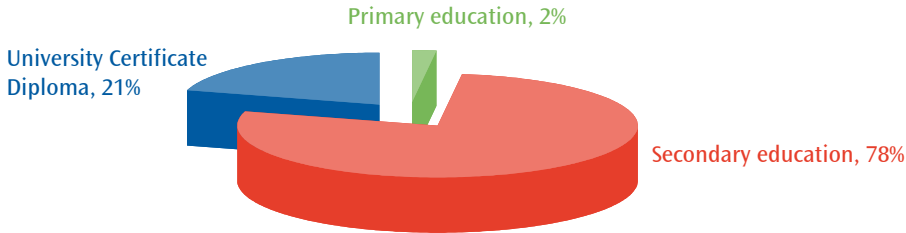
communication) but for policy incompatibility reason that particular councillor did not specify the age question. Most of the councillors (39; 43%) fall into the 36-45 years range. *Figure 4*

Figure 4 Councillors’ age frequency distribution



Education: One hundred nine councillors (out of 110) answered the education question. Most of the councillors completed secondary education as the highest formal education qualification (84; 78%). Nearly one-quarter of the councillors have some tertiary education experience (23; 21%). Two councillors (2%) have only primary education (one male, one female). Only five female councillors have tertiary education. *Figure 5.*

Figure 5 Councillors’ education level



Employment: One hundred five councillors (out of 110) answered the employment question. Some councillors marked more than one employment categories. The majority of the councillors work full time and live only on their allowance. 43% indicated that they had income from paid jobs either in the private sector (4%) or self-employment (19%, e.g. farming, NGO) or in the government (20%). Those who indicated that they work for the government did not make it clear whether their work was paid (salaried) or they meant their council work for which they got only an allowance. A few councillors (4%) are retired. As councillors are not expected to conduct salaried work according to party regulation, they may have not disclosed their additional income resource, so the survey data may not reflect the real picture. Further studies are necessary to get clearer view of councillors’ employment status and income source.

Working hours: Eighty-seven councillors (out of 110) answered the working hour question. The majority¹ of the councillors (37%-47%; one-third-half) work full time (21-40 hours per week). Seventy percent of the councillors work full or more than full time. On an average councillors work 38 hours per week. The minimum is 8 hours, the maximum is 133 hours². Further studies are needed to get a more precise estimate of average working hours per week as many councillors put in numbers which could not be interpreted consistently and clearly, e.g. some figures suggested working hours per day versus per week, several councillors did not specify the number just put 'full time' without specifying the number of days and hours per day, required estimates for the sake of quantifying the input, etc. **Figures 6 and 7** show the lower and higher estimates respectively.

Figure 6 Councillors' working hours per week - Frequency distribution

Councillors' working hours per week - Frequency
(Ambivalent data included as 8h/w)

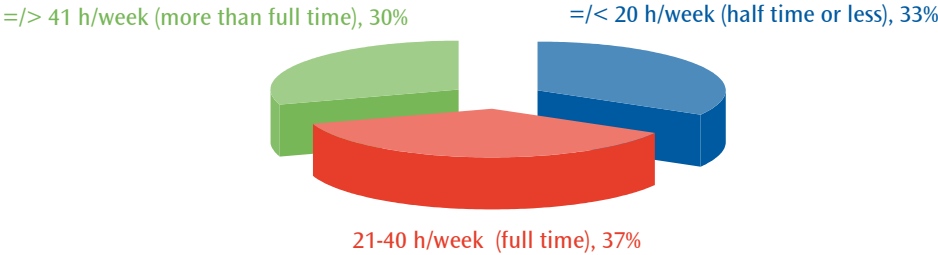
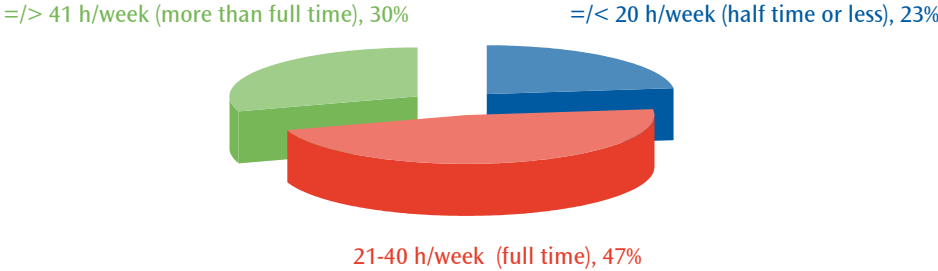


Figure 7 Councillors' working hours per week – Frequency distribution

Councillors' working hours per week - Frequency
(Ambivalent data included as 40 h/w)



Office term: One hundred eight 108 councillors (out of 110) answered the office term question. The majority of the councillors (70; 66%; two-third) serve their first term. The rest, 33%, is in their second term. **Figure 8**

1 9 out of the 87 responses to this question were ambivalent. Their input can be interpreted as 8 hours per day or 8 hours per week. This ambivalence, however, does not alter the key finding.
 2 This high number was doubted by some.



Figure 8 Councillors' office term distribution



Population size of councillors' constituency: Eighty-five councillors (out of 110) answered the population size question. The majority of the councillors (46; 54%) serve areas of 10,000 or less people. More than a quarter (27, 25%) serve areas between 10,00-20,000 people. **Figure 9** The average population size served is about 15,918, the smallest 588, and the largest one is 150,000. Further studies are needed, however, as many councillors were not aware of the size of their constituency or were uncertain about it, especially when it involved large areas (e.g. in the case of nominated councillors for underprivileged social groups).

Figure 9 Population of areas councillors serve

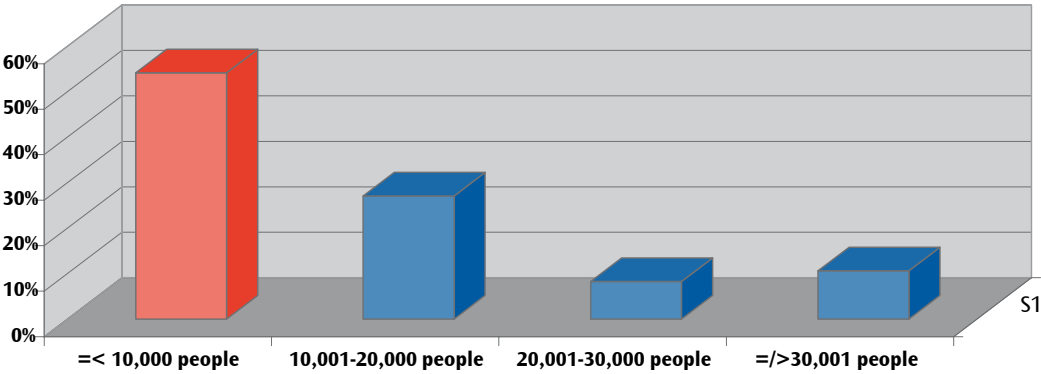


Table 2 provides results of part 1 of survey relating to councillors' profile in a tabular manner.

Table 2 Survey results: Councillors Profile in The Gambia, 2009^{3,4}

Profile categories	Response categories	Number of responses	Percentage
Succession	Elected councillors	91	83%
	Nominated councillors	19	17%
	Total number of responses	110	
Gender	Male	91	83%
	Female	19	17%
	Total number of responses	110	
Age	Average	41	
	Minimum	24	
	Maximum	59 ¹	
	Total number of responses	90	
Education	Completed primary	2	2%
	Completed secondary	84	78%
	Tertiary (university) level	23	20%
	Total number of responses	109	
Employment	Public sector	23	20%
	Private sector	5	4% ²
	Self-employed	22	19%
	Retired	4	3%
	Other	63	54
	Total number of responses	87	
Working hours	Average (per week)	38	
	Minimum	8	
	Maximum	133	
	Total number of responses	87	
Office term	First term	70	66%
	Second term	38	34%
	Total number of responses	108	
Constituency population	Average	15,988	
	Minimum	588	
	Maximum	150,000	
	Total number of responses	85	

3 The most senior councillor is actually 63 years old but for policy incompatibility reason that councillor did not specify the age question. See more details in the text.

4 Councillors are not supposed to take up any other job by their party regulations since 2002. Councillors, however, are not paid salary, only allowance, so they have to augment their income by either second jobs (illegally) or receive support from their family in The Gambia or in the diasporas (UK, USA: Atlanta; Canada: Toronto).

Part 2 - Activities councillors carry out in local government

In this exercise councillors worked in six small groups and listed the actual, concrete activities they did in The Gambia. Councillors used a handout which listed the general role categories. Prior to this a presentation was given to the councillors with an overview of typical roles and responsibilities of councillors. **Table 3** summarises the input of the entire cohort of 110 councillors.

Table 3 Roles and activities of councillors in The Gambia, 2009

Role/Activity	Councillors' Inputs
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent ward in planning and prioritizing project • Represent people at the council to make sure that their taxes are ploughed back in the form of development and initiating development • Represent people at council and ward level • Conducting sensitization at local level on council decisions, policies and programmes • Advocate for donor support in development project • Act as an entry point of any development for all projects • Hold meetings • Discuss development orientation • Offer scholarship to students etc • Convey information to institutions and from institutions to electorates • Agent of development
Voice for and help to all members of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying problems and lobby funding for ward • Develop and lobby for projects for your ward • Mobilize resources from donors to support the needs of people • Speak on behalf of the ward at council and national levels • Identification of needs • Facilitate the formation of CBOs to identify felt needs at community level • Capacitate CBO, VDC, WDC • Conduct meetings at ward level • Feedback to your community to and from council • Decision making • Land dispute settlement • Community participation in development activities • Looking for aid for disaster victims • Orient development project at local level

Role/Activity	Councillors' Inputs
Community leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, plan and implement projects, activities • Conduct community needs assessment • Visit (monitor and evaluate) projects with ward members • Conduct ward meetings and sensitise people on development issues • Chairing WDC meetings • Regular ward meetings to identify projects and prioritizing them for possible funding by council or donors • Chairing all ward meetings • Lead in any development activities in your ward • Representation • Legislature • Resolving conflicts • Eradicate poverty • Monthly community cleaning exercise (last Saturday each month: 9-13), • Environmental protection (e.g. tree planting, prevention of bush fires etc)
Oversight and scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the implementation and progress of ward projects • Monitor and evaluate projects and programmes approved by council and other funding agencies • Check, review and approve annual budget estimates of council • Monitor spending of council funds and resources • Establishment of sub-committees within the council to check the financial status of council e.g. finance & establishment committees • Identify needs • Ward development plan • Monitoring and evaluation of development activities • Decision making at both council and ward level
Contributor to council policy and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation of policies • Make by-law • Agreeing and adopting council resolutions • Contribute to council policies and strategies during council meetings • Forwarding ideas for discussion • Standing for or against the motion • Participation in debates • Development plans • Identifying problems, constraints, needs • Strategic planning • Budget preparation
Regulatory duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming council standing committees and sub-committee at a council and ward sub-committee • Giving directives to council staff • Ensure the timely payment of licences and rates • Ensure that all contracts are given as according to GPPA rules • Review and regulate early licenses • Make by-laws for controlling stray animals • Increase revenue for council etc



Part 3 - Division of responsibilities between the councillors and local government officers in local governments

In this part of the survey, a presentation was given to the councillors providing an overview of the typical division of roles and responsibilities of councillors and local government officers based on international practices. After the presentation councillors worked in six small groups and used the checklist provided to characterise the Gambian situation. **Table 4** summarises the input of the entire cohort of 110 councillors. It is noteworthy that several councillors work full time in The Gambia while councillors in general work only part-time.

Table 4 Division of responsibilities between councillors and local government officers in The Gambia, 2009

Councillors <i>'classical view'</i>	Councillors <i>local governments in The Gambia</i>	Local government officers <i>local governments in The Gambia</i>	Local government officers <i>'classical view'</i>
Make policies	Make policies	Implement policies	Implement policies
Political	Political	Non-political	Non-political
Not a professional	Not a professional	Professional	Professional
Often part-time	Some part-time, majority full-time ⁵	Full-time	Full-time
Recruited by party	Recruited by party	Recruited by the organisation	Recruited by the organisation
Elected representative	Elected and some nominated	Non-representative	Non-representative
Paid allowances	Paid allowances	Salaried	Salaried



Part 4 - Identifying ways to improve personal effectiveness

On the last day of the training workshop, councillors were encouraged to think about their own personal effectiveness and set priorities for improvement. This activity built on and followed the story-line of previous days' discussions on councillors' roles and responsibilities and local governments' current activities and plans on implementing the poverty eradication goal of the Millennium Development Goals.

Process

Participants (110) worked in six groups of 15-20 in the following three-step process:

(1) Individual

- Each participant listed three-four ways s/he wanted to improve her/his personal effectiveness. Each idea was written on separate post-it notes. See '**Personal Priorities**' in *Table 5* for details.
- Participants were given the opportunity of writing their contact details on their individual post-it notes if they wished to have a discussion with the trainers on their progress in couple of month time after the training event.

(2) Small group

- The post-it notes were collected and clustered by topics by small group members.

(3) Plenary

- Small group representatives shared their three top priority development goals on a plenary discussion with all training workshop participants. See '**Group Priorities**' in *Table 6* for details.

Results

Three key areas of improving personal effectiveness emerged through the highly participatory process: actions, capacity development and resource allocation. Councillors identified a wide range of current and future actions they can, could and want to take to improve their effectiveness, and highlighted needs for capacity building and resources they would need for implementing the identified actions.

Many of the identified actions were related to service delivery and meeting the MDG targets e.g. road building, poverty eradication, improving education, upgrading health care, gender equity, providing safe drinking water and sanitation, others were targeting good governance issues, e.g. transparency, more attentive and more regular relationship with the electors, VDCs, WDCs.

Councillors also have drawn a comprehensive list of actions that aimed to empower their constituency, the local community members, especially youth, women and the development committees. This focus on local capacities is a reflection of councillors' awareness of the positive correlation between enhanced local capacities, good governance and the effectiveness of leadership even when adequate resources are not available to fully develop this synergy. The need for community level capacity development, including local NGOs, must be considered in future trainings, e.g. scale and type of projects designed for fundraising in the recommended proposal writing workshop.

Strongly related to these actions, councillors identified three sets of skills for their own professional development: leadership and management skills; planning and fundraising skills with special attention to certain areas as follow:

Leadership and management

- Management: time management; managing contacts; managing meetings including note taking and sharing meeting notes;
- Financial management
- Communication skills: getting your message across; effective oral and written communication;
- Effective use of Information Technology (IT) skills

Planning

- Strategic Planning
- Project design with special emphasis on monitoring and evaluation

Fundraising

- Project proposal development (based on project design)
- Creating and managing donor relations

In order to implement the required actions and to enhance their leadership and management capacities councillors underscored the need for adequate resources, especially fund transfer from the central government to the local governments. Councillors are prepared to generate revenue from local sources; however, given the poverty level, they are also committed to sharpen their fundraising skills to attract external donor interest.

Table 5 - Individual Priorities

Categories	Councillors' input
<p>Actions</p> <p>Councillors are committed to do more and start new activities in the following areas to improve the effectiveness of their work.</p>	<p>Walking the talk: Leading with integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being accountable and transparent in our activities • Being consistent with our visions • Having a vision and mission • Having a (charismatic)⁵ personality • Learning (lifelong learning?) • Being professional in local governance • <i>'Providing my electorates with all that I pledged to do for them during my campaign.'</i>⁶ • Getting prepared for proactive and creative problem solving • (<i>' By identifying bold and strategic problem solving strategies with your constituency thereby paving a way for swift response when problems arise in or within your wards.'</i>)

5 Black fonts are used for notes and questions raised by the training team.

6 Italics are used for quoting councillors.



Categories	Councillors' input
	<p>Voice for and help to all members of community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing people in the ward about the councillors' roles and functions • Conducting intensive consultative meetings with communities to learn about their priority needs • Consulting with development officers and NGOs for more projects (needs assessment?) • Exchange ideas with people • <i>'Problem identification of those you represent'</i> • <i>'Being open as much as possible and approachable to help electorates have the courage to put forward to you their problems i.e. representation'</i> • <i>'Making regular visits to your communities to get to know the people you lead.'</i> • <i>'To know or identify the needs of your people well.'</i> • <i>'Being open and being a very good listener with the view to accommodate problems constantly and seeing possible solutions'</i> • <i>'Working hand in hand with your ward committee in order to identify project in your ward through transparency and accountability'</i> • Networking with people in the ward and others to make things happen • Having frequent meetings with ward communities, elder to discuss development issues • Having weekly meeting with ward development committee • Conducting meetings with CDC at community level to create small loans • Strengthening community participation in operations and programmes • Involving ward members in the planning of the decentralization process • Encouraging ward members who are based in Europe to contact donor agencies on behalf of the ward <p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing more training for WDCs, VDCs, CSOs, CBOs and council staff • Providing basic computer and IT training to the members of the development committee will improve my effectiveness as a councillor • More training for WDC to help them understand their roles and functions • Providing training on MDGs, gender equity and equal opportunities • Empowering community members in the ward • Making community members aware of their situation, of their role in poverty reduction, so they can take better ownership of their development, e.g. parents should send their children to school • Raising awareness and sensitising communities in health issues • Providing financial management training to help community groups to organise themselves <p>Setting up new organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Setting up an organisation called Youth Organisation for Self-Employment and Self-Fulfilment' to organise our people and help them to organise themselves.</i> • Constructing a skill centre to build capacities of people in the area • Setting up a skill centre for councillors and our development committees • Skills training facilities for youth and women

Categories	Councillors' input
	<p>Service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradicate poverty and hunger • Sensitising people to create and rehabilitate community vegetable farms at both villages and ward level for food self-sufficiency <p>Gender equity and participation</p> <p>Empowering women to eradicate poverty</p> <p>Promoting gender equity and full participation of women in development</p> <p>Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading health facilities • Upgrading primary healthcare personnel • Reducing maternal death • Ensuring that the Jammeh Foundation for People Hospital (JFPH) is upgraded into a major hospital • Training more people to improve the health delivery system in the area • Building health facilities • Reducing child mortality <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the enrolment of girls in schools • Awarding scholarship to needy students • Providing education for all at school age • <i>Improve school enrolment of girls to complete primary education</i> • <i>Both genders should be given equal opportunities at all educational institutions.</i> <p>Environmental health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring environmental health by sensitisation on environmental cleanliness for sustainable health • Ensuring that the environment is clean by conducting regular cleansing exercise • Ensuring environmental sustainability <p>Safe drinking water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing safe drinking water to all communities at ward level • Increasing water supply in communities <p>Communication / Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone • Road and road network development • ('As a councillor, I want to see small roads made because I want to see improvement in the world.') • Building bridges • Infrastructural development <p>Energy (electricity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that rural electrification reaches all villages in my ward.

Categories	Councillors' input
<p>Capacity development</p> <p>Councillors want to improve their knowledge and skills in the following areas to improve the effectiveness of their work.</p>	<p>Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming <p>Knowledge about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors' roles and responsibilities • Decentralisation; the development aspects of decentralisation • Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) • Right-based approach to development • Traditional culture of the people the councillors lead • Gender issues • Demography • Principles of administration • Public administration • Budgetary systems • Annual council budgeting • Diversifying council funding • Other councillors' work in and outside of The Gambia (e.g. Europe, UK) via study tours and twinning Gambian wards with wards in other countries <p>Skills in both technical and administrative areas including</p> <p><i>Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Project design & development • Planning before proposal writing • Monitoring capacity building in management • Project proposal writing <p>Fundraising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource mobilisation • Creating micro-finance projects as revolving funds • Lobbying and linking their ward with donor agencies • Approaching donors and government agencies for funding • Liaising with donors and getting donors' confidence in Europe and UK to seek funding to support their area and ward villages to address poverty <p><i>Project implementation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective and efficient project implementation • ('After networking and planning you have to implement your projects') <p>Leadership and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Management practices • Day-to-day administrative and technical skills • Financial management • Human development and human resource management • Communication

Categories	Councillors' input
	<p>– <i>(‘I can improve my personal effectiveness as a councillor by enhancing my communication skills so that I can communicate with my constituency in any medium thereby opening ways to identifying their problems.’)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Technology (IT) to access information easily on matters of concerns on global and local governance • Listening (active listening?) <p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>(‘To have more training so that as a leader you can train others about gender, capacity building etc.’)</i> <p>Farming</p>
<p>Resources</p> <p>Councillors feel their personal effectiveness would improve if the following issues received adequate attention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate financial support from the central government to area councils • More support from the central government to fight poverty • 10% funding from the Government of The Gambia: it is particularly important to small councils • Funding from more affluent councils like BCC and KMC to support small rural councils • <i>‘The Government of The Gambia in collaboration with NGO in and outside the country should help the councillor to seek donation either by seeking food from WFP or give fund to councillors to distribute it in their own ward as a credit base in a period of months to fight poverty.’</i> • <i>‘Funding, after knowing the priorities of your electorates.’</i> • Resources for mobility (covering travel cost) are highly needed for effectiveness and monitoring. Mobility helps councillors to visit their ward regularly so they get to know problems of the electorates. • Allowances, on time, are needed to do the work. • Grassroot contacts. • Funding to community level. • Motivation for councillors • <i>‘Not to be left behind in any decision making as far as local government is concerned’</i> • Information system

Table 6 - Group Priorities

Groups	Priorities: Councillors' input
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Project proposal development • Communication • Good representation • Strategic planning • Problem identification
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: safe drinking water; upgrade health facilities; • Gender • Education • Capacity building: MDGs; project proposal writing; monitoring & evaluation; management principles; • Resource mobilisation: microfinance projects • Poverty reduction
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Management • Communication • Project development • Mobilisation of resources • Strengthening community participation
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Strategic planning • Management • Proposal development • Monitoring & evaluation • Knowledge on MDG targets • Decentralisation training
Group 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource mobilisation (fundraising, proposal development etc) • Leadership & management training • Strategic planning • Communication • Mobility to access people
Group 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information technology training • Project proposal writing • Mobilising resources & funds

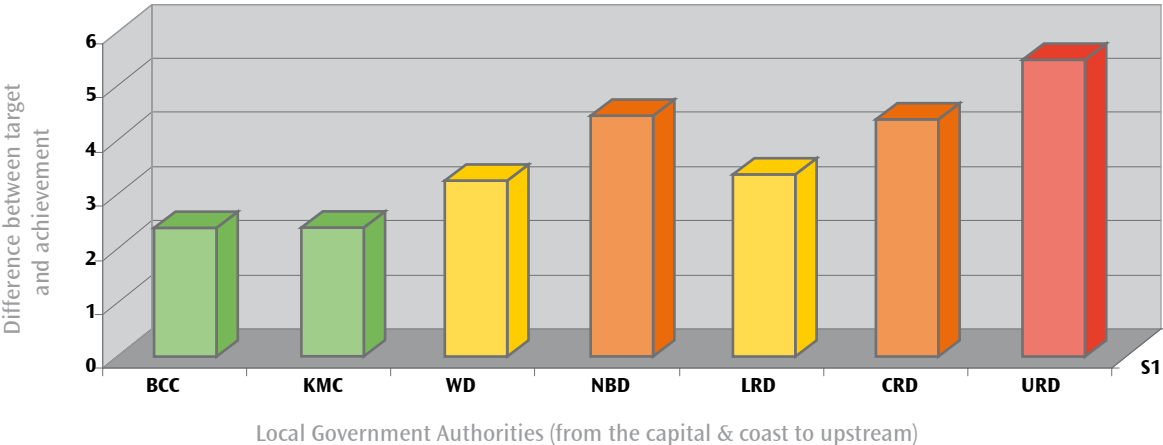


Part 5 - Regional differences in achieving the MDGs

Background

Two presentations introduced participants to the role of local governments in poverty reduction. The first presentation gave councillors an overview of the Millennium Development Goals, the relationship between decentralisation and poverty reduction, and explored the question of what councillors could do to reduce poverty; the second one presented councillors with a comparison of the MDG progress in the seven local government authorities of The Gambia based on the latest available MDG progress report which was distributed to all participants⁷. According to the report, the difference between the targeted and the actual development is the least in the two municipal councils (BAC, KMC), and most in the Upper River District (URD). The difference is growing with the distance from Banjul, the capital. In other words, the poverty is higher in the rural areas in the cities.

Figure 10 Regional difference between MDG targets and achievement in the seven⁸ local government authorities (LGAs) of The Gambia, 2005



Short, columns indicate good progress (the difference between the target and the actual level is small) tall yellow, red and orange columns indicate slower progress.

⁷ 'Reaching out to the People. A Review of Progress Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals at the Local Levels in The Gambia. March 2005

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/The%20Millennium%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202008.pdf>

⁸ There were only seven LGAs at the time when the report was published, 2005. Today, 2009, there are eight LGAs.

Process

After the two presentations councillors were divided into six small groups and discussed three questions:

- How do you explain the regional difference in achieving the MDG targets in the Gambia?
- What are you doing currently to reduce poverty?
- What are you planning to do in the future to reduce poverty?

Results

How do you explain the regional difference in achieving the MDG targets in the Gambia?

Participants attributed the regional development differences to five key factors: (i) uneven distribution of financial resources in favour of urban areas, (ii) variation of human resources especially their level of education, (iii) lack of infrastructure in rural Gambia e.g. road network that could facilitate the mobility and more even distribution of certain resources, (iv) the disparity of service delivery with emphasis on healthcare, clean water supply, quality education, IT, and (v) the increasing rural-urban migration. *Table 7*

What are you doing currently to reduce poverty?

In order to reduce poverty, councils conduct ongoing needs assessment and focus their scarce resources on developing human resources and forging multi-stakeholder partnerships to leverage resources. Some of the councils also mentioned more resource-intensive activities such as building infrastructure e.g. road and market. Most of the activities mentioned fall under MDG 1, and less under MDG 6, 7 and 8. The most often mentioned activities include raising awareness of poverty related issues, supporting the education of poor students with scholarships, offering training programmes for youth and women to encourage self-employment and improve and scale up agricultural practices. Many councillors commented on the very limited resources their councils had to address poverty. *Table 8*

What are you planning to do in the future to reduce poverty?

In terms of future plans to reduce poverty, almost all councillors have made it explicit that their future plans were contingent on the central government's regular provision of financial resources to local government authorities as stipulated in the amended Local Government Act 2002. Councillors see the fiscal decentralisation necessary to mainstreaming MDGs, with special attention to MDG 1, 2, 4-5, and 7 through decentralisation of governance, providing proper public services, and diversifying local financial resources. Building VDCs', WDCs' and community members' capacities plays an important role in councillors' plans to reduce poverty. *Table 9*

Table 7 Councillors' explanations of the regional differences in achieving the MDG targets in The Gambia

Main category	Details: Councillors' input
Financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue base is higher in urban than in rural areas • More private sector interventions in KMC and Banjul • KMC and BCC have more resources than regional council • Financial strength of councils differ • Differences in local income level • Variation in financial resources • Lack of equitable distribution of resources • Donor intervention is easily available in urban areas • Rural business tycoons concentrating their investment in the urban areas • More concentration of NGOs an CSOs and international funding agencies in some LGAs than in others
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of MDGs is relatively low • General awareness is lower in some LGAs than in other • Lack of awareness • Variation in human resources • The more educated elite is in the urban communities then rural communities • High rate of illiteracy in most of the provincial local government areas • The people donors meet in rural areas are illiterate and find it difficult to understand and comprehend the mission of the donors • Malnutrition • HIV/AIDS awareness
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to infrastructure: health facilities, schools • Lack of road network • Lack of market facilities
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information: media, higher education • Quality of education • Access to training institutions • Lack of adequate social amenities in provincial local government, facility distribution e.g. electricity, IT, clean water supply • Effective health delivery
Rural–urban migration	



Table 8 ‘What are you doing NOW to combat poverty?’

Main category	Details: Councillors’ input
Needs assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying poverty related issues • Motivating the council to adopt poverty-friendly budget • Listening to my constituency’s problems • Communicating people to find out their problems
Human resource development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitizing people (ward, constituency) in MDGs, poverty related issues • <i>‘We can only reduce poverty in our community by sensitise the community and vie them grant, not loan.’</i> • Sensitising people about their fundamental rights • Encourage the communities to educate their children • Awareness creation • Educate the mass • Information dissemination supported by donor agencies • Empower local people on the ground • Organising trainings for VDCs and WDCs on fundraising • Education, sensitisation, capacity building • Encouraging more CBOs in skill training and horticulture
MDG 1 End poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that the revenue collected from my ward 25% is paid to the ward account for their priority projects • Provision of electricity • Building markets • Making shops • Repairing roads • Engaging youth as the future leaders in meaningful skill training to help them take responsibility and live an independent life rather than being dependent • By encouraging women to do horticulture to boost their economic status and fill the vacuum of dependency on men as sole provider • Encourage the community to be fully involved in agriculture and personally participate in it fully • Support agriculture and related skills development from central government funds • Promotion of agriculture • Fishing • Develop farming in our community • Encouraging the establishment of communal vegetable gardens at both village and ward level • Support the farming system, skills, marketing • Farming • Animal fattening • Sheep fattening • Ram fattening • Sustainable income generating activities e.g. horticulture, agriculture • Skill training for youth and women: encouraging them to do horticulture • Organise vulnerable (youth and women) to access funds



Main category	Details: Councillors' input
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise youth ,women etc in formal groups to create opportunities to to access funds for self-employment • Capacity building for youth • Engage grassroots in income generating activities e.g. farm inputs, small scale business by the central government donor agencies, NGOs etc • Encourage both individuals and communities to get involved in farming, e.g. becoming self-employed • Training programmes on welding, carpentry, masonry etc - skills to make money and get out of the poverty trap • Soap making • Organising fundraising activities to support the blind people • Organizing shows e.g. fund raising, donations from officers, NGOs • Create development projects • Care for my constituency's welfare • Micro-financing CBOs and individuals • Employment creation • Contact the disaster relief committee for assistance for victims of e.g. fire, rain etc • Mobilizing women or organizing them into groups and advise them about MDGs and train them to make their own gardening • Sensitization towards gardening • Business • Small business e.g. baking & selling of cakes, pancakes, akara etc. • Partnership or OSUSU (i.e. contributing an amount which goes to an individual at the end of every month in turns) • Mobilize funds and support small projects in rural areas • Many wards of my LGA are engaged in CDDP projects (World Bank' Community-driven Development Projects)
MDG 2 Universal education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization towards education • Scholarships for needy students to attend schools (almost all council mentioned this!) • Empowering the committee (community??) by given free education and loan to committees and organisations • Building schools
MDG 3 Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free education for girls • Improve education in my community • Facilitate adult literacy • teaching
MDG 4-5 Child and maternal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for proper health care through the possibilities of pregnancy health care in consultation with Dept. State for Health (DOSH) • Sensitization towards health



Main category	Details: Councillors' input
MDG 7 Environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of water • Environmental sanitation • Collection of refuse
MDG 8 Partnership / Collaboration / Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with government departments and NGOs in income generating activities • Linking NGOs and Central Government Department with my communities • Utilisation of available resources • Resource mobilization • Training VDCs and WDCs in fundraising • Help VDCs to develop project proposals • Solicit outside funding to fund ward projects • Solicit outside funding from NGOs, philanthropist and organisations to help fund ward projects • Increasing public involvement in decision making

Table 9 'What are you planning to do in the FUTURE to combat poverty?'

Main category	Details: Councillors' input
Request regular funding from the Central Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convince the government to pay their subvention to councils on time • Engage Government for their contribution to Council • Central Government to pay their quarter to the local government • Government to be paying its percentage contribution to councils to enable them to do better / more • Central Government should give out money to LGAs – devolution of resources to the local government • The government should relocate some of the revenues to the councils e.g. car park fees. Etc. • Lobbying the Central Government to give enough funds to the LGAs for immediate development • Remind the central government to pay their annual subventions to the councils • Government should pay annual subvention to the council as dictated by the Local Government Act 2002 as amended • Insure government subventions • Devolve power to local government authorities • Equal utilization of national resources • The government of the Gambia in collaboration with NGOs in- or outside the Gambia should assist the LGA through their councilors in terms of food supplies, farming, or finance management to credit it to the farmer to reduce poverty

Main category	Details: Councillors' input
Further decentralisation of governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralise and empower LGAs • LGAs to facilitate and empower Ward Development Committees to carry out their functions within their areas • All LGAs to apply bottom-up approach
Diversify local financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase taxes • Request loans from NGOs to support youth and women at village level • Seek loans from NGOs to help the communities in their various fields of business • More support from NGOs • Proper monitoring of council's revenue • Donors to continue the funding of information transfer to the grassroots in the most affected • Asking rural business tycoons in urban areas to start investing in rural areas • Positive attitudinal change to discourage dependency • Create self-loan for our people • Promotion of self-employment • Create marketing avenues to farmer produces • Invest in industrial activities
Aim for proper service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is fund available the council will embark on proper and effective service delivery systems and capacity building so as to meet the MDGs (i.e. all possibilities) • We continue to provide services to our communities through awareness creation, supporting education activities, strengthening health sector, provisioning of clean drinking water etc • We at council will do anything possible and preferable when the fund is there... • Council will develop social amenities for a better livelihood for everybody or citizens. • Render services that are expected from us as councils, e.g. empowering of our people through devolution of power to WDCs and VDCs to take ownership of their own development • Provision of infrastructural developments like electricity supply to all, and road network throughout the country



Main category	Details: Councillors' input
<p>Mainstream MDGs through the capacity development for VDCs, WDCs, community members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would want to make people to know their right as far as the MDGs concerned • Raise people's awareness of what is written in the MDGs and PRSP • Fulfil the MDGs <i>if funds are available</i>: education, health, agriculture. • Mainstreaming MDGs at LGA level • Sensitization on MDG at LGA level • Sensitise communities on MDGs and their role in poverty alleviation, health, education • Encourage communities at grassroots to participate in development process in their own capacities • Sensitisation of people to know their role in national development • More sensitization on MDG goals • Provide more training programme to reduce poverty
<p>MDG 1 End poverty and hunger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embark on food self-sufficiency <i>if councils are funded</i> • To revive the use of the milling machines • Provision of storage facilities for famers • Proper communication and transportation network • Carpentry
<p>MDG 2 Universal education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory basic education to all communities • Planning for the eradication of the wide disparity of school enrolment and social amenities • Lobby for funding to build more skill training centres to school drop-outs • Invest in training skills
<p>MDG 4-5 Child and maternal health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building health facilities
<p>MDG 7 Environmental sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate and safe drinking water to all communities • Cover the drainage system so as to prevent malaria • Sustainability • There will be sustainability



Part 6 - Decentralisation: Change Management

Decentralisation is a profound change in governance. As a planned change-process, decentralization usually develops slowly, often spanning decades. Typical of governance changes, the process evolves through stages including the (i) communication and sharing of the new vision, (ii) creating policy changes, (iii) supporting the change with capacity development and (iv) consolidating the new governance with a range of actions that implement the new policies. Monitoring the progress of change is critical to keep the process not only on track but on the right track, and making sure the limited resources are used most effectively and efficiently according to the principles of good governance.

Measuring the progress of decentralisation is a challenging and complex undertaking. There are, however, well-tested tools that help measuring the *perception* of the change in a user-friendly rapid-response format. Although perception is highly subjective, it provides invaluable information for policy makers, politicians and practitioners on how the change-process is viewed overall, and what the priority areas are to leverage resources for furthering the desired change.

Method

The perception of the progress of decentralization in The Gambia was assessed by a monitoring tool called ‘change management rubric’⁹ **Table 10**. The same tool was administered in the ‘High Level Workshop on Decentralisation’ in The Gambia in April 2008, a year prior to the current workshop for councillors only. The ‘High Level Workshop’ hosted a multi-stakeholder group, consisting of national level decision makers from the Ministry of Local Government, the National Assembly and regional and local representative of local governments.

The ‘change management rubric’ describes milestones of the change process which are used as indicators to measure progress based on their level of completion. It assesses four critical success factors of the change process: (a) pressure or awareness of the need for change, (b) vision, (c) capacity building and (d) action. The progress is measured on a four-level scale where the lowest level represents a situation where there is no progress and the highest level describes the most advanced level where all stakeholders are motivated and engaged in the change process.

9 Source: Government Office for the South West, 2004 http://www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/change_matrix.doc Adapted to decentralization and managing change in local governance by Andrew Nickson, Munawwar Alam, Roger Koranteng, Andrea Deri, 7 April 2008

Participants were given the tool on a one-page handout and asked to read the statements arranged in columns under the four change factors, and mark the highest level which describes their perception of decentralisation in The Gambia. Each column was supposed to have one mark only, four marks per handout in total. A few participants marked more than one level in a column. In order to account for all inputs, all marks were included in the evaluation, not only the highest level for each column which would be the routine procedure for this tool.

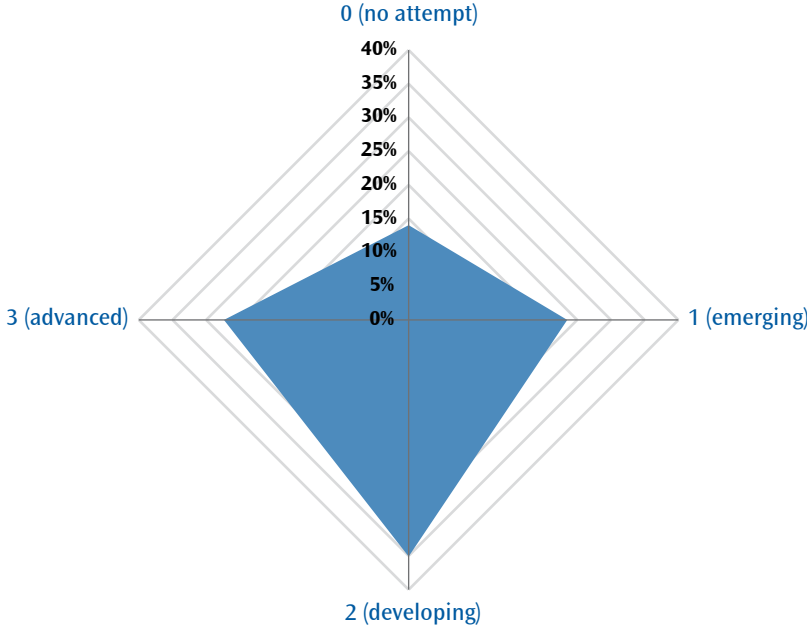
In February 2009, 74 of the participating 110¹⁰ councillors submitted their data. In April 2008, 39 of the participating 46 delegates of the ‘High Level Workshop on Decentralisation’ shared their views. There were about 10-12 participants who participated in both workshops and both surveys.

Results

Overall, the decentralisation in The Gambia was described by councillors as a ‘developing’ process. ‘Developing’ represents the third level of a four-level scale ranging from ‘no attempt’ (0), ‘emerging’ (1), ‘developing’ (2) and ‘advanced’ (3). **Figure 11** In comparison, the multi-stakeholder group in 2008 perceived decentralisation still at the ‘emerging’ level. **Figure 12**.

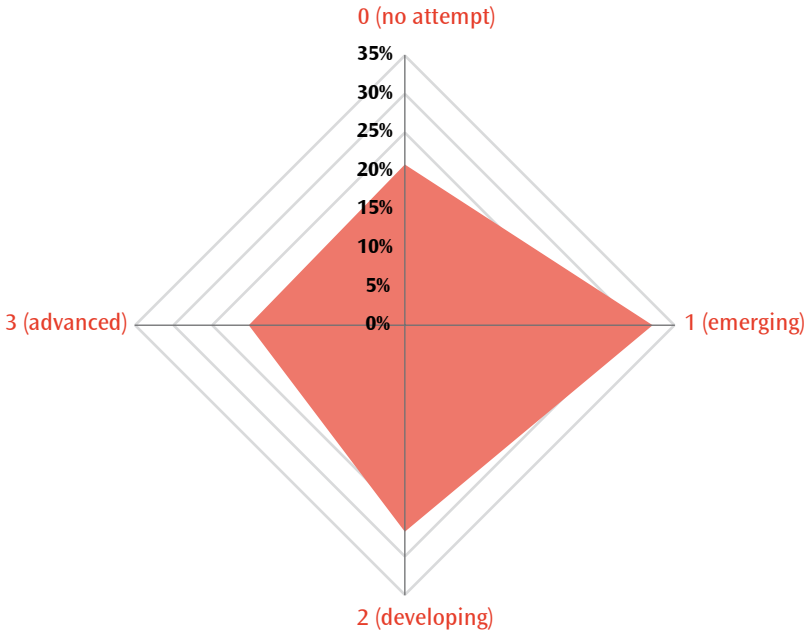
The results highlight the importance of clarifying and sharing a common vision of the process of decentralisation, and providing capacity development and resources for implementation.

Figure 11 Councillors’ overall perception of the decentralisation process in 2009: ‘Developing’



10 Total number of councillors in The Gambia: 114

Figure 12 Participants of the ‘High Level Workshop on Decentralisation’ in 2008’ perceived the decentralisation process as ‘Emerging



Pressure

No matter where the pressure for change comes from, top-down or bottom-up, there needs to be a felt need for change before it can be translated into policies otherwise actions will not follow in a consistent manner. Important it is, the legal framework, however, is not enough: political support, high level leadership is necessary to share the vision and build capacities (human, fiscal, environmental etc) to implement decentralisation.

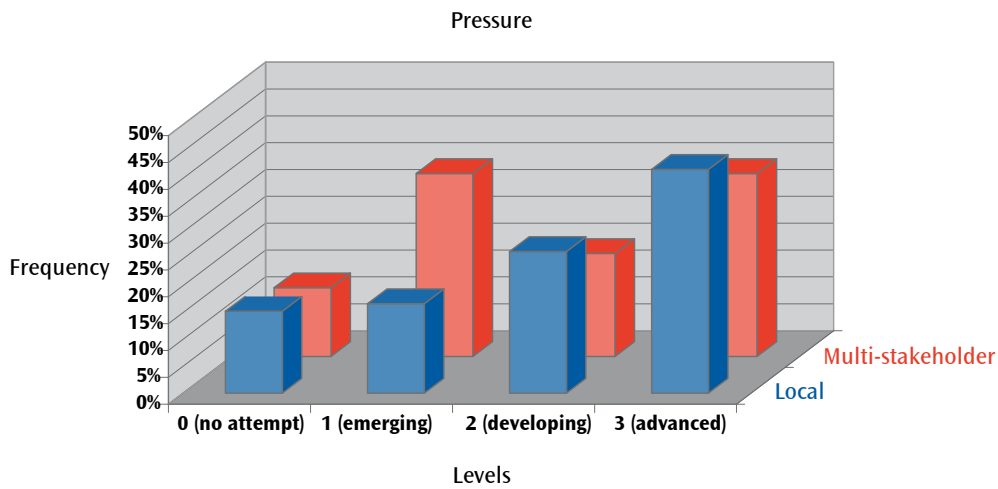
Both groups – councillors and the ‘high level’ multi-stakeholders – exhibit a wide range of opinions on how decentralisation has progressed in The Gambia in terms of legal framework in place, institutional arrangements and consistent leadership.

The highest ‘advanced’ level received the most marks from councillors, while the multi-stakeholders divided most of their ‘votes’ between two levels: ‘emerging’ and ‘advanced’. *Figure 13*

According to the results, the perception of both groups is that there is ‘top level political commitment for decentralisation in The Gambia’, ‘all ministries are on board’, and the ‘legal context of decentralisation is approved’.



Figure 13 Comparison of the perception of the 'Pressure' component of change management by councillors (2009) and multi-stakeholder decision makers (2009)



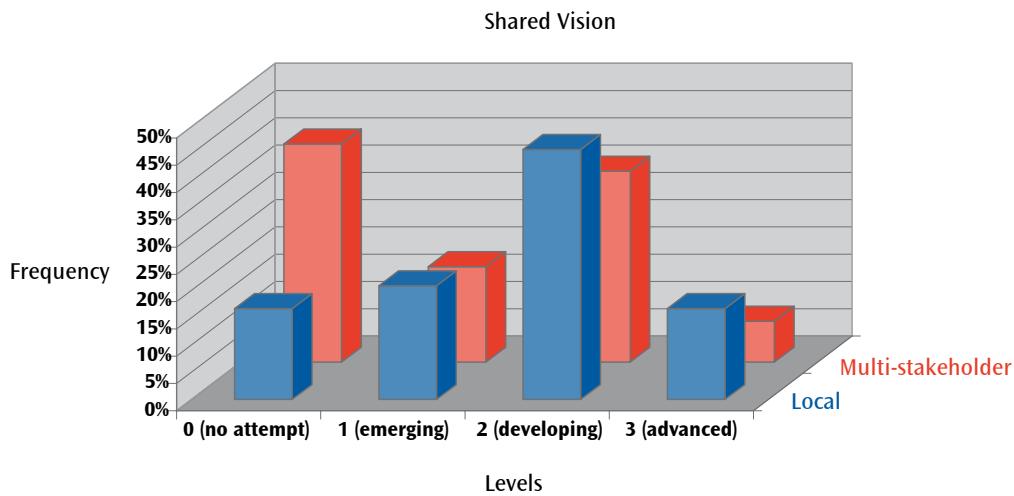
Shared Vision

Shared vision is the key motivator to keep the impetus and to implement decentralisation in a consistent manner in all administrative levels and sectors. A clear, shared vision makes sure that all stakeholders have the same understanding and commitment of where the change process is heading and how it is going to be achieved.

There seems to be a difference between the two groups' perception on the extent of sharing a clear vision of decentralisation. The 'developing' level received most votes from the all-councillors group. The 'developing' level is characterised by actions such as 'all staff given opportunity to make an input'; 'representatives of all levels of government are involved in the planning process and drawing up the action plan(s) of decentralisation.'

While 35% of the members of the multi-stakeholder workshop shared this view, 40% had the perception that there was 'no attempt' to share a clear vision: 'de-motivated staff was kept in the dark; there was 'no communication between different levels of government'.

Figure 14 Comparison of the perception of the 'Shared Vision' component of change management by councillors (2009) and multi-stakeholder decision makers (2009)



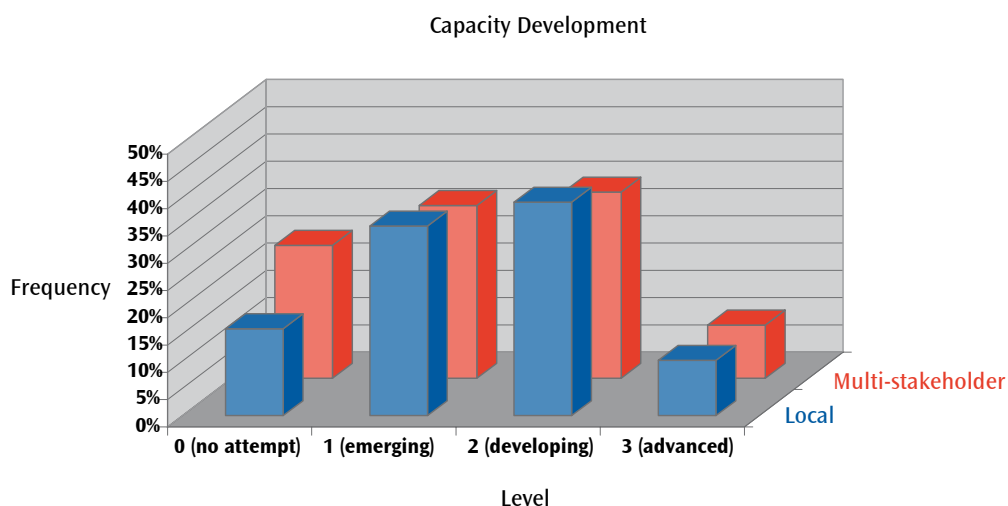
Capacity Development

Resources such as human, financial, technical, informational etc resources, often referred as capacities, represent the fuel of a change engine. A wide range of capacities are necessary to transform the vision and policy framework into a functional new, decentralised governance system. These capacities need to be developed to and kept up to date at the level required by the change process.

The perception of the level of capacity development for decentralisation is very similar in the two groups. In fact, capacity development is the change factor where there is most agreement between the groups, seeing it within the range of 'developing' and 'emerging' levels with the following characteristics:

- 'Developing': Staffing and funding needs are identified', 'resources are becoming available to meet staffing and funding needs'.
- 'Emerging': Middle management level 'Focal Point or Coordinator' appointed', 'training & development needs assessment is in progress'.

Figure 15 Comparison of the perception of the 'Capacity Development' component of change management by councillors (2009) and multi-stakeholder decision makers (2009)



Action / Implementation

The fourth success factor of the change process is the actual implementation of the vision. Ideally, actions are guided by the new policies and resources are available for putting plans in action. Implementation, however, is not an end on its own. It is an iterative process complete with monitoring and evaluation of the whole process including the vision, policies, capacity building & resource allocation, and feeding lessons learned to the new planning cycles.

Most members of both groups see the implementation of decentralisation in progress. Interestingly, councillors (in 2009) could see more progress in the actual implementation of decentralisation in The Gambia than the multi-stakeholder group (in 2008). 69% of the councillors saw decentralisation in its 'advanced' and 'developing' level, while 65% of the multi-stakeholder group had the impression that it was still at the 'emerging' – 'developing' phase. The difference in their perception may come from the difference in their proximity to action. Councillors can see more action at the local level than high level decision makers who are more distanced from grass-roots realities.

Figure 16 Comparison of the perception of the 'Action / Implementation' component of change management by councillors (2009) and multi-stakeholder decision makers (2009)

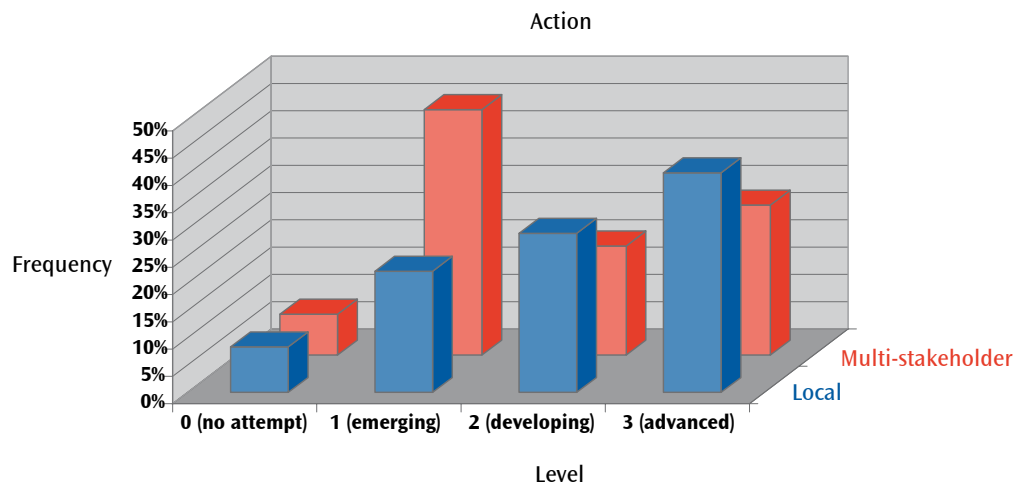


Table 10 Change Management Rubric

How is the decentralisation in The Gambia being implemented?

Mark that cell in each column which best describes the progress according to your own experience.

Level	Pressure	Shared Vision	Capacity Building	Actions
3 Advanced	<p>Top level political commitment. All ministries are on board.</p> <p>Legal context of decentralisation is approved.</p>	<p>High level of awareness and support at all levels. Staff highly motivated.</p> <p>Action plan is in place, regular reviews.</p>	<p>Resources (staff and funding) are available and routinely committed to capacity building.</p>	<p>Actions being taken and embedded throughout the central and local governments</p> <p>Monitoring & reporting of progress to Cabinet / Parliament</p>
2 Developing	<p>Proposals for the legal context of decentralisation is agreed.</p>	<p>All staff given opportunity to make an input.</p> <p>Representatives of all levels of government are involved in the planning process and drawing up the action plan(s) of decentralisation.</p>	<p>Staffing and funding needs are identified.</p> <p>Resources are becoming available to meet staffing and funding needs.</p>	<p>Wide engagement across the central and local governments.</p>
1 Emerging	<p>Institutional arrangements in place (e.g. Decentralisation Secretariat). High level 'Focal Point' or 'Director of Decentralisation' identified.</p> <p>Initial draft of decentralization policy</p> <p>Active 'change champion'</p>	<p>Change 'champion drives' the implementation strategy. Only a few staff members are involved.</p>	<p>Middle management level 'Focal Point or Coordinator' appointed</p> <p>Training & development needs assessment is in progress.</p>	<p>Commencement of isolated actions at some levels of the central and local governments.</p>



Level	Pressure	Shared Vision	Capacity Building	Actions
0 No attempt	No explicit policy. Lack of consistent leadership & responsibility for reforms.	De-motivated staff kept in the dark. No communication between different levels of government.	No investment in capacity building High stress level in over-worked and under-valued staff.	Zero action (or actions limited to crisis management).

Based on © Government Office for the South West, 2004 http://www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/change_matrix.doc Adapted to decentralization and managing change in local governance by Andrew Nickson, Munawwar Alam, Roger Koranteng, Andrea Deri, 7 April 2008

Acronyms

CBO – Community based organisation

VDC – Village Development Committee

WDC – Ward Development Committee

GPPA - Gambia Public Procurement Agency

MDG – Millennium Development Goal

BAC - Brikama Area Council

KMC – Kanifang Municipal Council

BCC – Banjul City Council

PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy paper

About Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD)

The Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) has responsibility for the Commonwealth Secretariat's mandate on public sector development. GIDD's work covers the full spectrum of public policy, management, and administration, as well as issues relating to civil society and private sector institutions with public responsibilities. Its role is to provide strategic advice and technical assistance in capacity building and institutional development towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Commonwealth developing countries. GIDD's in-house advisers work in collaboration with other divisions and external partners to provide assistance across a wide range of development issues to meet the specific needs of member countries in a diverse, complex, and rapidly changing environment.

The Thematic Programmes Group provides specialised expertise and advisory services to member countries in four thematic clusters – governance, service delivery, leadership and human resource (HR) policy, and information and communication technology. It serves Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting mandates like Commonwealth Connects and maintains specialisations in public sector management and reform, institutional governance, anti-corruption, corporate governance, public expenditure management, sub-national government, public-private partnerships, human resource management (HRM), leadership development, ethics and values, e-governance, and other aspects of public sector development. The Thematic Programmes Group works closely in the Division with the Regional Programmes Group and the Technical Cooperation and Strategic Response Group to provide an integrated and seamless service to member governments.

The Regional Programmes Group includes four regions covering the developing countries of the Commonwealth: Africa, Caribbean and Mediterranean, Asia and Pacific. The Regional Programmes Group works with Commonwealth member countries in response to their public sector development capacity building needs by providing specialised advice and advisory services. Primarily it works to assist national governments' transform their public services into responsive, citizen focused, results oriented, sustained, and effective service delivery systems.

The Technical Cooperation and Strategic Response Group is responsible for preparation, appraisal and supervision, monitoring and evaluation of Technical Assistance projects for all the Divisions of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Section provides long and short term technical assistance through the services of specialist consultants and volunteers to member governments and regional organisations in response to their needs towards building a national capacity and institutional strengths. The experts come from both developed and developing countries, and are very experienced in their fields, their assignments range from a few days to two or three years.

The Commonwealth Service Abroad Programme (CSAP) is also included within this Unit. The CSAP places about 30 volunteer experts a year to assist member countries to provide technical assistance related to hands-on, on-the-job training, exposure to new operating technologies and innovative practices, technology transfer, community workshops, stakeholder retreats etc.

The Divisional Coordination and Support Unit is responsible for the formulating and implementing policy and procedures and for the effective functioning of the Division. It also acts as a contact point for other Divisions in the Commonwealth Secretariat.

For further information please visit: www.thecommonwealth.org/governance

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