Helpdesk Research Report: Local Government Capacity and Leadership in Fragile Areas  
Date: 15.10.10

Query: Identify literature that assesses local government capacity (either for service delivery or internal skills capacity) and leadership in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

Enquirer: AusAID

Contents

1. Overview
2. Local government capacity
3. Leadership
4. Additional information

1. Overview

Whereas there is a large body of research and a number of tools which assess local government capacity, or more precisely local governance, there is little of relevance on leadership in fragile and conflict-affected environments. There is, however, an emerging field of literature on leadership which is providing some early insights into characteristics of effective leadership. If validated by further research, such characteristics could be used as a basis for a tool to assess leadership in a development context.

Local Government Capacity

UNDP (2009a) provides a comprehensive guide to current tools and methods available to measure, assess and monitor local governance. Local governance is defined as covering the range of governance issues that exist at the local level, including decentralisation of policies and processes, the roles and inter-relationships of different actors and institutions, local democracy and local government performance (UNDP, 2009a). It includes an inventory of 22 existing assessment tools and methodologies. These methodologies are based on assessment by citizens (single stakeholders), by local government institutions, or by multiple stakeholders.

UNDP (n.d.) provides suggestions for choosing an appropriate local governance assessment tool in the form of a flow chart. The first choice is whether the tool should be based on multiple or single stakeholders. In the case of multiple stakeholders there is a choice between a general governance assessment and thematic assessments with one such theme being states in transition or post-conflict. For this category the chart suggests the Indicators for Local Democratic Governance for a tool focused only on the supply side; and the Governance for Local Development (GOFORGOLD) for a tool which also incorporates demand side issues of governance.

The Indicators of Local Democratic Governance was initially designed to offer comprehensive, longitudinal and cross-nationally comparable information on local democratic governance for different research and development activities in Central and Eastern Europe (Soos, 2001). The indicators of the tool cover a wide range of political activity of local governments and their contacts with local citizens and civic organizations.
GOFORGOLD has been integrated into the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. The tool aims to provide a snapshot of governance at the sub-national level, and more specifically, to help in monitoring the governance situation in the provinces, districts, municipalities, and villages against benchmarks and governance indicators. It uses data such as national and city statistics and regulations; and available administrative data on population, budgets and procedures.

Another tool of interest in the case of multiple stakeholders is the UN-HABITAT Urban Governance Index (UGI, see UN-HABITAT, 2004). The UGI assesses structure and the supply side of governance, using universal criteria indicators and objective data. The UGI like GOFORGOLD has data converted into quantitative data of two types - single numbers (expressed by averages, means, rations, percentages) and binary variables (expressed by 0/1 assessments).

The Local Governance Barometer (LGB), developed by Pact, SNV and IDASA, also seems a relevant tool (see Bloom et al., 2007). It is similar to the UGI except that it assesses outcome rather than structure and looks at the demand side of governance as well as supply. The LGB is based on locally defined criteria and participatory processes for assessing local governance. Of note is the case study of Cameroon, a country which has recently been considered a fragile state by some estimates (e.g. Brookings Institute of State Weakness). The case study outlines the process involving surveys and focus groups. It concludes that the process was generally successful and effective, with some administrative authorities using it to identify and improve on weaknesses while capitalising on their strengths.

These tools focus on local governance rather than capacity per se. In terms of specifically assessing capacity there are tools which produce capacity assessments for the purposes of Capacity Development (CD). For example Brinkerhoff (2007) provides a series of assessment frameworks which could be used to assess local government capacity and provide comparisons between local governments.

Leadership

There does not currently seem to be a readily available tool to assess leadership in a development context. However, leadership and human agency within development contexts has emerged recently as a focus of research. Recent literature suggests how to better define leadership and decision-making characteristics which help identify good leadership.

Leftwich (2010) critiques the structuralist approach to development. To engage seriously with the politics of economic growth, state-building and social inclusion, policy makers must have a much better analytical handle on the role of human agency in the developmental process and on the role of leaders, elites and coalitions in particular. It is important to differentiate between leaders and leadership. When leadership results in positive development dividends it can be termed as ‘developmental leadership’ which is defined as follows:

‘Developmental leadership is an inherently political process involving the organization and mobilization of people and resources in pursuit of particular goals, in given institutional contexts of authority, legitimacy and power (often of a hybrid kind). Achieving these goals, and overcoming the collective action problems which commonly obstruct their achievement, normally requires negotiating locally appropriate institutions by formal or informal coalitions of interests, elites and organizations, both vertical and horizontal.’ (p103)

The paper synthesised findings from a research work stream on leadership case studies. These case studies showed that leadership faced problems which could only be addressed by overcoming collective action problems. Effective leadership emerges when coalitions are formed which are able to respond to these collective action problems. In each case the solutions employed were context-specific and often innovative. Key leaders were open to foreign ideas and experience and absorbed, adopted or adapted ideas and advice as
appropriate. A somewhat surprising feature of these studies is that these leaders seem to have received similar quality of secondary and tertiary education, often at the same institutions.

Though not considered a fragile state the case study of leadership in South Africa (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009) elucidates further the points made by Leftwich. The study emphasises that a key success factor in state-making and peace-building in South Africa has been inclusive coalitions and the commitment to development by influential political leaders able to forge broad coalitions through their links to multiple institutions (including local and indigenous institutions).

Leftwich and Hogg (2007) stress that effective leadership and the collective action of a relatively small number of leaders and elites, across the public and private sectors, are essential for building effective states, ensuring stability and promoting economic growth. The paper goes on to outline the forms and functions of leadership, the role of elites in state building, how coalitions of elites forging agreed institutional arrangements can promote economic growth, the centrality of politics in these processes and the implications of this work for aid effectiveness.

Current research is being undertaken by the Research and Analytical Programme (RAP) of the Leadership Programme: Developmental Leaders, Elites and Coalitions (LPDLEC). The LPDLEC builds on work previously undertaken by the Leaders, Elites and Coalitions Research Programme (LECRP) which was initiated in 2007. The RAP has been building a ‘Leadership Database’ to map characteristics of effective leaders; undertaking a series of case studies and investigations; and developing comparative analytic narratives of how different leaders have been effective. Of note is the Political Analytical Tool (PAT), a software programme which has been developed to identify, track and analyse in varying institutional and country contexts: (i) how different forms of leadership interact with each other over time; (ii) the kinds of institutional or policy outcomes these interactions may produce; and (iii) how coalitions form and evolve over time to influence policies and institutional formation. Such research may provide insights into producing a tool to identify good leadership.

2. Local Government Capacity


This guide outlines the tools and methods that are being used to measure, assess and monitor governance at the local level. These tools have been used in a variety of contexts including in transition or post-conflict environments.

The guide uses the term ‘local governance’ to cover the range of governance issues that exist at the local level, including decentralisation of policies and processes, the roles and inter-relationships of different actors and institutions, local democracy and local government performance. The guide combines a discussion of theoretical/conceptual issues relating to local governance with a review of past and ongoing local governance assessment initiatives.

The Guide is essentially made up of two parts; the first part outlines what is meant by local governance and describes the kinds of issues, concepts and priorities for local governance that existing measurement and assessment tools tend to focus on. It provides guidance on challenges and opportunities for assessing local governance and is based on direct feedback from users of assessment tools, a distillation of good practices, and four illustrative case study examples.

The second part is the Source Guide - an inventory of existing assessment tools and methodologies with detailed information on each including: history, objectives, applicability, the types and sources of data used, methodology used, key actors/stakeholders involved, the results reporting format, the gender and poverty focus (if it has one), strengths and
weaknesses, the coverage, timeline, the assumptions in the method, contact details and any supplementary tools/guidelines related to the particular instrument. It includes 22 assessment methodologies for decentralised governance. The sources are grouped into three categories:

- Comprehensive local governance assessment approaches based on multiple stakeholder perspectives
- Local governance assessments based on citizen (or single stakeholder) perspectives
- Local governance and performance self-assessments by local government institutions

**Comprehensive local governance assessment approaches based on multiple stakeholder perspectives**

This category emphasises capturing the principal dimensions and determinants of governance at the local level such as the local political system (i.e. elections, human rights, rule of law, civil society, freedom of information), institutional issues (i.e. corruption, public administration, financial management, public procurement), social and cross-cutting issues (i.e. the policy process, the budget process, revenue mobilization, service delivery, gender, environmental sustainability) and market governance (i.e. the business/trade environment). In this category, the source guide includes the following:

- Urban Governance Index (UN-HABITAT)
- Local Governance Barometer (Impact Alliance)
- Good Governance for Local Development – GOFORGOLD Index (Afghanistan)
- Local Democracy Assessment Guide (International IDEA)
- Indicators of Local Democratic Governance (Tocqueville Research Centre & OSI)
- Methodological Guidelines for Local Governance Analysis (UNDP)
- Governance Index (Indonesia, Kemitraan – Partnership)
- Measuring Municipal Performance – MiDAMOS (Paraguay)
- Observatory of Democracy in Central America: System of Legal and Institutional Governance Indicators for Central America (Centro Estudios para el Futuro)
- Desde lo Local – Strategic Decentralization for Local Development (Mexico)
- Council of Europe’s Guide to Developing Well-Being & Progress Indicators with Citizens – Application of the Governance Module in Timisoara (Romania)

**Local governance assessments based on citizen (or single stakeholder) perspectives**

This category emphasises citizens’ perceptions and experiences based on an assumption that the quality of local governance is determined by local stakeholders. The identification of expectations, experiences and perceptions is carried out by different data collection methods including direct surveying and focus groups. The most often cited instruments and approaches are Citizen Report Cards originally developed in Bangalore, India. In this category, the source guide includes the following:

- Citizen Report Cards (Public Affairs Centre, India)
- Social Audit of Local Governance (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Social Audit of governance and delivery of public services (Pakistan)
- Local Governance Self-Assessment (Bangladesh)

**Local governance and performance self-assessments by local government institutions**

This category emphasises outputs or results achieved by local governments in service delivery, income and expenditure. The performance measures often include the volume, quality, efficiency and outcomes of providing these goods and services. They might also include measures focused on the institutional, financial and human resource capacities to develop, implement and monitor/evaluate its policies and programmes. Most of these measures address “multi-sectoral” aspects of performance, while only a few others focus on particular sectors. In this category, the source guide includes the following:

- Governance for Local Development Index – GOFORDEV Index (Philippines)
- Assessments Informing Performance Based Grant Systems (UNCDF)
- Local Governance Performance Management System (Philippines)
- Index of Responsibility, Transparency and Accountability (Macedonia)
- Standards of Municipal Transparency (Chile)
- Local Integrity Initiative (Global Integrity)
- Methodology for the Assessment of Capacity of Municipalities in Turkey and the Western Balkans to deliver basic services (UNDP)


The flowchart can be read as a supplement to the Users’ Guide to Measuring Local Governance. It is designed to help select the right type of local governance assessment in response to specific needs.


This guide examines the basic issues that a country or organization should consider when developing and producing a governance assessment. It aims to serve as a starting point and outline for those interested in conducting a country-led governance assessment. The paper explains the trade-offs of various approaches and methodologies in terms of quality and costs. At the same time, it provides some basic background on the technical aspects of conducting a governance assessment. The guide attempts to detail how country-led governance assessments can be carried out with broad stakeholder participation at a reasonable cost, and at the same time how to produce meaningful results that can be used by civil society and governments alike.


The goal of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance project was to offer comprehensive, longitudinal and cross-nationally comparable information on local democratic governance for different research and development activities in Central and Eastern Europe. The indicators of the project cover a wide range of political activity of local governments and their contacts with local citizens and civic organizations. The main goal of the project was to develop a set of operational, flexible, and adaptable indicators based on internationally recognized definitions and to publish reports measuring the process of decentralization in the target countries. This paper develops the conceptual framework and selects the indicators.


This UNDP GAP Portal page outlines the GOFORGOLD Index tool. The tool aims to provide a snapshot of governance at the sub-national level and more specifically, to help in monitoring governance situation in the provinces, districts, municipalities, and villages against benchmarks and governance indicators. It uses data such as national and city statistics and regulations; and available administrative data on population, budgets and procedures. The system allows for comparison across sub-national government levels and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of a local government. This enables the Independent Directorate for Local Governance in Afghanistan to direct more focused support and technical assistance for provinces, districts, and municipalities.

The Urban Governance Index (UGI) was developed with a two-fold purpose:

- At the global level, the index will be used to demonstrate the importance of good urban governance in achieving broad development objectives, such as the Millennium Development Goals and those in the Habitat Agenda.
- At the local level, the index is expected to catalyze local action to improve the quality of urban governance.

This report synthesizes the findings and recommendations from various campaign events on developing the UGI, field test results, the suggestions and feedback from participating and partner cities and the experience of the Global Campaign on Urban Governance and the Global Urban Observatory.


Pact is a US-based non-profit, capacity-building organization. They worked with SNV (Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers - Dutch Volunteers Foundation) and IDASA (Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa) to develop the Local Governance Barometer (LGB). The objectives of LGB are to:

- Ensure the participation of principal actors during the design of governance models as well as the collection, processing, and analysis of the information collected.
- Arrive at quantitative measures for good governance indicators to enable a comparative analysis between different situations, an understanding of the evolution of factors of governance, and evaluate the impact of interventions.

The LGB is based on locally defined criteria and participatory processes for assessing local governance. While the process is locally driven, it is informed by regional, national and international best practices. Through the LGB, local governments help coordinate stakeholders to assume collaborative roles in addressing governance issues. Citizens, government employees and elected officials help define what is meant by good governance and monitor progress across a broad range of critical success factors.

Between 2006 and 2007, SNV, Pact, and IDASA have undertaken fifteen pilots in six countries including South Africa, Botswana, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ghana, and Tanzania. The report concludes that there have been strong impacts including:

- Enhanced functionality and responsiveness of democratic local government through the application of lessons learned, including addressing gaps in service delivery and applying new knowledge in policy making. It has also encouraged rival government actors to collaborate around new, shared goals such as improving citizen participation in local government;
- Development of strategies, programmes, and practices that seek to increase citizen participation and empower participant citizens—specifically to increase the direct and indirect participation and empowerment of women and other formerly disenfranchised groups in local government decision-making; and
- Provision of technical assistance and training to support planning and implementation of local economic development strategies.
- Additionally, the process has helped participating Civil Society groups and citizens to identify advocacy and lobbying issues and develop strategies to address them.
Cameroon Case Study

The Local Governance Barometer was used in Cameroon to assess governance based on the following five core determinants:

- effectiveness in improving the living conditions or access of the population to services;
- rule of law and exercise of authority in accordance to law;
- accountability and ability of authorities to report their actions;
- participation and involvement in decision making and ownership of achievements;
- equity and fair repartition of resources and equal rights.

There was a process of localization where the core determinants was broken down into criteria and sub-criteria according to the local realities in a given place. The assessment itself involved focus groups, surveys and questionnaires of Government Technical Services (GTS), Civil Society organizations (CSOs) and Private Sector Organizations (PSOs).

The results produced comparable results between the two localities of Kumbo and Yagoua. For example in terms of core determinants, effectiveness and participation are good in Kumbo while in Yagoua the determinants with good scores are accountability and rule of law. Equity and participation appear to be the main factors hindering good governance in Yagoua.

Some administrative authorities used the opportunity to call on the participants, particularly those delivering services to the public, to work on improving the weaknesses identify and capitalize on their strengths so as to better satisfy the population and improve on the governance image of the State.


This paper clarifies key concepts, reviews selected experience, and addresses several of the issues and dilemmas that members of the international community confront in dealing with capacity and capacity development (CD) in fragile states. Assessment frameworks are provided to enable actors to begin to examine some of these issues with additional tables which suggest starting points for thinking about CD interventions.

3. Leadership

http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/poli/staff/al/ForumforDevelopmentStudiesarticle.pdf

Structure and agency in politics have been rarely addressed in the development context. In the main, policy-makers and researchers have adopted emphatically structuralist approaches with their stress on institutions and institution building. This paper suggests that if researchers and policy-makers are to engage seriously with the politics of economic growth, state-building and social inclusion, they will need to have a much better analytical handle on the role of human agency in the developmental process and on the role of leaders, elites and coalitions in particular.

This paper emphasises the difference between leaders as individual agents and leadership, and in particular ‘developmental leadership’. The last of which is defined as the following:
‘Developmental leadership is an inherently political process involving the organization and mobilization of people and resources in pursuit of particular goals, in given institutional contexts of authority, legitimacy and power (often of a hybrid kind). Achieving these goals, and overcoming the collective action problems which commonly obstruct their achievement, normally requires negotiating locally appropriate institutions by formal or informal coalitions of interests, elites and organizations, both vertical and horizontal.’ (p103)

This paper suggests that successful and sustained development depends crucially on whether and how various leaders and elites across the public and private domains are able to form sufficiently inclusive ‘developmental coalitions’ (or growth coalitions), formal or informal, which:

- Establish, maintain and implement the locally appropriate, legitimate and feasible institutional arrangements which facilitate economic growth and (inclusive) social development.
- Contribute to building the core institutions of secure and effective states and stable polities.
- Work – regionally, nationally, sub-nationally, sectorally or within and between organizations – to overcome major political, economic and social problems.

The paper summarizes findings from recent research which looked at case studies in leadership in Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa, and Uganda. The paper found several common emerging themes:

- In every case the leaderships faced a critical problem, threat or challenge – internal, external, political, social, economic, or in some cases all.
- The problem they faced could only be addressed by overcoming single or multiple collective action problems and this was recognised by the respective leaders and elites.
- Coalitions represented the political solution to these collective action problems. The processes by which they achieved this were intensely political and the institutional solutions unique to each situation and often innovative.
- They were all open to foreign ideas and experience and absorbed, adopted and adapted ideas and advice as appropriate to local circumstances and possibilities.
- One feature of all the key leaders who made the running in building the coalitions was the quality of the secondary and tertiary education they received, often at the same educational institutions. In many cases they were able to draw on prior networks established at those institutions or from other contexts.

http://www.crisisstates.com/Publications/wp/WP55.2.htm

This study, building on earlier work undertaken for the Crisis States Research Centre and further developed for the Leadership, Elites and Coalitions Research Programme (LECRP) suggests that in South Africa, state-making and peace-building has been facilitated by:

(1) the creation of an administrative machinery that can contain customary authority institutions within a broader polity;
(2) political structures that channel the ambitions and grievances of traditional leaders; and
(3) a system of local government that draws on the experience and access of chieftaincies to bring development to hard-to-reach areas.

A key success factor is inclusive coalitions and the commitment to development of influential political leaders able to forge broad coalitions through their links to multiple institutions. In
many parts of the world, and especially post-colonial states, customary forms of governance remain prominent, being deeply rooted in local institutions. Indigenous institutions are not immutable, but they are resilient nevertheless and it is recognised that institutional multiplicity and competing claims to social and political legitimacy need to be taken seriously within hybrid political orders.

Development is predicated on inclusive political settlements that encompass a variety of elite interests that in turn are in tune with the needs and aspirations of significant popular constituencies. In South Africa’s transitional political context and under conditions of considerable fragility, coalitions of traditional and other leaders became a key factor in determining how indigenous institutions evolved and were articulated within a plural institutional landscape.


In developing countries, where the institutional structure and institutional rules of the game are less rigid, less clear and less universally accepted, the role of leadership is of great importance. This literature survey bears out that there has been little research done on leadership. Most of the leadership literature is managerial or organizational in nature and looks at leadership from largely individualistic and western perspectives. Where the literature does consider development as such, there is little appreciation of the critical importance of its role in development. Leadership is rarely considered as a political phenomenon.

The review identifies 7 broad themes in the literature:

- **Focus on individuals and western business.** Much of the general leadership literature has a distinctly western, business-related focus. The central focus of this mainstream literature is on individual leaders’ characteristics, qualities, attributes or traits and these are seldom linked to discussion and analysis of coalitions of elites. Much of this work therefore takes for granted the existence of stable and reliable institutional structures within which leaders can operate and ‘improve’. This is often not the context when considering leadership for development.

- **Disciplinary spread.** Literature on leadership is found in several disciplines such as management, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology and politics. There appears to be little cross-fertilisation between disciplines. The study found very little on leadership in the development studies literature.

- **Definitional ambiguity.** There are a number of different definitions for leadership with few relevant in all contexts. There is little common agreement as to what the term means or constitutes.

- **Leadership for economic and social development.** There is only a small body of mainstream ‘leadership’ literature that addresses this issue, and mostly in the form of empirical studies of individual cases. In general, where leadership is considered, there tends to be little explanatory linkage to economic or social development, and a political perspective on leadership is largely absent. In some recent development literature there is reference to the importance of leadership for development but this is seldom elaborated. There is an almost complete failure to locate issues to do with the politics of developmental leadership in wider bodies of political theory concerning the role of elites or coalitions.

- **Development studies literature and leadership.** Much the same can be said for the literature and policy papers in development studies, where leaders, elites or coalitions have been notably neglected as a focus of analysis, with much more attention paid to institutional frameworks and political systems – that is, to structures rather than agents. Where connections between leadership and development are made, they tend to be in the form of specific cases or stories of particular individuals or circumstances, providing few useful generalisations for application elsewhere.

- **Predominantly USA based.** Most of the scholars working in the field of ‘leadership studies’ are based in the United States, and this is reflected in the concentration of
the political leadership literature on western-style democracies. This concentration on the West means that the literature assumes the existence of a stable institutional structure within which leaders operate, which is not the case in many developing societies and fragile states. It also assumes that actors fit the western ‘rational economic actor’ mould, and that Western cultural assumptions - such as the importance of profit as a measure of success in business - are much more universal than they are.

- Absence of theory. There is an absence of an integrating theory of leadership, which would enable the concept and the literature to be useful across definitional boundaries. Many of the gaps and characteristics of the literature on leadership and development identified above may be explained by the lack of a theoretical underpinning for the concept and process of leadership.


This paper makes the case that effective leadership and the collective action of a relatively small number of leaders and elites, across the public and private sectors, are essential for building effective states, ensuring stability and promoting economic growth. Successful development depends largely on political processes which involve diverse leaders and elites, representing different groups, interests and organizations, tackling a series of collective action problems in locally appropriate and feasible ways. In many developing countries, the limited quality and quantity of leaders and elites with the necessary vision, knowledge and experience means that their ability to shape the strategies and institutions that will mediate the relations between private interests and public goods is seriously compromised.

Donors need to re-think and refine policies, strategies and programmes to support the emergence and expansion of pro-development leadership and growth coalitions. This paper sketches out the forms and functions of leadership, the role of elites in state building, how coalitions of elites forging agreed institutional arrangements can promote economic growth, the centrality of politics in these processes and the implications of this work for aid effectiveness.


The research programme, outlined in this paper, is designed to start filling the knowledge gap about the role of leadership in development. The central focus is the role of leaders, elites and coalitions in promoting stability, national economic growth and inclusive social development. In order to do this researchers are currently:

- Building a series of databases and taxonomies which will map the empirical characteristics of effective leaders, classify the different cultures and forms of leadership, and identify and evaluate the various organizations and initiatives concerned with promoting leadership.
- Undertaking a series of case studies in Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific regions which explore the provenance and function of leaders in successful (and less successful) episodes of national and sub-national economic growth and social development.
- Investigating the way in which leaders and elites have shaped more or less successful organizations in the public sector and civil society (such as business associations, unions and promotional groups).
Developing comparative analytic narratives of how different leaders and elites have, or have not, been able to form ‘developmental’ or problem-solving coalitions, at national and sub national level.

Analysing a number of global, regional and sectoral challenge areas (e.g., HIV/AIDS, corruption, climate change, exclusion) to assess the extent to which elite behaviour and interaction best explains the relative success or failure to overcome such problems.

The Leadership Programme: Developmental Leaders, Elites and Coalitions (LPDLEC)

For further information see:
http://www.lpdlec.org/

For information about the LPDLEC Leadership Database see:

For information about the LPDLEC Political Analytical Tool: Leadership & Institutions (PAT) see:
http://www.lpdlec.org/contents/analytical-tools/political-analytical-tool.php

Additional Information

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Selected websites visited
USAID, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Pact, UNDP Governance Assessment Portal, Leadership Programme: Developmental Leaders, Elites and Coalitions (LPDLEC)

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