

Foreword

Public sector development is integral to the work that we do at the Commonwealth Secretariat. Through the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD), we support member countries and their public institutions with technical assistance, advisory services and training. The aim is to build institutional capacity to improve governance and public service delivery.

This book is a result of the agreement made during the 4th Commonwealth Heads of African Public Services meeting held in Magaliesburg, South Africa in July 2007, that the Commonwealth Secretariat should assist member countries in Africa to document and publish the progress that African public services are making in improving public services. One of the three areas in which the Commonwealth Secretariat was asked to document progress was decentralisation policy and practices, which is seen as crucial in getting services delivered to the people.

Two objectives that are central in most decentralisation programmes are: improvement in the provision of public services; and empowerment of local citizens and institutions for self-governance. These objectives are in line with global efforts to reduce poverty and open the democratic space. Most observers believe that these objectives are interrelated, in that empowered citizens drive local institutions to deliver services more effectively, efficiently, transparently, responsively and equitably.

It is against this background that research was undertaken in five countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania, who were the first countries to submit their country reports to the Commonwealth Secretariat. They are considered representative of African decentralisation experience.

The findings on decentralisation policies and practices in these countries are presented in this book. It is divided into seven chapters, with the five country reports each constituting a chapter. The first chapter provides an overview of the study, the conceptual/literature review of decentralisation and the methodology that guided the research. The final chapter undertakes a comparative review and highlights the challenges presented, lessons learned and suggestions on ways to improve some of the weaknesses in implementation.

The Commonwealth Secretariat recognises the contributions of the leaders of the five countries that provided the initial country reports. They gave access to the consultants who worked with them to validate and document the facts on this critical part of African decentralisation. In particular, we appreciate the Botswana Government for hosting the stakeholders' workshop in Gaborone between 26 and 28 April 2010.

This provided the countries with an opportunity to review the final papers in their countries and provide input before publication of this book

We are grateful to the expert team led by Dr Dele Olowu, Director of Africa Europe Foundation and former Professor of Public Administration and Public Policy. Dr Olowu was assisted by two research consultants: Dr Nicholas Awortwi of the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and Dr Akinyinka Akinyoade of the African Studies Center, University of Leiden. They brought broad teaching, research, advisory and practical experiences in Africa, Europe and a number of other international organisations. The team undertook rapid research to validate the papers written by member countries and finalised the papers based upon the research findings.

We also acknowledge the commendable effort of the Africa team in GIDD, which managed the process from conceptualising the methodology to getting this book published. The team was comprised of Mrs Janet Kathyola (Adviser, Southern Africa), Mrs Oluwatoyin Job (Adviser, West Africa), Ms Lorraine Howe (Programme Officer) and Ms Jacqueline Johnson (Programme Assistant).

This book is a good resource for academia, scholars and practitioners on decentralisation, both in Africa and other countries in the Commonwealth. We hope that the countries whose decentralisation experiences have been documented in this book will use the lessons learnt to advance their decentralisation agenda to get services closer to the people and to deepen democracy through active popular participation in local governance. The intent is for other Commonwealth countries to identify and adapt good practices from the experiences of the five countries to improve their own decentralisation processes. We will continue working with partners to support member countries' efforts to advance decentralisation.

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