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Book Review: Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies

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Book Review - 2

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Timothy Mwololo Waema and Edith Ofwona Adera, Local Governance and ICTs in Africa: Case Studies and Guidelines for Implementation and Evaluation, Pambazuka Press, 6 IDRC, Ottawa, Cairo, Dakar, Montevideo, Nairobi, New Delhi & Singapore, ISBN978-0-85749-032-2 (paperback) 6 ISBN 978-1-55250-518-2 e-book(IDRC), 2011: 357 pages.

This work "Local Governance and ICTs in Africa" emerged as a result of a three years research funded by the IDRC involving 10 African states. Eventually nine countries were able to carry out the research. The countries were Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, Ghana and Mauritius. The country that dropped out is Senegal. One of us (Mammo Muchie) was involved as a scientific advisor in this research for three years from 2006 and 2009. The interesting aspect of this research is that it focused entirely at the local level where the people directly face the challenge of problems in service delivery. It addressed issues of how staff can be

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enabled by using ICT, and how services can be delivered better and generally how local Government can be organised effectively. The locality is the site where the people can access or not as the case may be, services. The degree to which staff and consumers interact systematically to provide local services to the people requires the application of ICT to facilitate timely delivery. Government is different from governance and E- Government is also different from e-governance. There is also a third distinction that is introduced in this original and important field and laboratory based research work on local governance: the distinction between E- government and H-government as there is a distinction between e- governance and, h- governance. Government is concerned with the rules and regulations by which public management is effected whereas governance deals with the relationship between government public management and citizens engagement with the various structures and organisations by concentrating on the way services are delivered effectively, timely with both procedural and substantive fairness and justice. It also deals with the degree to which Government is trusted by citizens because of the system of service delivery that is open, transparent and accountable to those it purports to serve.

Carrying out research on local e-governance by bringing together such a diverse team of researchers was not an easy task. The research process faced difficulties because of the uneven research experience of the country teams that resulted in one of the countries dropping out from the research altogether.

In terms of setting the framework for the research the team leader Professor Tim Waema selected the UNDP's nine underlying characteristics of good governance. These are: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision. From this framework for Login-Africa the main components of e-government were identified to constitute the computerisation of internal government processes, the electronic delivery of government information, knowledge and services to citizens, businesses and other government units through the wide area network infrastructure and internet connectivity, and the electronic interactions between government actors and citizens, businesses and other government actors (p.43). The case studies that followed assessed the effects or benefits of e- governance. Login-Africa researchers from the nine countries used this framework assessment and reported their results.

The first country study reported was from Egypt on business process mapping for e-local governance projects. The important achievement by the Egyptian team is that the business mapping methodology (BPM) and tool developed by Login-Africa was adopted by the Government. Egyptian context enabled e-local governance. The second was by the Ethiopian team

which did it on E-Local governance: case study on life event services in the smallest local government called Kebeles. The main result from their work was to spread awareness. The third case study was from Kenya on ICTs and financial management in Mavoko and Nyeri municipal councils in Kenya and the results were communicated to top e-government and public sector reform officials. The fourth was from Mauritius on revenue management systems in municipal and district councils where the e-local government researcher was invited in the e-regulation project committee of the country. The fifth was Morocco where the Login-team worked on establishing a roadmap to e-government for good governance in a developing country context where the team was proud in getting two municipal Governments (Fez and Larache) voted to implement an electronic civil registration system. The sixth was from Mozambique that worked on the influence of the e-Government implementation process on outcomes: case study of the Land Management Information System in Mozambique but found that the "technology is still far from meeting the expectations that can contribute to good governance and consequently to social and economic development" (p.211). The seventh country study is from South Africa on E-governance for social and local development: a Case Study of Gauteng province, South Africa. It appears that what the South African Login team did was offer courses on e-governance for managers in local government meeting the request of the Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality. The 8th case study is from Uganda on ICTs in Local Governance as a case study of the local Government Information, Communication System (LoGICS) in Uganda. "The study found that the system did not have any significant effect on participation of stakeholders, whether in the operational aspect of logics or in accessing information produced by the system" (p.258). The ninth study is on Ghana on the topic of ICTs for political inclusion and good governance in Northern Ghana. The team reports that though the northern Ghana region is poorer, it is the "pace setter in the e-local government" effort in Ghana (p.278).

Overall the nine case studies show varied uptake of e-governance by those in Government and other stakeholders. Together they relay a compelling message that work and research on e-governance with a view to foster policy learning is much needed in Africa.

In general, it is very positive that ICT has been seized upon to help improve the overall governance landscape on the African continent. ICTs are useful in addressing what is very often very weak in many developing economies. That is general institutional weakness in organising basic and quality data and surveys to being able to govern economies and societies. Human or h-governance is weaker in developing counties even if these countries practise democratic government rather than dictatorships. There is a need to add e-governance and by the creative combination better opportu-

nities may be open to improve the overall governance landscape from the localities to the national and vice versa.

In Africa there is a clash between indigenous and modern styles of government. Very often, the Governments that run the existing 54 states are not fully independent. They rely on external support for continuing their government on what is called the donor system. Some writers have described these donorized states as suffering from dead aid that has not promoted any meaningful transformation from the economy to the governance structures that exist to this day. In fact the aid has been encouraging rent seeking and corrupt behaviour. If human governance (h-G) continues, it is likely that the corruption will increase rather than decreasing. One way to reduce corruption in government is to go for e-governance systematically.

Whilst a technology fix to remove governance challenges is difficult to sustain, there is no doubt provided the infrastructure such as electricity provision is sustainable, the ICT application to governance can be helpful to reduce some of the obvious sources that can lead officials to prefer corrupt practices.

The Login-Africa results from this IDRC-CAFRAD research show, if anything, how critically important it is, to develop further and deeper research that includes and covers as many local economies in general and concentration within specific African economies in particular. It will be useful if more open and better research collaboration linking Northern researchers with Africans researchers can be developed in the spirit of the Globelics (www.Globelics.org), and Medalics (www.medalics.org) research orientation of inclusive research and researchers.

In Africa the existing states are living with boundaries that do not make political and economic sense. There is huge value in applying ICT to help African economies to rearticulate their current unsustainable irrational state arrangements by building on the local and making Africa as a whole share a unity project identity for smart, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It looks that African economies can progress better and faster if they concentrate in getting local level governance right. If we expand research at the local level and produce knowledge that can change the way local government can be re-organised, there is a big chance new path breaking governance changes can emerge which can also be replicable to other regions and areas in much of the rest of Africa.

Thus research to improve governance through ICT is an important pillar to improve human governance in Africa or make it difficult for human governance to continue thieving and circulating corrupt practices. So the combination of e-governance and h-governance is likely to change the entire government landscape in Africa. This combination of E-government with e-governance and both with h-government and h-governance is critical to

improve the current African Government deficit. The Login-Africa research is a strong foundation to carry out further and deeper research that covers all the local government landscape in Africa. There is an opportunity that the foundation to increase and sustain an inclusive welfare of the communities lies at the local level. So getting local Governance right at the point of service delivery is critical. This research must continue.