

individuals or the community with respect to their well being and happiness within its boundaries. Local government is both "local" and "government" and has two main aspects:

service delivery or provision in which case it can be viewed as a management, a productive and an administrative system; democratic self-government, when it is considered as a political system.

Nowhere has democracy worked well without a great measure of local self-government.

Local government is historically prior to central government and in democratic terms, superior to any other form of government since it is only at the local level that the individual can really participate in his or her own government. The basic values inherent in local government are liberty, equality and the welfare of the people. Hence the saying that local government "looks after you from pregnancy, birth, infancy and will bury you when you die"

In developing countries, central authorities have more readily downloaded functions to local governments than they have decentralised the implementation tools such as financial resources and qualified manpower to handle the decentralised functions more effectively. In other cases, countries operate deconcentrated systems where the budgetary allocations and staff are centrally controlled in every respect. This has made local government not only ineffective, but more of a mockery. The planning and implementation of development programmes (even if these fall within the parameters of the national development plan), they are subjected to rigorous approval processes which are very bureaucratic and costly for the taxpayer.

Another factor that has been observed as militating against conducive decentralisation and devolution of power, is associated with the attitude of central government staff who are not comfortable with the idea of relinquishing power to democratically elected local politicians and appointed officials.

Though one appreciates the recent CHOGM decisions in Harare 1991, Cyprus 1993, Auckland 1995 and Edinburgh 1997; it is important to note that both the Commonwealth governments and their people, have yet to accept the challenges that go with the Declarations they adopt. These challenges may be summarised as (

i) Enshrinement of local government in national constitutions as has been done by the Republic of South Africa and Uganda,

(ii) Ensuring that local governments are elected popularly and are accorded appropriate decision making powers commensurate with the

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