

devolved. to local government; what is the impact on local government; what changes should be made to accommodate new functions or responsibilities and how can the policies be refined or improved. This of course requires research and lobbying.

(b) The second level will be **implementation**. National associations should be engaged in capacity building and development of strategies to implement new policy programmes. This entails provision of such services as training, research, operating procedures development, recruitment practices, procurement of equipment, etc. Central government may not be willing or able to do all this. National associations should be on the forefront hence the need to strengthen them as well. These policy issues include inter alia:

(a) **Finance**: The level of decentralisation and central-local government financial flows; property tax and general tax structure; property tax as an efficient and effective means to mobilise local government revenues; and how to improve the property tax system. Decisions on these policies do not require lip service often paid to the concept of devolved power. If property tax is not accepted, a viable and buoyant alternative has to be put in place.

(b) **Capacity Building** : This in the first instance is a responsibility of the centre, which invariably receives most of the credit when things are running well in the country. Central governments cannot shun away the responsibility for facilitating local governments, which they create through legislation. The argument that local authorities cannot be entrusted with authority to make decisions is a retrogressive attitude that belongs to the heyday of the "development administration era" promoted in Africa after the second world war. At any rate, local government national associations must even be more interested in the capacity building activity to support municipal government effort.

(c) **Establishment of Integrity Systems**: central government officials have often labelled Local Governments as corrupt. In fact the reverse is true for corruption at local level is only symptomatic of the corruption at the centre. Experience has shown that it is easier to stamp out unethical practices at the local level than it is to reduce malpractice at the centre. More so, decision making at the centre is not as transparent as it is at the local level. It is therefore necessary that commonwealth governments address this issue. In fact most of the corruption in Africa is imported. The malpractice by people wanting to win contracts (especially multi-national corporations) in Africa has tended to entrench bribe as part of our culture, which is not the case. Developed Commonwealth member states should therefore refrain from or be induced to double standards.