

“Innovative solutions for accountable and more transparent local governments”

1st December 2015, 9.30 – 12.30



**SHAPING THE FUTURE OF AFRICA WITH THE PEOPLE
THE CONTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES
TO THE AGENDA 2063 OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

Background

The past two decades have seen an increasing trend of devolution of powers, responsibilities and budgets from central government to local government both globally and on the African continent in particular. From basic social services such as water and sanitation, health, education to commercial licensing and construction permits, local governments are playing a greater role designing policies and delivering key public services.

On the other hand, urbanization is occurring at an unprecedented speed and pace in Africa exacerbating the pressure on local governments on delivering efficient and effective public services, often within a context of weak institutional and governance structures.

As a result, certain sectors and services such as infrastructure development, health or education, and access to urban land are often prone to corruption, misappropriation and, even worse on terms of quantities: inefficiency and mismanagement. Consequently, there is a tangible effect on the quality of services, eroding public trust in the accountability and merits of government.

As it is at the local sphere where citizens and the public sector interact most regularly and directly, when corruption occurs locally, the impact on citizens' lives can be most damaging, with the poorest being hit the hardest.

It is often perceived that African local decision-making suffer from a high risk of being captured by special interests and that in many cases, institutions designed to hold local public officials to account are not always adequate, and something need to be done to change this perception and situation. Decentralization has helped strengthen accountability and participation by bringing government closer to the people, so opportunities for direct civil society engagement and oversight, control and monitor local spending and performance are higher at the local level.

In this way, local governments all over the world need support to face the new challenges posed by new types of governance, as many of them lack the necessary capacities, resources or legal frameworks to effectively respond to the citizen's demand for transparency and accountability in city management and for increased participation in the city matters. With increasing education and access to information, governing without the citizen has become nearly impossible in the world of today.

Transparency and accountability are the key to give African citizens the tools and information they need to play a more active role in society, and are crucial for improving the lives of citizens by delivering services efficiently and effectively, increasing confidence and trust, and promoting development in an open, competitive, and fair manner.

The aim of this session is to discuss a holistic approach to strengthening local government integrity by highlighting innovative measures that local governments are experimenting to improve transparency and accountability in the field of urban planning and the provision of basic services while ensuring access, quality affordability and safety in the provision, on one side, and the control over the speculative physical development of the city.

Ensuring fair and equal access to land in African cities and towns will a determining factor of the achievement of Agenda 2063 of the Africa Union in a context where, according to projections, the majority of Africa's population will live in urban areas. African local governments should therefore equipped - both from a legal and institutional perspective - to fulfil their role in urban policies with the highest integrity levels for the public interest.

The sessions link up with the Theme "Strategies for strengthening the institutional environment for local governments" as the issues linked to corruption are key to connecting municipal finances with service delivery. Transparency and accountability are essential for African cities today as the essential means to create the necessary trust with the citizens. Without this essential element of trust, the governance of the city becomes impossible and population suffers from the absence of a functioning local public sector able to provide basic services and improved living conditions for all.

As the sphere of government closest to the people, local governments have a crucial role to play in the realisation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Local governments are responsible for the delivery of most services required to raise the living standards of the people of Africa.

Objectives

- To share practical experiences related to local government integrity in Africa and to identify needs and gaps that local government have today to face corruption and what can be done to support them in “doing their job” and to better serve the citizen.
- To serve as pilot need assessment of a future possible project to be implemented in Africa by the organising partners.

Africities offers a unique platform and opportunity to interact with African local governments’ leaders and stakeholders to present and discuss experiences related to transparency in local urban governance and also identify needs, gaps but also solutions and recommendation to these issues. In this way, the session will focus on these three topics:

1. **Innovation and accountability in transparent municipal governance:** The proposed session will address the transparency and accountability aspects of municipal management: “how can African local governments ensure access to data, increase channels for citizen participation and dialogue, and facilitate monitoring over public expenditures?”. This will also contribute to the overarching questions of Africities “Which possible futures for the African local governments?” by exploring better ways to engage constituencies and make local governments more accountable. UN-Habitat is willing to bridge local governments’ perspectives and concerns with the tools developed its partner, Transparency International. Hence, this event will be embedded in the Uraia platform’s activities, created as a space for exchange between local governments and their partners about the possibilities offered today with the introduction of SMART technologies in local public management. In other words, fostering stakeholder communication, and promoting a culture of integrity, innovation and technology can empower African local governments and shift the way in which people live and participate in local governance, and make information more accessible, which results in improved efficiency, quality and cost of providing basic services.
2. **Tax recovery and transparent management:** Many African mayors and governors are battling to establish a new culture of openness and efficiency in the management of their cities, but many reasons for concern arise from the urbanization process, as construction is exploding in developing cities and absence of planning is generating challenges that will impact generations to come. Another area of concern is the procurement of basic services by municipalities, especially in areas where high technical capacity is needed and technological innovation is constantly happening. The increase of transparency on the negotiations and implementation of Public-Private-Partnerships and the need to include the citizen in the management of basic urban services is key,

given that access to basic services is essential to battle urban poverty and to ensure universal access and basic quality for the more disadvantaged inhabitants of the city.

3. **Transparency and integrity in urban land governance:** Changes in land use (from rural to urban) have immediate consequences on the shape of the city, and urban planning and licensing is an area particularly sensitive to corruption at large scale. New solutions to this problem need to be identified for this continent, and fast. In order to share share Transparency International's holistic approach to strengthening local government integrity, part of the discussion will focus specifically on strengthening the role of local government in ensuring transparency and integrity in urban land governance.

The session is co-organised by the Local Government and Decentralization Unit (UN-Habitat), Transparency International and the Global Fund for the Development of Cities (FMDV) in the framework of the Platform Uraia for active citizenship. www.uraia.org

AGENDA

09.30 – 11.00 Session Part I. Thematic approaches to local transparency

- The use of SMART technologies for transparent municipal revenue, **Robert Beugré Mambe**, Governor of Abidjan (Ivory Coast)
- Tax recovery and transparent management, **Celia Cumbe**, Financial Controller of Maputo (Mozambique).
- Transparency and integrity in urban land governance. **Elijah Ochieng Ambasa**, Transparency International (Kenya)

Questions and debate with the room

11.00 – 12.30 Session Part II. The infrastructure for local transparency.

- Supporting local governments to be more transparent. What can national institutions do? **ThembeKile Kimi Makwetu**, Auditor-General of South Africa.
- African local governments and transparency. Emerging regional challenges and opportunities. **Chantal Uwimana**, Regional Director for Africa Transparency International Secretariat
- Investing for transparency: the United Nations Capital Development Fund model, **Christel Alvergne**, Deputy Director, Local Development Finance. UNCDF

Questions and debate with the room

Session moderator: **Diana A. Lopez Caramazana**, Local government and Decentralization Unit Leader a.i, UN-Habitat @dianitalop