



## Rural decentralization and local governance

Decentralization refers to the transfer of decision-making from the central level to a sub-national authority. The aim is to transfer power and resources to a level that is closer, better understood and more easily influenced by local people. This should result in gains in efficiency and appropriateness of service delivery, as well as better governance and greater accountability. By creating the conditions for more inclusive and transparent operations, decentralization enhances citizen participation in local governance, allowing communities to take responsibility for their own development.

### Approach and expertise

Decentralization is a complex process that is accompanied by legal and institutional reforms that change governance relations at all levels and determine the effectiveness of pro-poor policies. These reforms provide opportunities for establishing new forms of collaboration and accountability between government structures and existing authorities (including customary), community-based organizations and the private sector. They require approaches that facilitate multi-stakeholder processes, learning and institutional innovation.

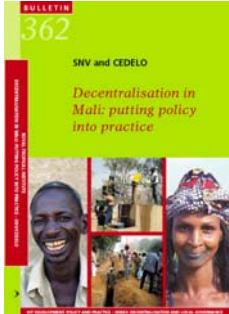
KIT supports these processes, mainly in rural areas in Africa. We do this by facilitating capacity development and learning, knowledge generation and translation, advisory services and by strengthening links with policy-making processes. We have thematic expertise in the fields of local economic development, basic service delivery (health, water, education), natural resource management, land governance, and participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation. We aim for the inclusion of marginalized groups in local governance to enhance equity of development outcomes.

### Services and products

We work with central and local government institutions, non-governmental and civil society organizations and knowledge and research institutes. International partners include the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch embassies, Danida, GTZ, SDC, FAO, the World Bank, NGOs (ICCO, SNV, Cordaid). Specific services include:

- **Policy advice and programme development** at the request of national ministries, embassies and multilateral institutions in the fields of decentralization, governance, alignment and accountability, particularly with respect to macro-micro challenges in sector-wide approaches.
- **Collaborative write-workshops** to monitor, analyse and document good practice on the ground. The resulting publications (evidence-based papers, books, policy briefs) are used to inform practitioners and policymakers and promote debate through seminars.
- **Learning trajectories** through participatory action-research and workshop series to strengthen knowledge and capacities of a range of actors and to develop, test and evaluate tools and approaches that are used to facilitate local governance.
- **Tailor-made training and short courses** in The Netherlands and abroad to develop capacities of organizations which support decentralization and local governance processes. These include civil society, NGOs, local government associations, local capacity builders, representatives of central and local government, ministries and agencies. KIT further provides courses on health and governance. See: [www.kit.nl/training](http://www.kit.nl/training).
- **Facilitate international networking** to strengthen a knowledge base and community of practice by promoting sharing of experience and information, developing joint products and building alliances between professionals.

## Examples of recent projects



### Analysing and documenting policy and practice

With local partners in Africa, case studies have been developed on the practice of decentralization and local governance in rural areas, focusing on themes such as:

- decentralization's contribution to the MDGs (Niger)
- governance of local infrastructure investments (Cameroun)
- gendered planning (West Africa)
- decentralized service delivery (Mali)
- land tenure (Niger)
- natural resource management (Burkina Faso, Ghana)
- financing rural decentralization (West Africa)

**Advising on the World Bank's Community Driven Development programme (CDD)**, including methodology development for inclusive local government and community planning and conflict management in the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Guinea (2005-2009). KIT also developed a web-based toolbox that aims to enhance the integration, harmonization and alignment of CDD approaches in national policies. The toolbox is being applied in Senegal, Mozambique, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Madagascar.

**Preparing a guidance paper and tools for participatory monitoring and evaluation** in support of local governance and empowerment (World Bank, 2006). KIT is also involved in developing participatory M&E tools that aim to improve accountability in primary health and education service delivery in Mali, Burundi and DRC (Ministry of Health Mali, Healthnet International, 2006-2009)

**Providing national policy advice and policy design** to sector ministries on nationwide decentralization programmes in Rwanda (2005), Cameroun (2009), Tanzania (2008) and Burkina Faso (2006). In Ethiopia and Burundi, we provide advice on environmental governance, securing farm land and communal lands, such as forests, wetlands and grazing areas (FAO, EKN, SDC). KIT is also involved in a Dutch embassy support programme for institutional capacity development (SPICAD).

**Action-research and training on the governance of basic services** (2004-2009). In collaboration with the Ministry of Health in Mali, KIT is promoting the establishment of effective local partnerships between users of services, service providers and local governments to improve the quality and accessibility of primary healthcare services. KIT supports the development of appropriate approaches for policy development, alignment and performance monitoring. In Benin, we are analysing the influence of financial decentralization on local-level institutional development for effective drinking water provision and sanitation.



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### More information and publications

For more about KIT's work on *Rural decentralization and local governance* go to: [www.kit.nl/sustainable](http://www.kit.nl/sustainable)

Most of our publications are free to download from the KIT website: [www.kit.nl/publications](http://www.kit.nl/publications)

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