THE BOOKLOVERS, THE MAYORS AND THE CITIZENS

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON

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PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON

"The participation of citizens in decision-making processes that affect their lives and access to accountability mechanisms is fundamental to the promotion of sustainable development and poverty reduction... Being closer to citizens than other public institutions, local authorities hold responsibility in mobilising local societies' opinions while acting as catalysts for change."

(Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, 15 May 2013)

"Sustainable development cannot be done by national or state governments alone. Local authorities are often best placed to help improve living conditions, reduce poverty and promote participatory democracy."

(Carl Wright, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Bangkok, July 2012)

"'Top-down' decentralisation is a tool used by central government to control territory and urban populations and ensure the continuity of its own structures and policy rather than a framework for teaching and empowering residents with the goal of strengthening independent local governments."

(Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, Second Global Report on Decentralisation and Local Democracy, 2010)

CONTENTS

1

An introduction to participatory budgeting

In August 2012, neighbourhood meetings were taking place in three of the seven municipalities in Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital city. In some locations, a new initiative to boost attendance by sending SMS reminders to 50,000 residents appeared to have been successful. While the turnout at most meetings could be counted in tens, not thousands, very few were cancelled due to a lack of interest.

The purpose of the meetings was for residents to debate what basic infrastructure projects their neighbourhoods needed and to agree on the most pressing priorities. The projects selected by vote would subsequently be presented to the mayor by elected neighbourhood representatives. The meetings I witnessed were animated and mediated fairly and competently by a trained external moderator. Majority decisions were accepted with apparent equanimity by those whose proposals had not proved most popular. Final decision-making would be in the hands of the mayor at a competitive public forum. There were insufficient funds available to finance all proposals in any of the municipalities.

Participatory budgeting (PB) involves local authorities and the inhabitants of a municipality, or some other administrative unit, co-operating in determining the allocation of public money. Its objective is to provide an opportunity for citizens to influence decisions about the provision of services and where they will be located. The proportion of the total municipal budget made available through PB for discretionary expenditure on small public works is typically 2–10%. But the will to improve basic services and infrastructure in poor, marginalised neighbourhoods is generally regarded as being more important than the sum of money available.

Projects selected by communities might include wells and standpipes, sanitation and sewerage works, street lighting, paving and roads, or housing. An important principle of PB is that communities must themselves contribute – in cash, manpower, materials or land – in order to promote a sense of ownership of any new assets. Construction or implementation of projects should be a joint, monitored endeavour involving neighbourhood representatives and the municipality. If PB is to yield demonstrable benefits and prove sustainable, commitment and trust on the part of all participants are indispensable.

For Jules Dumas Nguebou, co-ordinator of programmes at ASSOAL, the leading civil society organisation promoting the adoption of PB in Cameroon, its potential is considerable:

> *"The introduction of PB in Cameroon, although in its infancy, has allowed for the participation of citizens in decision-making processes which fundamentally affect their lives. It has brought tangible, if modest, improvements. PB can help municipal authorities to engage with the population – the voters – and provide important feedback about development projects and programmes. In instances where this has been effective, PB has contributed to a reduction in corruption in local government.*
>
> *At the local level, it is easier to bring concrete change to the lives of citizens, easier to have some real impact on local administration and against local corruption, and easier to organise social services to the poor. In a country with a political framework like that of Cameroon, a local approach is a much more effective way of pursuing important socio-economic goals and reducing poverty.*
>
> *PB is essentially governance for poverty reduction. It can also help to foster democracy – most importantly in countries that are, or have been, dictatorships. It gives people the opportunity to participate in administration and press for local developments which will improve their lives, including better access to basic services and housing."*

For progressive local government leaders, PB offers an opportunity to increase the impact of very limited financial resources by aligning policymaking with local needs. Yvette Claudine Ngono, Mayor of Yaoundé V, one of the capital's seven municipalities, explains why this prompted her to adopt PB:

> *We launched PB in Yaoundé V in June 2012. PB empowers local government to do more – and to do what people want. We have undertaken to allocate 10–15% of the total municipal budget to PB. As it involves working with all neighbourhoods in the municipality on equal terms we hope to avoid being accused of favouritism. Of course there will be some suspicions about what we are up to.*
>
> *Before the introduction of PB, the mayor's office used to take all decisions regarding the implementation of projects in a particular neighbourhood. People were not so happy with that. They felt that their priorities were not taken into account. For example, the town hall might build a new road when the top priority for the residents was a new water point.*
>
> *The best way to make people more satisfied with local government is to involve them in the budget. We had to find a way to ensure that residents came together, discussed their problems and chose their own development priorities which were then presented to the mayor's office.*
>
> *If residents are involved in identifying development priorities and solutions, they are likely to be more involved in ensuring that a project is carried out properly. When plans for a new road or water point are agreed, local people are able to say, "that's our project, we don't want it to fail or be put in the wrong place". The mayor's office also benefits from knowing that money has been channelled to meet the requirements of the community, not just for the benefit of a few.*
>
> *PB represents a new social contract between the municipality and the population. It aims to place the aspirations of citizens at the forefront of local development.*

Although PB is most commonly associated with Brazil and other South American countries, the process had been practised in as many as 1,500 states, cities, towns and rural municipalities worldwide by 2010.[1] It has been depicted as a shining example of the merits of "grassroots democracy" involving a mobilisation of citizens which can be replicated for other purposes – for example, to resist eviction. It has also been hailed as "one of the most significant innovations for increasing citizen participation and local government accountability".[2]

Caution is required when confronted by the bolder claims. There are plenty of documented examples of PB delivering basic infrastructure to poor neighbourhoods which would certainly not have secured these essential improvements through any other means, as in Cameroon. There is also evidence of PB helping to improve financial management, the image of local administration and revenue collection. But PB is not a developmental "silver bullet" which lends itself to easy distillation in a blueprint.

The PB process and outcomes differ location by location. This is inevitable given a plethora of variables, including the motives and objectives of the individuals and groups involved, the degree of participation and the extent to which it is genuinely collaborative, the scope of the projects or measures under discussion and the available resources. Literacy levels and history can be equally influential. While certain fundamental principles are typically observed in examples of PB deemed successful, their adoption does not guarantee "success". Even in Brazil, the birthplace of PB, its record is not unalloyed – although the positive developmental outcomes secured by PB in that country are arguably unrivalled.

Civil society organisations have led the introduction of PB to Cameroon. It has been no easy task. As Achille Noupeou of ASSOAL says in this paper, "democracy in Cameroon is weak and there is no tradition of participation". Mayors have for the most part been reticent or obstructive. Implementation of projects is often fraught with difficulty. But after a decade of considerable effort on the part of its proponents inside the country and elsewhere, the process appears to be firmly established.

ASSOAL, THE SOCIETY OF BOOKLOVERS – A HISTORY

By Jules Dumas Nguebou
Co-ordinator of programmes at ASSOAL
Secretary of the national executive, *Réseau National des Habitants Cameroun*/Network of Inhabitants of Cameroon (RNHC)

In 1997 a group of us at the university in Yaoundé started a club sharing documents, lecture notes and books. When we finished our studies we had amassed a lot of books and did not know what to do with them. So, in 1998, we started the *Association des Amoureux du Livre* (ASSOAL) – The Society of Booklovers – to share what we had with some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city.

We started in a neighbourhood, or *quartier*, called Nkolbikok, in Yaoundé VI. The capital has seven *communes d'arrondissement*, or municipalities. Some parents of students provided space for teaching and a library. At that time, there was no internet access. Knowledge was disseminated through books and other printed documents. We helped people to read and write and learn by using popular animations in the neighbourhoods. We wanted to empower people to improve their lives.

It was not only about education. ASSOAL was always interested in health, water, the lack of infrastructure and all other issues affecting people's daily lives in the poor neighbourhoods. In 1999 we created a development research centre to bridge the information gap between residents, NGOs and municipalities. This paved the way for dialogue, exchange of experiences and joint actions between these groups. We also founded the RNHC, and started to publish two newspapers – the *Gazette Municipal* and the *Tribune du Citoyen*. Both have continued to the present day.

In 2001 we received some funding from an EU local development programme and from that point everything to do with urban development became a priority for us. We started to team up with other civil society organisations and partners to bring about improvements in the poorer neighbourhoods.

In 2008 ASSOAL took on an additional name to reflect its activities better – *Actions Solidaires de Soutien aux Organisations et d'Appui aux Libertés*, or "Actions of Solidarity to Support Organisations Promoting Freedom". The government has always been nervous about the use of the word *liberté*, but we were determined.

In 2013 ASSOAL's innovative work in promoting a culture of public participation in urban development through PB and co-operative housing initiatives received international recognition when it was nominated as a finalist for the World Habitat Awards.

2

From Brazil to Cameroon

The end of two decades of military dictatorship in Brazil in 1985 was followed by increasingly voluble calls for greater democracy. In 1988 Brazil ratified a new constitution establishing many forms of direct popular participation in politics. In local elections held the same year the leftist *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or Workers' Party, gained control of Porto Alegre, the state capital of Rio Grande do Sul, and 30 other municipalities – including São Paolo, Brazil's largest city.

The finances of Brazilian cities were in a dire state. In Porto Alegre, the Workers' Party, in collaboration with civil society organisations, devised PB as a means of making the best use of scant resources while also fulfilling a pledge to ensure effective participation in local government by the poor and disadvantaged. An "inversion of spending priorities" was pursued with the aim of countering a long-established pattern of allocating most public resources to affluent neighbourhoods.

The first two cycles of PB in Porto Alegre took place in 1989 and 1990. The initiative was slow to take off. Between 1989 and 1996, however, PB gathered momentum. By the mid-1990s more than US$80m was being committed annually to the participatory budget by the city authorities. The number of households with access to water services rose from 80% to 98%; the number of children enrolled in school doubled; and 30km of roads in poorer neighbourhoods were paved annually.[3]

In Porto Alegre, revenue collection increased by an average annual rate of 14% in 1989–94 as tax administration and compliance improved. In 1996–2003, an estimated 50,000 citizens took part in PB meetings annually and a total of US$400m was allocated to participatory projects by the municipal authorities.[4]

More than 250 Brazilian municipalities had adopted some form of PB by 2004. In Porto Alegre it was retained despite the Workers' Party's loss of control of the mayor's office that year. Jules Dumas Nguebou acknowledges the importance of the PB model developed in Porto Alegre to Cameroon: "For us, and many people elsewhere, Porto Alegre is an inspiration."

In Cameroon, a similar process of *abertura* (opening up) also began with legislative changes. The passage of Law 90 in 1990 allowed freedom of association and the right to form political parties. The first multi-party presidential elections two years later were fiercely contested. John Fru Ndi, leader of the predominantly anglophone Social Democratic Front, polled 36% to President Paul Biya's 40%. A second opposition candidate, Bello Bouba Maigari, of the National Union for Democracy and Progress, secured 19% of the vote.

The opposition accused Biya of stealing the election. A multinational electoral observer team from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs remarked in its report that the government "took unusually extreme and illegitimate actions to ensure the President's victory".[5] Although Biya remained in power, a clear message had been delivered to the regime by voters.

Jules Dumas Nguebou recalls the significance and consequences of the passage of Law 90 and the disputed 1992 election:

In 1990, in common with many other countries in Africa, a nationwide movement started to demand liberty, political participation and democracy. Lots of activists and innocent civilians died in protests. Law 90 wasn't only an empty legislative formality responding to the pressure exerted on African leaders by the West, with the aim of establishing the illusion of a multi-party democracy after the Cold War. On the contrary, the law energised and uplifted muted passions by fulfilling the legitimate ambition of the citizens to participate in public life.

In 1996, the government finally responded to the demands of the people by including provisions for the introduction of decentralisation in the constitution.

Things moved very slowly between 1996 and 2004. The government dragged its feet. Then, in response to another controversial presidential election, and more rioting, the first decentralisation law was passed in July 2004. The president was very keen to try and stop unrest and criticism. In 2008, further decrees were signed to placate the social and political movement against government. The 2004 decentralisation laws were finally enacted, giving decision-making powers to local councils and their executives – although without the accompanying decrees for the transfer of adequate financial resources to the communes which would enable them to discharge their new responsibilities. This created a problem for mayors and councils – and an opportunity to lobby for PB.

We were certain that if municipalities adopted PB, the participation of citizens in decision-making processes which fundamentally affected their lives would be improved. We were also sure that PB could help municipal authorities to engage with the population – the voters – and provide important feedback about development projects and programmes implemented by them. A third goal was to combat widespread corruption in local government.

PB IN AFRICA

In December 2003, ASSOAL and RNHC organised a special session on PB at the Africities 3 summit held in Yaoundé. The conference was attended by the Executive Director for Africa of UN-Habitat, the Africa representative of the International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAH) and more than 700 mayors and local government officials from across Africa. A charter to develop PB in Africa was signed.

The decision was also taken to establish a new pan-African organisation of local governments, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA), headquartered in Rabat, Morocco. The driving force behind this new organisation, Cameroonian Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, was appointed its Secretary-General and from inception UCLGA committed to promote PB.

By 2011, 162 municipalities in 23 African countries had adopted PB. Their total population was approximately 35 million.

In December 2012, an "African charter for citizen participation" was signed at Africities 6, which was attended by 5,000 mayors, local government officials and representatives of civil society associations from across Africa, and international partners. A partnership agreement was also signed between Porto Alegre, the birthplace of PB, and Yaoundé V, a municipality embarking on PB for the first time. The agreement is the first of its kind between two southern hemisphere municipalities.

3

The backdrop: decentralisation in Cameroon

The 1996 constitution defined Cameroon as a "decentralised unitary state" with a central government and regional and local councils. But eight years elapsed before any enabling legislation was passed. The government of Cameroon attributed the slow progress to a desire to proceed with care and not jeopardise national unity.

Few accept at face value this explanation from a highly centralised government led by individuals dependent on the patronage of a president who has been in power for more than three decades. A half-hearted attempt at appeasement is widely considered a more plausible rationale, but unanimity regarding the real drivers of decentralisation in Cameroon is elusive. Many external commentators consider decentralisation in France, the former colonial power, which commenced in the 1980s and the influence of the World Bank to have been decisive in a country which remains substantially donor-dependent. Civil society organisations insist that they forced the government's hand – a view articulated by ASSOAL's Jules Dumas Nguebou:

> *Sometimes outsiders think that decentralisation was initiated as a sop to donors – a cynical move by the government to access funds to pursue a fashionable political project. That may be partly true in many countries. But in Cameroon it was demanded by the people – even before independence in 1960. Besides, donors are usually in cahoots with government, and the government was very reluctant to decentralise power and resources.*
>
> *For the people of Cameroon, decentralisation is a real aspiration. All 335 ethnic groups have fought since independence for survival, for power and for the right to express themselves. Everyone knows the current situation, with a highly centralised state, is not sustainable.*

Whichever factor – or combination of factors – has proved decisive, there is consensus about the slow pace of decentralisation in Cameroon. In 2010, Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, observed that "in West and Central Africa, apart from Senegal and Burkina Faso, there is no real plan to implement decentralisation. Rather, moves to decentralisation in this region seem to rest on policy announcements made in the speeches by heads of state".[6] In 2012 the World Bank noted that the country still lacked "an effective strategy and an operational plan for decentralisation" despite implementation of the decentralisation laws enacted in 2004, and that "line ministries appear to regard decentralisation as a threat to their control over resources and influence".[7] Decentralisation has been described by Cameroonian lawyer Professor Ndiva Kofele-Kale as "a false version of devolution".[8]

The central government retains a tight grip on the most important levers of power. For example, the president can still create, rename and redraw the boundaries of local authorities. As is common in much of francophone Africa, the practice of *tutelle*, or active oversight, is wielded by appointed regional governors, departmental prefects and government delegates. In Yaoundé, the city council is headed by a government delegate whose authority over the city budget and management of services, real estate and development is almost total. The mayors of the seven sub-divisional municipalities in the capital are only *ex-officio* members of the city council. Their budgets have to be approved by the government delegate to the city council, the prefect of the department of Mfoundi and the governor of the Central Region.

Despite these substantial constraints, the concessions inherent in the decentralisation process, its complexity and the responsibilities conferred on local authorities have provided opportunities for civil society organisations. Jules Dumas Nguebou explains:

> *No matter how slowly decentralisation is proceeding, the state is at least responsive. That is to say, it has moved. This is very important for local development and for all of ASSOAL's objectives. It creates opportunity for us – and hope. So too is the national anti-corruption drive and the government's emphasis on transparency in procurement in public contracts. All these political changes provide a real opportunity for PB to be used as a tool for improving local governance and development.*

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE (LONG) ROAD TO DECENTRALISATION IN CAMEROON – A TIMELINE

1990: Law 90 allowing freedom of association and right to form political parties.

1996: Article 1 of the new constitution declares that Cameroon "shall be a decentralised unitary state".

Article 55 (2) states that regional and local authorities shall have administrative and financial autonomy and be freely administered by elected councils.

Article 56 states that the state shall transfer to regions, under conditions laid down by law, jurisdiction in areas necessary for their economic, social, health educational and sports development.

Article 58 (1) states that a delegate appointed by the president shall represent the state in each region. In this capacity, the delegate is responsible for national interests, administrative control, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations and maintaining law and order.

Article 59 states that the president has the power to dissolve any regional council.

22 July 2004: President Biya signs Laws 17, 18 and 19 governing decentralisation, the administration of communes and the administration of regions respectively. Section 2 (2) of Law 17 describes decentralisation as the "basic driving force for the promotion of development, democracy and good governance at the local level". Section 7 of Law 17 requires transfer to councils of the "necessary resources and means for the normal exercise of the power devolved".

17 January 2008: President Biya signs two decrees which enable the National Decentralisation Council (*Conseil National de la Décentralisation*) and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Local Services (*Comité Interministériel des Services locaux*) to come into being.

April 2008: Despite widespread protest in February, parliament votes by 157 to 5 to amend the constitution to allow Paul Biya, president since 1982, to run for another term.

January 2010: Rolling programme of devolution of powers from nine ministries commences. Four more ministries devolve powers in 2011. The RNHC describes decentralisation as "in train but timid, with very little real power exercised by local actors".

November 2011: Prime Minister Philemon Yang authorises the distribution of the Common Decentralisation Fund (CDF) and the refund of local taxes to councils following promulgation of the 2012 finance law. Ministries that have devolved power are obliged to transfer corresponding financial resources and staff competent to manage them.

President Biya reiterates that decentralisation will be one of the key priorities during his new seven-year tenure.

10 August 2012: On African Day of Decentralisation and Local Governance, René Emmanuel Sadi, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, states that the government is determined "to give a real and concrete meaning to decentralisation and local governance" and complimented President Biya on "making remarkable progress" with both.

4

Financing, and doing things differently

The proportion of public resources distributed to local authorities in sub-Saharan Africa is extremely low – about 10% is typical. This compares with 20–25% in Latin America and 40–50% in OECD countries. Local taxes in Africa usually account for about 5% of the national budget.[9] The situation in Cameroon is representative of the rest of the continent.

The continued – and near-total – reliance on central government for meagre funding is a serious flaw in the decentralisation process in Cameroon. Section 56 of the Local Fiscal Law 2009 stipulates that all revenue from additional council taxes (CAC) is distributed between the central government and the Special Council for Mutual Assistance (FEICOM), which is supervised by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation. The CAC comprises a 10% levy on personal income tax, company tax, entertainment tax and VAT. Government retains 10% of the CAC to cover administrative costs, FEICOM retains 20% and 70% is passed on to councils.

Although 40% of the money allocated to councils is directed to municipalities in Yaoundé, the funding is paltry even when supplemented by soft loans and grants from FEICOM. For example, the 2012 budget forecast for Yaoundé V was about FCFA750–800m (€1.1m – €1.2m). This semi-rural municipality covers an area of about 20km² and has a population of about 300,000 – more than half of whom are under the age of 25. In reality, revenue received by Yaoundé V is no more than FCFA 500 million (€750,000), equivalent to FCFA1,666 (€2.50) per person for the year. Municipal offices in Yaoundé frequently receive only 70% of expected funding, or less, and revenues typically cover little more than the salaries of quite a small number of municipal executives and councillors.

In most Brazilian municipalities, by comparison, budgets amount to a few hundred dollars per person, although this is inflated by devolved funds for education. In Africa, a few tens of dollars is the norm. In Cameroon many municipalities are in effect forced into arrears – for which the central government is liable. Furthermore, the system for transferring funds from central government is opaque and unpredictable. Central and local budget cycles are not synchronised and consultation is minimal.

The dilemma created for local authorities by the conferral of additional powers and responsibilities without commensurate resources has been a prime motivation for some mayors to adopt PB. Yvette Claudine Ngono explains her predicament as Mayor of Yaoundé V, a municipality which adopted PB in 2012:

> *To be honest, we had reached a saturation point in Yaoundé V. I hadn't really been prepared for the number of people beating a path to the town hall with demands. This started to happen when the decentralisation laws of 2004 came into effect. It increased a lot when the first transfers of money to communes began in 2010. Expectations rose much faster than our funding. So we had to look at doing things differently.*
>
> *The economy of Yaoundé V is largely informal – most people are engaged in small trades and commerce. The main direct source of income for the municipality is local taxes. This amounts to about FCFA300m (€450,000), most of which comes from the* impôt liberatoire*, a tax levied on small traders. If a trader has capital of less FCFA15m, they pay taxes directly to the town hall. Above that amount they pay the state. In addition to taxes collected locally, the municipality has received about FCFA200m (€300,000) annually from the state since 2010.*

The non-payment of taxes and corruption among external tax collection agents is a problem we are trying to overcome. A lot of revenue never arrives at the town hall. The agents strike deals with people and pocket the cash.

Our largest item of expenditure is the salaries of municipal staff. There are 147 staff in the town hall. Their wages are all there has been money for in the past. While we have received more money from the state in recent years, it is never enough for us to meet our budget forecast.

The state is meant to repair roads but this is very expensive. When nothing is done, the problem becomes ours in the mayor's office. People flock to the town hall to complain. Unfortunately, we simply don't have the money to help even if it were our responsibility. It's the same with health. We have a number of hospitals in Yaoundé V, but health services are private and the population is very poor. The mayor's office helps if it can in dispensing small amounts to the most needy, but we can do no more.

"

PB can enable a progressive mayor to "do more" with their scant resources. It also provides an opportunity to try and improve the collection of local taxes that are payable direct to the municipality. Mayors make it clear from the outset that if the council is going to undertake PB and fund neighbourhood projects, citizens are required to pay their taxes and make some contribution to the cost of each project. "This is an absolute necessity", says Léonie Messi Ndongo, head of the municipal support office for local development in Yaoundé VI. "The municipality does not have the money to do whatever it wants and fund everything. At meetings in the various neighbourhoods, it is explained that securing the benefits of PB is dependent on people paying their taxes."

Although revenue collection has demonstrably improved and non-payment of taxes has diminished in many municipalities practising PB in other countries, it is too soon to quantify any positive impact on revenue collection in Cameroon. But Léonie Messi Ndongo is certain that "the payment of taxes improves when there is PB. When people see the municipality building things that are definitely needed, they are more willing to pay their dues – even if they don't participate in the PB process themselves".

5

The expansion of PB in Cameroon

In 2004, ASSOAL guided the launch of PB in Cameroon – and in Africa – in very different municipalities: Batcham and Edzendouan. Despite numerous expressions of interest during Africities 3 the previous year, these were the only municipalities to adopt PB after the conference. Many mayors initially assumed that PB was a means of accessing external funding and baulked when they discovered that this was not the case. The requirements for reciprocity and transparency deterred others.

Batcham is a city in western Cameroon with a population at the time of about 150,000. Edzendouan is a rural municipality about 60km south-east of Yaoundé comprising 13 villages with about 12,000 inhabitants. "At the beginning we were simply looking at how to work with local authorities", says Jules Dumas Nguebou. "We were keen to show them how PB worked as a tool for improving local governance in cities, towns and even rural districts".

In 2006, a resurgence of interest was generated by external and internal factors. At the special session focusing on PB at Africities 4 in Nairobi, the mayors of Dondo (Mozambique), Matam (Senegal), Mutoko (Zimbabwe) and Batcham shared their experiences of PB with more than 1,200 participants. In Cameroon, the prospect of local elections in 2007 provided the motivation for some mayors to reconsider adopting PB. ASSOAL seized the opportunity and provided practical advice about what the process entailed to government officials and interested mayors, including five from Yaoundé's seven municipalities. ASSOAL also trained a large number of volunteers and deployed them to brief residents of these municipalities about the potential of PB through development action committees. By the time a national workshop on PB was convened in February 2008, 20 municipalities had asked for ASSOAL to assist them with introducing the process.

In Cameroon, the two cycles of a single PB exercise usually take two years to complete. ASSOAL guide, or *accompagnateur*, Achille Noupeou explains:

"

The preliminary stage of PB involves structuration in all the neighbourhoods of a municipality adopting PB and the launch of development action committees known as comités d'animation et de développement local (CADEL). *These committees comprise people involved in civil society or local development who assist neighbourhoods to organise and mobilise themselves. The executive officers are chosen at elective assemblies attended by residents, neighbourhood chiefs (*chefs de quartier*), ward chiefs (*chefs de blocs*), and local development and civil society organisations. Each committee receives some basic equipment and a small sum of money – perhaps FCFA150,000 (€225) – to support its work. This effectively marks "take-off" for the PB process.*

Throughout the structuration process, ASSOAL staff act as facilitators and discussion leaders. We also provide guidance and advice to mayors and municipal officials. We explain the methodology, how PB works for the population, how it works for the mayor and municipality, and what is to be gained by participants. It is very important that citizens and officials all know what the PB process entails. Realistic expectations, good communications and mutual trust are indispensable.

In the first cycle of PB neighbourhoods identify the most pressing needs of the residents and prioritise them. This usually takes one year. Various projects are proposed at residents' meetings which are extensively advertised. Everyone is welcome and we ensure that anyone attending understands that they have an equal right to speak – and to respect certain rules which ensure that the meetings are fair and orderly.

The individual merits and feasibility of each option are debated and budgets are drawn up by participants who have the necessary abilities. The top two or three projects are selected by vote, as are neighbourhood representatives to defend the projects in front of the mayor.

Neighbourhood forums happen once a year in all neighbourhoods of a municipality undertaking PB. Many smaller meetings will have taken place beforehand. The forums are officially organised by the mayor with the assistance of ASSOAL.

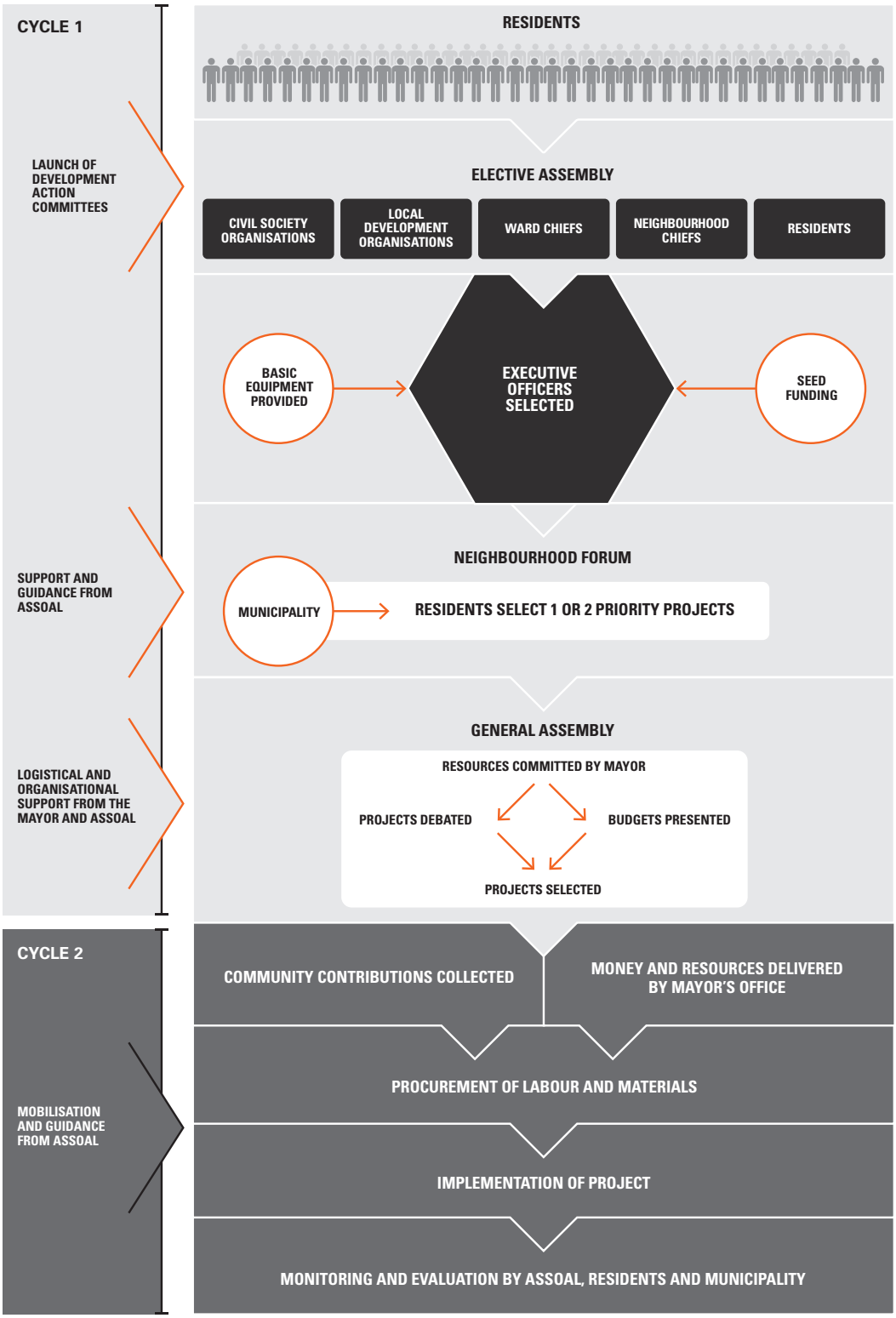
At a general assembly usually held in October, in the presence of the mayor, neighbourhood representatives make the case for the priority projects selected by the residents of their localities. Everyone present votes but the mayor has final approval over which projects can be funded. The mayor's commitment to PB is crystallised by involvement in the general assembly and by publicly stating how much money is available. Dummy cheques showing the amount are circulated throughout the municipality to underscore the commitment. The general assembly concludes the first cycle of PB.

In the second cycle, the implementation phase, ASSOAL works with all parties to ensure that procurement of materials and labour is done properly and transparently. Procurement must maximise the benefit of the funds available while also giving citizens a central role in the process. Active participation in the implementation process can help to mitigate the traditional practice of mayors using contractors connected to them or their political allies.

If residents feel that something has not been done correctly they are likely to disown the process and the money will be wasted. ASSOAL, our partners and residents monitor the second stage very closely to see that promises from the municipality are kept and carried out properly. Residents must also keep their side of the bargain. If they undertook to provide a financial contribution, that contribution must be collected. If people promised land or materials, the promise must be fulfilled.

Active monitoring during the implementation of PB is one of the most important components of PB. It is like an independent audit to counter inaction or any aversion to transparency on the part of local officials. Copies of reports are circulated within the neighbourhood; to the mayor, municipal officials and councillors; and to local development organisations and the Alliance for Participatory Budgeting in Cameroon.

The audit reports are very revealing. Among other things they illustrate that PB is never carried out in exactly the same way in any two municipalities. It varies location by location. This is one reason why there can never really be a PB "blueprint".


CYCLE 1
RESIDENTS
LAUNCH OF DEVELOPMENT ACTION COMMITTEES
ELECTIVE ASSEMBLY
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS
WARD CHIEFS
NEIGHBOURHOOD CHIEFS
RESIDENTS
BASIC EQUIPMENT PROVIDED
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS SELECTED
SEED FUNDING
SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FROM ASSOAL
NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM
MUNICIPALITY
RESIDENTS SELECT 1 OR 2 PRIORITY PROJECTS
LOGISTICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT FROM THE MAYOR AND ASSOAL
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
RESOURCES COMMITTED BY MAYOR
PROJECTS DEBATED
BUDGETS PRESENTED
PROJECTS SELECTED
CYCLE 2
COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS COLLECTED
MONEY AND RESOURCES DELIVERED BY MAYOR'S OFFICE
MOBILISATION AND GUIDANCE FROM ASSOAL
PROCUREMENT OF LABOUR AND MATERIALS
IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT
MONITORING AND EVALUATION BY ASSOAL, RESIDENTS AND MUNICIPALITY

6

The mayors of Yaoundé

Yaoundé is a prime example of what has been termed a "discriminatory city", in which "laws, policies, planning processes and economic priorities are effectively structured to discriminate against poor and informal communities, to ignore their needs or restrict their ability to claim their rights as citizens".[11] At the direction of Gilbert Tsimi Evouna, the government delegate who heads the city council, tens of thousands of residents have been evicted from homes which in many cases they had occupied for decades. Entire neighbourhoods have been destroyed, the largest of these being home to more than 5,000 people in Yaoundé I. Compensation is offered to residents but fewer than 2% of those evicted possess land titles, a prerequisite for all claims. Markets have been razed, creating financial difficulties both for traders and the municipalities dependent on them for revenue. Public consultation is almost non-existent.

The active "clean-up" and "beautification" of the city is ongoing – and welcomed by its beneficiaries, a small minority of the capital's inhabitants and investors. The evictions are symptomatic of a mindset which partly explains why the adoption by the city's mayors of PB – a process intended to be collaborative, transparent and pro-poor – has been gradual and uneven. The first municipality to implement PB, Yaoundé VI, has persisted since 2006. The mayors of Yaoundé I and III have never adopted PB. Others have abandoned the process after a single cycle. According to Achille Noupeou, a major obstacle to sustaining PB in Yaoundé and elsewhere in Cameroon is that "there is no tradition of public service among state officials".

While acknowledging the difficulties of persuading mayors to adopt – and sustain – PB, ASSOAL's Jules Dumas Nguebou believes that there are grounds for optimism:

> *Some mayors persist in believing that by claiming to embrace PB they will gain access to funds from, or through, ASSOAL. Some mayors also show favouritism to certain neighbourhoods because of family or historical ties – or to gain political advantage. When this happens it quickly leads to cynicism about PB in the disadvantaged and overlooked neighbourhoods. For them, PB is just old politics dressed up in new clothes.*
>
> *Many others oppose PB for what you might call cultural reasons. They believe that power only comes from above. They do not agree with the concept of civil society organisations and neighbourhood associations – or with the notion of the public having any right to be involved in government at all. This attitude is still very common in Cameroon, but it is starting to change. In Yaoundé II and Yaoundé VI the situation has been much more encouraging. There is real progress with PB, and its launch in Yaoundé V is promising.*
>
> *After several years of experience in supporting the introduction of PB in Yaoundé, ASSOAL is now trying to create a PB model specifically for Cameroon. The way in which the process is being handled in Yaoundé V means that in two or three years it could be a shining example of how to do PB in Cameroon.*

The signal importance of the mindset and objectives of individual mayors is also attested to by Jean Guy Yopa, president of a community association in Cité Verte Nord, a small neighbourhood in Yaoundé II with about 500 residents:

> *It's the mayor who holds the power in municipalities in Cameroon. He's the man with the influence. As for councillors, they aren't really very important. They are voted in on the mayor's party list, not individually – and you vote for the party. Like the majority of mayors in Cameroon, the mayor of Yaoundé II is from the ruling party.*
>
> *Cité Verte is generally thought of as one of Yaoundé's better districts. But it has two parts. The south is home to many government servants who live in solid buildings, mostly with access to water and electricity. They have few major problems there. The north, by contrast, has acute problems. There is almost no infrastructure - there are no water points and no roads - and it has real structural problems.*
>
> *The relationship with the municipality is quite good in Cité Verte because the mayor is genuinely interested in improving things and in what is going on. He's not just playing at politics. He visits the neighbourhood every Wednesday and people now know that it is worth speaking to him if something is wrong. If you tell him about some problem, he will pay attention. This is not the case everywhere in the city, by any means, and it is quite a recent development here in Yaoundé II. In 2010, many associations started to call for the introduction of PB in the municipality. ASSOAL and the RNHC were heavily involved in this, and from that time on relations with the mayor have been good. It was a very critical juncture.*

7

The citizens and representatives

Participation

"Democracy in Cameroon is weak," says ASSOAL's Achille Noupeou, "and there is no tradition of participation". The mobilisation of citizens to participate in community initiatives is no more straightforward than convincing mayors of the merits of engaging in PB. Tribalism, clientelism and a tendency to follow the crowd are entrenched. Apathy and antipathy to any interaction with "authority" are widespread. Women, the young, migrants, the disabled and many others are frequently marginalised by their neighbours as well as by sundry authorities.

Mobilisation is also rendered more difficult by the heterogeneous character of most neighbourhoods – each with its own hierarchies and rivalries. Participation does not guarantee that an individual will be listened to. One of the most substantial obstacles to overcoming a mistrust of PB and its potential benefits is poverty of time and resource. The livelihoods of most residents of Yaoundé are so precarious that simply finding the time to participate in neighbourhood meetings or community development projects is far from easy.

Romuald Yepmo, a former PB delegate for Nkolbikok II, a neighbourhood in Yaoundé VI, explains some of the difficulties:

> *"You cannot ever take it for granted that people will be interested in participating. For most, development is regarded as the government's business – and the government has done little or nothing in the past. Mayors are regarded as distant figures with no interest in interacting with ordinary citizens. There is deep-seated scepticism, suspicion and apathy. It is not easy to convince residents that they really can exert influence during the PB process, or that a mayor is genuinely prepared to listen and to engage with them."*

In Yaoundé II, 351 residents were involved in meetings during the first PB cycle in 2009. While the number of participants appears very low, it represented a similar rate of participation among the municipality's total population of 250,000 to that registered in Porto Alegre in 1989 and 1990. It takes a great deal of time and effort – from a mayor, mayoral staff, residents and civil society organisations – to build trust and for PB to achieve "lift-off".

In 2010, the number of people attending PB meetings in Yaoundé II rose fivefold to 1,704. In 2011, following a major awareness campaign in all neighbourhoods, 11,331 residents participated – a comparable proportion of the total population to many municipalities practising PB in Brazil. The following year, a pilot project to increase attendance at PB meetings through the use of ICT involved SMS messages being sent to nearly 50,000 residents of Yaoundé II and VI. Furthermore, the number of civil society organisations active in Yaoundé II rose from 17 in 2009 to 65 in 2011. "Before PB, people weren't the slightest bit interested in getting involved in local government and development," says Achille Noupeou.

Representation and management

The responsibilities of neighbourhood delegates are onerous and the task exacting. The key priorities during the first cycle of PB are to build trust in the community, encourage collaboration and secure commitments from residents. Expectations need to be skilfully managed. There is always scope for misunderstandings to arise from a lack of familiarity with what PB entails, and for individuals to seek personal advantage. Romuald Yepmo's experience in Nkolbikok II is indicative of the challenges confronted by neighbourhood representatives:

> *Nkolbikok means "the hill of stones". About 8,000 people live in our neighbourhood. We have a small market and most people earn a living from informal trade.*
>
> *At the mayor's PB general assembly in 2011, one of the projects defended by me on behalf of the residents of Nkolbikok II was a water standpipe costing FCFA2.5m (€4,000). Residents had selected water supply as their top priority. Limited funds were available because the main market in Yaoundé VI had been closed down by the city authorities.*
>
> *While there is plenty of co-operation involved in PB, there is also competition. Representatives have to fight hard for their neighbourhoods, especially when there is little money on the table. You have to explain how many people will benefit from your project, its impact on their lives and the care with which you have assessed construction, management and budget issues. You also have to set out what the residents are prepared to contribute.*
>
> *In Nkolbikok II, securing our contribution to the project was complicated. Someone was willing to provide the land for our standpipe in a very good place, easily accessible by almost everyone in the neighbourhood. However, he thought he would be paid for the land by the mayor, rather than donating it for the benefit of the community, and when we started building the standpipe he opposed us. We had to get the community together again and explain that the land needed to be our contribution if the municipality was to pay for the construction of the standpipe. A second site was offered by someone who understood PB.*

In addition to ensuring that the neighbourhood delivers its contribution, in the second cycle of PB the neighbourhood representative is also responsible for co-ordinating construction and planning how the asset will be managed. In Nkolbikok II, meetings were held to form two committees – one to oversee the construction process and one to manage the standpipe – and select leaders with appropriate skills or experience.

Benefits and learning

After construction, it soon became apparent that the new site for the standpipe was not ideal. Romuald Yepmo explains its shortcomings and why, despite these, engaging in PB has still been worthwhile for the residents of Nkolbikok II:

> *The standpipe isn't easily accessible for the majority. It's a bit out of the way for most people and it has not been easy getting volunteers to manage it without being paid. We don't have the resources among us to pay for a manager as well as for the water and the water company's administration fees. It has certainly been of real benefit to those nearby.*
>
> *PB is a learning process. Everyone in Nkolbikok II has at least seen that PB has yielded something. Many more people understand the point of getting involved in PB now that they have seen a promise fulfilled by the municipality.*

Furthermore, the benefits resulting from PB are sometimes less tangible but every bit as important as the construction of a physical asset.

> *In Nkolbikok II, fear was a motivating factor for residents to take part in PB. The city plan involves the demolition of many neighbourhoods. People have seen this happen and know that no provision is made for the displaced. One day you are simply evicted, your home is destroyed and that's that. Fear drives a need for information and that is more available if people come together and organise themselves.*
>
> *In 2011, we knew that the city authorities planned to destroy part of our neighbourhood which is subjected to flooding in the rainy season – and possibly the whole of Nkolbikok II. As it happens, the standpipe was constructed in the part which was meant to be demolished. This has reassured residents in that locality that they cannot be about to lose their homes if the municipality has just spent money building a standpipe in their midst. The project may only be small but it is perceived as having conferred a degree of legitimacy on the surrounding area. It signifies to the residents their right to live where they do.*

Civil society organisations and local development

The introduction of PB is an important manifestation of the rapid growth and proliferation of civil society and community associations which has accompanied decentralisation in Cameroon. PB has also supported, and is supported by, many other initiatives to fund and implement small, but essential, local development projects.

There is a tacit consensus among the plethora of organisations with representatives in poor neighbourhoods that the priority is to secure the provision of basic services and infrastructure. But the best means of achieving this varies location by location. In one neighbourhood, an association might be particularly close to the mayor. In another, the mayor may reject PB but still be willing to provide funding for wells, street lighting, paths and sanitation. In another, some funding may be available for electricity but not for health facilities. Exchange of information between local organisations and exploitation of their respective strengths are essential.

In addition to promoting and facilitating PB, ASSOAL runs a "Deprived Urban Areas Development Programme" (PDQUD) funded by local residents, the Dutch Catholic NGO Cordaid and the European Commission's "Participatory Slum Development Programme". Although the main source of funding is external rather than domestic, PDQUD adheres to the same principles as PB, as programme officer Maurice Moukala explains:

For local development plans to succeed, we need the municipalities alongside us – not for funding but as an institutional partner. Local development and maintaining new infrastructure are technically their responsibility as they receive taxes and funding from the state. In reality, the municipalities do nothing. But they must be involved. Even the smallest projects need approval from the government delegate – Yaoundé's mayor of mayors, if you like – because he controls the city plan. If you don't get approval from him, you might find that your project is demolished to make way for something in the city plan – a road, for example.

The dynamism of a community's residents is absolutely crucial to the success of any project. It is more important than the financial contribution we insist on. We have recently completed a water project for which the residents contributed 25% of the FCFA6m (€9,000) cost. They are very motivated to improve their living conditions. But so too are the residents of another neighbourhood which contributed only 10% of the FCFA2m (€3,000) cost of their well. In some areas people are too poor to contribute anything but their labour. The important thing is simply that the residents contribute, in whatever form, as much as they possibly can.

After approval, a residents' monitoring committee for each project is appointed in much the same way as during PB. We start buying goods and materials, drawing up detailed plans and finding a secure place for stocks which are carefully recorded by the treasurer. The financial contributions promised by the residents are collected. Although several local associations may be represented on the committee, there is always one in charge. It is up to this one to guarantee the execution of the project. It is preferable to use specialists, artisans and labour from within the locality. That way, an economic benefit accrues to the neighbourhood as well as the benefit of whatever asset is being built. If outside contractors were to do the work at least 30% of the economic value of the project is lost.

We monitor completed projects continually. Of the 40 projects undertaken as part of PDQUD since 2009, 26 are functioning properly. Problems are usually due to lack of maintenance. That is the fault of the management committees. When this happens, we try and help them to reorganise by involving more dynamic individuals and associations.

PDQUD is all about community mobilisation and constructing vital assets with small relatively amounts of money. In the first phase of the programme, from 2009 to 2012, so much has been achieved with a few hundred thousand Euros. Now we need to build on that.

8

Conclusions and recommendations

While towns and cities in sub-Saharan Africa are growing rapidly, the financial resources and political will needed to manage urban development effectively remain inadequate. At the same time, the systematic marginalisation of the vast majority of urban residents – particularly those living in informal settlements – constrains economic potential as well as exacerbating hardship and social tensions. The pursuit of economic growth and the wider provision of basic services and employment opportunities need not be mutually exclusive options for local and national governments. **Good urban governance is anchored in a "whole city" perspective.**[12]

Participatory development initiatives are no universal panacea. Expectations of what PB, for example, can achieve need to be realistic. A number of the key constraints are highlighted in this paper. Ultimate power rests firmly with the mayor or municipality. The scale of what can be achieved is limited by minuscule local authority budgets. But in Yaoundé **the process has yielded tangible, much-needed public works quickly**. Furthermore, these assets – wells, paths, sanitation and street lighting – have been constructed in neighbourhoods where nothing has been provided by the state before and where their impact is material.

While a new water point or road is certainly visible proof of delivery by PB, other **benefits are not easily quantifiable**. Assessment of results is determined by the objectives of participants. The adoption of democratic principles and practice in neighbourhood affairs may be an end in itself. The positive effect on a neighbourhood of mobilising its own resources and managing a development can be dramatic, and lead to further co-operation. The value of participation is clear. Even if it is never all-inclusive, sometimes fractious and even divisive, participation is more productive than a refusal to collaborate.

The attainment of a certain critical mass in the numbers of municipalities practising PB in Cameroon would undoubtedly be beneficial. If the number doubled, the practical experience available for dissemination among civil society organisations, neighbourhood representatives and municipalities would improve sustainability in individual locations, accountability and transparency, the effective implementation and maintenance of public works, and trust between participants. Mayors might gradually be encouraged to compete on performance rather than for favours from central government. To this end, **ASSOAL and other organisations are lobbying the government to require by law the adoption of PB in all councils in Cameroon – as is the case in Peru**. "We will succeed with this – I'm very confident of that," says Jules Dumas Nguebou. "What we want enshrined in law is the principle of adopting PB, not the way it should be implemented. You cannot legislate for a process whose strength lies in its flexibility."

Action taken by donors to support PB requires careful consideration. The influence of large multilateral and bilateral donors on government can certainly be advantageous. In 2012, the World Bank's *Programme National de Développement Participatif* (PNDP) – its local government support programme in Cameroon – was instructed to incorporate PB. But donors tend to create fiefdoms and are not renowned for the flexibility which is one of the most important characteristics of PB. **Although PB does not lend itself to distillation in a blueprint, financial and technical support for local civil society organisations involved in promoting PB would be constructive**.

In countries undergoing decentralisation, like Cameroon, there is a dire shortage of relevant administrative skills and technical expertise in regional, city and municipal offices. **Donors could usefully assist in addressing the capacity constraints in local government**. Among other things, this would promote the adoption of realistic local development strategies that would integrate developments delivered by participatory budgets in a more methodical manner, monitor and evaluate those developments more effectively, and support city and regional development plans.

There is also a role for donors in assisting the improvement of local revenue collection. For example, if a land register were established in Yaoundé it could support the introduction of property taxes to increase municipal revenues. Similarly, development of a system to collect taxes from small traders by mobile phone payment could reduce the proportion of tax revenues appropriated by tax agents.

The development of closer ties between organisations promoting and practising PB is imperative, both within Africa and between Africa and South America. ASSOAL has for many years worked with ENDA Ecopop, an organisation, an organisation with similar objectives in Senegal. It has also hosted delegations from – among others – Kinshasa, Madagascar and the National Taxpayers Alliance of Kenya. ASSOAL staff have visited municipalities in Brazil and Peru.

A Pan-Africa PB network has been established by the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA). The network will encourage much more extensive research into the factors which contribute to the success or failure of PB in different locations. The launch of an African platform of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy, based in Barcelona, will also support the **exchange of knowledge and practical experience**.

A recent study[13] undertaken by the UK's Institute for Development Studies of 84 participatory research projects globally drew four principal conclusions:

- Development frequently does not reach the very poor and the most marginalised
- Development that is sustainable requires meaningful participation that leads to strong local ownership
- Poverty is increasingly characterised by uncertainty, crisis, conflict, insecurity and volatility
- Poor governance reinforces poverty for the poorest and the most marginalised

These findings encapsulate the challenges that proponents of PB in Cameroon are seeking to mitigate. For them, **the role of PB is to alleviate the hardships created by entrenched malpractice in local government, urban planning and resource allocation** – and they are adamant that PB has secured vital improvements. Ten years after the introduction of PB, ASSOAL's Jules Dumas Nguebou summarises its usefulness and impact:

> *When ASSOAL was founded local government was atrocious – a mere formality – and there was a total lack of transparency. Local councillors were barely involved in government, let alone the people. Corruption was endemic, the rights of citizens were totally ignored, evictions were commonplace, living conditions were indecent, and public and social services were almost non-existent. We still have a long way to go before the situation is in any way acceptable but we are making steady headway. Progress has been made – and PB has been an invaluable tool for us.*
>
> *Despite the headwinds, PB has occurred in 20 of the 379 councils in Cameroon. ASSOAL's partner organisations in Senegal believe that PB may spread to 50% of municipalities in their country. We are working to see a similar result achieved in Cameroon.*

[1] See Sintomer, Yves et al., *Learning from the South: Participatory Budgeting Worldwide – An Invitation to Global Cooperation*, inWEnt gGmbH/ Service Agency/giz, Dialog Global No. 25, Dec. 2010, p.9: an estimate of 795–1,469 examples of PB worldwide

[2] Souza, Celina, "Participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities: limits and possibilities in building democratic institutions", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.13/1 (2001), p.159

[3] World Bank participatory budgeting workshop, Tirana, 12 May 2004

[4] Wampler, Brian, *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: Contestation, Cooperation, and Accountability*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, p.6

[5] National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *An Assessment of the October 11, 1992 Election in Cameroon*, p.iv

[6] *Second Global Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy* (2010), Africa section, United Cities and Local Governments, p.26

[7] *Cameroon: The Path to Fiscal Decentralization*, World Bank, 2012, p.4

[8] Kofele-Kale, Ndiva, "Local governance under Cameroon's decentralization regime: is it all sound and fury signifying nothing?", *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Sept. 2011), p.513

[9] Kanoute, Mamadou Bachir, "Budgétisation Participative en Afrique", UCLGA conference paper, Tunis, Sept. 2011

[10] See, for example, Cabannes, Yves, "Participatory budgeting: a significant contribution to participatory democracy", *Environment and Urbanization*, No. 16/1 (2004), p.36

[11] Datu, Kerwin and Lashermes, Naik, "2012 in review: How democracy is forcing itself onto the global urban agenda", www.globalurbanist.com (accessed 29 Aug. 2013)

[12] Satterthwaite, David, "What role for mayors in good city governance?", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 21/1 (2009) , p.14

[13] Leavy, J., and Howard, J., *What Matters Most? Evidence from 84 Participatory Studies with Those Living with Extreme Poverty and Marginalisation*, Institute of Development Studies, 2013

[14] Presentation to UCLGA by Professor Yves Cabannes, April 2012

CAMEROON

Area: 475,442 km²

Population: 19.4m (Government of Cameroon, 2010)

Administrative Structure (2011): 10 regions, 58 departments (*départements*), 378 districts (*communes d'arrondissement*)

GDP (2012): US$25.3 billion – 7th largest in Africa (World Bank)

Non-oil revenue as % of GDP (2011): 14%

Average annual GDP growth 2003–12: 3% (World Bank)

Average income per capita: US$1,180

45% of population engaged in subsistence agriculture

Poverty rate: c.40%

Literacy rate: 70%

Access to improved sanitation facilities: 50%

Access to potable water: 70%

CAPITAL CITY: YAOUNDÉ

Area: 310km²

Estimated population: c.1.8 million

Average annual population growth: 6.8%

Informal settlements account for 60% of the built area and house 70% of the population*

Population density of 480–500 people in 80 structures per hectare common*

Access to potable water and electricity in informal settlements: 30–40%*

Latrines linked directly to sources of drinking water: 70–80%*

80% of land is untitled and 80% of property transactions take place informally*

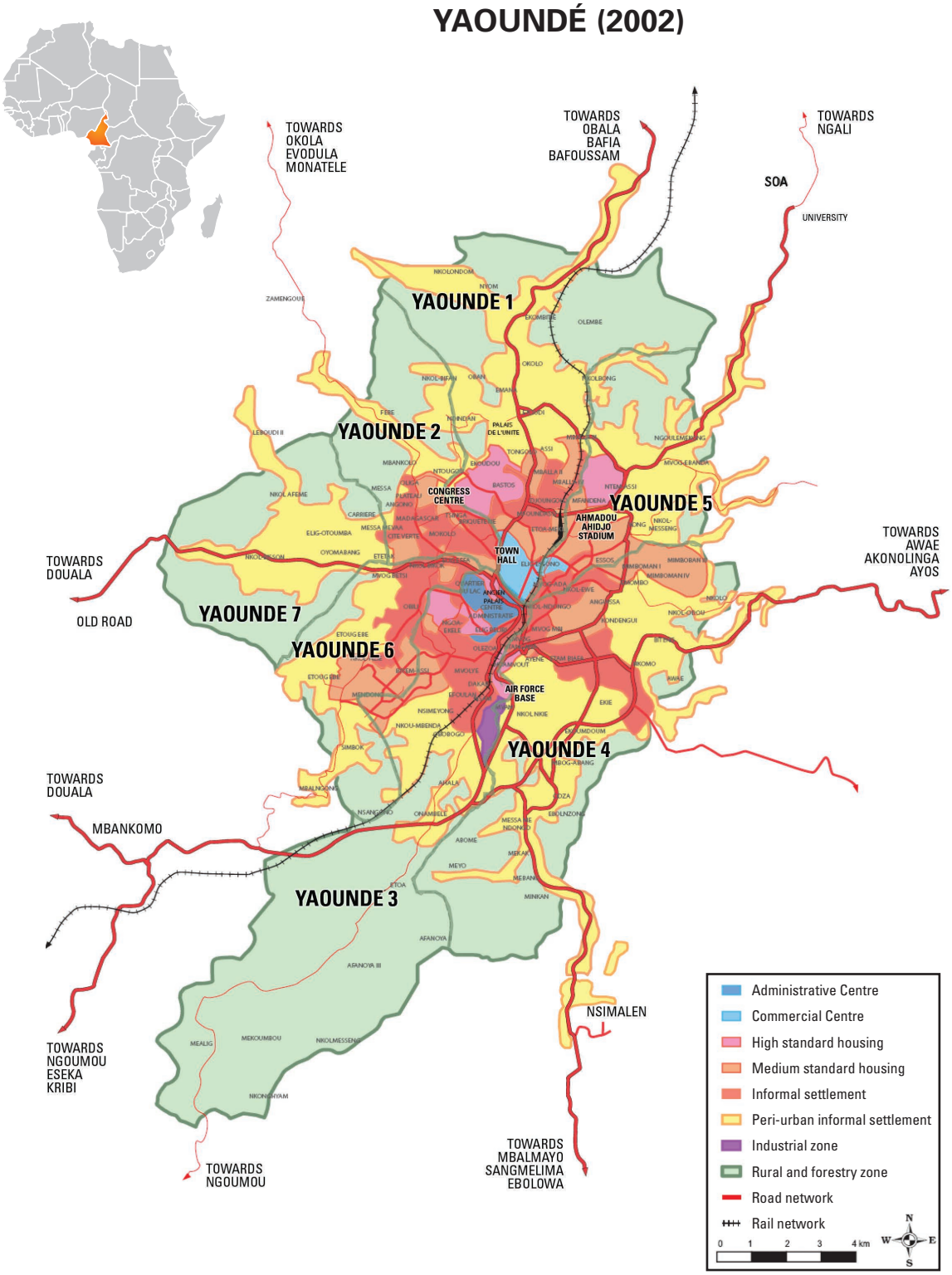
In 1980 the urban area accounted for 38km² of the 241km² within the city limits**

By 2001 the urban area had quadrupled to 159km² of the 288km² with the city limits**

The prime objective of city planning is to stabilise the population at 2.8 million by 2020 and relocate the expected surplus of 600,000 to six peripheral settlements – Mfou, Nkolafamba, Soa, Obala, Okola and Mbankomo.**

*UN-Habitat, Profil Urbain de Yaoundé, 2006

**Plan Directeur d'Urbanisme de Yaoundé (PDU), Horizon 2020, dated December 2008



URBAN MASTER PLAN: "HORIZON 2020"

THE BOOKLOVERS, THE MAYORS AND THE CITIZENS:

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON

"The participation of citizens in decision-making processes that affect their lives and access to accountability mechanisms is fundamental to the promotion of sustainable development and poverty reduction... Being closer to citizens than other public institutions, local authorities hold responsibility in mobilising local societies' opinions while acting as catalysts for change."

(Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, 15 May 2013)

"Sustainable development cannot be done by national or state governments alone. Local authorities are often best placed to help improve living conditions, reduce poverty and promote participatory democracy."

(Carl Wright, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Bangkok, July 2012)

"'Top-down' decentralisation is a tool used by central government to control territory and urban populations and ensure the continuity of its own structures and policy rather than a framework for teaching and empowering residents with the goal of strengthening independent local governments."

(Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, Second Global Report on Decentralisation and Local Democracy, 2010)

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Aiming to reflect, understand and build on the dynamism in Africa today