

Nurturing good governance in Africa

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We present this issue in the aftermath of the passing of Nelson Mandela – a leader whose commitment to the liberation and renaissance of Africa and to equality and social justice remains unrivalled; a leader who many around the world associate with good governance and development on the continent. As we reflect on Mandela's legacy, we think of him as a good leader whose charisma could inspire people to do more and better, and thus achieve desirable results towards development. It is common knowledge that the success or failure of our development policies occur through the lack of good leadership rather than lack of capacity, know-how or skills. Corruption, self-enrichment and nepotism are some of the undesirable acts that prevail when leadership and accountability are absent. During his presidency and post-presidency, amid technical and obviously human limitations, Nelson Mandela gave his best to shape policy and influence the world. As the world mourns this iconic leader, his words are echoed unchallenged by every continent: "I would like it to be said, here lies the man who has done his duty on Earth. That is all." (Nelson Mandela) *The African Journal of Governance and Development* draws on Mandela's commitment to governance and development on the African continent and seeks to unpack, interrogate and critique these values and concepts.

This issue is no different and, drawing largely from West Africa, examines underlying factors impacting governance on the African continent. In the first article, Bolarinwa discusses the challenges of democratic sustainability in Nigeria with respect to good governance and economic development. Bolarinwa observes that promotion of good governance at all levels of authority remains the greatest antidote to the problem of democratic sustenance in Nigeria.

Oyebode interrogates issues of culture as infused into deification, gerontology and clientelism and the extent to which they impact the relationship between the citizens and those in government, with dire consequences for societal well-being.

Against this backdrop, Omagu submits that military coup d'états have become the institutionalised method for changing governments in many African countries. He then examines the heightened waves of military incursions, with particular emphasis on General Ibrahim Babangida's regime in Nigeria. He concludes that African leaders fall short of their promise when they vie for public office to fight for the people and promote good governance.

Kimemia discusses the perception of public corruption in Kenya. He contends that regardless of the resources spent on anti-corruption initiatives, Kenyans seem more pessimistic about the trend of corruption, hence the inflated public perception of corruption. Kimemia attributes this to the lack of prosecuting power and 'big fish versus small fish syndrome'. The discussion concludes that government officials who have unjustly enriched themselves with public funds and assets should be charged in a court of law regardless of their position in government.

As the target date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals approaches, policy makers in Africa are taking stock of what is, was and could have been. As corruption pervades administrative processes and threatens good governance and accountability, pressure is on public service to rid itself of this evil.

This Issue of the African Journal of Governance and Development is thus timely and relevant in that it offers a glimpse into the thinking of scholars on the continent. It is clear from the discussions in this issue that scholars on the continent are concerned about a range of subjects relating to declining good governance.

But there is hope for Africa. According to the Chair of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Africa's economies have come a long way since the difficult and challenging 1980s and 1990s. At the time, most of Africa's economies were saddled with high foreign debts and burdened by inflation. The overall GDP growth of Africa's economies was very low, at about 2% per annum. Presently, the continent has turned the corner in that foreign debts are in decline, inflation is under control in most countries, and foreign direct investments are positively flowing back onto the continent.

It is crucial that these gains be sustained through good governance processes of the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. It is not only to politicians that the continent will look to nurture these values, it is also to a functional public service that is alive to Africa's challenges; committed to ethics, efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector and alive to the needs of those living on the margins of society.

