

# Differences between decentralisation and delegation



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Delegation is the act of assigning tasks, work and/or power to subordinates. It is the turning over of authoritative power and responsibility to another individual to perform certain predefined tasks. Delegation gives the power to a person to make all major decision pertaining to the given task. In essence, delegation is simply the shift of power to make decisions from one hierarchal level to another, usually a lower one. Delegation if not done effectively, is called as micromanagement, when the subordinate is overloaded with too much data to handle (Blurt it 2011).

On the other hand, decentralisation refers to the transfer of decision making authority to the different unit of an organization. It is basically the procedure of spreading out the decision making, getting it closer to the point of action. Basically, it is delegation on a larger level so as to disperse the work and give each unit its own freedom and authority, instead of there being one centralised entity to which everyone reports. Decentralisation is on a much bigger scale. It means moving power and authority away from the centre (usually national government) and handing it over to bodies or organisations outside the centre, especially regional organisations. In politics, this might mean that an area of policy that used to be decided by the national government is now the responsibility of local government, local councils and so on( Blurt it 2011).

Delegation is the entrustment of responsibility and authority from a superior to his subordinate and is individualistic while decentralisation refers to the delegation of authority to a lower level in the organization.

Delegation is limited as superior delegates the powers to the subordinates on individual basis while decentralisation is wide as the decision making is shared by the subordinates also.

With delegation responsibility remains with the managers and cannot be delegated while under decentralisation responsibility is also delegated to subordinates

Freedom is not given to the subordinates as they have to work as per the instructions of their superiors under delegation while under decentralisation freedom is maintained by subordinates as they are free to take decision and to implement it.

Delegation is important in all concerns whether big or small. No enterprises can work without delegation while decentralisation becomes more important in large concerns and it depends upon the decision made by the enterprise, it is not compulsory.

The authority is granted by one individual to another under delegation while in decentralisation it is a systematic act which takes place at all levels and at all functions in a concern.

Responsibility cannot be delegated under delegation while under decentralisation authority with responsibility is delegated to subordinates.

Delegation is a process which explains superior-subordinates relationship while decentralisation is an outcome which explains relationship between top management and all other departments.

Delegated authority can be taken back while decentralisation is considered as a general policy of top management and is applicable to all departments.

Delegation is essential for creating the organization while decentralisation is an optional policy at the discretion of top management (Management Study Guide 2011)

## **Body**

### **Delegation and decentralisation in Rwanda**

Below is a discussion of delegation and decentralisation processes in Rwanda.

In the public sector, the delegation of authority is well understood because of the division of tasks performed to achieve the goals that the organization has set. The organizational structure of public bodies is often composed of two parts: The party responsible for decision making (the board) and the party responsible for carrying out the objectives of the organization. The second part is the heaviest since they have a lot of work. It is in this sector that the delegation of authority is exercised more often. In any case, the delegation of authority is traditional and it is understood by all stakeholders.

Delegation is the process that makes management possible, because management is the process of getting results accomplished through others. A manager should provide team members with the information they require to do a good job, communicating with them frequently, and giving them clear guidelines on the results that are expected. Further, managers must

also take the “ relationship responsibility” for those with whom they work (e-Coach 2011).

In Rwanda , Ministries, Government Agencies and commissions enjoy a certain degree of autonomy because some power has been delegated to them so that they can function and carry out the work of government. These organizations take decisions and commit the government and the country in what they do although the real power remains with the appointing authority and that power is supervised.

The decentralisation program is a long-term process that requires both political and financial commitments on the part of the reforming state and other development partners. In Rwanda decentralisation is a process that was started several years ago and is beginning to bear fruit. Through decentralisation, the image of Rwanda’s policy has completely changed by the active participation of the population. The decentralisation policy was developed after widespread consultation on the causes of disunity among Rwandans. In those countrywide consultations, the citizens showed a remarkable desire to have a voice in the affairs of the state. Pro poor policies had to be worked out in such a way that resources would be directed to where the poor live and in programs that would utilise the only resource available to them: unskilled labour. It was also hoped that with increased participation of the majority of Rwandans in resolving the day-to-day problems that are commonly faced, a spirit of nation-hood would permeate the decades-old divisions and thus help in the reconciliation process. The decentralisation Policy was to be implemented in a progressive and

incremental manner, always taking advantage of the experiences accumulated, and correcting mistakes made.

The first phase of this process which has involved the participation of several stake holders, was intended to institutionalise decentralised governance by articulating the policies, legal frameworks, putting in place the necessary administrative structures, systems and mechanisms, holding the grassroots and local government elections, undertaking institutional and human resources capacity building activities and extensive sensitisation of the population on the legal and administration aspects of decentralised governance

The constitution, which was drafted in a participatory manner and it guarantees sustainability of the decentralisation process as well as addressing the gender issue in the political arena.

Three years ago, Rwanda embarked on an ambitious democratic decentralisation policy geared towards empowering the Rwandan people at all levels to actively participate in the political, economic and social transformation of Rwanda. In this phase, special attention will be given to those areas, processes and procedures that:

Facilitate greater participation of the citizens in decision making, planning and implementation of their development programmes and projects;

Facilitate greater allocation of resources to the Local governments and grass root structures for their use in the processes of self liberation from the poverty traps, increasing their productive capacities, plus enhancing their

access to health services, education, information and above all, ensuring that they have enough to eat;

Give greater linkages to other political, social, judicial, administrative and economic reforms;

Allow better co-ordination of stakeholder interventions in the decentralisation program and activities to create synergy in interventions and progressively shift from project support to programme support that would best bring about even development throughout the whole country as well as help to raise the national capacities to manage the reform process.

### **Success of Decentralisation (MINALOC 2011)**

Legal texts regarding establishment and functioning of administrative units, are well established. (For example, the local administrative structure was reconstituted from 154 former communes, to 107 Local Governments).

Local leaders have been elected at all levels.

The gender policy and legal framework guarantees one third of elective local government positions to women. As a result, women participation in decision-making and economic activities has increased and continues to rise.

In the area of financing of local governments, central government transfers to local governments for operation and development activities are now regular, and the perception of the local authorities is that the grant transfers are provided by a statutory instrument which guarantees sustainability,

Operational guidelines relating to local government financial management, public tendering and the relationship between different decentralised units are in place and these, by and large, provide a code of conduct in local governance.

Similarly, Community development policy and a National programme for strengthening good governance for poverty reduction are in place.

The entrenchment and sustainability of decentralisation will depend on the institutional appropriateness, viability, and capacity of the decentralised units. In this regard, the decentralisation implementation programme has over the last three years registered success:

Local Government Councils democratically established & given legal mandate.

At the level of local government, the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) has been established. As a voice for the 107 local governments, it is playing a vital role.

The common development fund (CDF) is expected to provide a coordinated funding mechanism for development initiatives at local government and grass root levels.

Focal points and Forums established at all levels (central government, provinces, civil society, private sector and donors) for coordinated planning and execution purposes, though they need strengthening.



## **Local Government and Community Planning**

In the context of poverty reduction, one of the government's expectations from decentralisation is the creation of a framework that promotes bottom-up planning where communities decide what their development needs and priorities are, and participate in the design and implementation of development programmes based on their local needs. Significant progress has been made through a number of achievements:

The administrative structures for community development from cell to district level are in place

Community development committees (CDCs) have been created and filled through democratic elections, meaning that they are controlled and answerable to the population.

Efforts have been made in the area of developing the capacities of CDCs through training. In some areas CDCs are acting as conduits for community development actions.

A number of districts have been assisted by different donor and NGO interventions to prepare district development plans (DDPs) through a participatory process. These DDPs; reflect actual needs of the population in those districts, and provide a framework for donor & NGO support in development activities.

Treats

CDCs and DCs are still weak, their appreciation, involvement and ownership of the planning process needs to be deepened

Inadequate technical capacity and low literacy levels among DCs and CDCs.

Limited involvement of the Provincial Administration in the local government planning process.

Absence of appropriate data and information on which to base planning projections.

Limited DDP coherence with National priorities.

Unreliable funding for local government development activities elaborated in respective DDPs.

## **Fiscal Decentralisation & Financial Management**

The implementation of fiscal and financial decentralisation has progressed comparably well, given the urgency of financing local government activities and the existing institutional and human resource conditions in local governments.

Since 2002, the budgeting process was devolved to Provincial level, and district authorities are able to prepare their own medium term expenditure frameworks (MTEF).

The training in MTEF budgeting undertaken by MINALOC/MINECOFIN has created an opportunity for local authorities to learn through practice, thus gradually enhancing their capacities.

The fiscal and financial decentralisation policy adopted in 2001 and more recently the law on the fiscal and financial decentralisation have, in principle, provided the necessary legal framework for sustainable financing to decentralised units, grant transfers through CDF are significantly increasing.

CDF provides an appropriate framework for the mobilisation and disbursement of community development resources without the complexities and bureaucracy from government and donors.

There is relative autonomy in budgeting and financial management at local levels, which facilitates prioritisation of the expenditure needs in situations of inadequate financing.

### **Threats to decentralisation in Rwanda**

Inadequate funding and delayed disbursement of central government grants.

Inadequate mechanisms for monitoring budgeting and public expenditure management at Province and District levels.

Roles and responsibilities of the local government leaders and personnel in financial management are not yet internalised and appreciated.

Inadequate information on revenue potentials and generation levels in local governments.

Inadequate financial management and accounting capacities in local governments.

Shifting the link between CDF approaches and individual local governments priorities

Unfavourable Sectoral decentralisation environment, due to low levels of appreciation & internalisation of decentralisation Policy by almost all Ministries

Sectoral budgets are not sufficient for implementation of sectoral strategic at all levels

Urgent need to develop clearly linked sectoral decentralisation financing and implementation mechanisms for efficient service delivery at decentralised levels.

Weak supervision of service delivery at local governments level, and inadequate sector

## **Conclusion**

Decentralisation is the transfer of authority and responsibility to lower levels of government. In case of delegation there also occurs shift of authority and responsibility to lower levels of government but it remains accountable to the central organisation while delegation is the preferred approach to managing and coaching people who have high skill and high will to complete the specific task at hand.

Decentralisation is a type of authority structure in a business setting that flourishes on delegation of authority. The basic idea is that there are not large layers of management and one way to do things. It is also essential to

have direction and trust in order to keep control of the business. Business functions are a shared effort and process instead of assignments being passed down through layers of management.

By delegating responsibility in a coordinated manner, there is more of a fluid flow of ideas from various people. Many workers respond positively towards independence and empowerment when they are delegated an assignment. Decentralisation can be called as extension of delegation. When delegation of authority is done to the fullest possible extent, it gives use to decentralisation.

In Rwanda both delegation and decentralisation have been implemented with the giving of autonomy to some state agencies, ministries and institutions while decentralisation is more nationwide with the transfer of decision making powers to lower/local governments.

Success of both decentralisation and delegation in Rwanda has been registered and the results can be seen in a stable government and functioning state that delivers on government programs.