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The **CLGF Research Colloquium**, generously hosted by the Uganda Management Institute in Kamapala in May 2013, produced many outstanding papers, several of which are published in this issue. Our thanks to many of the staff and students of UMI, and to **Lucy Slack** and **Gareth Wall** from CLGF, who made the colloquium such a success.

Phil Amis, Chair of CLGF's Research Advisory Group, in his **OPINION** piece, looks at the future of local government in the Post-2015 development agenda. From a critical reading of documents by the UN task team on the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the High Level Panel of experts he concludes that local government will have a core role in delivering most of the new SDGs, and calls for explicit recognition of its role. He suggests a way to overcome the problem of defining 'targets' at local government level, through a hybrid approach that retains national SDG targets, but sets an explicit aim gives of disaggregating and implementing these at local level.

Two **RESEARCH & EVALUATION** papers explore Uganda's much-vaunted local government, introduced in the mid-1980s and in the 1995 Uganda Constitution as a way of restoring state credibility in the post-war reconciliation process. **Lazarus Nabaho** from UMI gives a stinging critique of the 2005 Constitutional Amendment, which gave central government powers to hire and fire Chief Administrative Officers, resulting in split loyalties for the CAOs, and weakening their local accountability. **David Ssonko** argue that this ambitious and politically driven programme has had mixed results, due to central interference, a politically-driven increase in the number of districts, gaps in service delivery and endemic corruption.

From the UK, **Andy Asquith** revisits local authorities that he studied in the late 1990s to see how they have adapted to the left-of-centre Labour Government's reform programme. His sample of two London boroughs (with different politics), a northern city, two rural counties, and a southern market town, were classified as 'transactional', 'community', 'business' or 'entrepreneurial- citizenship' oriented, and he found the latter in the ascendency with an LG renaissance under Labour control.

EDITORIAL

In Ghana, the role of social accountability in deepening local democracy is explored by **Rudith King**, **Amponsah Owusu**, and **Imoro Braimah**, who found that despite legislative backing to improve public finance through civic engagement and transparent budgeting, the weak capacity of Assembly Members hindered effectiveness. **Hamza Zakaria** examines controversy over Ghana's public sector performance, and uses path dependency theory – which suggests that the timing and sequence of events matter in policy development – to explore the new donor-backed performance-based grants based on a Functional Organisational Assessment Tool, are having an impact. Meanwhile **Nicholas Boamah** examines the thorny issue of local government finance and the wasted potential of property tax as a viable source of revenue, due to weak administration, public contempt and perceived corruption in his detailed study of its application in Offinso South Municipality.

David Mandiyanike looks at the history of Zimbabwe's uneasy rural district councils, an amalgam of former settler-run rural councils and district councils, at the uneven progress of capacity building between 1994 and 2001, and its erosion during Zimbabwe's post -1999 political and economic crisis with problems such as strong ZANU-PF, council suspensions and war-vet invasions, **Daniel Tonwe** and **Osa Osemwota** explore the challenges of integrating traditional leadership into modern local government in Nigeria, arguing that the continuing public respect for traditional rulers should be embrace and leaders should be involved in strategy development and implementation. Finally in the **Angelita Kithatu-Kiwekete** reports on a comparative study of the revenue-raising potential of semi-autonomous utility agencies in Nairobi and Johannesburg.

In the POLICY & PRACTICE papers, from Australia **Grahame Collier** and **Rebecca Jones** report on the highly successful *Urban Sustainability Support Alliance*, a large and faceted NSW-wide programme, running from 2007 – 2011, that significantly raised sustainability awareness amongst its local authority targets. **Gad Ruzaaza Ndaruhutse** argues that a community-based model of local health care training, can transform health care provision in local government jurisdictions of Uganda. **S'bonsile Zama** focuses on Dipaleseng Municipality, Mumpalanga in South Africa to how inadequate service provision contributed to the 2009 riots that gripped the region in protest against poor housing and service delivery.