Re-imagining governance in Africa through a people driven developmental approach - with specific reference to Indigenous Knowledge Systems

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Background & Introduction

- SDG’s and AU Agenda 2063 are critical guiding documents
- SDGs (2030) - “leaving no one behind”.
- Agenda 2063, “Africa we want”
- ....Agenda 2063 will not happen spontaneously, it will require conscious and deliberate efforts to nurture a transformative leadership that will drive and defend Africa’s interest”. (AU, 2015)
- Such transformative leadership will trigger the desired change across sectors
- And re-imaging governance could assist in translating that vision in real and concrete terms
Key questions

- What does this aspiration “Africa we want” mean specifically in relation to AU Aspiration 6?
- How is IKS and people driven development (A6) linked?
- Does IKS present an opportunity for people driven development and improved governance?
- How can people driven development be hinged on solid research capacity and capability to attain our aspiration?
Question 1 - What does this aspiration “Africa we want” specifically in relation to AU Aspiration 6?

- Key Agenda 2063 Aspirations:
  - **Aspiration 1** - A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
  - **Aspiration 2** - An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of African Renaissance
  - **Aspiration 3** - An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
  - **Aspiration 4** - A peaceful and secure Africa
  - **Aspiration 5** - An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics
  - **Aspiration 6** - An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women, youth and caring for children
  - **Aspiration 7** - Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner
Making sense of the Aspiration 6(A6)

- **An Africa whose development:**
  - **1. is people driven**
    - All - Inclusive of rural & urban populations (closes divides)
    - Recognizes and integrates culture & development
    - Deeply rooted in sustainable practices (tried and tested)
  - **2. relies on the potential of African people**
    - Culture/IKS presents opportunity in governance
    - The pursuit of that opportunity actualizes the “potential”
  - **3. targets especially its women, youth and children**
    - These groups particularly present immense resources and potential to be utilized for Africa’s development (youth – about 60%)
Question 2 - How is IKS and people driven development (A6) linked?

- Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in this presentation refers to culturally rooted and appropriate local knowledge applied for developmental purposes:
  - Knowledge with depth not just for the sake of knowledge
  - Knowledge that is developmental oriented & improves society
  - Knowledge that has strong application grounding/problem solving
  - Promotes inclusivity as knowledge not seen as the preserve of the West
  - Knowledge that is culturally relevant & has a better contextual fit
  - Accessible especially to rural populations, where majority of Africans live.
  - Knowledge that could be geared and adapted towards innovation with practical societal value
  - Contribute to a Decolonized education (re-orientation...)
    - Affirms our identity
    - is empowering
    - pursuing valid knowledge and that is appropriate
IK holds deep truths that are still relevant today! e.g. has always recognized nature needs a break.

Examples of Environmental & Agricultural practices:
Fish ponds to avoid over fishing, rotational farming, crop rotation, spacing techniques, bio diversity conservation (beauty & medicines)
Question 3 - Does IK present an opportunity for people driven development (A6) and improved governance?

- Yes! How so?
- The pursuit of IK presents an opportunity to be unleashed because:
  - it recognizes Africa’s most important resources – its people and their knowledge is valid! (Governance and Ubuntu).
  - IK is not alien, it is accessible to all across the continent
  - IKS hook can be used to mobilize majority of Africans behind appropriate visions
  - IK can be adopted and adapted, reoriented into innovative ways
  - IK provides pathways that connect communities with the AU aspirations and various governance reforms
  - IK is deeply rooted and sustainable
In pursuit of an IKS governance framework?

**Governance principles:**
- Contextually relevant
- Culturally sensitive
- Outcome based
- Value based (Ubuntu)
- Evidence based/lived experiences
- Innovation focused
- Sustainable

**Governance Processes:**
- Community driven
- Citizen driven
Combine top down and bottom up approaches
- co-owned
collaborative

People based
- transformative leadership
Whole society
Collaborative
Committed partnerships
Aligned visions
How can we (as Africans) use IK for improved governance?

- Actively seek and recognize the IK opportunities as value add (e.g. accountability sanctions by peers (e.g. age groups), varied levels of accountability – public reprimand by Elders, extended family/kinship sanctions, Ban from leadership etc)
- Document evidence of IKS best practices through sustained research across various sectors
- Leverage IK pathways for desired governance outcomes
- Mainstream IK opportunities and innovations into governance, especially at local government level
- Increase research output - Sub Saharan Africa accounts for 13.5% of global population yet our research spend is about 1% of global research expenditure. Quartz Africa (2018)
- Consume our research and minimize consumption of other research that are not relevant to our context
Question 4 - How can people driven development be hinged on solid research capacity and capability to attain our aspiration?

- Varied strategies to strengthen R & D capabilities and capacities
  - Strengthen networking capacities (links with and amongst universities, think tanks, continental and national governments, other spheres)
  - Develop talents (research awards/scholarships/grants) and minimize brain drain
  - Seek development partners & philanthropists committed to our research agenda,
  - Strengthen national capacities (research institutes (e.g. NRF in SA), National departments of Science and innovation) especially its focus on IK e.g. Indigenous Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation.
  - Strengthen link between research, innovation & entrepreneurship (numerous opportunities e.g., resource management (land use, indigenous plants eg Rooibos, solar panels)
  - Seek analytical, solution driven and localized research skills (use IM&E)
Recommendations...

- Seek, document and affirm IKS governance best practices (Shared knowledge even at community level)
- Innovate and adapt relevant governance insights
- Re-energize the call for transformative and Afrocentric leadership agenda
- Build sustainable linkages and pursue whole society wide approach to AU aspirations and implementations (multi-stakeholder)
- Purse Bottom up/community IKS based approach with strong participation
- Increase commitments to decolonized and inclusive education
Concluding remarks

- Let’s create opportunities for the Africa we want and the world that leaves no one behind.
- All hands on deck...to unleash and actualize Africa’s fullest potential!
Questions

Thank You!
References

- www.qz.com/africa/1382151/africa-needs-research-universities-like-capetown-makarere
- www.un.org
- www.au.int.