

# Decentralization Principle and Achieving Sustainable Development in Yemen

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## Abstract

Decentralization principle is one of the main modern public management mechanisms that facilitate the good governance as the foundation for achieving prosperity for society. Good governance in its turn considered as the perfect environment to achieve any strategy, especially sustainable development one. This paper, a part of a field study, aims to see the sights and explore the reality of the sustainable development management in Yemen. The issue of 'decentralization' is an essential part of the study. The primary objective is to examine the extent of adopting the decentralization principle, required for achieving sustainable development, for maintaining the harmony between the central and local authorities' and managerial activities regarding decentralization procedures in Yemen. The study used Chi-square analyses test to reveal that.

**Keywords:** Decentralization; Deconcentration; Delegation; Devolution; Sustainable development Goals (SDGs); Good Governance; Poverty reduction.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Entrance

In real life, in addition to the principles of accountability, participation, predictability and transparency the principle of decentralization is one of the main modern public management mechanisms that facilitate the good governance as the foundation for achieving prosperity for society. Good governance in its turn considered as the perfect environment to achieve the strategy, especially sustainable development one. Sustainable development strategies embodied the idea of an importance of flexibility and availability of the resources for the current generation, which leads in achieving their own prosperity. Those resources should also continue to be flexible and available for the coming generations too.

Sustainable development in practice means finding manageable ways of taking into account changing cognitive and empirical circumstances; and persisting uncertainties – for even as knowledge and information develop, one can expect uncertainty to be a permanent aspect of policy action (Laurence and O'Toole, 2004).

The flexibility in systems could be flexibility to use which is linked with current requirements in terms of options and freedom of choice, or flexibility to change that is related with anticipated as well as unanticipated future requirements (Sushil, 2018).

World Bank emphasizes that developing countries should establish the good governance, confront the corruption, enhance property rights, contracts and the legal system to protect human rights. These are considered as prerequisites in order to achieve the economic development and avoid the financial crises and poverty (World Bank, 2000).

Asian Development Bank (ADB) defined the Good Governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (ADB, 1999). Mikesell (2007) states that, the administrative tasks may be done by the central government (possibly through its local offices), by the local government, or by some cooperative arrangement involving both levels (Mikesell, 2007).

In Yemen, the geographical nature especially in the mountainous regions reach a height of 3600 meters where some Yemeni citizens made their inhabitants at the top of mountains in scattered communities. Thus, facilities and basic services become difficult to be supplied and resulted in slowing the development process. So, the comprehensive sustainable development becomes one of the multi-dimensional challenges that this country continues to face. Those scattered population communities in Yemen come up to more than 129,610 collecting the number of villages and small villages, according to the Central Statistical Organization; (table 1.1). It is expected that about 1000-3000 people are living in a single assembly (YCSO, 2011). The real challenge is that each gathering wants to get better services such as schools for primary and secondary education, colleges and even universities, health institutions, clean water, electricity, telephone connections and paved road. But the dispersion and scattering communities make the process of development and its sustainability very difficult to achieve for the central government.

High percentage of rural population in Yemen makes it necessary to discuss the appropriate ways to develop the rural areas in particular. This is necessary to avoid the economic and social problems resulting from the populations

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migrating to the cities. Internal migration causes a huge pressure on the services in the main cities (Urban), and in the meantime it leads to decrease the level of production, especially agricultural one. It turns society to be a consumer, not a productive one threatened by economic shocks and social negative transformations, and dangerous climate change. One of those threats is the high level of poverty which made the country suffer much. The general indicators, in 2011 Human Development Report, show that the Gross national income (GNI) per capita in Yemen is US \$ 2.213 (constant 2005 ppp\$).

Table-1.1. Statistics of Governorates level of Yemen

	Governorate	Districts	Cites			Islands	Villages	Sub villages
			Districts Centers	Sub Cities	Total			
1	Ibb	20	15	2	17	0	2,724	14,957
2	Abyan	11	6	4	10	0	3,030	1
3	Sana'a City	10	1	0	1	0	52	125
4	Al-Baida	20	8	1	9	0	1,495	1,838
5	Taiz	23	13	1	14	2	1,990	15,187
6	Al-Jawf	12	11	0	11	0	488	2,080
7	Hajjah	31	18	1	19	67	3,798	10,491
8	Al-Hodeidah	26	21	8	29	112	2,302	3,605
9	Hadramout	30	23	6	29	7	4,204	12
0	Dhamar	12	7	0	7	0	3,377	10,342
1	Shabwah	17	10	0	10	5	3,489	223
2	Sa'adah	15	10	2	12	0	1,212	5,630
3	Sana'a	16	8	2	10	0	2,177	5,387
4	Aden	8	0	0	0	23	0	0
5	Laheg	15	7	2	9	0	4,158	1,833
6	Mareb	14	4	0	4	0	477	1,943
7	Al-Mahweet	9	5	0	5	0	1,214	3,506
8	Al-Maharah	9	5	0	5	0	530	4
9	Amran	20	14	1	15	0	1,646	4,266
0	Al-Daleh	9	7	0	7	0	1,691	1,229
1	Reymah	6	2	0	2	0	739	6,158
	Total	333	195	30	225	216	40,793	88,817

\* According to the final results of 2004 census.

Source: Statistical Yearbook, (2011) Central Statistical Organizations, population.

Based on the above presentation, we can see the real need of decentralization principle in order to achieve the sustainable development for the Yemeni society. Theoretically (Gushaim, 2007), stated that the Local Authority Act which declared in 2000 has shifted the administrative from the central administrative system to the local administrative decentralization system, Gushaim also reported that Yemeni legislature lineup for the members of the local authority in two ways: election to achieve democracy and popular participation, and appointment to ensure the presence of qualified administrative efficiency which may be lacking through an election. Others like (Al-Hemiary, 2010) argued that the current role of local authority in Yemen is not that active as it is provided in the Law of Local Authority and its related roles. Furthermore, the local management experience is out of its soul, because the governor was still appointed by the president of the Republic and that governor was at the same time the head of the local council (Al-Hemiary, 2010). Ali (2008), in her study reported that Yemen, experience of local administrative affairs, is still in need for reform and she emphasized that there is an overlapping between the central and local authorities.

At the same time, in order to work towards sustainable development, the Republic of Yemen has demonstrated its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, which are in fact translated into the goals of sustainable development through the commitment shown by the country's top leaders at the time. That viewpoint (high-level commitment) is reflected in the adoption of many Yemeni national institutions and establishment in all governmental and non-governmental sectors and the incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals into strategic policies and plans to achieve them (MPIC, 2005).

The purpose of the new concept of sustainable development is not only to serve the current generations and improve their standards of living, but also to use the resources properly in a way which does not affect the next generations' future.

Local governances in rural regions which are responsible for implementation of the development projects should be aware of the concept of sustainability, comprehensive development and inclusive growth. In addition, it should adopt and apply the modern management functions, methods and concepts in their work procedures. Rogers *et al.* (2008) state that "Sustainability is the term chosen to bridge the gulf between development and environment" (Rogers *et al.*, 2008).

Balaswamy (2006) argues that, all people and especially poor ones, who conserve the life sustaining system on plant earth, should be aware of various environmental problem, the causes of them, solutions and their role to be played relating to such problems (Balaswamy, 2006).

In this regard, sustainable development presents a new approach to develop both urban and rural areas. Decentralization is considered as one of the effective policies that help to achieve the sustainable development strategies for the scattered population communities in Yemen.

## **1.2. A Literature Review**

Saito (2008a), reports that, decentralization is considered as a desirable aspect of the government organizational system in order to achieve an ideal state. It is due to the local governments which are in close proximity to the people and they are in more suitable position than the central government to provide the public services of people's desire (Saito, 2008a). There are three forms of the Decentralization: deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Miller states that, deconcentration is sometimes called administrative or bureaucratic decentralization. This the term used when decentralization takes the form of a transfer of functions from the centre to regional or branch offices, since real decision-making is retained at the centre. Delegation is the term used when the transfer of function is to a non-governmental or private sector entity (privatization), or it could even be to a government agency, over which government exercises limited control. Devolution occurs where the transfer of any function or responsibility involves both administrative as well as political/decision-making authority (Miller, 2002).

Experts argue that "the decentralized states are expected to reduce poverty by making public services more responsive to the needs of people. Decentralization, therefore, has often been regarded as a remedy as well as a normatively justified policy that has no room for criticism." (Saito, 2008b).

Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002) state that in order to develop and implement a national sustainable development strategies, participation processes are required to involve all sectors, the governmental, the private and the civil society in a partnership – processes that will transform governance approaches and facilitate multi-stakeholder involvement (Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2002).

Thus, the decentralization facilitates in somehow the needed participation that would lead to more society involvement in the process of sustainable development.

Another researcher points to the necessity of open and learning-oriented policy systems. Decentralization, consensus building and flexibility could significantly promote productive openness and learning that lead to cope the uncertainties in the sustainability challenge. Then, he mentioned other cautionary implication that flexibility and decentralization can catalyze or exacerbate serious problems of uncertainty when there is no a careful institutional management (Laurence and O'Toole, 2004).

Regarding the definition of the Sustainable development, Strange and Bayley (2008) stated that the term 'Development' refers to the act or process of developing, growth, and progress. While the term of 'Sustainable development' refers to "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Strange and Bayley, 2008).

Sustainable development policies face a lot of challenges such uncertainty, unpredictable change and evolving properties of complex systems. In an evolutionary perspective study, some researchers stated that "The current economic focus on conventional policies is entirely based on optimum-and-equilibrium oriented approaches that do not recognise the pivotal role of diversity." And they showed that "long-term sustainability calls for adaptive flexibility and evolutionary potential, which enables a continuous process of adaptive learning and a diversity of co-existing alternatives, at any level and in every subsystem of the economy. Implementing adaptive flexibility means shifting ones focus from a short-term to a long-term horizon, where evolutionary potential and long-term stability can be linked to diversity" (Rammel and Bergh, 2003).

The interlinked development of the concept of 'Sustainable Development' (SD) went through many stages which may begin in a report put out by the Club of Rome in 1972, entitled 'Limits to Development' (Ukaga and Afoaku, 2005). Then, it has become a universal goal that every nation seeks to achieve. Therefore, the United Nations has launched the Millennium development goals (MDGs) which had been formed after the Millennium Summit in 2000 and hoped to be achieved by the end of 2015 (UN, 2000). Then, the United Nations launched a new set of goals in 2015, called 'the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs). The set consisted of 18 goals, determined to be achieved within a time limit of fifteen years, by 2030 (UN, 2015).

## **1.3. Objective of Study**

This paper, a part of a field study, aims to see the sights and explore the reality of the sustainable development management in Yemen. The issue of 'decentralization' is an essential part of the study. The primary objective is to examine the extent of adopting the decentralization principle, required for achieving sustainable development, for maintaining the harmony between the central and local authorities' and managerial activities regarding decentralization procedures in Yemen.

To achieve this core purpose of this study, other points should be inquired to like: highlight the terms of 'Decentralization' and 'Sustainable development' and present a background about Yemen.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Methods**

Two types of the questionnaire were used to collect the primary data of this study. The first targeted the managerial leadership in the central government departments, and the second targeted the managerial leadership in the local authorities development departments. In addition to that, the study depended on high-valued sources such as books and international reports.

This study attempts to explore the state of the 'Decentralization' principle through a designed questionnaire. The answer of these questions was close end answer with (5) point scale where:

1 (Totally agree) and 2 (Agree) points - represent the positive opinion.

3 (Neutral) point - represents neutral opinion.

4 (Disagree) and 5 (Totally disagree) points - represent the negative opinion.

To measure the extent of availability and affectivity of 'Decentralization' principle the study put one closed end question for measuring the extent of this principle in Yemen. The form of question for the central samples is different from that the questionnaire of the local samples.

## **2.2. Study Area**

The Republic of Yemen is located in the continent of Asia, at the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Its estimated population is over 25 million and a land area of 555,000 square kilometers including over 200 islands. The administrative divisions divided Yemen into 21 Governorates.

This study is restricted to Yemen. The capital secretariat of Sana'a was the geographical sample area for the central departments, while Sana'a governorate represents the samples about the local Authorities departments.

## **2.3. Study Sample**

In this study, multistage proportionate random sampling is used to design the sample. It was targeted all the Managerial Leadership in the governmental departments and institutions in both central and local level authorities in Yemen as a study universe and that considered a large population. The sample based on a selection of offices/ departments and locations, as a part of segmentation of the universe. Based on these systematic process 75 samples from the central departments and 140 samples from the local authorities departments are defining, so the total samples set as 215 of different departments' managerial leadership.

## **2.4. Hypothesis**

To examine the significant difference between the central and local authorities in Yemen regarding the Decentralization procedure, the null hypothesis (Ho) was formed as follows:

Ho: There is no significance difference among the harmony of decentralization practices in central and local authorities in Yemen.

## **2.5. Analysis Data and Present the Findings**

After adopting the needed editing, coding, classification and tabulation of the collected data the analysis process took a place. The proper tests were applied to evaluate the hypothesis validity. The procedures contain various methods such as applying Chi-Square Test and presenting the descriptive statistic and graph depending on the Cross-tabulation which is an output of the test with modifying it by E-axel and SPSS programs.

# **3. Result and Discussion**

## **3.1. Study Findings**

The study paper is limited to present only the study finding of the state of 'Decentralization' in Yemen as one of the Good governance principles. The study findings of the state of the other's principles such Accountability, Predictability, and Transparency are eliminated from this paper according to the limited space. It focuses to explore whether the current managerial leadership in central and local levels are adopting the basic flexible decentralization procedures which is needed to achieve sustainable development goals. The questionnaires addressed the following questions for the samples according to their level, as follow:

### **1<sup>st</sup> - Question for the Sample in Central Government Departments**

*Central Government is transferring functions and responsibilities involved in both administrative and political/decision-making authority in the local governance (Devolution).*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> -Question for the Sample in Local Authority Departments**

*There is a transformation of financial resources and empowerment from Central Government to raise resources locally.*

The study came up with the following result regarding the above questions as follow:

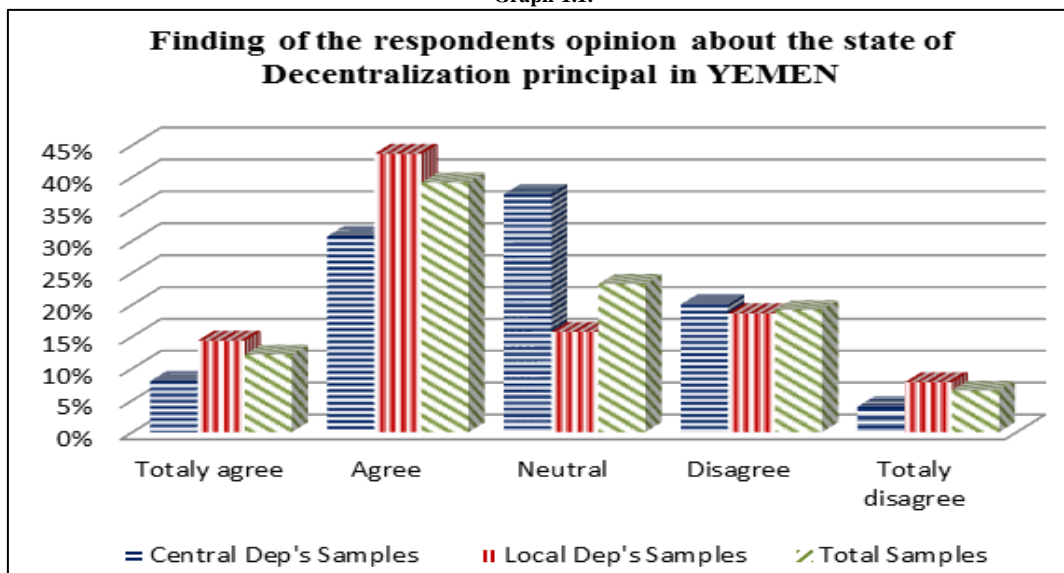
According to the [table \(1.2\)](#) the respondents' answers from the samples in Yemen showed, in the first targeted sample, the 'Neutral' opinion about the first given statement. It recorded a remarkable average with 37.3% from the sample of the managerial leadership of the central government departments. The average of the sample which gives a positive opinion about the same statement recorded 30.7% answer with 'agree' and only 8% with 'totally agree'. On the other hand, the negative opinions recorded 20% with 'disagree' and 4% answer with 'totally disagree'.

In the second targeted sample which is the local authorities' samples, the positive opinion recorded remarkable average. 43.6% the managerial leadership in the local authorities government departments were 'Agree' with the second given statement and 14.3% of the sample were 'Totally agree' for the same statement. on other hand 'Neutral' recorded 15.7%. The negative opinions recorded a noticeable average with 18.6% 'disagree' and 7.8% 'Totally disagree'.

Table-1.2. Finding of the respondents' opinion about the state of Decentralization principle

Country	YEMEN					Total samples
Answers	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree	
Central departments	6	23	28	15	3	75
	8 %	30.7%	37.3%	20 %	4 %	100%
Local departments	20	61	22	26	11	140
	14.3%	43.6%	15.7%	18.6%	7.8%	100%
Total per the country	26	84	50	41	14	215
	12.1%	39.1%	23.2%	19.1%	6.5%	100%

Graph-1.1.



In respect to the total samples responds the following percentage observed, downwardly: 39.1% were ‘Agree’, 23.2% ‘Neutral’, 19.1% ‘Disagree’, 12.1% ‘Totally agree’ and 6.5% were ‘Totally disagree’.

The scattered percentages of answers interpret the test result of the relevant hypothesis, as we will see later; refer to the weakness of the Decentralization principle in Yemen.

### 3.2. Hypothesis Test

To examine the significant difference about the real practices toward Decentralization principle between the central government departments' sample and the local Authorities departments' sample the null hypothesis Ho was formed as follows:

**Ho:** There is no significance difference among the harmony of decentralization element between the central and local authorities in Yemen.

Chi-square test was conducted on the collective data of the related question in order to assess the significance difference between the two levels of government authorities in Yemen and make the needed verification test for the related hypothesis, as follows:

Table-1.3. Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.660 <sup>a</sup>	4	.005
Likelihood Ratio	14.391	4	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.457	1	.227
N of Valid Cases	215		

a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.88.

According to the analysis table no. (1.3) the result was significant,  $\chi^2(4, N = 215) = 14.66, p = 0.05$ .

Hence, the null hypothesis Ho is rejected and the alternative hypothesis Ha is accepted that states the following result:

**Result:** There is a significance difference among the harmony of decentralization element between central and local authorities in Yemen.

The result of test of this hypothesis can be interpreted in noting that the related legislation of Decentralization is, to some extent, available in Yemen; but there are not, in the reality, a kind of harmony between the managerial practices in both levels of authorities the central and local and that considered, unfortunately, as frustrating for the

good governance principles which lead in turn to restrain and delay the achievement of the comprehensive sustainable development.

## 4. Conclusion

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) became a global goal for all nations and adopting the Good Governance is an important requirement for achieving those goals. Decentralization, also, is a fundamental element of the Good Governance system. Decentralization procedures and mechanisms should be flexible and all level of authorities should work with a careful institutional management harmony to achieve the goal of sustainable development.

Based on the findings the study concludes that there is a weakness of applying the decentralization principle in Yemen. Yemen has the legalization base for applying the principle of decentralization, but it need to enhance the related process in the real managerial daily activates. Under this dimension, the study recommends to enhance the principles of good governance in general and decentralization in particular, among the authorities in the central and local level, Yemen.

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