Assessing the Status of ‘Leadership for Results’ and the Options Available for Leadership Based on African Realities
This Executive Summary is a knowledge product of the African Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results (AfCoP-MfDR) which aims to develop and promote a results culture in Africa to contribute to the Africa transformation agenda. It assesses the status of leadership for results and the related options available to better address Africa’s development challenges. The key messages are outlined in this synopsis.
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Agenda 2063 and the Ten-Year Implementation Plan recognize the critical role in Africa’s transformation of leadership that is visionary, nurtures talent, creates space for individual expression, and motivates and brings out the best in people. Historical evidence, too, indicates that successful transformation has occurred mostly in countries that were governed over long periods by a capable, credible, and committed government under strong political leadership that is skilled in devising public policies that advance socio-economic growth.

A look at the developed countries shows that whilst a rich natural resource base would ideally set an economy at an advantage in economic progression, it is actually the attitude, the thinking, disposition and mindset of these economies’ leaders that has mostly driven their development success, to the extent that even without much natural resources, countries like the ‘Asian Tigers’ have done so well.

There is a virtuous circle between high manufacture exports by developing high-tech industries, high investments through innovation, and reaching high human development capacities. In this regard, political leadership is very important as it sets the tone and pace for the other sets of leadership – private sector, development partners and civil society – to flourish. What is at stake in Africa and its development trajectory in terms of leadership for results?

The purpose of this research was to assess the status of the African Community of Practice on managing for Development Results (AfCoP-MfDR) leadership for results against Africa’s development aspirations, realities and contexts, and propose recommendations on how leadership should be redefined to better reflect Africa’s development agenda and achieve development results. Leadership for results has been defined as the degree of ownership and leadership by country policy makers, measured by the level of political leaders’ involvement, openness and transparency in decision-making, and reform (change management).

The research aims to contribute to the discussions during the 2019 African MfDR Forum – which will revisit the MfDR pillars, including leadership for results – where practitioners and leaders will discuss and agree on how to re-conceptualize the MfDR pillars to enable them to support Africa’s key transformative agendas.

The methodology to address these questions involved the collection of data from three sources:

- Literature review
- Case study review and
- Online forum.
Literature review

To articulate the continent’s development priorities and aspirations, some key documents were explored: Agendas 2063, 2030, AfDB’s High Fives, and a number of academic papers on leadership and development in Africa. These texts were used to provide an overview of the context.

To assess how far AfCoP’s current conceptualization of leadership for results responds to Africa’s context and development priorities, the literature review focussed primarily on AfCoP leadership for results literature. These included AfCoP-MfDR Managing for Development Results Country Assessment reports for the 18 participating countries and the two participating regions, and the AfCoP-MfDR Final Evaluation conducted in 2017. The last area of literature consulted pertained to leadership. This included transformative and transformational leadership, and leadership for results – precisely because the first two types of leadership have been identified as imperative in operationalizing Agenda 2063.

Case Study Review

Three case studies were selected to explore lessons related to the three components of leadership for results:

i. Policy Leadership in Rwanda – a discussion of the importance of policy leadership and success in implementation, as observed from experiences of Vision 2020 and MfDR implementations.

ii. Stakeholder involvement, the media and regional integration in EAC and COMESA – exploring the media’s engagement in advancing regional integration; one subcomponent of openness and transparency. This case highlights the valuable role of this actor in driving regional integration, and what can be done to facilitate its participation.

iii. ‘Huduma Kenya and transformational change’ – which discusses change management lessons learned in public sector reform in Kenya, emphasising the importance of partnership and innovation in public sector reform.

Online Discussion

An Online discussion – entitled ‘What Leadership is Required for Africa to Achieve Development Results?’ – was hosted for a period of three weeks in July 2019 (Afrik4R, 2019).
KEY FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT OF THE MFDR PILLAR AGAINST AFRICA’S CONTEXT AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Finding 1: AfCoP-MfDR’s implementation of leadership for results shows mixed progress

- Progress has varied in securing policy leadership for MFDR. Policy and frameworks, political commitment, and the use of performance data by leaders and decision-makers all need to be strengthened to further the MFDR agenda.

- Challenges remain: in how far decisions are open and transparent; in the effective involvement of CSO – particularly women, youth, disabled – and non-state actors including the media, and in the establishment of structures to ensure participation.

- The change management component scored lowest at both country and regional integration levels, with the exception of public sector reform in Kenya. Whilst major public sector reform is under way in all countries, implementation challenges are endemic.

- Transformative leadership is defined as leadership that brings about positive radical changes by embracing all spheres of influence – public, private, traditional, civil society and international, national, regional, and local entities. When applied to development, it significantly improves key human development indicators, such as income levels, life expectancy, and universal access to basic services, including social safety nets.

Finding 2: Development priorities and agendas identify that transformative leadership is key to achieving Africa’s desired future

- Agenda 2063 is deemed to be a transformative agenda. It clearly articulates that transformative leadership is the style of leadership required to bring about the desired socio-economic transformation on the continent.

- Leadership for results’ as a concept or practice (i.e. one of the pillars in the AfCoP-MfDR capacity-building project) is not mentioned in Agenda 2063.

- Transformative leadership requires leaders to inspire and mobilize populations. This is achieved by communicating an agenda for long-term success: improving technical capacities to strengthen institutions; incentivising through short-term opportunities (quick wins), and cultivating the political coalitions necessary to ensure sustainability.

- The implementation of leadership for results across 18 countries and prescriptions for transformative leadership have highlighted the importance of soft and hard capacities.
Vision: The AfCoP-MfDR country and regional reports, Final Evaluation and Agenda 2063, all underscore the need to develop and articulate a compelling vision and transformative mindset, in leading transformative change. Rwanda’s socio-economic progress and success in implementing MfDR are associated with strong political will and a clear vision. The ability to develop and articulate a clear vision is one of the key leadership competencies for both transformative and transformational leadership.

Strategic dexterity: Navigating the global political, economic, and technological spaces is a leadership imperative. This means having leaders with capacity for strategic planning, including regular environmental scans; fostering and promoting innovation, domestically and globally; and mobilizing resources, and negotiating. Leaders need to move seamlessly between leadership styles – transformative, transformational, ethical, servant, shared, visionary – as required.

Stakeholder involvement: Engaging leaders across domains – public, private, media, religious, traditional, civil society, trade union, academic – is essential for development. Some antipathy exists on the part of political leadership toward other types of leaderships. This needs to be addressed and reframed as an opportunity to build greater support and champions for change.

Democratization of information: Governments are decentralizing decision-making and empowering citizens by putting meaningful data in their hands. This redistributes power, creating more inclusive platforms and coalitions. Leaders need to effectively engage with new forms of stakeholder involvement and mobile telephony that enables citizens across Africa to take part in politics. Here, stakeholder involvement is largely premised on increasing affordable internet access.

Change management: Institution-building is key to development and to building transformative leaders. Leaders in all 18 participating AfCoP-MfDR countries are actively engaged in building state bureaucracy through public sector reform efforts. Additional support is needed to ensure that adequate resources are available; strengthening implementation capacities in general and change capacities in particular.
Recommendation 1: Clarify concepts to create an African leadership narrative. Agree shared definition of concepts like ‘transformative leadership’ – their application and relationship to other concepts / styles of leadership. The relationship between transformative leadership and leadership for results also requires clarification, to embed a wider understanding of the similarities and differences.

Recommendation 2: Maintain efforts to operationalize the recommendations of the Africa Capacity Report 2019 Report and AfCoP-MfDR assessments and evaluations, to develop programs to build leadership capacity targeted on addressing country realities. One capacity-coordinating institution considering both sets of recommendations would enable national institutions for transformative leadership to incorporate leadership for results competencies synergistically, avoiding duplication. They can also play a role in reporting on progress towards the ACR 2019 and AfCoP-MfDR recommendations.

Recommendation 3: Clarify and distribute curricula guidelines for designing and coordinating targeted leadership programmes to national capacity building institutions. Training facilities need to provide specialized training – e.g. in Results Based Management and change management – with a clear brief on expectations, and with financial support.
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Recommendation 4: Clearly communicate leadership concepts, relationships, and expectations to implementers of MfDR activities at country and regional levels. Future conceptualizations of leadership for results need to strengthen and expand the pillars to deliver MfDR results and contribute to the development priorities.

Recommendation 5: Political leadership should build political commitment and will, by developing and communicating compelling visions that will mobilize resources for transformative change. Openness and transparency need to be strengthened across member countries and in the RECs, instilling ethical approaches and building trust in political institutions. Change management requires strengthening and expansion to deliver on MfDR deliverables and respond to transformation outlined in the various Agendas.

AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS & REGIONAL BODIES

Recommendation 6: Aligning leadership initiatives in-country. Countries with frameworks for transformative leadership development and capacity building should clarify where and how leadership for results initiatives are aligned within these frameworks, building on synergies and reducing overlap.

Recommendation 7: Governments must invest significantly in building competencies in their public services. E.g. designating a ministry/department for national planning and M&E to host; mandating/ equipping national training institutes to provide training; ensuring affordable internet access to increase stakeholder participation – particularly amongst hard to reach populations. Online technology and the media can educate the public and disseminate information – particularly around regional integration.

Recommendation 8: Regional partners (COMESA and WAEMU) should encourage regional COP participation by key actors from their membership, to build ownership and encourage stakeholder participation.
Agenda 2063 and the ACR 2019 clearly state that transformative leadership is required to bring about the desired socio-economic transformation on the continent. Transformative leadership is defined and articulated as a set of required competencies. Leadership for results is one of the pillars, in a capacity building project, designed to bring more rigor and accountability to development results. This is important in achieving development priorities. However, in its current formulation, leadership for results in Africa does not meet all the transformative criteria, particularly around visioning, strategic dexterity and change/transformative capacity.

It is now opportune for key continental, regional and country stakeholders to discuss and review leadership in general – and the role of leadership for results in particular – to create and manage their leadership narrative and success within the African and global contexts. This will powerfully enhance their ability to achieve their aspirations and development priorities.